

The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No 228

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Editorial

Dear Brethren, Sisters and friends, A few months ago I was sent, anonymously, a copy of the Editorial of the Christadelphian magazine for last June. For the most part the editor, Michael Ashton, deals with the matter of when did Jesus become the Son of God? Although every Sunday School pupil learns early on that Jesus was the only begotten Son of God, the editor expends a thousand words in order to show this is so.

However, in the course of his remarks Michael claims that,

“Another view describes Jesus as ‘merely man,’ and in the early years of the brotherhood this teaching was resisted whenever it surfaced.”

The Editor is of course alluding to Edward Turney, but it is misplaced criticism for such a view was never believed or taught by Edward Turney, nor by The Nazarene Fellowship; in fact such a view was never described by anyone but was a product of the fruitful imagination of Robert Roberts when trying to oppose Edward Turney. Robert Roberts comment can be found early on in his booklet “The Slain Lamb” where he wrote, “The Renunciationist heresy makes Him a mere man.” By referring to their archives the Christadelphian Office continue to perpetuate falsehoods and conceal actual events.

We say that the word “mere” is not a suitable adjective to use regarding Jesus whether one is referring to his flesh or His character.

But just listen to what Michael Ashton says of Jesus in answer to his own question “What then about the title “Son of God.” He answers:-

“Like His mother Mary He was of human lineage, and therefore Son of Man even though He was Son of God. Are these therefore the “two natures” that are sometimes discussed? So far as the Lord's nature was concerned, He was a man, descended from our first parents as we all are.”

Should anyone wish to make Jesus a “mere man” how better could he express his view than to say “Jesus was a man, descended from our first parents as we all are”?

This surely cannot have any truth in it and it is difficult to follow such reasoning, especially as it contradicts Dr Thomas who wrote “His germination was irrespective of the lust of the flesh. In this particular the germination of Jesus was different from that of all other men. If Joseph had been his father, He would have been born of blood of the will of the flesh, and of man, instead of the Spirit. He would have

been son of man only, and not Son of God.” It seems that rather than such a “teaching” being “resisted whenever it surfaced,” Michael Ashton now wants to promulgate the view that Jesus was a “mere man - as we all are.”

However, the human race, apart from Jesus, is descended from Adam but Jesus was begotten of God which sets Him apart in a unique way. The Bible tells us that the life is in the blood - Leviticus 17:11-14, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood... For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof... for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof.”

The egg in the womb counts for nothing without being given life by the father. In the case of Mary it was God who gave life to Jesus hence Mary said “How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”

So while Adam received his life from God by creation and in this way is said to be the son of God, Jesus uniquely received His life direct from God through being conceived in the womb of Mary and became the “second Adam” - 1 Corinthians 15:47. “The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven.”

Sadly, after saying “So far as the Lord’s nature was concerned, He was a man, descended from our first parents as we all are” the Editor makes things worse when he goes on to say:

“The title “Son of God” does not therefore describe Jesus nature but his standing or status, just as a modern prince is both a man with human nature, and receives due respect because he is the monarch’s son. This was recognised in the Lord’s parable, when the husbandmen saw the son coming to receive the fruits from the vineyard: “They said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance” (Matthew 21:38).”

No, the title “Son of God” means exactly what it says, Jesus truly was God’s only begotten Son “that holy Thing” born of Mary and thus He was heir to all the great and precious promises. The parable of the husbandman reveals the Son’s mission in dying to save those who have faith in whom He is - John 17:3, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”

The Editor denigrates Jesus to the status of a mere man and compares Him to a modern prince who is a mere man. He then confuses the matter by saying: “Because He was God’s Son, Jesus was heir of all the great and precious promises.” How can he justify his claim that Jesus is heir to all the great and precious promises when he has denied His literal Sonship by saying He is descended from Adam as we all are?

Michael Ashton further makes the claim that,

“Christadelphians have uniquely answered the apparent difficulties raised by these discussions about the Lord’s position by recognising that Jesus, born to Mary as a member of the human race, completely represented and manifested His Father to mankind.”

“Christadelphians have uniquely answered the apparent difficulties”! One does well not to boast!

But to give credit where we can, the unsurpassed statement of the editorial was: “Creeds and human statements all contain inherent weaknesses, because they are framed by frail, earth-bound beings.” The editor should be applauded for this thought and it is to be hoped that one day the Christadelphians will acknowledge its worth.

Love in Jesus to all brethren, sisters and friends. Russell Gregory

1 Peter 4: 1. "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God."

The Inspired Word of God as Recorded by the Prophets of Israel and Preached by Jesus and His appointed Teachers.

I have heard it said that the Bible known as the Old Testament and the New Testament is the most numerous of books to have been printed and the least read. The former, I think, has been equalled if not outnumbered through the Islamic and Muslim influence which so-called Christians are asked to tolerate; a great mistake Israel made when coming out of Egyptian bondage. Israel was meant to learn a great lesson through the blood of the unspotted, unblemished slain lamb sprinkled on the lintel and side-posts of their doors to be saved from inflicted death when the Angel of death passed over and from then on it was called "The Passover;" its antitype fulfilled in the death of Jesus, as said the Apostle – "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." (1 Corinthians 5:7).

If the Bible is the least read why should people in the general sense think they have a right to the salvation and the many benefits offered on its pages under certain conditions and ignore those conditions? The apostle said, Whatsoever was written aforetime was written for our admonition and learning upon whom is come the end of the world (or age) i.e. the Mosaic. (Romans 15). People are meant to learn from the Old Testament and the admonition it contains in order to understand the New Testament and that Jesus died for all, and they make the word "all" of none effect by ignoring the conditions associated with the sacrifice Jesus made.

I mentioned about toleration, and the mistake Israel made. The surrounding nations had turned to idolatrous practices and would have been a snare to Israel's true worship of the God of Abraham in making them to be a holy and peculiar people unto Him. The only cure seemed to be the destruction of these idolatrous nations having ignored the lesson of the flood and of Sodom to the effect that God commanded Israel to annihilate them in preparation for a Kingdom of Righteousness but instead of obedience Israel did what the rulers of England are telling people to do in respect of false doctrine and beliefs and ignore the doctrine of One God, one Faith, one Baptism taught by Jesus and especially Paul whom Jesus appointed to preach to the Gentiles. Incidentally, Muslims do not, to their credit, believe in The Trinity, so you can imagine what is needed to abolish this idea of toleration of the Faith as they falsely term it while love ones neighbours and human beings can still exist without the carnal weapons of warfare.

Ah, but this must be the Kingdom of God. Amen.

True, but as Jesus said, the ultimate Kingdom of God over all the kingdoms of this world, cometh not with observation when they shall say "lo, here or lo, there but the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21). This is what Paul means when he says, "The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink but love, righteousness and joy in the Holy Spirit." (Romans 14:17). The true Gospel involves all the above mentioned and is based on belief and faith on which the longsuffering of God is waiting until the final effort to preach it again as "The Everlasting Gospel" the same original Gospel and not a perversion of it.

