

# The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No 227

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## Editorial

Dear Brethren and Sisters and respected friends, I had occasion recently to refer to Joshua’s league with the inhabitants of Gibeon. My correspondent had asked why was it easier to sin than to not sin? The Christadelphian answer is that it is because we inherit a nature inclined to sin, or that we are susceptible to temptation, but such a concept is not to be found in Scripture and there is no reason to suppose our inherent nature is at fault.

But to suppose our nature has anything to do with sinning is to miss the reason for law and commandments. God has given us commandments to live by and by keeping them we are able to build characters well pleasing to Him with very great reward. He does not expect us nor ask us to keep laws we are unable to and as sin is transgression of law, I believe the chief reason we fail to keep ourselves free from sin has to do with our testing.

We read in Matthew 22:37, “Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” This alone asks for constant, diligent commitment on our part and many Scriptures testify to those who were strong in faith and courageous in action; some of whom we read in Hebrews 11:33 “Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented (of whom the world was not worthy): they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth... all having obtained a good report through faith.”

The strength and courage of these faithful people makes us feel as nothing and yet even amongst such great characters we see how some failed. Joshua was exhorted time and again to be strong and very courageous and when we read of his exploits we see how faithful he was yet when tested in a comparatively small matter he used his own discretion and failed to do the right thing. He had received a command to destroy all the inhabitants of the countries into which he led the children of Israel but when the inhabitants of Gibeon realised this they came to Joshua as if from some far country, and were seemingly at the end of a

long journey; thereby they deceived Joshua, who accepted their story as there seemed to him no reason why he should suspect them of lying. Joshua's failure was that he did not seek advice from God regarding these people and using his own judgment made a covenant with them.

This was a test for Joshua and one in which he failed. Many years later, through the wickedness of Saul, the Gibeonites became a test for David and on this occasion David did turn to God for guidance (2 Samuel 21:1-9).

Turning to the New Testament we find Peter's weakness on two occasions, once when he denied knowing Jesus (Luke 22:54-62) and the second we read about is in Galatians 2:11-14, "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I (Paul) withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?"

How easy it is to get carried away by circumstances and be taken unawares through being naïve or too trusting or through fear of what others might say or do. Jesus knew this when he exhorted, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Matthew 26: 41.

Another correspondent has been discussing the importance of doctrine and works, and wrote "having obtained knowledge of the basic gospel it is essential that we put (works) into practice by loving God and our neighbour. Without that love, all the most profound knowledge will not save us." This, of course is very true, and we ask what is this "knowledge of the basic gospel"? I suppose that a child who has been through Sunday School will have a good basic knowledge of the gospel and perhaps more than is necessary for baptism. So yes, I think we would all agree that baptism being a new birth is a good starting point to gain further knowledge and certainly good works done in response and thankfulness to the love of God and Jesus should follow. This is the start along the road of a life in Jesus and as our correspondent says, "We are each at a different place along that road."

Our correspondent continues: "The more I think about the terrible death of the Lord Jesus, the more I ask 'Was there no other way...?'" We can be sure there was no other way and the Law of Moses was our schoolmaster to teach us this and to bring us to Christ and it would seem from Old Testament history that most of the children of Israel failed to recognise the spiritual teachings incorporated in the Law of Moses regarding its ordinances. Not only do the ordinances of the Law of Moses prove to us that there was no other way but when we listen to Isaiah 1:18, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: 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 sure that the death of Jesus (was not a martyrdom which would also bring us to tears that such a good man was cruelly killed) but a true sacrifice in order to save us, and the contemplation of the life and death of Jesus should surely bring forth the response of grateful hearts in servitude and with Paul we "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." (Philippians 3:8).

We agree with our Sister, too, on the matter of the B.A.S.F. that it is a flawed document and we believe most Christadelphians would agree and this is surely why it is now rarely used before baptism. This in itself is a good thing but when someone on learning what is in it and finds they disagree with some sections then they are advised to keep their thoughts to themselves or trouble starts. But how can a follower of Jesus Christ keep quiet when they find blasphemy being taught as truth? This Sister also says regarding the Statement of Faith, there are "some things that should not be there and it omits some things which should be there! However, the uproar that would undoubtedly ensue were a change to be called for puts people off even suggesting it."

This statement alone expresses the tragedy of Christadelphia, that there is no unity of the Spirit in that body of some twenty-five or more divisions, yet some even call it 'the Body of Christ.' What a misnomer! Is the "Body of Christ divided"? Of course not but the Christadelphians keep calling for unity "with enticing

words of man's wisdom" and relying upon man's teaching based on the B.A.S.F. which stifles all attempts at finding the truth. And as our correspondent says "What the majority of ecclesias do is to accept it rather loosely for the sake of unity but largely ignore it..." How sad that one should have to do this in order to 'belong' to a community that is so splintered. If we have the Bible as our Statement of Faith then we "are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:20-22).

Finally our correspondent asks "I wonder whether you are fighting against an enemy that does not exist?" Oh! How we wish we were! Previously this Sister had said that the three statements I had quoted as errors (a. that Christadelphians teach that the sacrifice of Jesus was for Himself; b. that Christ was defiled by sin, and c. that Jesus was the Son of God in order to give Him special strength necessary to overcome all temptation to sin) were strange to her and she had never heard them used, yet they are from the B.A.S.F. Clauses 8 and 9.

Jesus tells us in John 4:23, "...the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." To worship God in spirit and in truth calls for knowledge of right doctrine and three chapters further on in John 7:16, we read "Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

"If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine" that it is of God, not man. Here we see the need for both doing and knowing - doing God's will and for knowing true doctrine.

True doctrine must come first and in this we show faithfulness and by faith in that true doctrine we become the children of God and as His children we receive a rich inheritance. Thankfulness is expressed in works - in doing the will of God, as well as praise.

In the early chapters of Paul's letter to the Corinthians we see the importance he attaches to knowledge of true doctrine. Chapter 1 Verse 4 - "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." And in verse 10 Paul says, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." How can this be except we have the true doctrine of God?

And Paul emphasises "I was determined to know nothing among you except Jesus and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). This he did, not through man's wisdom, but by the power of God. "The things we speak are not taught in human wisdom but by the Spirit unfolding spiritual things to spiritual persons" (verse 13). And the spiritual man examines all things. (15).

Joshua was deceived by being too trusting in accepting the words of those who deceived him. Peter was weak through fear of what others might do or say and he was not ready to stand up for his convictions through being taken unawares.

Jesus said, "Take heed therefore how ye hear"! May we all take good heed of our position before God.

With love in Jesus to all, Russell

## Concerning the Atoning Work of Christ

There seems to be a gross weakness in the Christadelphian body on this profound and important work of God in His begetting of a Son, a second Adam of the same physical nature as the first, even Jesus, who was tempted in all points as we are yet proved it possible to be obedient to the Father and in effect justifying God in condemning Adam's sin.

It is an unassailable truth of Scripture teaching by the Spirit that before being placed under Law to God it was possible for Adam to die by some manner or be slain by the sword to cause the shedding of blood wherein was the life. To doubt this is to believe he was not a living soul when created and that the Apostle Paul was wrong in his epistle to 1 Corinthians 15 and that he was right in using the erroneous translation in Romans of the term "sinful flesh" where it is properly translated "sin's flesh." There is no such term in the Scripture as "sin nature."

Having said the former and proved it to be in opposition to Christadelphian tradition I will proceed to show the further weakness of their understanding of the atoning work of God through Jesus beginning at God's appointment of the Priesthood to perform the tasks and rituals for the benefit of the people concerned. Even Abel, Seth, Enoch, Noah and Abraham were concluded under the sin of Adam but were imputed righteous through their sacrificial offerings in recognition of whom the sacrifices typified. And so this was to be recognised also under the Law of Moses which was added that the Adamic offence might abound as stated by the Apostle Paul in Romans 5:20, adding "But where sin abounded grace did much more abound."

Coming now to Hebrews 7:27 we find that the main object of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement was to minister to the people and therefore must be in a position of holiness in order to offer up the sacrificial cleansing of sin for the people. We are told therefore that to do this he must first offer a sacrifice for his own sins and then for the people. People should recognise that this offering for the people was the main object of the work of the High Priest daily; and annually on the special Day of Atonement.

We are informed in Hebrews 8 that if Jesus were on earth He could not be a Priest so that in effect Hebrews 7:27 does not apply to Jesus, being of a different tribe, and also He could not offer for His own sins because He had none to offer for having retained His holiness of birth to the time when He gave himself to be the offering on Calvary for the world that those who recognise it in faith may lay hold on eternal life.

To say because Jesus had no sins He might have died to cleanse His condemned flesh is the height of scriptural ignorance for nowhere do we read that David had condemned flesh yet we are informed Jesus was made of the seed of David according to the flesh. Neither the Virgin Mary or her seed was condemned; it was always sin which was condemned not the physical flesh.

An article by M. Wille of Australia in 1909 on forgiveness of Sins and The resurrection of Life and The second Death 1000 years later I found quite thrilling to read as it showed much of the errors of Dr Thomas in Anastasia and such like, but when I got to his statement that Jesus by His resurrection freed himself of His Sin Nature it put the damper on my respect for what he had written against Christadelphianism when he was also astray in the error of believing in Sin Nature.

I commend a reading of "The Great White Throne" up to where the writer states "Sin Nature" but from then on I would be very cautious - everything can be understood on the basis of Scripture.

My advice to all who profess to study the inspired word of God especially taught by the Apostle Paul, is to read his statement confirming that Jesus died only for all, not for His nature or personal sin. (See Romans 8:30 to 32). Accept Paul's words and be justified to address him as your brother in Christ.

Our Love in the Name of Jesus to all our known members and our readers of the Circular Letters,

Brother Phil and Sister Rene Parry.

## **Exhortation**

# **Forgiveness**

**Micah 6:8 Matthew 6:14,15**

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Loving Greetings in Jesus' Name.

