

The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No 232

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Editorial

Dear Brothers, Sisters and Friends, Loving greetings.

All the centurions of the Apostle Paul's acquaintance protected him. Julius in particular who is mentioned in detail in Acts proved to be especially considerate. Julius was a centurion in the Augustan cohort which was one of ten divisions in an ancient Roman legion numbering from 300 to 600 hundred men. As an officer-courier he was in charge of Paul and other political prisoners sailing for Rome from Caesarea.

Julius was kind enough to allow Paul to go ashore at Sidon to visit friends. It seems from then on to have been a difficult voyage because to start with the winds were, as the Bible describes them, 'contrary.' On arriving at Lycia everyone was transferred to a ship that was from Alexandria sailing to Italy. Then once again progress was slow for many days and when at last they arrived at Crete. Julius unwisely ignored Paul's warning not to set off again so late in the year, but instead took the advice of both the ship's owner and captain and because the south wind blew softly they set sail. Everyone on board learned the hard way of the foolishness of this decision. The ship was tossed and driven before a storm for fourteen days and nights. It must have been a dreadful experience with the passengers, some of whom were no doubt ill, becoming weaker and more frightened for their lives with each passing hour.

The ship was virtually out of control when at last soundings indicated that land was near. Paul reassured the 276 passengers with the words, "Be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, fear not Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee, for I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me." Paul urged everyone to eat something to gain strength and for their health, and again he reassured them all by saying "for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you". The crew attempted to escape in the ship's boat, but at Paul's suggestion Julius made the soldiers cut the ropes and let the boat drop away.

Then when the ship finally ran aground, the soldiers prepared to kill the prisoners lest they escape. Julius, however, 'wishing to save Paul', would not let them, and ordered all who could swim to jump

overboard and the rest to follow on planks and wreckage. In this way all came safe and sound to land just as the angel had foretold.

Paul knew only too well what a shipwreck was like for he endured three in his time, and Luke who was with him on this occasion, describes vividly Paul's constant initiative and encouragement in emergency. Julius must have recognized the experience of Paul and, by accepting Paul's advice to jettison the ship's boat, ensured that the crew remained on board to beach the ship. Thus without Julius the centurion's respect for Paul's judgment, Paul might have perished before reaching Rome and all those with him.

I have heard it said that the description in Acts 27 of the storm and shipwreck is completely authentic, and accepted as such by those who know about boats and sailing. It is also a fine example of Paul's trust in God and a lesson to us all to surrender ourselves at all times and in all circumstances to His unfailing love and care.

Underneath are the everlasting arms.

Love to all. Helen Brady.

The Doctrine of The Antichrist.

“Every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in flesh is not of God, and this is that SPIRIT of antichrist whereof ye have heard, that it should come; and even now already is it in the world” - (1 John; 4:5).

The meaning of the apostle in this passage seems to be that every one who came teaching that Jesus Christ was not flesh was not from God, and was consequently antichristian in his doctrine, not to be received into the houses of the disciples; neither were they to bid him God-speed.

If the question was put to the apostle John, Who was Jesus Christ? he would have answered, He was the only begotten Son of God.

The Word, promise, or declaration of God made flesh, John the Baptist bare record that He was the Son of God. Nathaniel confessed, “Thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.”

And Jesus declared of Himself, “I am the Living Bread which came down from heaven and giveth life unto the world. “And the bread which I give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

The sum of those testimonies is that Jesus the Christ who had been the subject of promise from the foundation of the world was now flesh, living flesh, living bread, the gift of God, the Son of the living God, the Christ spoken of by Moses and the prophets.

But a bystander asks, Was not Jesus Adam's flesh or Mary's flesh? No, neither Adam, nor Mary his daughter, ever were in heaven.

The power of Almighty, Father of Jesus, came down from heaven and caused a Son to be born of Mary; in other words, gave a Son to the world, not a gift of Adam's son, nor of Mary's, but of His own, His only begotten.

But another says, Was not Jesus the Father? Certainly not. The Father was the cause; the Son the effect - no effect can be at the same time its own cause. But it is again suggested, Jesus was the Father in flesh. This introduces confusion between Father and Son. The Father was manifested in a Son, who was flesh and blood, born of a daughter of Abraham.

But He was not spirit, although begotten of spirit; neither was He flesh of Adam although born of his descendant, but as He testifies Himself living flesh, which came down from heaven, or whose origin was in the bosom of His Father.

But did not the Christ exist in spirit before He became flesh? Yea; the Father, who is spirit, determined to have a Son, and uttered His declaration of that purpose many times from the foundation of the world. The Christ existed in the bosom or mind of the Father, but in no other form.

To affirm that Jesus Christ existed in spirit-form or angelic form before He was begotten of spirit-power is to affirm what is contrary to the testimony of the Scriptures.

To affirm that He existed before John the Baptist as a living intelligence, and that He laid aside that living intelligence and existence in spirit-form, to assume that of a babe of flesh, is also to add to the Scripture testimony, and thereby defeat its object.

The Truth is simple and easily discerned by those who wish it and nothing else.

Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, built up of the substance of mother, and therefore flesh, but related to His Father more than to His mother, inasmuch as His Father, was the CAUSE of His existence, while she gave him birth as the effect.

Trinitarianism and Unitarianism have added to and taken from the divine testimony.

The more recent doctrine, called by its promoters God-manifestation, is also to be rejected because it fails to distinguish between the Father and the Son.

It proceeds upon the idea of exalting the Father, and in so doing, says the Christ was not flesh, but the Father in flesh.

If these well-meaning friends would give up the use of words which obscure their meaning, and content themselves with saying that God manifested Himself, or His purpose of redemption in a Son, contention on that matter would cease.

W.E.

GETHSEMANE

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

I wonder how many of us who understand the Scriptures can read this account of our Lord's suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane without being deeply moved.

It seems that this moment was the greatest struggle He had with the flesh, His weakest moment, His greatest trial of faith, and, thanks be to God, His greatest victory.