While those who at present preach this true Gospel and are ignored, it will then be preached with greater power and authority as declared in Revelation 10:6-11.

John saw an angel come down from heaven having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth. (Revelation 14:6). John was also told that he must preach again before nations and tongues and when there was time no longer the mystery of God would be finished. (Revelation 10). What is this mystery? St Paul said to the Ephesians that the mystery of God had been hid through the ages but had been revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets in these last times and I gather from Paul's epistle that it involved the failure of Israel in remaining a unique and holy people separated unto God and thus making it necessary to justify God in calling in the Gentiles to their former state when Abram as a Gentile of Chaldea exhibited great faith the sacrifice Jesus made for all still valid through faith.

I believe there is an important matter we must accept as declared by St Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:22 and we who are called Nazarene profess to preach the same. “For the Jews require a sign and the Greeks seek after wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified; unto the Jews a stumbling block and unto the Greeks foolishness, but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”

In order to preach Christ crucified we must fully understand why and how it relates to salvation and eternal life and I know Nazarenes without boasting are sure of their ground.

Phil Parry 16.10.2007.

Appendix

The fulfilling of Jeremiah 31:31, Hebrews 8:10, 1 Peter 2:9-10 began on Calvary. See Romans 9:6.

As a Christadelphian about 60 years ago the topic and the lectures centred around the Jews and the Promised Land to Abraham and his seed. But another seed was mentioned before Abram even existed; the seed of the woman to which Adam made no contribution other than bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh her seed being of no value if unfertilized to produce. Therefore when they twain become one flesh the woman's seed is independent as medical science will prove. None can prove from the Holy Scriptures that Eve and her female descendants had condemned flesh nor sinful flesh, neither did Adam. Condemnation is a legal matter not by fleshly descent. Listen to St Paul – 1 Corinthians 11:11, “Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man in the Lord. Verse 12, For as the woman is of the man, even so also is the man by the woman; but all things of God.”

How important those last five words of Paul in relation to the seed and the birth of Jesus. It is notable that the angel's message to Mary firstly was that He would be called the Son of the Highest, His father David by virtue of Mary who was of the seed of David according to the flesh of which, I add, there was no condemnation. “How can this (conception) be” said Mary, “seeing I know not a man?” The angel's answer was “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Highest shall, overshadow thee: therefore that Holy Thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” Adam by creation was styled the son of God; there was no difference in flesh and blood of Adam than with that of Jesus, both were related to their Creator and of one blood. See Acts 17:26,27. Paul does not speak of change of nature from the time of Adam he only implies alienation from God through certain circumstances which arose through Adam's transgression, the long suffering of God waiting to find Him and feel after Him – all contained in the apostles' words to the Athenians.

Scripture denotes two ways in which to describe Jesus; Son of God flesh and blood birth of Mary corruptible or capable of dying; and Son of God with power by resurrection from the dead; in physical nature and spirit He was Son of God from birth and also the first-born from the dead of many brethren. When Seth is mentioned in the genealogy as son of Adam in order falsely to make Jesus a son of Adam through Seth the fact is overlooked that Adam was an adopted son of God when Seth was born and we find that all who followed the example of Abel, Seth, Enoch etc. were called sons of God by faith in the blood of the lamb in Eden foreshadowing Jesus but many left the way of life and took to themselves the daughters of men and consequently the flood destroyed them; Noah and his family saved by faith. In his epistle John says “Beloved now are we the sons of God” and he implies that as long as we retain our relationship a superior change of nature will be ours to see Him as He is.

At the beginning of this appendix I remarked on the general Christadelphian focus on the Jews after the flesh and their presence in the Promised Land being necessary for the establishment of the Kingdom of God to be the subjects of that kingdom, but ignoring the fact that the present believers out of Adam and in Christ are the real subjects of the Kingdom. Their mistaken view emanates from the question of the disciples of Jesus “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” Jesus neither answered yes or no; how could He?

The Kingdom of Israel was not the Kingdom of God; it was divided and corrupt in many ways with good kings and evil kings after the time that God declared to the prophet Samuel when they asked for a king

to reign over them like other nations, “Samuel... they have not rejected thee but me that I should not reign over them.”

Yet for all this, a Christadelphian lecturer said, “The kingdom of God is the kingdom of Israel restored” – such a flimsy statement based on that question put to Jesus by the disciples. Did Saul, David, Solomon or any of the kings of Israel reign over all the earth?

The kingdoms of this world will become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, a righteous and glorious Kingdom, therefore as Jesus taught His disciples, “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on the earth as it is in heaven.” Amen

Brother Phil Parry 30.10.2007

Ps. To my brethren, sisters, friends and readers of the Circular Letters, may the Lord increase your understanding in the patient waiting for Christ.

Exhortation

MY GUIDE

Through the glades and meadows green,
And through the forest sheen,
My guide I cannot see,
For He has gone ahead to scout for me.
When my path is full of brier and stone,
It's then I know I'm not alone,
It's then His voice I clearly hear,
Prompting me to persevere.
And when I reach the higher ground,
I have no doubt that He's around,
For it is then our souls transcend,
And we commune as friend to friend.

All true Christians take comfort and courage from the words of Paul in Romans 8:28 when he writes, “we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose,” and I suppose we realise in all the issues of life and our varying experiences there is a lesson to be learnt, if only our minds are exercised thereby. This may apply perhaps only to the things that loom so large upon our own horizon those vital decisions we have to make at times, those trials and sorrows which bring sadness and grief and from which we cannot escape. Yet so many things can happen which pass unheeded, perhaps through lack of concentration or just familiarity. This I suppose is so often the case where housewives are concerned. A sister who is wife and mother has so many duties to perform – cooking for the physical needs of her family, washing, mending, cleaning, and shopping and the important feeding on the Word of God, so necessary for spiritual sustenance - all calling for her constant attention, and the days seem hardly long enough at times to pull all things into place. Added to this perhaps a visitor arrives or a caller at the door who will not be said ‘nay,’ and she finds it difficult to dispose of such without being rude - and just when busy preparing dinner. So she returns at last perhaps to finish peeling the potatoes, flurried and anxious. The children and husband will be home and now the meal will be late, and this thought together maybe with her aching fingers is all that can occupy her mind. Yet in less trying moments perhaps, a remembrance of life's true values would help to find peace in the daily round. As one writer put it:-

Although I must have ‘Martha’ hands, I have a ‘Mary’ mind,
and when I black the boots, I try Thy sandals, Lord, to find.
I think of how they trod on earth, what time I scrub the floor,
accept this meditation when I haven't time for more!

Remind me of the things I need - not just to save the stairs,
but so that I may perfectly lay tables, into prayers.
Warm all the kitchen with Thy love and light it with Thy peace,
forgive the worrying, and make the grumbling words to cease.
Lord who laid breakfast on the shore, forgive the world which saith,
can any good thing come to God, out of poor Nazareth?