I think 'forgiveness' is one of the most necessary, and yet the hardest virtues to cultivate - more especially for the children of God. All those, more or less, who strive to serve God and keep His commandments have suffered many injustices right down through the ages, and will do until the coming of our Lord Jesus.

It is easy to say we forgive, but to do so right from the heart, to have no ill feeling whatever towards those who have deeply hurt us, to feel nothing but love toward them when we see them, is a different thing which we only know personally. To be able to "turn the other cheek" immediately to those who hurt us unjustly, requires a great effort of control.

This virtue, although hard to cultivate, gives the greatest satisfaction once we have gained the necessary control. The greatest example of self control in the whole of the Scriptures is of course the example set by the Lord Jesus Himself. What a wonderful thing it would be if we could think and act as He did towards His enemies all through His lifetime. This great Son of God, who was an 'ordinary' man in His lifetime, yet who possessed unlimited power from God, who could have called Legions of angels to His assistance to wreak vengeance on His persecutors, never once gave way to temptation. From whence came His strength? His great strength came by faith. Absolute and complete Faith in the commandments and promises of God. By His great faith He overcame all things.

This same power is also available to all those who wish to follow His example. To believe absolutely and completely in God the Great Creator and Sustainer of all things, and who cannot lie. This is the Faith which our Lord said could "remove mountains;" this is the faith we should have. Once our belief is complete we have an anchor to hold on to, while we strive the self-control which is so necessary.

We must overcome vanity and learn to place all things in His Power. This is a lifetime's work for the would-be Sons of God. Like Peter, we shall fall; like Peter, we shall be saved by Christ and forgiven and reinstated "Sons of God," Heirs of Eternal Life.

These are the promises of Him who said, "where is your faith?"

With love to all, Your Brother in Christ, A.Hodges.

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**Further correspondence relating to**

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

**We have received the following letter from Brother Richard Pursell in reply to our commentary of his book “Christadelphians – The Untold Story” published in our Circular Letter No 225:-**

Bro. Russell Gregory and Sis. Helen Brady—

I apologize for not writing sooner, at least to acknowledge receipt of Russell's letter concerning "*Christadelphians: The Untold Story*." His letter is somewhat detailed, and requires some time to respond properly. Your criticism of a seeming lack of response based perhaps upon your publication dates seems unreasonable. While it may be your experience with some Christadelphians that they take "refuge in silence," I believe a blanket statement is not only unfair, but certainly condescending and counterproductive to the pursuit of common understanding. In addition, have you considered the burdens some bear relative to

life itself, for example, health issues, providing for their families, personal crises, etc.? Your seeming presumption that others should respond immediately and seemingly conform to your agenda is distasteful.

That having been said, you may remember that I clearly stated in the preface of my book that its purpose was “to promote healing among Christadelphians,” primarily for those in North America, since to my knowledge, divisions among the fellowships in other areas noted in the book were generally homogenized by John Carter. In this regard, the book was written for Christadelphians, in terminology that should be familiar with Christadelphians. The copy sent to Bro. Russell was complementary and intended as a “thank you” for the information that he had graciously provided about the Nazarene fellowship, not only directly, but also through the pages of the “Circular.”

I had no intentions when writing the book to misrepresent anyone. If, indeed, I have done so, it has been in innocence. Please accept my apologies. Certainly, I am not as familiar with the nuances of your beliefs as perhaps some would wish, but I did my best with what I had to work with at the time. As with any work of this sort, everyone cannot and will not be fully satisfied no matter how accurately the information may be presented.

### **Credits**

As to credits at the back of the book, my intention was to reveal as many sources as were practical so readers could find and read for themselves what had happened among the parties, and while the Nazarenes may be well known in Britain, and perhaps also in Australia, I can assure you that in North America most Christadelphians would be surprised that any proponents, let alone descendants of Edward Turney, David Handley, or H. Fry, even existed. For neglecting to include your website, I’m sorry. For failing to categorize the Nazarenes as “Non-Christadelphians,” I’m also sorry, especially for my ignorance of your seeming sensitivity. As for the misspelling of Bro. Brady’s given name, it was an oversight entirely. To spell Ernest with an “a” is as normal here in the U.S. as spelling Jon or Tom with an “h”. I beg your forgiveness.

### **Augustine vs. Pelagius**

While there may be a similarity between Augustine’s perspective and that of some Christadelphians, it appears to me that it is unfair for you to generalize that Christadelphians follow Augustine when a portion of Augustine’s doctrine, that is, that of “original sin” is completely absent among all Christadelphians, and I believe this distinctive qualification is important to keep in mind. While most Christadelphians likely would agree with the concept of the Augustinian fallen nature, it is unmerited to attach or project upon Christadelphians the idea of personal “guilt” for that nature. In the Preface I used the word “akin” concerning the Augustine vs. Pelagius controversy and not “identical.” I thought I had made the difference quite clear throughout the book, and particularly in chapters 21, “Inherited Guilt? Explanations Answering the Charges,” and 23, “Misfortune and not a fault.” From Russell’s letter, however, it may be true that “Nazarenes are with Pelagius,” as he has stated, but it is not necessarily true, because of the above qualification that “Christadelphians agree with Augustine.”

Generally speaking, most Christadelphians of which I am aware, do not make a distinction between the terms, “sin nature,” “sinful flesh,” “sin’s flesh,” “sin in the flesh,” “sin that dwelleth in me,” and other such expressions. To them, they are all expressive of the same thing. In this regard, it is quite understandable to say one is a “possessor of sin’s flesh” because he believes that the dying nature, mortality, the “flesh” that he possesses, is a result of Adam’s transgression. While you may not appreciate nor agree with this terminology, it is nonetheless quite familiar among Christadelphians. To isolate the adjective “sinful” as being descriptive of “transgression” only, and not permitted to describe the secondary state which emanated there from, seems unwarranted. It would seem the same logic would demand that “righteousness” is descriptive only of “good works” and its use as describing the status or state of “righteousness” (which is imputed not actual), would and should also be denied, regardless of how valid its use in Scripture may be. As said above, the book was written for Christadelphians, and primarily about Christadelphians, and therefore was put in terms understandable to Christadelphians.

### **“Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil”**

It seems much is read between the lines about the events in the Garden and the “fall of man,” and it is the implications (and assumptions) that seem to present the biggest problems among Bible students. While

Nazarenes seemingly believe there was no physical change in either the man or the woman as a result of their transgression, it appears that the Bible, however, does record some sort of change. It seems that the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil indeed did change something about them, for it is written that upon eating, “the eyes of them both were opened.” This coincides with the serpent’s earlier insight that by eating they would be as “gods” to know good and evil. It seems to me that the fruit did exactly what it had been seemingly empowered to do—perhaps a chemically induced physical change which affected their mental acuity—they now, as a direct result of eating the fruit, knew good and evil. The account says they “knew they were naked,” and “hid themselves.” The Lord’s questions to Adam, “Who told thee...?”, and “Hast thou eaten...?”, clearly imply that Adam’s newly acquired awareness was a result of sinning, that is, his awareness of and discernment between good and evil came about by eating the forbidden fruit.

Whatever occurred in this “change” has obviously been passed on to their progeny. We each have the ability to “choose the good and refuse the evil” (Isa 7:16). The implication is, therefore, that prior to Adam’s transgression he did not possess the ability to know the difference between good and evil, and as such, was not, and could not have been, “tempted from within.” But we as his progeny are different, and that difference, I believe, was shared by the Son of Man, being “in all points tempted as we are” (Heb 4:15). In this regard, we can see that his temptation in the wilderness immediately after his having been anointed with the Holy Spirit as God’s sanctified vessel, was a conflict within himself as to how he would set his mind for the task before him. To say that Christ was “given extra help to overcome temptation,” as some have suggested, is not only dishonouring to him of the work he accomplished, but certainly as you say “a notion that denies the testimony of the Spirit word.” Is it not sufficient to agree with the prophet who said the “Son of David” would be of “quick understanding?” (Isaiah 11:3). And is this not evident in his Scriptural response to each diabolical thought of achieving notoriety, being “drawn away by his own lust” (James 1:14), through abuse of the Spirit-power entrusted to him? He did not succumb. Lust did not “conceive.” It did not “bring forth sin.” His anointing with the Holy Spirit certainly marked his consecration and commencement as God’s chosen and appointed High Priest of the Melchizedek order, who, later, at the end of his ministry, “offered himself” (Heb 9:14) “once in the end of the world” (v26) and “hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” by which he passed “through the veil, that is to say his flesh” (Heb 10:20).

### **Mortal vs. Corruptible**

While Nazarene doctrine appears to be largely based upon a distinction of definitions between the meanings of “mortal” and “corruptible,” Unamended Christadelphian doctrine is not. “Mortal” can mean “dying” (as in the process of ~), “subject to death,” or even “capable of dying.” Certainly Adam was created “capable of dying” because he did. So, was he created “mortal?” Yes, in that sense, but as you are well aware, that doesn’t convey the entire story. The same exercise can be applied to “corruptible.” Strictly speaking, “corruptible” means “able to corrupt.” Was Adam created in a nature “able to corrupt?” Again, yes, apparently so, because he did. But while it is true that the Scriptures say Adam was created “very good,” they do not say he was either mortal or immortal. And if not immortal, are we to assume he was “mortal”? Not necessarily. Here, the English language seems to be void of a proper word by which to describe Adam’s condition prior to the fall. Was he created “mortal” in the sense of being “capable of dying?” Yes, of course, the record is explicit. On the other hand, was he created “mortal” in the sense of currently being in the process of “dying?” Apparently not.