We read in Luke's account that "great drops of sweat, like blood, fell from his forehead." What a great strain He must have been under! This moment was almost the end of His great struggle against "sin" and the weakness of the flesh. I think we should meditate much more than we do upon the tremendous responsibilities our Lord and Saviour took upon Himself when He decided to do His Father's will.

He was just flesh and blood as we are, and His only source of help was the same as ours, yet He was able to say to His enemies, "which of you convinceth me of sin?" What a wonderful and beautiful thing to say, but do we ever consider what a tremendous struggle He must have had to live this sinless life?

When we consider how He was despised and rejected by all whom He came to save and deserted by all His friends in the end, it makes me marvel at His wonderful faith in God. There was no allowance made for Him for the weakness of the flesh as was made for all other human beings, both before and after Him.

He must not sin or all is lost!

I doubt whether we can really understand this tremendous responsibility. Is it any wonder that He spent sometimes all night in prayer to God; “watch and pray,” He told His disciples, “lest ye enter into temptation.”

How He depended on prayer in His battle against the flesh!

When we also understand that He knew from the beginning everything that was going to happen to Him, it makes His great faith and will power all the more wonderful. All these things our Lord Jesus took upon Himself that we, and the rest of the world from the creation to the end, “might have life, and have it more abundantly” if they would only believe and accept.

How much He had to do and suffer; how little we have to do and suffer!

In the 2nd Corinthians 5:19 we read, “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.”

How wonderfully and beautifully everything fits in!

In the first chapter of Hebrews we find great joy and consolation in reading of the great honour God has bestowed on His dear Son for all He went through, when in due time He saw the “travail of His soul,” and was satisfied.

Coming back to Gethsemane again, if we turn to Mark 14:33-34 we read how tired and weak He was at this time. “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful unto death.”

There was His desperate prayer to be relieved from the fatal hour, and His immediate recovery to the will of His Father.

Dear Brethren and Sisters, so much is taken for granted these days that this great trial of our Lord Jesus has become “just another story.”

Let us make sure that we fully understand what our salvation cost our dear Saviour in blood, sweat, and tears, that our hearts may be lifted up towards our dear Lord who suffered so much that we might have life and have it more abundantly and let us never cease in our grateful thanks and gratitude to our God and His dear Son for their great love and mercy towards us.

With fond Love to all Brethren and Sisters,

Your brother in Christ. A. Hodge's.
October 1956

E-mail received from a Christadelphian:

3rd July 2008

Greetings, Brethren; I am member of a very small body of Christadelphians (ex-Central, ex-Dawn) currently seeking Brethren and Sisters of like faith with a view to fellowship.

To this end, I am contacting as many fellowships as I can to determine whether a commonality of belief might be found. Would you be so kind as to help me in this 'fact-finding' mission, by please giving me a very brief outline of your views regarding the following?

- 1) Divorce and remarriage within the brotherhood, including your views on the 'exceptive clause'.
- 2) Your views regarding your members attending Bible schools, worship, study days etc. with other Christadelphian bodies with whom you are not in fellowship.

I realize this will require a little time from someone, and I do thank you very much for any insight you can give me. Thanking you in advance...

Your sister, (name withheld).

Reply - 8th July 2008:

Dear Sister,

Thank you for your e-mail and I am very pleased to be able to write to you regarding the points you raise.

Firstly, regarding divorce and remarriage we are pleased to be able to say that we have never heard of a single case of divorce in our fellowship since the days of Edward Turney. This does not mean it has never happened but that it has not been reported or passed down to us in any of our literature or correspondence, or by word of mouth; we can further say with all certainty that it has not happened within the past fifty or sixty years to the knowledge of anyone in our fellowship.

If ever it should happen I feel it would be necessary to have a very sympathetic and loving approach above all things; I am sure you will agree that God has been very compassionate with us and so we must show the same compassion towards our brethren and sisters.

Secondly, we have no problem whatsoever with any of the Nazarene Fellowship attending Bible schools or study groups with any denomination. But with regard to attending Christadelphian Memorial services we feel there would be little in common between us as we do not accept the belief of a defiled Christ who had to die for Himself.

Indeed it is with regard to this last point (our belief that Jesus was undefiled and not under condemnation) which is the main reason we have been turned out of Christadelphia. We do not believe there is such a thing as 'sin in the flesh' but that our flesh is as God made it in the beginning. This was the view of Dr Thomas by the time of his death though earlier he had taught otherwise. It was Robert Roberts who took the Christadelphian community back to Dr Thomas' earlier understanding and which we say was a sad mistake. He ought not to have gone back but to have built on Dr Thomas' reasoning as did Edward Turney.

I wonder how your group see these matters? I would be interested to know. It may be that we have some more beliefs in common.

With Love in Jesus, Russell Gregory

2nd E-mail dated 8th July 2008

Brother Russell,

Greetings and thank-you for your timely response to my e-mail.

Well... you certainly raise some unusual issues; the most disturbing to me, as I am sure you will understand, being your view that Christ did not inherit the same sin nature as Adam, as indeed we all do. I am sorry to say that this point alone would be a 'deal-breaker' for us as far as fellowship is concerned. Are you open to discussion on this view? I am quite certain the truth of the matter can be amply demonstrated by scripture. As to your assertion that Bro. Thomas held this view at the time of his death, I can only say I have never

heard of it, but would be agreeable to read any of his writings that you may have that would prove what you say.

Concerning the other two items, again, I believe we are of differing minds. You see, it is our belief that worship, study days, fraternal etc... are all *in themselves* forms of fellowship, and we do have great difficulty with brethren and sisters 'cross-fraternizing' in this way.

As to divorce and remarriage, it is our contention that there is no 'exceptive clause', nor was any intended by Paul, and that any newly baptized member which may be divorced must remain in that state.

As you can see, we have fairly stringent views (all, I hasten to add, that may be proven by scripture), and so find ourselves much on the 'outside' ourselves.

I am sorry we are not in agreement; do you have an open mind regarding your views? Or are you quite 'set'? I'm sure the brethren here would be happy to set out the reasoning behind our position, if you like.