So in the simple task of preparing vegetables for the family meal, what can we find to help us in the development of characters worthy of God's children? A bowl of potatoes all shapes and sizes, some smooth, some rough. Some of the former are easy to prepare and very soon ready for the pan, but oh! the latter, how long they take: a crevasse here difficult to probe, a black spot there needs cutting out and sometimes there is very little left when all that is superfluous or unfit for consumption has been removed, for all must be clean and wholesome for the family needs. We think of the family of God and how these simple things can have a lesson if applied to us in our relationship to the things of the One who has called us with a holy calling. We to, must be clean to be fit for the Masters use, and even the lowliest and the sinner can be made so in His sight if we are pliable in His hands. Unfit we may have been, but His mercy and love provided the means whereby we have been cleansed with the washing of water by the Word. (Ephesians 5:26). We may need a lot of pruning to remove the blemishes, and this can be a very painful process. We may need the Master Surgeons knife to remove the canker of bitterness, envy and jealousy which perhaps is not always obvious to those with whom we come into contact. Yet nothing is hid from the Lord of heaven and earth, for He says through the prophet Jeremiah, "I the Lord search the heart," and again in Samuel, "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance but the Lord looketh on the heart." Perhaps we have been stubborn, proud, and like Israel of old sometimes rebellious, and the way of the Lord may mean much self-denial, but the Lord who bought us, did so with His own life's blood, after years of self-denial and loving service in complete obedience to the Fathers Will. If our vision is restricted and we lack understanding, our God will teach us in the right way if we seek humbly, for He is merciful and long suffering, not willing that any should perish. He gave His only beloved Son that all who would follow His example might have everlasting life. God is the Saviour of all men. Christ the head of the Church. He gave Himself for it that He might sanctify and cleanse it, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish that He might present it to Himself a glorious church. These are the days of preparation for us. We may not be called upon to do great things remember Naaman, captain of the host of Assyria, to whom the prophet Elisha said, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thou shalt be clean," Naaman was proud and went away in wrath saying, "I thought he would surely come out to me call on the name of the Lord his God and strike his hand over the place and recover the leper." "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing wouldest thou not have done it, asked his servant." Oh! How vain is man! and all such must be humbled to be acceptable to God the creator of the universe, for He says through the prophet Isaiah, "to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and that trembleth at my word." (Isaiah 66:2). Let us then humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, that we may, in His mercy, be exalted in due time.

by our late sister Minnie Allen.

In October I placed Brother Ernest Brady's article, "The Gospel as we Understand it" on the "Truth Alive" forum.

Here are the responses: -

Robin Todd writes:

Russell, I appreciate how you are on a continual quest to more accurately understand your beliefs and put them down on paper succinctly. We all need to be doing that and tweaking it as we come to understand things a bit differently. Like you, it is important to me to know what I believe and why, and then to be able to explain it to others (and myself) in as succinct a way as possible. I applaud your efforts in this regard

In terms of the content of the beliefs as you have stated them here, I also appreciate two specific comments; the one about man remaining very good, and also the one about human nature in itself not being defective. It is important going into any topic, that the premise be correct. The idea that man is intrinsically good in his essential being is absolutely necessary in order to carry on a good discussion of what is going on with humanity, its problems, and solutions to its current condition.

That being said, I think that you, along with the orthodox Christian church in general, have made a pivotal, foundational mistake in saying that God placed Adam under law from the get-go. It is exactly that belief that has been paradigmatic for so much of the false doctrine that has come out of traditional Christianity, in my view. It is definitely not the view of the New Testament writers. In fact, the New Testament has nothing good to say about the law when it comes to putting human beings under it.

What I do find is that Adam and Eve, prior to the deception, were in a relationship of rest with the Creator. This term has no place in legal definitions of law-keeping. Rest is associated with believing in the covenant promise of God, and is associated with disobedience only as it refers to not believing in the covenantal promise. It is a term that speaks of a faith that is not of works (Paul says that faith is not of works, in Galatians). As with any newly created child, the parent/child relationship is not based on law, but on trust in the parent's acceptance and love for the child's essential being, which by the way is good yet imperfect. Adam and Eve's mistake was to allow a definition of God to be one primarily of a perfect law-keeping being, and to think their acceptance was also based on being like Him in that regard. They put themselves under law, and that was their downfall into unhealthy shame and the behaviours that came out of that. God has been dealing with the fallout of that ever since. The strength of sin is the law (1 Corinthians 15:56). Romans 6:14 also says that sin has dominion over people precisely because they are under a law system (which is more than just Mosaic, it is a global system of legal justification methodology).

The first step out of this captivity to sin under the legal system, is to hear the message that God shouted out from the cross. He alone justifies for the reasons He chooses; and he never, ever, condemned his children for being incomplete and imperfect...that is a part of the original deception. This message through the blood of Jesus completely drains the legal system of all its power to condemn. Our Father is primarily a merciful God; patient, kind, and longsuffering toward his children. He is not to be characterized primarily as some kind of supreme court judge looking for perfect law-abiding kids. We put him in that role and it is wrong. Is he the Judge? Certainly. But this is not the place from which to begin our understanding of the relationship. Doing so has caused nothing but dysfunctional behaviour that just gets worse from one generation to another.

The justice and righteousness of God is not defined by law, but by covenant promise. It is a righteousness of faith first defined in Genesis regarding the faith of Abraham. And Paul elaborates on this in the new testament as being diametrically opposite of a legal system of works

Law working through humans has always been a problem, simply because we weren't designed to have a relationship with our Father based on that; nor were we designed to grow to spiritual maturity that way. The legal definitions you have applied to religion (in this case Christianity) are the very things that hold us captive to sin and death. We must look beyond our self-imposed matrix and get the answers we seek from Jesus and the apostles without misinterpreting their sayings by continuing to read them through the tinted glasses of the system we are immersed in

I hope the Nazarene Fellowship will re-examine the position as you have laid it out here. Thank you

Robin Todd

Russell writes:

Dear Robin, Thank you for your message No.3, but I must start with an apology. I failed to put the author's name at the end of the article and it looked as though I had written it. I wish I had, but the article was not mine. I wish it was because it expresses my understanding 100%. I only wish I could write so well but the

author was Ernest Brady and he wrote it about 50 years ago. It was my mistake not putting his name at the end of the article. I'm sorry.

I do not accept your criticism regarding the laws which God has introduced from time to time. God is love and all He has done is through His love for mankind. The laws He has introduced are for man's benefit. The first law was quite simple for the benefit of an inexperienced couple – 'Thou shalt not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.' This was not a difficult law for Adam and Eve to keep and failure to keep it was their fault. They knew the penalty was that they should die the very day they ate of it, but unknown to them, God had already prepared a new covenant. In His loving kindness and mercy He spared their lives and allowed them to live out their natural life span, which for Adam was 930 years, under different conditions. No longer in the protected environment of Eden but in a more unfriendly world and no longer in close relationship to God and the angelic host. It is quite evident that they were commanded to offer suitable sacrifices as witnessed by Cain and Abel. Cain's offering was rejected because he failed through lack of faith to keep the law or commandment as instructed.