The one place of which I am aware of the two terms “mortal” and “corruptible” occurring together is 1Cor 15. In this passage, the apostle is speaking of the changing of nature when death is to be swallowed up in victory “in a moment in the twinkling of an eye.” Since in another place he describes two classes of believers which will be subjects of this change, it is possible he has the same two classes in mind here in 1 Cor 15. There are those who have been raised from the dead, and those who are “alive and remain” at his coming (1 Thes 4:15). He says both classes are to be “changed” together. One is not to anticipate or “precede” the other. The first class, having come from their graves, has seen “corruption,” as it were, something of which our Lord was spared while in the tomb (Acts 13:37), the second have not died, but are yet “dying” that is, “mortal.” The first class may be the “corruptible,” that is, “decayed,” from a word, according to Dr. Strong, meaning “to spoil,” and the second may be the “mortals,” that is, those “liable to die” but are “alive and remain” at his coming. So, perhaps the explanation is: “For this corruptible (those in graves) must put on incorruption, and this mortal (those alive and dying) must put on immortality.” While

this explanation is not conclusive, it does provide an alternative for the otherwise redundancy of Paul's statement.

### **“Legally” Mortal**

While it is true that there is a physical aspect to “mortality,” it is also certainly true that there is a legal aspect as well. A man may be legally sentenced by a judge to be physically executed, yet continue to live under that sentence until it is physically accomplished. With this understanding, he may be “legally” mortal, that is, destined to, subject to, or even liable to death, but still very much “physically alive.” And the reverse can also be true. Consider at Christ's coming those on his “right hand” (Matthew 25:33). One may hear the word “well done thou good and faithful servant” (v21) and be “legally immortal,” but still awaiting the “moment” and “twinkling of an eye” when all are physically changed “together.”

### **Denied Access to the “Tree of Life”**

As I understand it, Nazarenes believe that Adam died as a result of his being barred from the “tree of life;” the equivalent (at least to Christadelphians) of saying that Adam was created in a condition “subject to” and “capable of” death—that is, “mortal.” And so, the Nazarene belief is described in those terms, even though perhaps Nazarenes may qualify the “mortality” as not being in the sense of actually dying because up until this point the “tree of life” medicine was able to “stay the plague” as it were. The apostle Paul explicitly says “death (came) by sin” (Romans 5:12). If Adam's eventual and so-called natural death 930 years later came by being unable to feed upon the “tree of life,” as I understand Nazarenes believe, then it would seem that death came not “by sin,” as the apostle says, but rather by a combination of Adam's creation and denied access to the tree.

### **Mortal—”Through Breach of Law”**

Russell says concerning Nazarene doctrine, “The important point to note is that ‘mortal’ means ‘destined to die through breach of law’.” But, the qualification, “through breach of law” seems arbitrary and may not be sustainable. Here is why. The words “mortal” and “immortal” differ in that one contains the prefix “im” meaning “not.” This being the case, “immortal” would mean not “destined to die through breach of law.” But doesn't this definition require each individual to breach the law to be “mortal?” It would seem that the “free life” doctrine demands this, inasmuch as by perfect obedience Jesus did not forfeit his life. According to Nazarene doctrine, all others have transgressed and thusly forfeited their lives, and are therefore “destined to die.” But, if Jesus did not incur “mortality” either by inheritance (as Christadelphians believe) or (as Nazarenes believe) by personal transgression, and was thus “immortal,” it becomes difficult to understand how he “likewise took part of the same” nature that contained the “power of death” (Hebrews 2:14) and was testified to be “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3).

### **Animals—Not Destined to Die?**

The Scripture says, concerning man and beast, “As the one dieth, so dieth the other” (Ecclesiastes 3:19). In this respect, are men and animals not equal? Are animals, like men, “destined to die?” Yes, of course. But, are animals “destined to die through breach of law?” If the answer is no, then animals would seemingly be “immortal.” If the answer is yes, then, according to your definition, animals are “mortal,” but then the question forces itself, “Did they transgress individually” as seems to be required by the qualified definition? No. The only explanation then, for their being “destined to die” would seem to be that they are so “destined” because of someone else's “breach of law” which directly contradicts the “free life” concept of individual transgression. But there is more. Perhaps animals also, as the man and woman, were created in a “corruptible” condition capable of dying but not actually yet dying? If so, did animals also, as the man and the woman, supposedly eat of the tree of life to sustain themselves? Probably not, and are we to suppose that the animal's abstinence from the “tree of life” explains why they die? Why is it so difficult for some to accept that “by one man sin entered the world and death by sin?” Does this not explain sorrow, disease, sickness, all human frailties, and their end result, death? And are not these all physical? In all of this Nazarenes seemingly ask others to believe that 1) Adam was not created mortal but became “mortal” by his personal transgression, 2) each man becomes “mortal” by his own transgression, which necessarily implies that transgressionless infants are “immortal”, 3) animals, while destined to die, did not breach law, and so are not “mortal” which means by all logic they are “immortal,” 4) “mortality” is a term that does not describe a “fallen nature” but rather denotes a “legal position” and nothing more. Is it any wonder why some have a hard time understanding the Nazarene perspective?



## **Death by Decree**

As far as I know, the Scriptures do not say that the forbidden fruit actually caused the man and woman's death, but only that the "eyes of them both were opened." It seems, therefore, that the physical death (mortality) which the apostle says "passed upon all men" by that "sin" (even over them who had not sinned personally as did Adam, Romans 5:14) may well have been by decree of the Almighty in the curse, "dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3:19) spoken along with other curses of a physical nature which included "sorrows." "By the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation." While the word "judgment" is supplied by the translators in this passage, it nonetheless seems to convey the idea of decree. In this regard, the "sting of death" would logically be none other than the sin of Adam. It is a simple matter of cause and effect. As the saying goes, "where there is smoke there is fire," so also where there is death (also sickness and sorrow) there is "sin." Transgressionless infants die. What "sin," therefore, can be responsible for the maladies of humanity but the "sin" of Adam?

## **"The Sting of Death"**

The suggestion that the stinging "sin" to which Paul alludes in this 1 Corinthians 15 passage is the "law of Moses" (Circular, July/August, '07) seems to be contradicted by Paul's own statement that the death which "passed upon all men" reigned even before the Law of Moses came to exist, and furthermore he adds "even over them who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam," that is, they hadn't personally transgressed. True, "the law entered, that the offence might abound" (v20) and the Law was called "the ministration of death" (2 Corinthians 3:7), and in that sense the Law certainly was "the strength of sin." But the fact that the "sting of death" is linked inextricably with the "grave" is evidence that the "death" of which the apostle speaks is physical. The "victory" is won over that which Adam's sin brought upon mankind, when each faithful individual is "changed" in "a moment in the twinkling of an eye" when, "in this mountain" (Isaiah 25:8), (Zion, not Sinai), "the Lord (shall) command the blessing, even life for evermore" (Psalm 133). This seems to be another way of expressing the blessing, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life" (Revelation 2:7), a statement in which the word "again" is absent and therefore implies that none excepting the Lord himself has yet eaten. When the "victory" is thus realized, there also "shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:4, Isaiah 25:8. This Isaiah passage is the same to which Paul alludes about the "victory"). Is this not the Edenic curse of "mortality that might be swallowed up of life?" (2 Corinthians 5:4). Christ was certainly a "man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief," a condition emanating upon all mankind from Adam's transgression, and being one of us, destroyed, by his shed blood, the diabolos, that which had the power of death. He was one of us, and hath "gotten the victory" (Psalm 98:1) over death, "through death" (Hebrews 2:14). "Christ the first fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (1Cor 15:23).

## **"Judicial Death"**

It is true that Adam's transgression alone caused a breach between himself and the Creator, a breach which may be described as "legal" and certainly incurred what may be called a "judicial death." And while this aspect of the transgression in Eden may be denied by the bulk of Christadelphia, the Unamended Christadelphian community by no means diminishes it in doctrinal value. Therein, it is styled "legal condemnation," a "sentence to death" that passed upon all men (being in the loins of Adam when he transgressed), and from which all men must be justified in the sight of God as the first step toward being "made perfect" (Hebrews 11:40). Unlike most Christadelphians, the Nazarenes seem to be plenty familiar with the Hebrew idiom "muth te muth (thou shalt surely die)," and as such appear to share with the Unamended community the foundation and basic reason of the necessity of a blood-shedding sacrifice on account of "sin," whether it be the "inherited state of sin" or actual personal transgression. Without question, the idiom is emphatic, and expresses the intention of the Almighty that by transgression, Adam's life would have been taken from him, and evidently by means of the shedding of his blood, because "the life is in the blood" (Leviticus 17:11).

But just as important as the understanding of being cut-off for "sin," is the doctrine of what Unamendeds call "inherited condemnation," "alienation," "Adamic Condemnation," and the like. It is about position. And it is position, or status in God's eyes, that, in my opinion, is generally missing in most Christadelphian teaching. It is a position that changes by means of one's expression of faith at an individual's baptism by associating himself with the sacrificial death of Christ. As the apostle said, "I am crucified with Christ" (Galatians 2:20), "Buried with him into death" (Romans 6:4), "Planted together in the

likeness of his death” (v5) and other such statements. In this single act of humility, one is no longer accounted as being “without God” (Ephesians 2:12) but rather accounted “righteous” (Romans 4:24), as was Abraham, even though we are “sinners” (Romans 3:10) in the behavioural sense. In this new state, position, or status, one is Scripturally called “brother,” “heir,” “just,” “washed,” “redeemed,” “in grace,” “saints,” “Sons of God,” “nigh,” “sanctified,” “alive/quicken,” “saved,” “living,” “in the Spirit,” “name written in the book of life,” and many more terms that define a position “in Christ.” This status is not something one can earn by personal behavior, as was the manner by which “righteousness” was sought by the Pharisees and later the Judaizers, for “by the law no flesh shall be justified,” wrote the apostle (Romans 3:20). Nazarenes appear to understand this aspect of “condemnation,” but at the same time, apparently because of unfamiliarity with Unamended Christadelphians, lump all Christadelphians into the same category of feeding “stones” to their children by believing that Adam’s sin incurred a natural death. This accusation, while perhaps true in the experience of the Nazarenes, is not true with respect to Unamended Christadelphians in North America where we agree that “the sin of Adam affected Adam and all his descendants legally...”—but we would disagree with you about “not physically.”