I do thank you once again for taking the time to respond to my mail. I'm sure you join with me in praying for our Lord's return.

Sister X

Reply dated 11th July 2008:

Dear Sister,

Thank you for your e-mail of the 8th July. You say I raise some unusual issues but I assure you our views are the teachings of Scripture which we have thoroughly studied, prayerfully and carefully, over many years.

It has been somewhat of a puzzle to me why it should be that sincere Bible students should 'prove' things so differently; one would expect the opposite, for God does not teach contradictory doctrines and Christ is not divided, so are His followers divided?

I am very willing to discuss our differing views but it may be helpful to you if you look at our website www.thenazarenefellowship.co.uk for more information than I can give here. It is a very simple website but in it I think you will find where we stand in regard to the Christadelphian community.

You will see that we do not have a statement of faith outside of the Bible and this allows those who wish, to remain amongst their Christadelphian ecclesias where they are sometimes accepted quite openly even though they are known not to accept the B.A.S.F.

Regarding our differences you say that "the most disturbing to me, as I am sure you will understand, being your view that Christ did not inherit the same sin nature as Adam, as indeed we all do." Now here you touch on the difference between us; for though we say that Jesus had the same nature as Adam and the rest of us, we say it was not sin nature.

Dr Thomas held this understanding for when writing in the Ambassador Magazine for March 1869 he said, "Our friend imagines there was a change in the nature of Adam when he transgressed. There is no evidence of this whatever, and the presumption and evidence are entirely contrary. There was a change in Adam's relation to his maker, but not in the nature of his organisation." While in August issue for the same year he wrote, "Our flesh is constitutionally no worse than Adam's flesh before the fall." This was three years before he died and I am not aware of any change in his belief after this time.

You ask if I have an open mind regarding my views, or am I quite 'set'? The answer is that I am not "set" but have found great weaknesses in Christadelphian reasoning. They have yet to show that Adam's nature was changed at the 'fall.' Another question that has to be answered is whether or not Jesus was under

Adam's sentence of death? If He was, then I fail to see how it can be said that Jesus crucifixion was in any way a sacrifice.

These are challenging questions for Christadelphians and I am happy to discuss them if you wish.

With Love in Jesus. Russell Gregory.

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It is now three weeks since the above was sent and we have received no further reply. Will this person also go away?

There are various reasons why people refrain from entering into discussion with us - perhaps they feel unable to support their point of view or are concerned lest discussion should become an attack, or perhaps feel their position is not all that safe, but when leading Christadelphians fail to respond to us we can only wonder why.

Paul Billington, editor of "The Bible Magazine" has gone away. He has had months in which to answer our two questions according to Bible teaching and he hasn't had the courtesy to acknowledge having received my letter. We naturally feel that had the questions come from a Church goer he would have only been too eager to answer such an enquiry, so why not answer us? The questions are asked in all sincerity with the aim of showing others the Love of God and of Jesus. - Russell.

CONTROVERSY

Controversy ought truly be called the breath of life to the truth as we know it. Without controversy we should not have the truth in the measure we now have, and without continuing controversy we shall not progress and learn further truths.

Never in history has there been a more controversial figure than Jesus Christ. If His message and teachings had not been the powerful force they were, striking at the very roots of men's beliefs, they would not have changed lives and endured down the centuries as they have done. Through the years since Christ first told men of God's purpose with them and how to conduct themselves, those who have endeavoured to follow him, have found little peace. Inward peace yes and a peace that passes understanding, but seldom outward peace. Many died for what they believed and after much bodily and mental suffering. Jesus warned His followers to expect it, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household."

We must therefore accept controversy and not expect our lives to be punctuated with gentle exhortation and generally a haven of peace once we have joined ourselves to Christ. Rather the opposite I think for whoever we mix with these days, people who profess something or nothing, our families or old Christadelphian associates, one is often called upon to defend and speak up about one's convictions - and as people are today both religious and non-religious, mostly the latter, that inevitably means expressing a controversial opinion. It's never been more controversial than now to say, all men are equal, or love your neighbour, or turn the other cheek, or love your enemies. Such commandments were never easy or a recipe for peaceful co-existence and they still are not, as anyone who has tried to practice or preach them well knows. A man like Martin Luther King tried to change men's hearts with the same message and so change a whole people's state and condition in a "civilised" country and he died for it - yet another controversial figure. Nothing is more certain to bring one into conflict with other people than to practice Christ-like principles and ideals. The only way to find the peace that some look for and expect is to be a hermit under a vow of silence or simply atop saying what you know is right.

The Christadelphians have stopped being controversial. In a recent letter to all members a leader says in effect “do not take sides, do not be concerned with rights and wrongs, just keep the meetings and the families in them united.” What a disgraceful message and one so alien to all Christ preached. No wonder the Christadelphian world is in chaos and with feeble pronouncements of that calibre even a union with the Pope seems quite possible.

The Churches are uncontroversial too; doctrine is hardly mentioned in sermons - just little talks about the fruits of the earth at harvest time and the evils of society at other times, but nothing to give offence for fear the handful of people who come each week are offended. Christ offended feelings and trampled on traditions and accepted practices, so should we; He was controversial so should we be. We are expected to be the salt of the earth and not the tasteless dregs of it.

Of course there is a place for exhortation and words of comfort and they can be a great help. But when you consider it the words used on those occasions are usually thoughts and expositions on controversies that we have resolved in reasoned argument and then find ourselves able to present as exhortation and encouragement to others. Paul’s words often seem to be just that - an edifying outcome of past controversies, and conclusions he has drawn from Jesus teachings, that he then passes on to people of like faith.

Paul was another controversial figure, always in reluctant conflict with authorities of one sort or another. But He never shrank from speaking the truth; we should all be much poorer if he had done otherwise. Jesus said “Take my yoke upon you and learn of me - For my yoke is easy and my burden light.” So there is a yoke and there is a burden, it used to be persecution and death, mercifully those sufferings in the main have passed. At this time in the western world our tribulations seem to be those of isolation and an absolute alienation from the aims of most of the people we meet and hear of. We feel like outcasts because we treasure things that most people regard as mythical rubbish and we attempt to live by standards that are said to be outmoded by new philosophies and we advocate moral precepts that are wiped away by medical progress and technology. This then is our yoke and burden, that we must meet the enemies of Christ and His standards with our controversial questions and answers.