Loving parents bring up their children with gentle but firm discipline and guidance. Their children learn what is right and what is wrong and as they grow in ability so they have to learn to observe new rules and regulations. They also discover the consequences of breaking them. It is the same with ourselves and our heavenly Father. His laws are for our good and we read that sin is transgression of law. If we are not under law we cannot sin. Those who break the law can be forgiven if they seek forgiveness in the appointed way. Those who knowingly break the law and do not seek forgiveness in the appointed way are subject to the second death. Those not under law die without law, having no hope and without God in the world. This divides all mankind into three groups and all live by the grace of God. All who would serve God live also under law. God's grace does not do away with the need for law. Adam was spared his life by the grace of God and our life is the extension of Adam's life having been passed down throughout the generations. Therefore we are under the same grace. Jesus of course being the exception, and He did not live under grace but by keeping the law perfectly. But as this introduces another aspect of our salvation I will not say any more here.

The covenants introduced by God through His loving kindness were/are for those under law. They were promises made by God for those who serve Him faithfully whatever dispensation they lived/live under.

Paul in writing to the Galatians explains how that "man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ... that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified."

No one can be justified by keeping the law because we are all under the law of sin and death and even keeping the law perfectly cannot save us. The law is there to show that God is supreme and we can only receive His blessing by showing our faith in Him trusting in His Loving kindness and mercies. Those in Jesus are no longer under the law of sin and death but under that law of the spirit of life.

From this I am sure you will see that God is not like a Supreme Court Judge looking for perfect law-abiding kids but rather that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already..."

With Love in Jesus. Russell.

Robin Todd writes:

Russell, You said that there is there can be no sin without law to transgress, since "sin is the transgression of the law". The better translation is "sin is lawlessness". Romans 5 tells us that sin and righteousness both exist even in the absence of law. However, the same chapter also tells us that sin is not accounted where there is not law, and vice versa.

Yes, children grow up with laws and regulations. That's not my point. God is not primarily to be equated with law or law-keeping. He is a loving Father who accepted Adam and Eve as the incomplete and imperfect human beings they were. The relationship basis was not law-keeping, to say nothing for perfect law-keeping. They were simply in a condition of rest with the Father and lessons would be learned from that place. The mistake they made was to accept the deception that God was to be defined primarily as a law abiding being, and that their acceptance and receiving the promises would be based on their being like God in that sense, as well.

The world has been in a legalistic, justification by performance ever since. The laws God has given have been the best that humanity could ever have under this system. However, the reality for God is, he never justified them on the basis of their obedience to laws or rules or regulations. In other words, their essential nature was good in God's sight even though incomplete and imperfect. The kids were okay with their nakedness because they knew Dad was okay with it. And Dad has been okay with it ever since. It is simply our perception that has changed and that has caused us to be quite dysfunctional. Living under a justification by law system does that to humans.

So, from the cross God shouts to us that he never has condemned us for being imperfect humans. He justifies us because He's our Father and He loves and accepts us that way. From that starting place, we can now go forward. Jesus embraced his 100% humanity in the trust of His Father's love for him. That empowered him to move forward in a life of continual obedience.....he was the first fully realized human being. The rest of us have not experienced what it's like to be human yet because we won't accept our humanness nor will we (through our false religion) understand that God accepts it. In fact, for the most part, we can't even let Jesus be human (no coincidence given the religious climate we live in).

My point is, God did not need Jesus' sacrifice to forgive us....we needed it in order to hear and understand how He thinks of us and feels toward us. If we are under this grace (it's our choice), sin will have no dominion over us because we are not under law. The power of sin is the law. We've got to abandon these legal definitions in order to break free of sin

Robin Todd

Russell writes:

Dear Robin, I accept the translation "sin is lawlessness" and that in Romans 5 Paul tells us that "sin is not imputed where there is no law." We ought to be aware that there are five 'deaths' spoken of in Scripture and know to which we are referring.

The wages of sin is death because sin is transgression of law. This is not natural death but inflicted death, a death without hope, perishing in death, often referred to as the second death.

Of course God is a loving Father who accepted Adam and Eve as He made them but His relationship with them was broken when they transgressed His commandment not to eat of the forbidden tree. The threatened death for sin was not carried out because of God's love for them and they were allowed to continue till natural death took them in their old age. But God did require an animal sacrifice to illustrate to them the seriousness of their action by showing them what they deserved in breaking His commandment. It is also evident that animal sacrifices were required by Adam and Eve's offspring too as we see from the story of Cain and Able. God will not allow sinners to continue to live for ever nor will He be associated with unrepentant sinners, though He is long-suffering. It is evident that Adam and Eve were repentant and faithful when they accepted the covering provided by their Creator. Their relationship with God was based entirely on the law under which God had placed them and that law allowed for forgiveness by grace through faith.

You say "The mistake they made was to accept the deception that God was to be defined primarily as a law abiding being, and that their acceptance and receiving the promises would be based on their being like God in that sense, as well."

This is speculation. There is no indication that Adam and Eve were deceived about God giving them the command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil or that they should die in the day of eating. Neither are we told of any promises they might receive for being 'godly' children.

We can make assumptions but not present them as facts.

Next you say, "The world has been in a legalistic, justification by performance ever since."

But we are not considering the world, but discipleship – followers of God's discipline. The laws God gave to Israel through Moses is certainly the best ever for a large community but that community failed to appreciate them, neither did they (with certain exceptions as for example Hebrews 11) understand the spiritual aspect of them.

You say, "The relationship basis was not law-keeping, to say nothing for perfect law-keeping." I say the relationship basis was law-keeping. I say this because all God's laws He has given mankind to live by are moral laws and they are for our good. We are asked to keep them. "Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect." If we don't keep them it is our fault, yet by the grace of God we can be forgiven through faith in Jesus.

You say, "It is simply our perception that has changed and that has caused us to be quite dysfunctional. Living under a justification by law system does that to humans."

But I don't see the prophets, apostles and faithful people as being dysfunctional; I see them as having peace with God – a peace which passes all understanding, and I have never heard before that any descendant of Adam could be justified by law. And no descendants of Adam have lived under "a justification by law system" and it seems pointless to me that anyone should imagine such things when Scripture rules them out. Scripture teaches that we are justified by faith as was Abraham – and that through Jesus' sacrifice. Romans 3:20, "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

You say, "God shouts to us that He never has condemned us for being imperfect humans. He justifies us because He's our Father and He loves and accepts us that way."

But Jesus says, "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already."

And Jesus goes on to say, "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved" - John 3:18-20, and this is confirmed by Paul in Romans 8:1 "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Jesus Christ." While in Romans 3, verse 28 we read, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."

God justifies the faithful because they were in an unjustified position; they were in a condemned position.

You say "He (Jesus) was the first fully realized human being. The rest of us have not experienced what it's like to be human yet because we won't accept our humanness nor will we (through our false religion) understand that God accepts it."

Maybe there are some you have met to whom this can apply but all this jargon is foreign to my way of thinking and this discussion seems to be going nowhere. Sorry but I can understand Paul's language much easier than yours.

True we needed Jesus' sacrifice and because we needed it and could not provide a suitable sacrifice for ourselves then God provided His Son who offered Himself for us." Why? Because it was necessary in the sight of God that His law should be upheld.