### Three “Condemnations”

As the editors of the Advocate magazine on page 149 of “*Christadelphians: The Untold Story*” were cited, the Unamended community believes the sin of Adam changed his relationship in three ways—Morally, Legally, and Physically. The first and second were a direct result of transgression, the third appears to be a curse that was added as a result of the first two. A curse, by the way, which is promised to be removed in the same sequence as it came, that is, “legally” followed by “physically.” As Adam “legally” incurred what Nazarenes call a “judicial death” merely by transgression, it appears he became physically “dying” in the declaration “dust thou art” etc. The reverse of this also seems to be a two-fold process. One must first be “justified” from the condemnation inherited from Adam. As Russell seems to agree, “Baptism is not primarily for the forgiveness of sins but to restore our relationship to our Creator; to remove the alienation introduced into the human race when Adam transgressed; to remove Sin as our Master and establish God as our Master through faith in Jesus.” One of the primary purposes of the book “*Christadelphians: The Untold Story*” was to demonstrate that this essential concept which both the Unamended community and Nazarenes embrace is for the most part absent in the Central Christadelphian fellowship. This absence appears to be primarily a reaction to what some have mistakenly believed Bro. Andrew taught, the portion of Augustine’s doctrine mentioned earlier—“original sin.” Of the three “condemnations” listed above relative to the sin of Adam therefore, it seems that Bro. Turney picked up on the first and second but denied the third; Bro. Roberts picked up the first and the third, denying the second, and the Unamended believe all three.

With the first step toward complete reconciliation with God being the “legal” aspect of becoming “in Christ” positionally, the second portion of the two-fold process described above is the “redemption of our body” (Romans 8:23), being “changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Corinthians 15:52) when “death is swallowed up in victory” (v54) and the “power of the grave” (Psalm 49:15, Hosea 13:14) shall have no hold. The Unamended believe, therefore, that the “death” from which we need deliverance is first the removal of the “sentence” in a “legal” sense, that the physical sorrow, pain, etc. which accompanies the physical curse of mortality might later be “changed” at the coming of our Lord. “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 7:24).

### Trying to Understand

I have spent a great deal of time trying to understand how the Nazarene Fellowship has been misrepresented by others, apparently, as you say, even by myself, and have come to the conclusion that the misrepresentation, while done in ignorance, may simply be a matter of differing definitions. It seems that the Nazarenes have a different set of definitions than Christadelphians. For example, while Christadelphians see “mortality” as a physical malady, the Nazarenes apparently see “mortality” as a legal status. This is not to say that either concept is unscriptural, but only that the use of the word “mortality” is confusing or seemingly inappropriate to the other group. It is my opinion that Robert Roberts, and his followers, for the most part have denied the legal status aspect which is why Nazarenes “wish Christadelphians could see that mortal and corruptible are two very different matters.” Contained in this “wish” is the Nazarene definition of “mortal.” As I understand Nazarene doctrine, “mortal” is purely a “legal” matter. You have given Edward Turney’s definition, and your assent to it to be, “destined to die through breach of law.” I have had to give this a lot of thought before understanding that when you say “destined to die” you apparently mean to put emphasis on

the word “destined” in the sense of “legal edict,” “decree”, or even “sentence of death” as a magistrate may pass a legal judgment, and not the physical declination of our bodies which is commonly understood to be “mortality.” I suppose, therefore, that if I am correct, this is the reason why you object to the statement that “Adam was created mortal,” because with your definition, linked to the fact that he had not yet transgressed, he could not yet have come under the “decree” or “legal edict.”

It appears therefore, at least to Christadelphians, that Nazarenes completely deny any physical aspect of “mortality” as a result of Adam’s sin, which explains why the so called “implantation” of “sin in the flesh” is likewise denied. This seems to be confirmed in that, in Russell’s letter he characterizes the “physical effects of Adam’s sin” as being “supposed.” This leaves but one explanation for the weakness, feebleness, sickness, sorrow, and declination of healthy cellular activity in our bodies that humans experience, and that is that Adam was created either with these physical ills or at least was potentially able to digress into them by being denied access to the “tree of life,” and perhaps that is why you describe his nature as “corruptible.” But, in all fairness, with the human experience being what it is, and the ills being an integral part of what is normally known as “mortality,” can you really and honestly blame others for understanding and summarizing your belief as anything but “Adam was created mortal?” And furthermore, can you honestly describe this condition as “very good?” If there was no change in the Garden physically, and men even today are of the same nature in which Adam was created, and some bearing that nature are someday permitted to “eat of the tree of life” as promised (Revelation 2:7, what is the “change” to which the apostle alludes which is to come “in a moment?” If, indeed, the “tree of life” is “given” to those who overcome in that same nature to eat, wouldn’t one “live for ever” in that nature, as the Lord God said (Genesis 3:22), without any “change?”

As I have attempted to show not only in the book “*Christadelphians: The Untold Story*,” but also in the 2003 *Shofar* magazine series “From Eden to Calvary,” and this reply, the Unamended Community fully endorses the “legal” aspect of Adam’s sin. We see his sin as incurring the liability of the Edenic law “thou shalt surely die,” but that does not necessarily mean that law was carried out. The cutting off was rather commuted for Adam (and his progeny) to a process of dying, (what we commonly call mortality), based upon his faith in the promised seed. We see the inherited “legal condemnation” as the abstract liability of the entire race to eternal death, and the curse of “dust thou art, etc” as the actual physical change in Adam likewise “passed upon all men.” In other words, the sentence “dust thou art, etc” became a physical law of his being. This is the position taken by both Bro. Andrew and Bro. Williams, and unfortunately, Bro. Roberts seems to have only recognized the “physical law of his (Adam’s) being,” and consequently this limited perspective became the subject of later division between what are now two portions of Christadelphia (Amended and Unamended).

I see I have written more than I intended. You may publish this if you wish.

Your brother in Christ, Richard Pursell

P.S.—Lastly, I’m having a bit of trouble sorting out what appears to be contradictory statements. On the one hand, you say, “Baptism is to restore our relationship to our Creator; to remove the alienation introduced into the human race when Adam transgressed.” On the other hand you say “He (Jesus) was never estranged from His Father). Is this to say Jesus was not of the human race?

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**Our reply:**

Dear Brother Richard,

Thank you for your letter of the 24<sup>th</sup> August. We understand your opening comments and we assure you that we had no wish to give offence. We are sorry to hear you have “burdens relative to life itself.” Thank you for your understanding and please accept our apologies. We are very pleased indeed to receive your reply.

We noted in the preface to your book your hope “to promote healing among Christadelphians” and such has been the desire of the Nazarene Fellowship since the days of Edward Turney when Robert Roberts took

the community off on a side-track of dispute, vain argument, and disfellowshipping; he had an abundance of arrogance, he could make beautiful and moving speeches and sway his audience but lacked calmness and humility, and little patience to reason things through, having the nature of a spoilt and impetuous child; a man who assiduously followed all that Dr. Thomas said but seemed not to understand him so that when Dr. Thomas died, Robert Roberts did a somersault with his teachings, setting brother against brother and the resultant community has been in desperate need of healing ever since.

You say you had no intentions to misrepresent anyone and this we accept of course, and we have no desire whatsoever to misunderstand your teachings which we feel we have done for there are some things in your reply which have come as a pleasant surprise to us, especially under your heading “Judicial death.” However, some of the things you express here I see as being contradicted elsewhere.

You say that it is unfair to attribute to Christadelphians the belief in “personal guilt” for the nature we bare, yet you say we have to die as the penalty imposed upon us by our inherent nature. First you say this inherent condemned nature makes us all guilty before God – and this is what we deny. I realise you specify “personal guilt” but we are either individually guilty or not guilty. If we die as the penalty imposed on our inherent nature we must be guilty, for God does not impose a penalty of condemnation without guilt. This impasse comes about by wrongly believing natural death to be the result of Adam’s transgression. Our natural death, or what Moses called “the common death of all men” is not the penalty of Adam’s sin. All creatures were created to live for a specific time only - from birth to maturity, reproduction and death according to their species. Ecclesiastes 3:19, “For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity.”

You claim our inherent condemned nature is a “Misfortune and not a fault” but this also is false. Paul tells us in Galatians 3:22, “But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” It’s hardly a misfortune to be offered such a blessing. The fact that God concluded all under sin is not a misfortune but the act of a merciful Father who wants to save His children from destruction. And Hebrews 9:14-16 expands on this – “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.” The purpose of concluding all under the sin of Adam then, was so that the one death of Christ for sin should cover all who come out of Adam to be in Christ. That is the blessing of the gospel.

You say your book was written for Christadelphians, about Christadelphians, in terms understandable to Christadelphians. Some years ago I said Christadelphians had a language of their own and was told I was talking nonsense but now I wonder, do they have a dictionary of their own too – a dictionary of terms understandable only to Christadelphians? Here is a phrase from that “Christadelphian dictionary” - “The Law of Condemnation” which Jesus is said to have abrogated. There can be no such thing as a “law of condemnation” – it is a nonsense. Condemnation is the resultant sentence of a broken law - any law; it is the guilty verdict passed upon those who break any law thus making them liable to its penalty. Can there be a “Law of guilty verdict”? I think you will see my point.

The important thing to accept and understand is that ‘Fallen nature,’ ‘Sin nature,’ ‘Sinful nature,’ and ‘sinful flesh’ are not found in Scripture.

While the words ‘**Sinful flesh**’ occur in the King James Version in Romans 8:3, it is the result of bias on the part of the translators who wish to uphold Augustinian “Original Sin” doctrine. This should read “sin’s flesh” to convey Paul’s meaning which is that “Sin’s flesh” is flesh belonging to ‘Sin’ as a master. Those under ‘King sin’ are therefore “sin’s flesh” - they are those “in Adam.”