It is wearisome to find oneself often in conflict with others whoever they are and its natural to wish for an end to it and to long for peace and quiet - but we must fight the good fight and remember that whatever it costs us, it can never compare with the cost of the sacrifice that was endured lovingly and willingly for us two thousand years ago.

Sister Helen Brady

A Question for the Advocates of Clause V

Have you ever thought that if Adam and Eve had borne children before their transgression the flesh of those children would be the same as that of Cain and Abel?

Dr Thomas said there was no change in the flesh of Adam and Eve when they sinned and that it required no miracle to bring about their death. Thus opposing the view of Robert Roberts whose theory violated scripture in his book “The Visible Hand of God” and Clause V of the B.A.S.F. If the Roberts theory is the basis of your faith you haven’t a leg to stand on; and if you prefer numbers and the social life in your community rather than the Truth necessary for your salvation why shut the door on those who are not aware of Christadelphian history and by your misrepresentation and false accusation keep it locked away from them, even yourselves being ignorant of the true facts?

Like the troubled sea casting up mire and dirt so the Truth of God was turned into fables after the deaths of the true servants of God and His Son as the Apostle Paul said would happen. Dr Thomas entered into such a scene as this mixture of doctrine and with all his efforts to find truth made many mistakes some of

which he later corrected unwittingly I think in Eureka, where in a few words he wrote the meaning of Redemption as follows – “Redemption is release for a ransom; all who become God’s servants have been released from a former Lord by purchase, the Purchaser is God and the ransom paid is the precious life in the blood of the Lord Jesus as of a Lamb without spot or blemish.”

The former lord is Sin personified as a bondmaster to whom Adam sold himself by transgression of divine law so that all in his loins were sold under sin as St Paul recognised where, in Galatians he wrote, “The scripture hath concluded all under sin that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to all that believe. This is why God’s Grace was made to abound.

What I have quoted from Dr Thomas and St Paul sets at nought the Robert Roberts theory of defiled condemned flesh. Both Dr Thomas and St Paul show it to be a legal matter of being under Sin or under Righteousness of Christ. (Dr Thomas could see that St Paul was teaching the legal matter of being under Sin or under Righteousness of Christ). It requires release from one master to be under the other. The Nazarene teaching has expanded from what I have quoted which is the kernel of the Atoning work of God in His Son and unless you understand it you will continue to abide in the error of defiled condemned flesh which is foreign to scripture.

Yet when Dr Thomas held this error he stated that “Jesus cleansed his ‘altar body’ by the means of shedding his blood.” This was quoted in the Ellwood ecclesia by a lecturer over fifty years ago when I was a marked man for disfellowship undecided what to do, resign or remain. The quoted statement of Dr Thomas made up my mind – I and my wife resigned; one managing member obstructing me from giving the members my reason for doing so as it would make the managing brethren a laughing stock. His words; they were not even aware or consulted. This same member was presiding and saw the look on my face when the lecturer quoted the ‘Altar body’ theory of Dr Thomas; Christadelphians at that time seemed afraid to question Dr Thomas’s views especially in the matter of why Jesus said “touch me not” to Mary Magdalene. It was considered Jesus was unclean when coming from the tomb and Mary would be unclean if she had touched Jesus. So a reason had to be found and came in the added words, “Touch me not for I have not yet ascended to my Father’s nature.”

How does it look today? How did the bloodless body already cleansed by the loss of blood come from the tomb and not be in the Father’s nature? There was no doubt about it, His body was never unclean and He came forth in Spirit nature flesh and bones. Even Lazarus came forth by the power of God with blood still in his veins but Jesus had no blood in His because the life in it had been to pay the debt of sin.

The Dr did make mistakes in his grasp for Truth and perhaps no one with anymore light than he to read his matter and correct it. Robert Roberts made matters worse with Clause V of the B.A.S.F. which is in opposition of the Dr’s statement that “There was no change in the nature of Adam when he transgressed, left to himself as God made him he would have died as with all animal creation returned to the dust eventually without any modification to his nature. That statement is correct and in harmony with Genesis but not with Clause V.

Please get your facts and position right before you campaign on a false basis.

Brother Phil Parry. 26.06. 2008.

Ernest Brady in reference to the word “substitution” wrote:-

“As regards the instant and automatic hostility which is aroused in Christadelphian breasts by the word “substitution” I am obliged to agree with her (reference to a letter received) and she may indeed be right in her judgment that it would be best not to use it, but I am not sure. Personally, I feel that if it is a word which properly conveys what we mean then we ought to use it where it is appropriate and not be over-concerned with their reaction to it. My own experience indicates that when people are really interested in finding out

the truth they are not going to be offended or put off by a word whatever its overtones. When I use the word I am always careful to explain that Jesus was a substitute in the sense that he suffered himself to be put to death in the stead of Adam; that this is in accordance with the sacrificial principle, and that we do not believe in substitutionary punishment. God was not punishing the innocent in order to free the guilty; He was giving, in and through His own Son, a life of His own for the life that was lost. This is the principle of redemption, buying back for an equivalent price and as long as they regard natural death as the penalty of sin and fail to appreciate that what was lost in Eden was the legal right to life, people can never understand the atonement. If they would only see, instead of the implantation of sin in the flesh, a sentence of death; instead of the imposition of corruptibility, the condemnation of life, they would realise why Jesus had to have life in a sense which we do not; that he retained his right to his life by perfect obedience and then chose voluntarily to give it as the price of redemption; and they would not stumble over the word substitution.”

From the Bible Truth Alive forum

ATONEMENT MODELS

Dear all at Bible Truth Alive,

I have now for a while researched various atonement models and I am sure you will agree that to appreciate the sacrifice of Christ one must understand what constitutes sin.