But to say that "we needed it (Jesus crucifixion) in order to hear and understand how He (God) thinks of us and feels toward us" would mean that Jesus crucifixion was necessary in order to show how much God loved us and that God could not have done it in a less painful way than by having His Son cruelly murdered!

This I cannot accept and it horrifies me that it is in the Christadelphian Statement of Faith – Clause 12 which says that Jesus "was put to death by the Jews and Romans, who were, however, but instruments in the hands of God..."

The power of sin is the law and it still operates over those who reject God and His Son Jesus. This is proven by the need for the second death – the wages of sin.

With Love in Jesus. Russell.

A Brief Consideration of the Book of RUTH.

In the first two verses of the book we are introduced to the family and their surroundings and the members of that family. ELI MELECH whose name means 'God is King' was I feel a God fearing man, and like Job, had been blessed by God, some writers feel he was the head of a family or clan in the area in which he resided, Bethlehem-judah, or as we are told in the T.B.S.E. Ephrath, was an area of Bethlehem just as today Kings Oak is a part of Birmingham. The name of his wife was NAOMI (my sweetness or delight) who no doubt was kindly, helpful, joyful, making home the centre of Godly influences. They had been blessed with two male children; every Jewish father and mother looked forward to the day when their Messiah should be born. They lived in a very fruitful area about 2500 ft. above sea level with a typical Mediterranean climate, Bethlehem was surrounded by an area of fig and olive orchards and vineyards. MAHLON the elder sons name we understand meant (a sick person; or sickness) while his younger brother CHILION according to the Westminster Bible Dictionary meant; wasting away. The family lived together in their native area described by one writer as 'A house of Bread: A place of good food.'

But sadly a famine in the land alters everything, so reduced in circumstances and need they seek to sojourn in another country for life's necessities, and to where did Elimelech and his family go? They went to MOAB. Concerning Moab we read in Deuteronomy 25 v 6 the instructions to the children of Israel "Thou shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever." How Elimelech and Naomi felt having to go into Moab we are not told. It must have weighed heavy upon them as God fearing persons, how they must have hesitated before moving. 'But is there evil in a city and God has not done it' (national sins). So the family move into Moab, but sadly (under the hand of God) the curse seems to follow them. Ruth 1 v 5 "And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left and her two sons." Here was Naomi in a strange land with two sickly sons, how was she to fare? God never yet forsook the man or woman who trusted Him. Provision in the long term was provided for Naomi, but not in just a material manner, for throughout the book of Ruth we trace the hand of God. Mahlon and Chillion in due time married, "they took them wives of the women of Moab;" the name of the one was ORPAH meaning (neck or stubbornness) and RUTH (meaning uncertain, perhaps comely but when convinced 'constant Filial love') how true was this latter description seen in her life, yet again to her in a strange land. Still however a curse appears to follow; with sadness must Naomi have in her heart thought upon such words as those recorded in Numbers 25:1-6 as she saw how the surrounding people went on in worship.

By her kindly and motherly instincts she seeks to win her daughters in law by precept and example "to worship the God of Israel."

We read in Ruth 1:20 "...call me Mara; for the Almighty hath dealt very... bitterly with me." This was when she had returned to her native land Naomi said this. But what was this "bitterness"? We see it recorded in v. 5 of this same chapter, for now, not only had Elimelech died, but her two sons also were now at rest, and we assumed buried in a strange land, having heard that things were now improved in Bethlehem, why should she remain in a strange land, her two daughters-in-law could stay in their native land tend their husbands graves and may be married again, and remain in the land. No doubt having considered it well and asked for God's guidance Naomi prepares to leave Moab and return to her homeland. Yes and after all her careful work it would at first appear that she was about to leave her two daughters in law as we see in v.8 of chapter 1 "And Naomi said to her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me." No doubt the two girls had tended with loving care their husbands while they lived; and also mother-in-law. What a difference is seen in many cases when distress and sorrow comes to a family, it is then that deep down feelings come to the fore. Naomi continued "The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband," but only one did - Ruth. Was this in any way prophetic? Orpah by another writer describes as 'Youthful and fresh, compared her to a hind of the field, kissed her mother-in-law but was lothe to part from her national environment' and so returned. Ruth also kissed her mother-in-law but it seems she hesitated, for she clave unto her despite the fact that her sister had returned and gone back to her peoples gods meant nothing to Ruth. How the heart of Naomi must have beat at speed with the comfort and reward God had given her for faithful labour and teaching, as she listened to Ruth's words as fully seen in ch, 2 v 16-18, especially, "and thy God my God." Naomi saw Ruth meant what she said and was determined to go with her, then she left speaking unto her. So she returned to her homeland empty but hopeful, no material possessions but no doubt full of hope with Ruth at her side.

Following their return to Bethlehem, the story is well known, from early Sunday School days and today has its lessons for us, in what appears the most unusual circumstances, the Word and Purpose of God prevails. Ruth was requiting the love spent on her and proved a friend indeed. It was not sentimental, but real steadfast love (faith begotten of love). Faith without works is dead. "If ye love me keep my commandments." Ruth became the husband of Boaz whose name means (Lord of Strength), the result of this union was the restoration of lands in accordance with Mosaic order, and the birth of Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of David.

There are many instances in the scriptures where late in life God gives his servants a satisfaction which they have lacked earlier, as Jacob being brought down to Egypt and seeing Joseph whom he had never thought to see again in this life. In this book of Ruth having nursed her own two sons seeing them die without child, had the joy of being able to nurse the son of Ruth, as expressed in chapter 4 v14 and 15 when the women said to Naomi "And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter-in-law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons..." This son had a direct connection with the line of Mary or Joseph as we can see in the records of Matthew and Luke. David and David's greater son.

Finally let us look at just a few lessons we can see or learn from the Book of Ruth.

1. God does not always work through prosperity even though He may so do at times and through adversity: Job: Abraham: Jacob: David: Solomon.

2. We may judge by appearances as did Job's three friends. But in matters concerning God, He judges the motive of a heart.

3. God can bring good out of evil, as the Moabitish marriage in Ruth, but not when His laws are deliberately ignored or disobeyed. As in the manner of the latter part of Romans ch. 3 v. 8 Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.

4. Truth by example and precept honestly taught, brings its reward when acting upon right material, e.g. Ruth rather than Orpah.

5. Blessings of God are not restricted to the one concerned: Ruth, Naomi, Boaz, but in this case to generations yet unborn, in Christ.

6. The curse of Deuteronomy 28 having driven the Jews to every corner of the earth God still provides Palestine with abundant rainfall and fruitfulness. The call will yet come to Israel. Psalm 45 v 10 and Isaiah chapter 55.

Editor's note: The above was compiled from brief notes written in 1926 by our late brother Hembling now sleeping in Jesus and was reproduced from an earlier Circular Letter.