“**Sin that dwelleth in me**” – is a much abused phrase and in fact applies to Paul or should I say, Saul? (or any other Jew under the Law of Moses) before conversion to Jesus. After baptism it was not sin that dwelt in him but Christ that dwelt in him. John 6: 56. “He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood,

dwelleth in me, and I in him.” Paul did not say that sin dwelt in him after his conversion, i.e. when Jesus dwelt in him.

**“Sin – is the transgression of law”** as we are clearly told in 1 John 3:4.

No secondary sense is taught in Scripture. The notion that ‘sin is that in the flesh which is the cause of all its diseases, death, and resolution into dust – this fixation of this evil in the flesh as the result of transgression’ is just so much nonsense and meaningless jargon yet still believed by some.

Reference to “the sin of the world” by John the Baptist is the one sin of Adam under which we are all concluded for the purpose of blessing the faithful, yet this has been described by some as being a misfortune! Oh that they should read the Bible effectively.

**“Sin in the flesh”** (Romans 8:3) refers to the time of Jesus’ suffering as in 1 Peter 4:1, “Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us (when) in the flesh.” Jesus condemned sin while He was in the flesh and thereby showing that perfect obedience was possible for anyone; flesh was not the problem but our unwillingness to always do what is right and good.

Surely it is high time Christadelphians made the right distinctions between these terms. To lump them together as you say they do can only lead to utter confusion. Even Robert Roberts before he crossed swords with Edward Turney had said there was no change in the nature of Adam when he became disobedient and that the phrase “sin in the flesh” is metonymical and not a literal element or principle pervading the physical organisation. But Robert Roberts turned his own belief upside down in order to oppose Edward Turney. How different Christadelphian history might have been if Robert Roberts had kept to the truth.

As I said in my first response to you four months ago, it is ‘King Sin’ which possesses those “in Adam” and not we who possess sin in our flesh. Having made this one big error, other errors had to follow - in just the same way as when one tells a lie and then one has to invent more lies to cover up the first.

Jesus has imputed His righteousness to the faithful in place of their sins (unrighteousness), while their sins were laid upon Him and He paid the price to take them away. Both are substitution. It seems to me you are prepared to accept the first – Jesus righteousness imputed to you in place of your unrighteousness but not the other way – you unrighteousness in place of His righteousness and would rather accept the first substitution but would deny the later.

You say: -

“It seems that the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil indeed did change something about them, for it is written that upon eating, “the eyes of them both were opened.””

Do you really believe the fruit contained some ‘toxin’ which opened their eyes? Was it not rather the act of disobedience, the first act of disobedience by Adam that gave him a sense of guilt? It awakened his guilty conscience for the first time. It seems that you have to find some reason for a physical change in order to uphold your pre-conceived conviction that there was such a change and in desperation you go on to say: -

“It seems to me that the fruit did exactly what it had been seemingly empowered to do - perhaps a chemically induced physical change which affected their mental acuity.”

What’s this? “A chemically induced physical change which affected their mental acuity”! I know that drug addiction can induce physical and mental changes but to suppose that God introduced such ‘medicine’ into the forbidden fruit just beggars belief. I’m sorry but I cannot accept you idea. And why does not Scripture give us more information to go on? No convincing argument can be built on such untenable assumption. Adam was made complete at his creation and did not need further modification after he disobeyed God.

Adam disobeyed while in the very good flesh in which he was created. Adam made a choice as we all can and do.

You write,

“Whatever occurred in this “change” has obviously been passed on to their progeny. We each have the ability to “choose the good and refuse the evil” (Isa 7:16). The implication is, therefore, that prior to Adam’s transgression he did not possess the ability to know the difference between good and evil, and as such, was not, and could not have been, ‘tempted from within.’”

But this has to be false surmising. Adam and Eve were given free will, that is, they were given the opportunity to choose to obey or to disobey God, but then you say they didn’t have the ability to know which was right and which was wrong because they had had no experience beforehand! No! God told them what was right and what was wrong. “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” God knew what He was doing in giving Adam and Eve a free-will and a law to live by. That very first command (law) was very simple indeed. They had the company of angels to teach them all they needed to know; they had experience of life and death in the natural world around them, so they knew what death was and Adam understood what God was telling him when He said “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,” which ‘Law’ Adam would have told to Eve, else the angels would have told her. They had no excuse for disobedience and each had their own reason. Eve was deceived but Adam was not.

I am pleased to see we agree that:-

“To say that Christ was “given extra help to overcome temptation,” as some have suggested, is not only dishonouring to Him of the work He accomplished, but certainly as you say, a notion that denies the testimony of the Spirit word. Is it not sufficient to agree with the prophet who said the “Son of David” would be of “quick understanding”? (Isaiah 11:3).

Let’s move on to consider mortal. The meaning of mortal has changed over the years. It originally applied only to human beings. The fact that there is the word “mortalise” (now rarely seen) which means “to make mortal” shows the belief that there was a time when one was not mortal but could be made so. Dr Thomas understood that Adam and Eve were neither mortal nor immortal at their creation 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, but were not subject to death or mortal.”

- “Elpis Israel,” page 65, (or pages 72-73 in 14th Edition - 1958)

Again, with your reference to 1 Corinthians 15, to say that mortal applies to the faithful still alive at Jesus return and corruptible applies to those who have died and seen corruption is another anomaly. It is nonsense to apply the term ‘corruptible’ to those ‘in the graves’ who have long since corrupted.

You write “while it is true that there is a physical aspect to ‘mortality’...”

No, Richard, it is not true except perhaps in today’s changed meaning; but your legal understanding is good - until you apply it to those at Jesus’ right hand in Matthew 25:33. I will quote from verse 31 –

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in...”

When Jesus comes in His glory the first resurrection will have already taken place so the holy angels of whom we read in verse 31 are the faithful since the time of Adam, now immortal and about to begin their

reign as “kings and priests unto God and his Father” (Revelation 1:6). Those on Jesus right hand are those invited into the Kingdom age over whom the elect will reign as kings and priests.

You also mention “legally immortal” and I agree with this for Jesus said in John 5:24, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life (zoe), and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life (zoe).” I believe at baptism we are given (born with) zoe life, that is, spirit life and when we die our natural psuche life ceases; but it is our zoe life that is hid with God till the resurrection; “your life (zoe) is hid with Christ in God.” Colossians 3:3.

You write:

“Nazarenes seemingly ask others to believe that

- 1) Adam was not created mortal but became “mortal” by his personal transgression,
- 2) each man becomes “mortal” by his own transgression, which necessarily implies that transgression-less infants are “immortal”,
- 3) animals, while destined to die, did not breach law, and so are not “mortal” which means by all logic they are “immortal,”
- 4) “mortality” is a term that does not describe a “fallen nature” but rather denotes a “legal position” and nothing more.

Is it any wonder why some have a hard time understanding the Nazarene perspective?”

In reply we say:

1) is true.

2) No. When Adam transgressed in Eden he sold himself to Sin as his master, and was under condemnation to death until redeemed. Redemption took place when Jesus died on the cross. Jesus redeemed the whole world but this is of no value while a person is “in Adam”. Everyone who leaves their position “in Adam” and is baptised “into Christ” is redeemed and for them “there is now no condemnation.” (Romans 8:1). For those who refuse this offer of salvation there is the second death which is the wages of sin. For all those ignorant of salvation their life also ends in death as it does for all the animal creation. Mortal and immortal are not opposites as we have seen above.

3) No logic can make animals immortal or mortal as the terms are legal and animals are not under the law of sin and death. They are corruptible.

4) There is no such thing as “fallen” nature. A legal term cannot be applied to a physical nature as though it was a quality of his flesh.

I know you have tried to understand the Nazarene position so I hope the above will be helpful.

Again, No, it is not Nazarene Fellowship belief that Adam died as a result of being barred from the Tree of Life. When he wrote “The Sacrifice of Christ” Edward Turney believed, along with Christadelphia in general, that our natural death was the wages of sin. By the time he had written “The Two Sons of God” he realised this view was untenable.

I know of nothing in Scripture which suggests that Adam died as a consequence of his sin. In this respect Adam was created no different to all other animals. I have heard Christadelphians say that Adam and Eve did not age while in the garden because they had access to the tree of life but how do they know? It is an unnecessary and unhelpful speculation.

In the words of Ernest Brady:

“Where then, shall we look for the explanation of the Fall of Man? It was undoubtedly a matter of Law. A tremendous change occurred certainly, but it was a legal change, not a physical one. The change was in Adam’s relationship to God. From being an obedient Son, living in harmony with his Creator, by a simple act of disobedience he alienated himself. This changed relationship is typified by the expulsion from Eden and debarment from the Tree of Life. It is not necessary to suppose that this tree of Life had a miraculous power to confer immortality; it typifies the fact that so long as Adam was obedient and free in the garden he was in a “living”

relationship, but having transgressed the law under which he was placed, he incurred the penalty attaching to that law, namely the sentence of death. He was therefore cut off from the tree of Life and expelled from Eden; he was in a legally dead condition and estranged from God.”

And it is this legal position we call “mortal” and believe this is how it is meant to be understood in scripture.

It can be seen from John 14 to 16 that Jesus is the Tree of Life upon whom the faithful feed.

You write: -

“The apostle Paul explicitly says “death (came) by sin” (Romans 5:12). If Adam’s eventual and so-called natural death 930 years later came by being unable to feed upon the “tree of life,” as I understand Nazarenes believe, then it would seem that death came not “by sin,” as the apostle says, but rather by a combination of Adam’s creation and denied access to the tree.”

But Nazarenes do not believe death came by a combination of Adam’s creation and being denied access to the Tree of Life. The death common to all people as Moses expressed it has nothing whatever to do with the judicial death for sin. The death Adam died when 930 years of age we believe was due to old age.