A paper I recently read very neatly categorised sin as follows:

1. Pathological or ontological
2. Moral or Deontic
3. Relational

How each atonement model differs depends on the degree of emphasis or weight given by it to one or more of these components.

And it's interesting to note that those who follow the idea of "original sin" (i.e. pathological) place less emphasis on the moral but more on the "blood" aspect of Christ's sacrifice. On the other hand those who follow an Exemplary model (Aberlard) place less on the pathological component of Christ's sacrifice but more on his obedient life (Deontic). At the more extreme Moral end the pathological is given zero treatment in a Pelagian atonement theory. As a key indicator the Moral extreme is perceived to be weak when addressing the blood/death sacrifice of Christ.

Although I can think of least one atonement model that places undue emphasis on the relational aspect of sin (i.e. our separation both individually and corporately from God) we tend to think that the relational aspect of sin is necessarily the outcome of either the moral or pathological aspects of sin (or even both). Nevertheless it seems to me that all the major atonement models have big flaws.

The idea that 'sin is inherent in human flesh' as an outcome of Adam's transgression must necessarily (when extended to it's logical conclusion) impinge upon the very principle of free will. Obviously under this pathological atonement model the corruption of the flesh represents both a physical as well as a mental corruption. How then (it could be asked) is anyone capable of understanding sin and therefore the salvic value of Christ's sacrifice if they are incapable of comprehending truth in the first instance?

Ignoring a rational-based approach to faith, the pathological impact on the principle of free will seems to me to be one of the hallmarks of fundamentalist Christianity and hence their obsessions with the overpowering influence of the Devil and human nature on the one hand and God and the Holy Spirit on the other. Under such an arrangement man is nothing more than a puppet with God or Satan pulling the strings. It is also hugely pre-occupied with the death and blood of Christ paying little regard to the exemplary aspects of Christ's obedience even 'unto death' for believers to follow. The moral aspects of the atonement appears to

take a backseat and yet are we not extolled in various parts of Scripture to ‘carry our own crosses’ or ‘to work out our own salvation’?

On the other hand the Exemplary model seems to place too much emphasis on the earthly example given to us in the Life of Christ but this meets with strong opposition at various levels. Paul says that by ‘his death we are reconciled’ yet much more so ‘by his life we are saved’. It would appear Yeshua’s glorified life is the focus here and not his earthly one. The redemptive or salvic emphasis on the ‘blood sacrifice of Christ’ or, and his Death, is blatantly missing or greatly diminished in Exemplarist diction. Another key indicator of the Exemplarist viewpoint would be their tendency towards a more legalistic and obedience vocab when defining the believer’s, as it were, obligations to live the ‘first-rate’ (ie. holy, clean and righteous) life. Where an atonement model stresses the Moral component more than the pathological it seems to tend towards a legalistic lifestyle and so some have branded it ‘self righteous’ for assuming any kind of righteousness can be attributed to human effort alone. On the other hand a greater emphasis on the pathological aspect of the atonement tends towards an absolute dependence on the divine and is construed by some to invite the excuse for licentiousness. Perhaps a more appropriate description of this in practice would be ‘All grace and no effort’.

It is perhaps that very last point that raised for me a interesting but poignant question:-- “If we are obligated to live first-rate lives then surely God is obligated to allow us the opportunity to live first-rate lives”. (NB. the words are quoted but defines the strategic question so well).

This question is meaningful not only for our perspective on the various models of atonement but on how nearly all religions address the essential way in which the world is and how the human soul can be rescued from the problem of evil that besets them. Yep you read me right! Whether we are speaking of a dualistic Manichean religion or an Eastern/Middle Eastern faith like Buddhism and Islam where good and evil are as natural as day and night - all concede some prevalence of the latter over the former.

But ignoring non-Abrahamic faiths for now (unless you think Yin Yang and Tai Chi can be brought into the mix), I am sure everyone here will agree that the Pelagian model follows pretty much along the same lines as the Jewish and Islamic beliefs on the nature of human beings and that, in particular, we are all very much capable of heeding divine commandments.

This therefore suggests that obedience is SIMPLY a matter of choice and that the Law of Moses (or and edicts of Allah) has and continues to have salvic power even with Christ in the picture as is the case with some Messianic groups. In this regard therefore God appears to afford us some opportunity to live first-rate lives in that we have no excuse for not being able to obey His laws. This seems perhaps plausible even from the NT perspective given the Jewishness of the Gospel and certain inferences in the NT which has given prejudicial notoriety to the Jerusalem synagogue of Peter, Barnabas and Jacob etc (well at least and rather unfortunately in the eyes of the paganised Christians the Jerusalem synagogue was nothing more than Ebonite sect). Moreover the leanings within certain sectors of Christendom under the banner of the “New Perspective” perhaps reinforces the idea that the Pauline viewpoint was never ever a polemic between ‘Grace’ and ‘Law’ but rather on the acceptance of Gentiles who were once without the “Law” but now equally and rightfully sharers in the commonwealth of Israel by virtue of the grace of God in their righteous faith. This New Perspective incidentally is termed by some as “proto-Pelagian”, which of course in Christadelphian terminology is called ‘Clean Flesh’ theology.

Yet despite the pros of this viewpoint it does not seem to address the question raised above satisfactorily. Contextually speaking if we are all obligated to live the first-rate life then surely God is obligated to provide us with the opportunity to live that first-rate life. How does the Exemplary or Pelagian viewpoint account for the countless millions (men, women and children) who have died never knowing the Gospel or for that matter understanding it in the wake of geographic and cultural location, language difficulties, education or at worse a genetic disease of the mind to mention a few?

Surely an honest appraisal of the real world suggests that not all men are born equal or for that matter very long. It seems the only thing all men are equally subject to is death and yet Scripture speaks of a connection that exists between death and sin. Under the Pelagian model death is a “Very Good” aspect of the Adamic

race and yet the NT speaks of it as being the “Last enemy”. Such anomalies exist both in terms of the Scriptural data and through casual observation or do they?