Some Thoughts of St. Paul's Teaching

When we read Paul's epistles we should realise that he is writing to converted believers in Christ under the New Covenant and concerned with their welfare as well as being educational of their position and of the hope set before them. How we read therefore is very important together with the context. Take for example 1 Corinthians 15; this much referred to at funeral services by the converted and unconverted. In verses 20-23 Paul says "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that sleep. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead; for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order. Christ, the first fruits, afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming."

Paul cannot be meaning that by Adam came the capability of dying by a process of decay. No, he had no part in his creation as a natural man or living soul capable of death whether inflicted or other means. The death that came by Adam was the death by sin through his disobedience to his Creator, therefore it was a legal sentence upon him when he ate of the forbidden fruit. Paul says this legal sentence passed upon all men not because they were guilty personally, but by imputation, being in the loins of Adam when he sinned. Through the love and mercy of God a way out of this situation was open to all by God's Word of enlightenment. Jesus became that way as foreshadowed in the slain lamb in Eden taking Adam's place and penalty of inflicted death by the shedding of blood – by man came death by sin, not by creation. The question is "Are you in Adam?"

The 'in Adam' position is not by natural descent but by imputation or conclusion under his sin but there is a way out of this position by becoming 'in Christ' but this also cannot be by natural descent from Christ in that He had no descendants, so it must be by belief and faith in the appointed way as Paul sets it out in his epistle to the Romans and Corinthians. Only in the legal sense can we be constituted sinners in Adam or constituted righteous in Christ; to be in either requires no physical change but knowledge and understanding of the position. (Galatians 3:22) "But the scripture hath concluded all under sin that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe."

The foregoing should explain Romans chapter 5 and one would do well to read the whole chapter and realise Paul makes a difference between death by sin and death by natural creation. His theme from Adam to Jesus Christ came by revelation by Jesus Himself who was taught of God. So in Paul's letters we have Adam the federal head of constituted sinners and Jesus the federal head of the constituted righteous – 'in Adam' and 'in Christ.'

Now Paul says "For as in Adam all die," but please note he is not saying that all die in Adam, for this cannot be said of that long list of the faithful in Hebrews 11; he must be referring to those in Adam who die in symbolic death into that of Christ and become alive unto God whether they die naturally as a result of their corruptible nature, will be made alive in Spirit nature at His coming. These are the all 'in Adam' who die with Jesus in symbol of the death that came by sin, not by creation. The latter by appointment (natural), the other by judicial infliction. See Hebrews 9:27,28 – "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

I conclude with the words of Isaiah 64:4,5, “For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him. Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways: behold...”

St Paul also quotes this and says that it has been revealed to him and others by the Spirit.

I also pray that our true brethren and sisters, past and present may rejoice in the glory revealed and to be revealed at God’s appointed time.

Brother Phil Parry.

Luke 21:24, “Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring.”

The Middle East – from Internet sources

Before the Annapolis Conference

For many years Iran has observed the last Friday of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan as “Jerusalem Day” (that is “Al-Quds Day”). This year (October 5th) millions of Iranians attended rallies throughout all the larger towns of Iran. In one of his speeches the President of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, stated that “The creation, continued existence and unlimited (Western) support for this regime (Israel) is an insult to human dignity... The occupation of Palestine is not limited to one land. The Zionist issue is now a global issue.”

These demonstrations were not only against Israel but against America for their continued support for Israel. Iranian State television reported demonstrators chanted “Death to America” and “Death to Israel” and President Ahmadinejad said that Palestinians should not have to give up part of their land because Europeans committed crimes against Jews in World War II but should find a home for the Jews in Europe or Alaska for them to establish their own country. “I ask European governments supporting Zionists and the American people that will you allow occupation of part of your land under a pretext and then talk about a two-state solution?” “Together with other nations we will continue the resistance until the Palestinian lands are liberated from Israel.”

In Lebanon, the Islamist group Hezbollah have brought politics to a standstill; the country’s Christian community feels under siege and has begun re-establishing militias, training in the hills and stockpiling weapons. Many Lebanese say another civil war, like the 15 year one from 1975, is pending and that the most dangerous flash points are within the divided Christian community. Christian youths are signing up for military training in the greatest numbers since the end of the civil war, and state publicly their willingness to fight in a new civil war - in particular, against fellow Christians! “When the war begins, I’ll be the first one in it,” said a 30 year old, “I want everyone to know I am a Christian and I am ready to fight.”

The struggle is over who gets to be the next president which must be filled by the end of November. But the main question is whether Lebanese Christians accept their minority status (now under 30% of the population) or whether they insist on special privileges no matter what their share of the population.

Lebanese Government leaders say they are worried that within days of a renewed conflict, heavy weapons could flow to rival Christian factions from Israel, France, Syria, or even the United States. “The training is a huge mistake” said a Sunni Muslim who leads the pro-Western governing coalition... Open, armed conflict could set off an unstoppable chain reaction. The bold talk and the throngs of youths converging on

recruitment offices throughout Beirut and in Christian towns in the mountains, stand in marked contrast to Hezbollah and the Sunni parties, which have urged restraint on their own militias.

Two Christian groups allied with Hezbollah and considered pro-Syrian, have stepped up their “youth summer camp” programs, a combination of hiking and political indoctrination. They have joined Hezbollah’s marches and occupation of downtown Beirut and, have engaged in militia training in Hezbollah camps.

Under the Constitution the president and the leader of the armed forces must always be a Christian, but since the Christian community is so bitterly divided, Shiite and Sunni Muslim leaders often end up choosing the candidate for them.

At the opening of the Winter Session Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert told the Knesset that the current Palestinian leadership wants to move forward toward peace with Israel and he planned to make every effort to pursue peace with the Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. “The current Palestinian leadership is not a terrorist leadership. President Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad are committed to all the agreements signed with Israel, and I believe that they want to move ahead together with us on a route that will bring about a change in the reality of relations between us and them.” “I want to serve notice here, in the most resolute way possible, that I do not intend to look for excuses to block a diplomatic process.”

Labour Chairman Ehud Barak said that he would give the “utmost importance to talks between Israel and the Palestinians.” “Israel is very strong and will look for every way to make peace with its neighbours.” He added that he was in favour of bolstering Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority. He also expressed his desire to see the Annapolis conference succeed.

In contrast, Likud Chairman, Binyamin Netanyahu slated the government’s policy saying its strategy would lead to an Iranian terrorist presence in Jerusalem and the rest of Israel. “The unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon created an Iranian outpost, from which Israel is being attacked in the North, and the unilateral pullout from Gaza created a second Iranian base in Gaza, ‘Hamastan’... And now the government is planning a third withdrawal - from Judea and Samaria - that will lead to a third Iranian outpost.”

Netanyahu quoted statements made by Defence Minister Barak and Prime Minister Olmert before the withdrawals from Lebanon and respectively, saying the two had promised security, fact served with terror and aggression. Netanyahu added “Giving Hamas half of Jerusalem will make the rest of Jerusalem unliveable” and “Giving up Judea and Samaria will transfer the areas controlling the coastal plain into the hands of Hamas, leading to rocket attacks...on Tel Aviv.” “According to the government’s plans, Israel will pull back to the 1967 borders... This is no way to make peace.”