Let’s bear in mind the teachings of Scripture that - 1). “The wages of sin is death,” 2). “It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (Hebrews 10:4), but 3). The sacrifice of Jesus did (Isaiah 53:6, John 1:29 etc.), and 4). “There is no forgiveness without the shedding of blood” (Hebrews 9:22) then surely we can see that the wages of sin has nothing to do with us dying a natural death. All these speak of judicial death. When a murderer is sentenced to death for his crime it is obvious the death he is about to suffer is not the death due to old age or accident or illness. The perpetrator has been sentenced to a judicial death due to falling foul of the law. I don’t know how to express our understanding in any better way!

Forgiveness can only be through Jesus after He was crucified – after His blood was shed. We then realize that forgiveness required the violent death of Jesus for our sakes. Therefore sin requires violent or judicial death, not natural death before forgiveness is possible. I.e. the wages of sin is violent death, which is judicial death. Neither the natural death of Adam nor the natural death of any of his descendants was or is the penalty for sin, else Jesus died in vain because we all still die. Hebrews 9:27, “it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” – this is proof that natural death is not the wages of sin.

But you agree with us that judicial death was incurred by Adam when he transgressed, so why ever do you say and think that natural death is the result of condemnation? “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ” yet they still die the common death of all men. The condemnation which is removed is the condemnation which came by Adam’s sin, i.e. judicial death (the second death). Natural death cannot be judicial death.

It is not at all complicated but has been made so by false doctrines and impractical assumptions that natural death came by sin and that Adam’s physical nature was changed at the ‘fall.’

You make the statement that,

“According to Nazarene doctrine, all others have transgressed and thusly forfeited their lives, and are therefore destined to die.”

This needs addressing as, once again, it is not Nazarene Fellowship teaching. We do not know that all others have transgressed. It may be some have not but it makes no difference as to whether or not one is accounted worthy of eternal life.

We see three groups of people; the first group are the majority of mankind who know not God. They will live and die as do the animals and never come under God’s laws. (“Where there is no law there is no sin”). The second group who come to a knowledge of the gospel and realise they are destined to die because they are “in Adam” and reject the offer of becoming “in Christ” are liable to the second death having spurned God’s gracious offer of life eternal through Jesus sacrificial death. (These are considered to have



crucified Christ afresh – Hebrews 6:6). They are destined to die the “second death” (judicial death) because they choose to be “in Adam” and are concluded under the sin of Adam. The third group are those who are faithful to God and accounted worthy and so are accepted of Him; all their personal sins have been forgiven.

It may come as a surprise when I say that Jesus was not mortal (in the biblical sense) for you have assumed that if one is not mortal then he must therefore be immortal. However, Jesus is called the second (or last) Adam because He was placed in a similar position to the first Adam. The new life from God excluded Jesus from being concluded under the sin of Adam. Life is passed down from father to child; the mother giving the child nourishment for building a new body. The life is in the blood which is not derived from the mother’s blood but each child has his/her own new blood from within its body which is in no way connected to the mother’s blood. If it was then one could say that Jesus life was connected to Mary’s. It was not, but the life in Jesus blood was new life from God, free of the mortality which came upon Adam. Therefore a ‘free life.’

You say there are Three Condemnations and that: -

“the sin of Adam changed his relationship in three ways – Morally, Legally, and Physically. The first and second are the direct result of transgression, the third appears to be a curse that was added as a result of the first two.”

We see the first two as identical. God’s laws for mankind are moral laws (morally and legally the same thing); they are the commands requiring good moral behaviour. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.” Where is there a law of God given for man to live by which is not a moral law?

Then you see a third change as being physical which you say “appears to be a curse that was added as a result of the first two.” I have covered this earlier and feel no need to enlarge up on it. But I will say that the physical change due to knowingly breaking God’s law and being unrepentant is, or rather will be judicial death. I believe we have been given an instance of this death in the matter of Korah, Dathan and Abiram - Numbers 16:29-33, “If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the LORD hath not sent me. But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD. And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation.”

These people did not die the “common death of all men” and I believe it illustrates the judicial “second death.”

Human frailty. While we deny any physical effects upon the race brought about by Adam’s sin you conclude: -

“this leaves but one explanation for the weakness, feebleness, sickness, sorrow, and declination of healthy cellular activity in our bodies that humans experience, and that is that Adam was created either with these physical ills or at least was potentially able to digress into them by being denied access to the “tree of life”... and furthermore can you honestly describe this condition as “very good”?

In reply I would say it does not follow that Adam suffered these ills through being denied access to the tree of life, but because he was not protected from them. I believe the reason for all the ills that our race experiences is due to God leaving us to chance as we read in Ecclesiastes 9:11, “I returned, and saw under

the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.”

Having said that, I also believe that this calls for prayer so that the faithful are not left to “time and chance.” Genesis 1:31, “And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.” We cannot doubt this but it must be realised that all things were created very good for the purposes of God, and not that they were created to remain in such a state for all eternity.

Finally, “This mortal must put on immortality and this corruptible must put on incorruption” and then, like Jesus’ body, the bodies of the faithful will not be energised by life in the blood which is natural life (psuche) but by spirit life (zoe). Jesus blood in which was His natural psuche/life was shed on the cross and not given back. Jesus was raised in zoe/life. No other “change” is spoken of in Scripture for the faithful.

I believe I have answered your P.S. inasmuch as Jesus was related to the human race through Mary but His life (both psuche and zoe) came direct from His Father and not via Adam.

With love in Jesus. Russell Gregory

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## A Greater than John The Baptist

The statement contained in Matt. 11:11, seems to be but badly understood by many otherwise well acquainted with the teachings of the Spirit.

I do not attach the same importance to a proper solution of this passage as I would do to having a correct appreciation of the Nature and Mission of the Christ, or to being well instructed in the doctrine of the Resurrection, or the like.

Nevertheless, as “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God,” and is useful in some particular way, I believe it is impossible for the Scripture student to derive the proper benefit from a passage he does not comprehend the meaning of, and thus, I shall briefly state what I believe to be the proper solution to the passage referred to.

Jesus says, “Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist; notwithstanding he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he”

The most popular idea seems to be that the least in the Kingdom will be immortals, and as John was then but mortal, this would account for the difference.

But this does not seem good reasoning.

The passage seems to refer to parties then living, and the prophets of bygone years, “He that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven IS greater than he.”

In either case, if mortality or immortality was meant at that time or now, everyone alike is mortal; and in the Kingdom every approved one will be alike immortal.

Jesus was accrediting all honour to John, but, in so doing He spoke of a greater, and if among those born of women, there has not risen a greater than John, with that one exception, the exception is easily found.

John had sent his disciples to enquire of Jesus if He really was the Christ. Then, as on many other occasions, the answer of Christ was not direct. He gave them certain things to judge from and decide for themselves. Then He addressed Himself to the multitudes to whom He had been preaching the Gospel, some of whom had received it.

Not, certainly, that they were in actual possession of the Kingdom preached; but their acceptance constituted them heirs.

But, in general, the people would not give the attention to the message of the great Salvation, and Jesus shows them how they had slighted both Himself and John, and showed their culpability in refusing the greatest that ever appeared in human form.

In Matthew 12:41,42, Jesus says, “the men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold a greater than Jonas is here. The Queen of the South shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.”

They despised John the Baptist, and also a greater than John the Baptist is here – The Only Begotten Son of God.

But it might be asked, why could He be called the least in the Kingdom of God? I answer, the kingdom was only preached, and accepted or rejected, (not certainly set up); but among the few whom He had specially chosen as some of its aristocracy, He says (Luke 22:25-27), “The Kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them: and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so, but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as one that serveth.”

We have the idea well brought out in Philippians 2:7-11 where it is said, “He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore, God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is, above every name; that at the name of Jesus every, knee shall bow, of those in heaven and on earth, and under the earth: and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

John and all the prophets were born of woman and through Adam as their father were heirs of sin and death.

Jesus was also born of a woman but having God as His Father was “without sin,” and although “making Himself of no reputation,” and “becoming obedient unto death,” yet it was through His death that John, or the greatest of the prophets, could attain to life everlasting.

“He was rejected, and despised of men,” yet, although He was the stone rejected by the builders, was nevertheless, the foundation and chief corner stone of the House of God.

Much more might be added, but I think this will be sufficient to shew my meaning.

If anyone thinks he has sufficient reasons for dissent from my theory, these remarks may lead him to give others the benefit of his discovery; in the meantime, and until the contrary is proved, I will believe that the meaning of the passage in plain language would be, “Among them that are born of woman, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist; and, behold, a greater than John the Baptist is here,” as in the case of versos 41 and 42 of chapter 12 already referred to.

A.H.

## **Since by a Man came Death, by a Man came also the Resurrection of the Dead**

When people read St Paul's teaching on death and the resurrection of the dead, it is important to know which death he is talking about and which dead are the subjects that came by Jesus Christ for it is written that by His death and resurrection Jesus had become the first-fruits from the dead of many brethren. This is all that Apostle Paul is concerned with, that is, the dead in Christ who are alive unto God legally and morally but to be raised incorruptible.

In effect Paul is saying, 'For as all in Adam die they must have realised this fact and must be introduced into the death and resurrection of Christ in order to be raised incorruptible or made so at His coming as the case may demand.'

If people read correctly, Paul is saying that none "in Adam" at Christ's coming are made alive from the grave, only those who have died unto Sin and are alive unto God.

You may notice the difference Paul makes between being "in Adam" and being "in Christ" and this is by knowledge and enlightenment gained by a reading of the Word of God or being taught of God by His inspired teachers. The options are open for a person to leave the "in Adam" position to be qualified to be "in Christ;" you die unto the "old man" and rise in the "new" without any physical change in your nature but in character, yes.

"By man came death – the death by Adam's sin – not the death common to God's creation which first came, the physical.

First that which is natural, afterward that which is spiritual. 1 Corinthians 15.

Brother Phil Parry.