Back at the other end of the spectrum one could also see the tremendous difficulties in a model that espouses the ideas that:

1. We have a fallen nature (beyond our control) inherited by virtue of a man 6,000 years ago and this nature makes it easy to sin.
2. There is also a supernatural angel that goes around tempting us to do wrong.
3. Given that the odds are heavily stacked against us we are more than likely destined to be consigned to eternal torment in a fiery place called hell.

Given that Christadelphians necessarily reject clauses 2 and 3 we are still left with the unfair condition of the ‘tainted’ or more blatant ‘Sinful flesh’ state. For Christendom the doctrinal meanings behind “expiation and propitiation” may give them some resolve (as they accept all 3 clauses). But we know better because such meanings were never apparent in the Hebrew and Greek words they were supposed to translate and at any rate any honest Christian who believes in such things should simply convert to Calvinism and that would be the end of it. And yet the Representative model (or at least its generally portrayed interpretation) leaves us (Christadelphians) also in a precarious position. If Christ was truly representative of mankind in sin flesh then there exists for us a logical paradox. In that whilst we are tainted in the body the mind somehow is still capable of comprehending divine truth. Is this sensible? Given that Christ when he walked the earth addressed the FLESH illnesses afflicting humans in both physical and mental terms? Scripturally it would seem we must be either one or the other but not a hybrid of both. Whatever spin we prefer to take on this matter we are still left with the problem that salvation is available only to a select few (i.e. those with the ‘right mind’ and perhaps even with the ‘language’ to understand it). Therefore God does not provide us all with the opportunity to live the first-rate life. Or does it?

Perhaps somewhere in this model there exists scope to concede that deep and latent in the human psyche there exists an aspect of the ‘image of God’ human beings which in spite of the **corruption** is apt to recognise at least the ‘need for God’ to make us strong. Without this kind of concession it can not be said that the Representative model (as it is generally conveyed) allows us all with the opportunity to live first rate lives.

One might argue that the whole foregoing question is a false dichotomy because God is not obligated to do anything. But such a statement would deprecate or make senseless the Biblical meaning of a Covenant in which both adhering parties have an obligation to the terms and conditions of it. Viz a vie - the Israelites were afforded God’s protection and guidance in return for their obedience to His Torah. They became His people and He became their God. The same covenantal relationship can be said therefore to exist for the believers in Christ.

As an aside; the historical facts would suggest that the interpretation of the atonement has been influenced by popularism and cultural changes. For a long time the Ransom sacrifice held sway followed by the Catholic Satisfaction theory. The major difference between the two being the one who received payment for the redemption of man (i.e. Satan or God). Neither attempts appear to have made much sense but with the long time establishment of the feudal system in Europe emphasis shifts towards God-payment with a ‘Penal Restitution’ model and as a reaction to Romish corruption there developed also the Reformed Penal Substitution model. You don’t need much imagination to see the connection between the feudal honour system and the idea that God’s honour was impinged by Adam’s transgression and is therefore a penalty that needs to be paid. Yet again and perhaps in rejection of such a petty-God-like syndrome arises the Moral and Non-violent theories advocated by Liberal Christianity particularly in the wake of Postmodernity. While all this may seem impressive but non-essential information it actually does reflect the way Christianity has behaved downright cruelly and violently for the past 1800 years. Not only is ‘blood’, ‘blood’, ‘blood’ in honour of their petty deity a favourite past time with them but history shows that Christianity and tolerance are by necessity mutually exclusive things.

If the inherent problems of Original Sin, the Trinity and the incarnate God the Son are outrightly manifest when compared to Scripture because they are pagan and not Jewish in origin then is it possible that the

answer to the foregoing question lies in a Jewish reckoning of Mosaic Law and the manner of its sacrificial system? Could it be the 'Blood' atonement is really a misnomer seeing that the truest sacrifice a person can make for God is to offer a 'broken heart and a contrite spirit'? A lesson that is as much Jewish as it is NT.

Is it possible that we have for too long ignored the Jewish viewpoint on the Chattat/Asharam and Olah offerings in the OT and the idea that only unintentional sins could be atoned for at the altar and on Yom Kippur for both the High priest and the nation of Israel? And what ramifications would there be if we suddenly reviewed our traditionally held views on the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 and the oft sung references to his 'stripes' and 'wounding' for our transgressions in light of National-Messianic identification of Israel? Would it cast a whole new and meaningful spin on the Christ sacrifice?

Lots to think about I know but here's some more thoughts perhaps worth thinking about and open for discussion. What again of first-rate life? Should this be confined only to the capacity to obey? What ALSO about the capacity to believe? To obey is surely predicated upon a right belief.

If the provision or the opportunity to live first rate life is obligatory on the part of God in return for our obedience then:

1. Why do some or perhaps even a few of us have the capacity to believe while others do not?
2. If we are born by default to interact and understand a reality perceived only by the senses then why is the 'better' world and the Spirit conveniently hidden or invisible from us?
3. If this life is nothing more than a test of our faith then why are some if not all of us kept ignorant of the rules at the very least beforehand?

It is interesting to note that Mormonism thinks to resolve a question here by making up a pre-existence (i.e. the spirit world) where human souls expressed their desire to be born into this life through free choice. Moreover they were instructed or made aware of the rules of the game before being sent to earth to be born. This theory while not Biblical certainly answers in part their god's provision of an 'opportunity' to live the first-rate life. Unfortunately it all falls over because once the human is born he/she loses all memory of what was known in the pre-existence and for their troubles they still get the tainted nature to blur their senses further.

Also there exists a certain brand of Gnosticism, which can be said (at least by those who follow a re-incarnation mode of it) to provide some answers:

1. The god of this world is not the true God hence this world like him is imperfect and riddled with evil.
2. Human beings can not perceive the 'better' world because they are under some great deception.
3. The way to break into the 'better' world and the true God is through a mystical knowledge that requires no intellectual prowess or gender-racial-and age distinction.
4. Re-incarnation continues until the human is introduced to gnosis and therefore breaks out from this world to the better world.