Israeli President Shimon Peres spoke about the forthcoming Middle East Peace Conference, saying the summit was “likely to be an opening for the attainment of a peace agreement... (and) even if there are some who express doubt as to the ability of the Palestinians to achieve peace, Israel must not allow the world to think that peace cannot be attained.” He warned that the two main enemies of world peace and progress were global terror and global warming. “These two dangers are more than strategic risks; they create an historic threat and a threat to the security of all countries and the safety of all inhabitants of the globe.”

The president spoke at length about the Iranian threat saying, “The leading government in terms of nurturing terror and financing it is Iran with Ahmadinejad at its helm.” “Ahmadinejad now calls for the destruction of the Jewish state... He denies the suppression enforced in his country; the brutal suppression of citizens’ rights, public executions...”

He added that the present Iranian leadership was “publicly declaring its intention to promote the Islamic-Shi’ite revolution,” not only in the Muslim world but in the entire world. The president also condemned Iran for maintaining Hizbullah with the intention of defeating independent Lebanon and turning it into an “Iranian satellite.”

Referring to Iran's nuclear program, Peres said that the biggest lie in Ahmadinejad's declaration was that Iran does not intend to produce nuclear weapons. "All of the intelligence services in the world are convinced, without a shadow of a doubt that Iran is actively seeking to attain nuclear weapons. [Iran] is investing enormous sums in the building of reactors and centrifuges, not because it does not have sufficient sources of energy, for it possesses a wealth of oil and gas." Iran "is openly building an arsenal of long-range missiles and, secretly, nuclear weapons. Obviously there is no reason to invest such huge amounts of money in these expensive missiles if they only bear conventional warheads."

Public Security Minister Avi Dichter met with Quartet Middle East envoy Tony Blair, 12th October, and said he was pessimistic about the chances for success of the forthcoming Annapolis Middle East peace parley. Dichter said that the parley was taking place too soon and that the Palestinians had not fulfilled their obligations under the first stage of the road map peace plan. He predicted it would be impossible for the summit to achieve any real results

He also told Tony Blair that the reason Israel has abstained from military operations in the Gaza Strip was because it would likely lead to the collapse of the Palestinian Authority for which Israel would then be blamed, even though 2,000 rockets have been fired at Israel in the last two years nothing very dramatic has been done to stop them yet.

Commenting on Hamas's takeover of Gaza last July, the Security Minister regarded the coup as an humiliation for the P.A. and saying that "25,000 Palestinian police failed to do anything against 11,000 Hamas operatives" and Hamas rule in Gaza has turned Israel's worst fears into reality.

Ismail Haniyeh, who is now Prime Minister of the Hamas government in Gaza, told thousands of cheering supporters at the Gaza City Stadium that Abbas could not negotiate at Anaplis without their support. "Don't go to conference when you don't have the power card in your pocket - and the power card is Hamas," he told his supporters. Another leader said that Abbas "will find out that they are pursuing nothing but a mirage." "They will find out that there can be no solution without dialogue," with Hamas.

A few days later the French president Nicolas Sarkozy reiterated to President Shimon Peres his country's obligation to keep Israel safe, saying he was personally responsible for the relations between the two countries. and is involved in achieving peace [in the Middle East], "I am full of hope that the countries in the region will continue without delay in the steps to the direction of peace and dialogue."

German Chancellor Angela Merkel in a meeting with the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, said Iran poses a danger to Israel's security. Their talks focussed on Iran's nuclear program and the push for stronger sanctions against Iran, stressing that further action would need to be taken if Iran refuses to conform to international controls but the talk of sanctions against Iran is a source of friction with Russia who is building Iran's first nuclear reactor and has been successful in preventing tougher sanctions on Iran.

For the moment Russia is delaying the completion of the nuclear plant but President Putin's next visit was to Teheran where any show of support for Iran would encourage Iran and worsen Russia's standing with the West

The United States has given a "green light" to an Israeli Defence Force operation in the Gaza Strip, the Lebanese newspaper, *Al-Akhbar* reported. The report cites "credible diplomatic sources" as saying that American approval came after Israeli intelligence impressed on US officials the importance of a wide-scale operation as an answer to the unprecedented arms smuggling within Gaza

Despite the "green light," Israel was hesitating to launch an operation out of concerns that it would complicate preparations for the upcoming US-sponsored Mideast peace summit in Annapolis. Until the timing of the operation is decided, IDF forces stationed on the Gaza border will continue training for a massive military operation in the Strip, the report said.

Meanwhile, IDF forces discovered seven weapons-smuggling tunnels in the southern Strip along the Egyptian border on Thursday. The kilometre-long tunnels were discovered near Dahiniye by an elite

Engineering Corps unit and troops from the Golani infantry's Battalion 51. The tunnels were found within two kilometres of the border with Israel and, according to the IDF, had been used intensively in recent months to smuggle weapons and explosives from Egypt into Gaza. The troops destroyed the tunnels in controlled explosions.

Israel's Foreign Minister says the International Atomic Energy Agency is not only neglecting its duties of preventing nuclear proliferation, but acting as an obstacle to those trying to preserve the status quo. Addressing the Saban Forum in Jerusalem Abramovitch said the UN nuclear watchdog provides an excuse to states that prefer not to join the international community's efforts to prevent a nuclear Iran.

Israeli officials believe the head of IAEA, Mohamed ElBaradei is not forceful enough in the periodic reports he presents to the UN on the Iranian nuclear program. By stressing Iranian cooperation with the inspectors and the need for more time, Jerusalem believes that ElBaradei is playing into Iranian hands.

Israel has informed the Palestinian Authorities in Ramallah of its intention to send the IDF into the Gaza Strip in order to regain control of the Philadelphi Corridor and put an end to Hamas smuggling of weapons and cash through tunnels from the Egyptian side of the border, the London-based *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* reported Friday morning.

According to *Al-Quds Al-Arabi's* sources, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, who rejected out of hand Israel's plan to recapture the Philadelphi Corridor, intends to send emissaries to regional countries in an effort to convey the sense of urgency regarding the danger of an Israeli incursion. Abbas, the paper said, will state that an Israeli incursion would destroy the Gaza Strip and its infrastructure.

Gaza's borders with Egypt have been largely closed-off since last June, when Hamas took over, but Israel has complained of increased Palestinian weapons smuggling and contraband through tunnels with Egypt, and blamed Egyptian authorities for not doing enough to stop this. In response Egypt has published a report saying they have seized about 20,000 tons of explosives in the Sinai Peninsula over the past 10 months, as well as mines, detonators, hand-grenades and ammunition, along with other goods such as cigarettes and car parts. It also gave details on the arrests of three groups of Palestinians earlier this year, some of whom were caught carrying explosive belts with the alleged intention of infiltrating into Israel to carryout suicide attacks. Some 60 tunnels have been uncovered.

However, Egypt has said they would make greater efforts to crack down on this trafficking.