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## **COMMENTS RELATING TO THE SERPENT**

### **in Genesis chapter 5**

The role played by the serpent recorded in the above scripture has always been a subject for speculation, was it literal, or allegorical? There are difficulties with either of these two extremes in harmonising with other relative scriptures. If the literal view is taken we are faced with the unlikely phenomena of "a beast of the field" (verse 1) with apparent equal intelligence in conversation with the woman, but even if this were so, verse 6 intimates that the human pair were together at the time so why did it not address them both? We know that the lower animals have varying degrees of intelligence and some are able to mimic various spoken words but they are normally 'dumb' and devoid of the reasoning power invested in God's highest creation (man), they are not moral responsible creatures. Paul's reference in 1 Corinthians 11:5 lends no real credence to the literal view of the case because 'subtlety' is not limited to speech, it is a characteristic which can be manifested in actions and ways, which is only possible in the case of dumb creatures. Nevertheless, the presence of a literal serpent cannot be ruled out if any sense is to be made out of Eve's excuse "the serpent beguiled me" etc. Could she not have been deceived by what she saw the serpent do? It is quite common in countries where snakes abound to see them in trees where they have a vantage point in catching their prey, some also eat the vegetation. It is quite likely that our first parents had been tempted by the forbidden tree before that fateful day, because, to the natural mind that which is prohibited appears more attractive and arouses the curiosity more than that which is allowed. I therefore submit as a possible explanation that the serpent was in the tree 'touching it' (verse 5) and probably eating of its fruit, and the woman, noticing that no harm came to it by so doing, might she not have been emboldened to do likewise? The seeming conversation with the beast was nothing more than the reasonings of her

tempted mind - it would be as though the serpent had said 'thou shall not surely die' etc., although its part in the event was entirely passive, it was only doing that which came naturally to its kind, no outside tempter was necessary to cause the first sin. The testimony of the Apostle James was as true then as now (chap. 1 verse 15-15), 'enticement' comes in various ways - by what we see, hear, feel, etc. We do not take the 'conversation' between the Devil (Satan) and Christ in the wilderness temptation to be literal so why in the case of Eve? It was evidently auto-suggestion in both cases, though some may still favour the idea of a speaking serpent on the grounds that God caused Balaam's ass to speak (Numbers 22) but that was most certainly a miracle for the sole purpose of preventing the madness of the prophet 'who had been hired to curse Israel.' The only record in the Old Testament scripture and confirmed in the New Testament (2 Peter 2:15) of a dumb creature speaking in man's voice. 1 Timothy 2:14 states that "Adam was not deceived (presumably by the serpent) but the woman, being deceived was in the transgression." A possible reason why Eve was deceived could be her failure to take into account that the 'Tree' forbidden on pain of death applied only to them as morally responsible and not other creatures, so it follows that the subsequent curse on the serpent recorded in Genesis 3:14 must be understood in a figurative sense only, as the following verse is predictive and concerns mankind not a literal serpent and its seed, obviously. To sum up then, we may say that because the literal serpent was involved (however unwittingly) in the temptation and fall of man, God made it to be symbolic of sin and death, the 'enemy' destined to be finally destroyed.

Sister Evelyn Linggood.

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### **From Forum:- <http://groups.msn.com/TruthAlive>**

Continuing from our last Circular Letter, page 27:-

#### **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

**Steve Writes:** Russell, That appears to me to be a mixing of metaphors. It's one thing to speak about a 'debt' being forgiven, but to then mix this up with a capital punishment for a criminal offence would be to confuse the metaphors.

If we stick to the language of debts being paid then Jesus must have paid the debt to someone - if indeed He paid a debt. This is quite different from someone dying as a substitute in place of another for a crime.

Paul indeed uses a variety of metaphors from the marketplace, the slave trade, the law courts and the Temple, because no one analogy is adequate or complete in itself. But I don't think he mixes them in the way you are doing.

What is interesting to me is that Jesus rarely, almost never, spoke of His death as an 'atonement.' The Gospels record only one brief saying which possibly alludes to His death as an atonement - the 'ransom saying' of Mark 10:45 (parallel Matt 20:28), which may, or may not, be a reference to His death. Jesus' references during the last supper to His blood being shed to seal the new covenant is the language of covenants, not atonement. So it's actually doubtful whether Jesus ever referred to His own death as an atonement.

On the other hand, Jesus spoke frequently of God's forgiveness, His abundant generosity, and His graciousness. There is nothing in any of His parables, stories or sayings which suggests that a price of any kind had to be paid to secure God's forgiveness. The stories which refer to debts being forgiven all emphasise the undeserved kindness shown by the one forgiving the debt. If any debt was owed by Adam or

his descendants because of his sin or theirs, then the debt was owed to God. If Jesus death was to pay a debt then the debt must have been paid to God, and that would put God in the position of demanding the death of His own Son in order to satisfy a debt to Himself. Is that how you see it? The other alternative would be Anselm's satisfaction theory which had the debt being paid to the devil, which I personally think is absurd.

Your reference to a criminal paying for a crime with his own life is a completely different metaphor. If Jesus died as a substitute, taking our place for the crimes we have committed, then He suffered the punishment for our sins which was due. There is no need for forgiveness then, because the sentence has been carried out. We are free, not because we have been forgiven, but because someone else took our place.

As I see it, the only way we can understand forgiveness is to see it as a gracious act of God in NOT demanding payment or punishment for our sins. If we use the metaphor of a debt, then the debt is paid and is not forgiven. If we use the language of capital punishment then the sentence has been carried out and the guilty party has a substitute who dies in their place, but the crime is not forgiven. Neither of these analogies explain what actually happened: God chose to forgive our sins even though there was absolutely nothing we could do to merit or deserve His forgiveness, and even though it would be impossible for us to find a substitute who could suffer the punishment which our sins deserved.

As I see it, Jesus' death was a demonstration of how far God's love would go in order to save us, not what God demands in order to be satisfied.

With love in Jesus, Steve

**Edgar Wille writes:** Thank you Steve for your clear rebuttal of a view which misses the whole point of the gospel of God's free forgiveness, which takes place against a background of the loving, non violent exposure and denial of all that this "present evil age" stands for, as Jesus endured the full horror of sin's apparent triumph. In doing so he established a platform for a new creation based on the opposite mode of living to that which has and does prevail in human history.

We are dealing with realities not legalities of a God who has to be satisfied by not forgiving sinners but exacting a penalty in the person of a substitute who by not having a human father was in some way not heir to what Adam had started. Russell's theories are bad biology as well as bad theology. Many angles there are through which to view the cross, but as I see it, Russell's is not one of them.

With love in the Lord. Edgar

**Linda writes:** So, what about the future? What will happen to those people who deny Christ and commit sin? Will they be forgiven? We know God is a loving God. Will that love extend to them being given eternal life?

Love Linda

Quote: "If any debt was owed by Adam or his descendants because of his sin or theirs, then the debt was owed to God. If Jesus death was to pay a debt then the debt must have been paid to God, and that would put God in the position of demanding the death of His own Son in order to satisfy a debt to Himself. Is that how you see it?" - (Steve)

Dear Steve,

I'm pretty sure that Russell is going to say, no. In fact my understanding of what Russell is saying, is that it's pretty well far far away from the above.

Quote: "There is no need for forgiveness then, because the sentence has been carried out. We are free, not because we have been forgiven, but because someone else took our place."- (Steve)

I believe we do need to be forgiven and that the power of granting forgiveness has been assigned to Jesus Christ.

That's interesting that you say this... "The other alternative would be Anselm's satisfaction theory which had the debt being paid to the devil, which I personally think is absurd"- (Steve) - as I've been wondering about that myself. I've thought - debt paid, then who to?

I've been thinking along these lines - Adam lost his life to whom? - to sin I would have thought. Then I think about who took Jesus' life - sin/sinners. Any kind of "payment" was made to sin. Because we are talking in "earthly" ways about "heavenly" things, I would see Jesus descending "into sin" or into darkness but the darkness couldn't extinguish the light and with His rising, we ascend with Him. Jesus was taken by sin, but came out of it, and brought us.

Last year, Edgar asked what led me away from John James exposition of the atonement. I said (I remember this because it's something that I've been waiting for enlightenment on) that I'm still trying to reconcile what John says and what Russell says. I think I'm getting it finally, but will think on it a bit more first.

Love Linda

**Russell writes:** Dear Steve, (re. your post 54): In the one illustration I showed that when a debt is paid it can still be forgiven because the debt was paid by a third party and it is the third party who forgives. I hold to this view as being common sense and believe that to deny it is deny what Jesus has done for us.

You then asked to whom the debt was paid and I said to no one and then gave an illustration as to how this could be.

I believe the confusion arises between payment of the debt owed by Adam which was voluntarily paid by Jesus (not demanded by God), and Jesus forgiveness of the faithful. So debt being paid is one matter; forgiveness of debt is another matter, though of course the two are related.

You say that "If we stick to the language of debts being paid then Jesus must have paid the debt to someone." Well, I'm not an inspired writer so perhaps I should not have attempted to do something which neither Paul nor Peter did.

When writing his Epistle, (1 Peter 1:18,19), Peter said we have been "redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." He does not say to whom the redemption price (Jesus' blood) was paid. And again in 2 Peter 2:1, "But there were false prophets... even denying the Lord that bought them" but again Peter does not say to whom the purchase price was paid.

When writing to the Ephesians (1:14), Paul said, "Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession" without mention of a recipient of the redemption price.

And in Acts 20:28 Paul says "feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" without saying to whom His blood was paid.

So, did Jesus pay a price? If so to whom was it paid? I believe my illustration of how a debt can be paid even though no one receives the payment is still valid. If you say Paul and Peter are using metaphors then you have Jesus dying for a metaphor.

In your last sentence you say "As I see it, Jesus' death was a demonstration of how far God's love would go in order to save us" – and this looks to me very much like a demand by God for Jesus to lay down His life for us.

With Love in Jesus. Russell.