While I certainly don't believe in this brand of religion it at least sets out (for them) some answers. What nevertheless resounds or echoes from the pages of Scripture when taking into consideration the Adamic transgression and it's pathological, moral and or relational impact on us is the notion that historically no man can be independent or separate from the historical condition that precedes them nor the effects past actions have on us in our current time. Whether we are Evolutionary atheists or God fearing creationists neither of us can say we have control of the circumstances or conditions that influence the way we are. We are either way subject to something that is beyond our control.

Well I think I raised the beginnings of something that could be discussed here.

All points of view are welcome. My post above does not reflect my actual atonement viewpoint but is intended to stimulate discussion and perhaps elicit answers to would be criticisms or arguments against your atonement beliefs whatever that might be.

Afa.

In response:-

Dear Afa,

I do not think I am in any way qualified to discuss your article as a whole, although fifty years ago I attended evening classes at the Birmingham Bible Institute on the history of the Christian Churches. This left me wondering why none of the churches believed the Bible! Apart from that I have read very few articles relating to Atonement issues, so if I may I would like to limit my comments to what I understand best and feel most important.

I believe you know the understanding of the Nazarene Fellowship with regard to the Atonement but for the sake of others on the forum who may not be familiar with it I would like to go through a few matters regarding this.

But first, let us pause a moment and realise that God is Love; that He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to die for us. That Jesus said, I and my Father are one, and, we should honour the Son even as we honour the Father. In all He said and did Jesus revealed His Father's love for mankind and finally said "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another as I have loved you." These and many such thoughts must be foremost in our minds as we consider the Atonement – the work of God in Christ – lest, if we isolate the 'mechanics' of the law, it may leave us feeling a little 'cold' towards God, failing to appreciate all that lay underneath the purpose of law. But from the beginning, law has been essential in order to give those who will the opportunity of giving to God the praise and thanksgiving which are His due.

We believe Jesus died in place of Adam and in doing so purchased the whole human race (Ephesians 1:14); had Adam been put to death in the day he transgressed God's commandment, there would be no human race. But an animal was slain to provide Adam with a covering, a covering which was both literal (because he was now ashamed of his nakedness) and symbolic of the fact that his sin was covered over - until the slaying of the Lamb of God when that sin was taken away (or Atoned for). This merciful deliverance by God enabled Adam and Eve to continue their lives and beget offspring .

(It has been said that God would not change His mind, and that if Adam didn't die "in the day" then the serpent was right and God was wrong. It matters nothing whether the serpent was right or wrong but what matters is whether God was right to show mercy to Adam and Eve in sparing their lives. "Mercy rejoices against judgment" (James 2:13). (Consider also Ezekiel 18:20-24).

The laying down of Jesus' life, i.e., His natural life which is in the blood, was for "the sin of the world" as John the Baptist declared (John 1:29). Here "Sin" is singular and refers to Adam's sin.

Having died in the place of Adam and purchased the whole of the human race, Jesus was not only in the position of Mediator between God and man for the present age, He also redeemed the transgressions that were under the first covenant as we read in Hebrews 9:15, "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." It was necessary that it should be this way as Paul explains in Acts 13:38 - "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man (Jesus) is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." So all those transgressions which had been earlier 'covered over' were now 'taken away'. This is how Jesus "brought life (*zoe*) and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10) for there could be no gospel without His willing sacrifice.

There is of course the need for disciples of Jesus walk in His paths and follow in His footsteps – "Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:13,14).

Regarding some of the other points in your dissertation:

There is no hint in scripture of flesh being sinful – this is derived from the doctrine of Original Sin introduced into the Roman Catholic church and followed later by the prejudice of translators.

There is no hint of mankind being puppets pulled by strings by God or Satan for we are able to live first-rate lives (i.e. holy, clean and righteous). There is no commandment that we cannot keep perfectly.

But self-righteousness is excluded; we have absolute dependence on the efficacy of the work of God in Christ to keep open the way of life (zoe).

Our truest sacrifice is to offer a ‘broken heart and contrite spirit’ for these God will not despise. Psalm 34:18, - “The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.” (Also Psalm 51:17; Isaiah 66:2, etc.). These are naturally closely associated with the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving.

Very early on in the Christian era, as in the Mosaic, I think what was lost sight of was the view that God will not let sinners live for ever; it is inconceivable that God will tolerate sinful behaviour indefinitely but after having given man many opportunities to repent and if those opportunities are spurned, there is only one end left – the second death - which is the wages of sin. In putting this view forward it assumes the opportunity of living the ‘first-rate life’ by exercising our will as Jesus did. But this opportunity has never been given to all; indeed the majority of mankind have not known of it. Does this make God unfair? From man’s viewpoint it may, but Jesus gave us an indication of God’s view of this matter when He 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 (John 7:16). Bearing in mind that God is not willing that any should perish, the significant point is this - If any man will do God’s will, he will know of Jesus doctrine of salvation. If we say God is not fair because countless millions have never had a chance to come to Him through ignorance or lack of opportunity, then are we not questioning the power of God and the integrity of Jesus?

But what is the end for this “majority”? It is natural death. It cannot be the second death which is the wages of sin for although all others have been ignorant of God they have also not been under His laws or commandments and so are not reckoned as or treated as transgressors. Their end is the same as the beasts of the field.

You ask, “...Contextually speaking if we are all obligated to live the first-rate life then surely God is obligated to provide us with the opportunity to live that first-rate life. How does the Exemplary or Pelagian viewpoint account for the countless millions (men, women and children) who have died never knowing the Gospel or for that matter understanding it in the wake of geographic and cultural location, language difficulties, education or at worse a genetic disease of the mind to mention a few?

Surely an honest appraisal of the real world suggests that not all men are born equal or for that matter very long. It seems the only thing all men are equally subject to is death and yet Scripture speaks of a connection that exists between death and sin. Under the Pelagian model death is a “Very Good” aspect of the Adamic race and yet the NT speaks of it as being the “Last enemy.” Such anomalies exist both in terms of the Scriptural data and through casual observation, - or do they?”