At the Annapolis Conference

The Syrian delegate to the Annapolis Conference delivered a strident and uncompromising speech saying that an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan should not be considered a "painful compromise" since it was not Israel's land to begin with. Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal al-Miqdad said that Israel should return the Golan, and then Damascus would consider normalization of ties. According to Israeli officials, Miqdad also called on Israel to leave the Sheba Farms-Har Dov area. As strident as Miqdad was in his comments, Lebanon's delegate - Minister of Culture Tarek Mitri - was even more so, saying that Israel needed to withdraw from not only Sheba Farms-Har Dov, but also the rest of the village of Rajr and a new area that he claimed Israel was occupying near the Sheba Farms. "He sounded like a mouthpiece for Hizbullah propaganda," said one Israeli official, who added that Mitri had raised the issue of Lebanese prisoners, something that is always in Hizbullah's arsenal. Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal, meanwhile, said at one of the conference's afternoon sessions that a great deal was riding on "the success or failure of this [Annapolis] undertaking." He said the Saudis came to Annapolis to "support the launching of serious and continuing talks" that will address all "core and final status issues." He said these talks needed to be followed by launching talks on the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese tracks. "It is absolutely necessary to establish an international follow-up mechanism that monitors progress in the negotiations among the parties, as well as the implementation of commitments made." He also said Israel must freeze all settlement activity, dismantle the settlement outposts, release prisoners, stop building the security barrier, remove Israeli checkpoints and lift the "siege imposed on the Palestinian people."

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, speaking at Annapolis, said Israel should end its occupation of all territories captured in the Six Day War, including east Jerusalem, the Syrian Golan and certain parts of Lebanon. He commended the significant participation in the conference of countries from all over the world, including Arab countries and major industrial leaders, in what he called a unique conference in the history of conflict. This, he said, would provide impetus and encouragement for the negotiation process, ending occupation and bringing about the establishment of the state of Palestine side by side with the state of Israel. “Our region stands at a crossroads that separate two historical phases,” “Let us make peace of the brave, and protect it for the sake of our children and your children.”

“I have the right here to defend openly and with no hesitation the right of my people to see a new dawn, with no occupation, no settlement, no separation wall, no prisons with thousands of prisoners, no assassinations, no siege, and no roadblocks around villages and cities,” Abbas continued. He called for a peace that “includes a halt to all settlement activities including natural growth, reopening the closed Jerusalem institutions, removing settlement outposts, roadblocks, and releasing prisoners, and facilitating our authority’s tasks of imposing order and sovereignty of law.” Abbas also said that it was his “duty” to say that the fate of Jerusalem, which both sides want to claim as their capital, must be central to any deal. “We want east Jerusalem to be our capital, and to have open relations with west Jerusalem, and to allow all believers from all faiths to practice their rituals and to reach sacred places without unfairness and on the basis of what is guaranteed by international and human laws.”

While the Annapolis summit concluded on Tuesday, paving the way for Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations, the defence establishment began gearing up for the possibility that Defence Minister Ehud Barak, upon his return from the United States, will order a large-scale military operation into the Gaza Strip. Barak has been saying for months that “with every day that passes Israel draws closer” to a large operation in Gaza in face of the incessant Kassam rocket attacks and the unprecedented Hamas military build-up there. However, Barak has refrained from recommending such an operation to the cabinet until now, out of fear that it would have brought about the cancellation of the talks. “Israel held back from launching such an operation ahead of the summit since it didn’t want to be blamed for ruining the summit,” a defence official explained Tuesday. “Once that the summit is over, there is an opportunity to go into Gaza and strike back at Hamas.” As reported in *The Jerusalem Post* on Tuesday, some defence officials have begun floating the idea that a large-scale operation in Gaza could also benefit Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and, by having the IDF weaken Hamas, his Fatah Party might be able to regain control there.

Defence officials noted that Hamas has used the past two years since Israel’s unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip to build up a powerful force that looks and operates like a real military. “Hamas is no longer just another terror group,” a defence official said. “Today it is built like a military with brigades, battalions and even special forces.” A large operation in Gaza would require the IDF to call up large numbers of reservists and to mobilize almost two divisions from the Infantry, Armoured and Engineering Corps. One option the IDF is considering is using the force to create a buffer zone in northern Gaza, possibly on the remains of three former Israeli settlements evacuated under the disengagement plan in the summer of 2005. The idea behind the buffer zone, sources said, would be to push back the Kassam rocket cells and take them out of the range of Ashkelon and Sderot. Other units would most probably be deployed in Rafah, Gaza’s southernmost point and home to dozens of tunnels that are used by Hamas to smuggle weapons and explosives into Gaza from Egypt.

After the Annapolis Conference

Nov 28, Ahmadinejad: Israel doomed to collapse. Israel is doomed to “collapse” and the US-brokered Middle East peace conference was a “failure,” Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said Wednesday, lashing out at the Annapolis gathering that many saw as aimed at isolating Iran. The comments highlighting Tehran’s bitterness towards the conference. “It is impossible that the Zionist regime will survive. Collapse is in the nature of this regime because it has been created on aggression, lying, oppression and crime,” Ahmadinejad said after a Cabinet meeting, according to state-run television. “Soon, even the most politically doltish individuals will understand that this conference was a failure from the beginning,” he said. Iran has repeatedly condemned the Annapolis conference, saying it would fail to bring any peace for the Palestinians and warning that it will discredit Arab countries who participated. Ahmadinejad said the Palestinian “resistance” - such as Hamas, which is backed by Teheran - must have a say in any settlement.

60 YEARS AGO:

November 29, 1947, UN Ambassador Dan Gillerman, in an address to the General Assembly, said, “It is possible to bring the spirit of Annapolis also to the halls of the UN; a coalition of moderates in favour of peace instead of the sprit that currently blows through the halls that brings hatred and eternalizes the past.”

On November 29, 1947, the League of Nations voted for Resolution 181, which recommended an end to the British mandate in Palestine and a partition plan which called for the creation of two states, one Jewish, one Arab. And still the plan insists that the large Arab minority that would live within Israel’s borders be guaranteed full civic equality. More so, it required that both states grant full religious freedom. The November 29, 1947, plan, which was welcomed by Jews but rejected by Arabs at the time, created the idea of dividing what was then British-ruled Palestine between the two peoples. This week, the “two-state solution” was at the centre of efforts to re-launch Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts at the conference in Annapolis, Maryland.

While the 1947 “partition plan” was never implemented, it paved the way for the creation of the state of Israel, and its recognition by the UN the following year. After rejecting the plan, local Arabs spent the next six decades under Jordanian, Egyptian and Israeli rule or became refugees in neighbouring countries. For Palestinians Nov. 29 is a day of regret. Since 1977, this day is earmarked at the UN as an annual day of “Solidarity with the Palestinian People,” and is typically commemorated as a day of mourning.

Israel sees it as a happy occasion and streets in several Israeli cities are named after the date. “The 29th of Nov. is a reason for celebration,” said Gillerman, who was at the conference in Annapolis. “On this date, the world got a gift: a state which contributes to humanity more than all the countries in the UN that mourn on this day.”

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How blind is the world to the greater gift to come!

“And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.” Luke 21:27,28.