**Edgar Writes:** Dear Russell, Some of us sincerely believe that your view of debts which have to be paid and legal situations that have to be righted, is a serious devaluation of what you rightly call a precious act by Jesus on Calvary.

Therefore I for one will always oppose your view as a corruption of the gospel. Many Christians whom I recognise as my brothers and sisters in Christ hold views which are at least confused and non the less corrupt because of that. So I am not denying your brotherhood in Christ because I believe you diminish the meaning of the cross, but I will resist the view by which you are corrupting the gospel. And if that is being unpleasant so be it - because the gospel is more precious than whether we are pleasant or not.

But even if we say hard things, because of the preciousness we perceive as being spoilt, it is love of Jesus and love of our brethren and sisters that causes us to resist your teaching which we regard as grievous error. I will happily see your promulgation of your views depart from this forum, as it is to me a gospel harming error. You are running a campaign for the views of the Nazarene Fellowship of ex Christadelphians. And you can't expect that everyone is going to blandly remain quiet under this attack, however nicely you express it and although your Christian sincerity is fully recognised.

With continuing love in Christ. Edgar.

**Linda writes:** Quote: "I will happily see your promulgation of your views depart from this forum, as it is to me a gospel harming error."- (Edgar)

Chilling! Edgar, I thought you were against fundamentalism, in all its ghastly forms.

I would not be at all happy to see Russell depart from this forum - Russell has as much right to be on this group as do you or anyone else.

I must say I am truly gob-smacked as to why you or anyone should say this. All I can see so far is people misrepresenting what Russell says, and then proceeding to try to decimate an argument he didn't make in the first place.

Also Edgar, you use a lot of "we's" – Quote: "But even if *we* say hard things, because of the preciousness *we* perceive as being spoilt"- (Edgar). This is just a strategy, to make another person feel isolated while "showing" one's own majority. Yuk.

Quote: "And if that is being unpleasant so be it - because the gospel is more precious than whether we are pleasant or not."- (Edgar). Finally, I must say, I've heard that lots of times before - kind of a "disclaimer" before someone writes/says/does something nasty - all in the name of God and for the sake of the gospel.

It takes my mind back to last year when I was verbally abused on this list by those who were "refuting" my "error." Ironically, they claimed to be on the side of grace while declaring me to be legalist because of holding Nazarene views.

"All men shall know you are my disciples if you love one another" - Jesus Christ. I see this as non-negotiable - law if you like. "If you love me you will obey me." Oftentimes we fail, but if we believe we are meant to love one another and if we pray for strength, then God will give it, because He doesn't give His children "a scorpion when they ask for an egg." God promises to give His Holy Spirit to those who ask Him.

I really hope and pray that this discussion will take a turn for good - we all believe that Jesus Christ died for our sins and that without Him, we have no hope. That makes us Christians together and Jesus says we should love one another.

Love to All, Linda.

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Sadly this forum 'thread' became 'a strife about words' and so ended. Russell.



## Middle East News items from Internet sources

1.) Israel today is surely the most extraordinary country in then world. In spite of a costly war, the experiencing constant terror attacks, a string of political scandals and a land almost devoid of natural resources only in Israel could this be the backdrop for the most impressive economic success story of the modern Middle East. Despite the war with Lebanon, 2006 was a golden year for the economy of the region's only liberal democracy. GDP (Gross domestic product) grew by 5.1 per cent, competitiveness improved sharply and the stock market surged. Israel came fifteenth in the World Economic Forum's global competitive index and top in the list of Middle East states. Its nearest regional rival, the United Arab Emirates, came 32nd. In recent years, the small state of Israel has turned itself into a "world technology powerhouse." One firm in particular has become a symbol of Israel's strength in research and development-heavy industry: Iscar, the world's second-largest maker of cutting tools. Tool factories are expected to be dirty, but Iscar is different. All the floors are painted bright yellow, which staff are keen to keep clean and all tools are put away when not in use; these things have increased the quality of workmanship. The plant is run at night by one person, from home, via their computer.

2.) Since Hamas took over the Gaza Strip in June there has been a marked increase in the smuggling of arms and tons of dynamite across the Egyptian border due to the inactivity of Egypt to prevent it and while the population of Gaza blames Hamas for their dire economic conditions Hamas do not care and their successes have only encouraged them to carry out more and greater attacks on Israel whom they have every intention of destroying whatever the cost to themselves. Its terror policy at present is limited to firing about 50 rockets and mortar shells a week into Israel though this has increased to 50 today, the 26<sup>th</sup> September as I am writing this.

3.) Recent delivery of Russian anti-ship missiles to Iran has concerned Israel. These are the latest supersonic missiles with a range of about two hundred miles. They fly about 5 feet only above the sea and are extremely hard to intercept. The concern is that if Iran has them then so too will Syria and Lebanon and it is only a matter of time before they are used against Israeli ships. Russia is establishing a navel base in Tartus in Syria and redeploying its fleet from Sevastopol and so exercising its military might within the Mediterranean area. Also Russia has plans to deploy its latest air-defence system to protect its base which will be manned by Russian servicemen rather than by Syrian forces. This system will provide defence protection for Syria. Moscow and Damascus have also reached an agreement to modernize Syria's anti-aircraft network by upgrading medium-range S-125 missile complexes that were sold to Syria in the 1980s.

4.) On July 23<sup>rd</sup>, while working in a factory created specifically for the purposes of modifying ballistic missiles to carry chemical payloads, many Syrian and Iranian engineers and personnel were killed when a team were attempting to mount a chemical warhead on a scud missile when it exploded spreading lethal chemical agents.

It has been known since early this year that North Koreans have been in Syria working on a nuclear facility and Israel has been watching very closely. Apparently Israeli's secret forces had seized nuclear material from the Syrian installation and gave proof to the US that the material was "nuclear related and of North Korean origin" before the bombing of the site by Israeli air-force planes on September 6<sup>th</sup>. The site is said to have been completely destroyed.

A week after the bombing, in a warning statement, a spokesman for Iran said that "Six hundred Iranian missiles are pointed at Israel and will be launched if either Iran or Syria are attacked."

5.) On Sep 25, Iran's President Ahmadinejad used his speech to the United Nations General Assembly unveil a vision of a world without Israel, in which America and Europe would be freed of what he said was Zionist oppression. Culminating a concerted assault on what he described as the injustices and oppressions practiced by the "big powers" since World War II, he said that the ungodly era of lewdness and violence was coming to a close and that "the age of monotheism has commenced..." the world was "nearing the sunset of the time of empires," and he urged the dominant world powers to shun their "obedience to Satan" and "submit to the will of god." If they did so, "they will be saved." If not, "calamities will befall them." But whether or not these powers chose to reform themselves, the day was fast approaching when "occupied lands

will be freed. Palestine and Iraq will be liberated from the domination of the occupiers.” And the people of America and Europe would be liberated from Zionist oppression. “This is the promise of god,” he said. “Therefore it will be fulfilled.”

6.) Since Mr. Sarkozy came to power in May, France has hardened its attitude towards Iran. In a speech last month to French ambassadors, the new French leader said that the world faced a “catastrophic choice” between “an Iranian bomb or the bombardment of Iran.” Sarkozy implies letting Iran go nuclear could lead to war. French President Nicolas Sarkozy said on Tuesday the international standoff over Iran’s nuclear program will only be resolved with a combination of “firmness and dialogue,” and that appeasement may only lead to war. Sarkozy, addressing the UN General Assembly for the first time since becoming president in May, said allowing Iran to arm itself with nuclear weapons would be an “unacceptable risk to stability in the region and in the world.” “Weakness and renunciation do not lead to peace. They lead to war,” he declared. “There will not be peace in the world if the international community falters in the face of the proliferation of nuclear arms.”

In related news, the US Congress moved quickly to signal its disapproval of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, calling for tighter sanctions against his government and designation of his military as a terrorist group. The swift rebuke was a rare display of bipartisan cooperation in a Congress bitterly divided on the Iraq war. It reflected lawmakers’ long-held nervousness surrounding Tehran’s aggression in the region, particularly toward Israel - a sentiment fuelled by the pro-Israeli lobby in Congress whose influence reaches across party lines. “Iran faces a choice between a very big carrot and a very sharp stick,” said Tom Lantos, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. “It is my hope that they will take the carrot. But today, we are putting the stick in place.” The House passed, by a 397-16 vote, a proposal by Lantos, a Democrat, aimed at blocking foreign investment in Iran, in particular its lucrative energy sector. The bill would specifically bar the president from waiving US sanctions.

7.) The goal of the moderate Palestinian leaders is that there should be a comprehensive peace with Israel based on the two-state solution and have stated that “The peace we are seeking must be based on all the UN resolutions pertaining to the Israeli-Arab conflict; the peace plan of 2002 - the road map vision of two states which will lead to ending the Israeli occupation of all territories that were occupied in 1967.

In the Middle East Summit meeting planned for October/November the Palestinians have said they would like to see as many Arab countries as possible present - including Syria and Lebanon but warned that they “won’t accept any attempt to mess around with the tracks.” The officials said that this “broad support” could be gained if countries such as Qatar, Oman, Kuwait and Morocco attended. Their participation would be a clear statement to Hamas that its extreme positions did not have broad Arab support.

The Democratic Party Chairman, Yossi Beilin warned that failure of the Middle East peace conference would be “the end of the world.” He told The Associated Press that he discussed the peace conference with Israeli Prime Minister Olmert during which he told Olmert, “If you fail, it’s the end of the world right now. You can’t fail. The responsibility you have on your shoulders now to succeed is very, very, very big.” He also warned that a vague statement at the end of the conference would be disastrous, propping up the Islamic militant group Hamas and undermining moderates like Abbas. If that happens, he said, the results would be “that Hamas will be stronger, that violence will erupt, that hopes will not be there any more.”

All these things seem a far cry from the time when “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.” - Isaiah 11:9 – yet may that time quickly come.

Russell.