No, they don’t; there is no anomaly here for Scripture gives us the answers every time. Death is indeed the last enemy, but it is necessary and good for its purpose; - the sleep of death allows that the faithful may rest from their labours, or in the case of the unfaithful, that they may receive their wages; and for the uninformed and unaware, death is but the natural end to their lives.

I don’t think ‘Blood’ atonement is really a misnomer for this was achieved by Jesus. He was brought into the world to freely give His lifeblood before He became King – “Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice” (John 18:37). But before He became King He was the Lamb of God. No one had a greater respect for God’s word than did Jesus and it was indispensable that Jesus lay down His life for us, which He freely did, for the joy set before Him in bringing many sons to glory (Hebrews 2:10 & 12 & 2).

Finally you ask *“What again of the first-rate life? Should this be confined only to the capacity to obey? What also about the capacity to believe? To obey is surely predicated upon right belief.”*

In answer to this point we must remember that Jesus said – “It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me...” (John 6:45). All who will do God’s will are taught of God, and all things work for the good of those who love God.

“The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty” (Numbers 14:18).

I pray these thoughts may be helpful.

With Love in Jesus. Russell.

Exhortation

Dear Brethren and Sisters, Love and Greetings in Christ Jesus.

There are times when we are able to speak for the Truth to our orthodox friends and have regretted that there is no meeting nearby to which we could invite them to hear us further, or a suitable pamphlet free from contention and strife, stating a few facts of the Kingdom and the Name.

Why are all these facilities possessed by our Christadelphian friends? Of course, there are Christadelphian meetings where a good framework of God’s plan of salvation is told, but the filling in is all wrong; therefore we feel it safer to leave our friends with the message we have delivered trusting that their mind will be occupied by it.

No doubt some of our friends would soon be shocked at some of the things proclaimed. I met a friend a few days ago who was very emphatic upon the purity of Jesus – “He was no son of Adam, and was free from the claim of sin” – very cheering to find. But talking together further my friend believed too much. Jesus, in his opinion was from everlasting; He was present when it was said “Let us make man in our image” – words from the Holy Trinity; then in some mysterious way He became a babe. Strange that men with big brains can yield to this – how much better if religious people paid more heed to what is written.

The Gospel is so simple and the preaching of the Cross appears to some to be foolishness, and much filthy gain is got out of it by making it a mystery. “The Almighty immortal God hath died for men” are words of a hymn I used to sing when a Wesleyan Methodist.

Always the impossible for salvation, it is also impossible for salvation is we hold that Jesus had sins of His own in His flesh to atone for – how could He make both one and break down the middle wall of partition? No unclean thing could enter the veil, and I take it that “sin in our flesh” is a state of uncleanness and a blemish.

As a Christadelphian I was always proud of the many well educated among us, such as doctors, professors, and scientists, kind and good men, but who were unable to give a reasonable and sensible talk upon the Sacrifice of Christ. If Jesus had sin, if He suffered all the effects at Adam’s transgression - even the death that passed upon all men - there was no sacrifice. I take it they still hold to this view.

When they come to their true senses and see what they are losing, to be without a sacrifice and delete such errors of doctrine, we will have one big fraternal gathering.

With Fraternal Love. F. Skinner.

Notes on the booklet “Correspondence between Dr Thomas and Lancelot Burrus 1855”

On re-reading the booklet, “Correspondence between Dr Thomas and Lancelot Burrus” I found the view of Burrus to be in line with Clause V of the B.A.S.F. on the matter of creation and Adam’s transgression, with Dr Thomas’ reply making him out of fellowship with Robert Roberts and Clause V of the B.A.S.F.

Yet Dr Thomas failed to explain the correct penalty for Adam’s sin by his side-tracking of what God told Adam would be the penalty if he partook of the Tree of knowledge of good and evil.

God did not say Adam would be driven from the garden to bar him from the Tree of Life and allow his corruptible nature to take its course and return to the dust; no God said, “In the day you eat thereof you will surely die.”

Mr Burrus praised Dr Thomas for his knowledge of The Law and Testimony but Dr Thomas ignored Law in this case because of his misconception of St Paul’s teaching of the death by sin in Romans 5:12; it being a legal penalty of inflicted or judicial death as a sentence upon Adam, a man already of a dying nature as Dr Thomas had stated in his reply.

By the grace of God Edward Turney realised this belief of Dr. Thomas but was accused of teaching falsehood by R. Roberts. Furthermore R. Roberts invented a view that Turney never taught or believed.

As an ex-Christadelphian, and a Nazarene for 56 years I have found no doctrine expressed by mouth or writings that would cause me to change my views and those of my late Brethren and Sisters and also the present ones who have held fast the profession of their faith without wavering.

Read this booklet and our other booklets, and then examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith.

Dr Thomas is said to be the founder of the Christadelphian sect but is now divided on certain aspects, but worst of all, they are divided on his scriptural and correct view that Adam’s nature was not changed on account of his transgression of God’s law.

This view of changed nature of Adam and all creation held by Lancelot Burrus was rejected by Dr Thomas as you may read in his reply, yet it is the belief of the majority of Christadelphians and a Clause in their statement of faith to be accepted for fellowship.

I read more of the Dr’s writings when I left the Christadelphian community and it astounds me that those who claim to have read them could not have read them effectively but they would rather believe Robert Roberts and his teaching of the Apostate doctrine of changed, defiled nature through a miracle of God.

On the resurrection matter, if the Dr had omitted from the first resurrection those who had turned like hogs to their wallowing in the mire, a statement by him which I read somewhere in his writings would have been according to the inspired scripture as follows: “I believe in the resurrection of the just at the coming of Christ and the unjust a thousand years later” (Dr Thomas).

This is in harmony with the teaching of Jesus, of Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 and Thessalonians but it is God and His Son who decide who are the just and the unjust. Not the B.A.S.F.

“Raised incorruptible” can refer to none but the just.

Brother Phil Parry

THE NATURE OF MAN

An extract from the Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come. Dated Feb. 1858 by the Editor

In regard to Adam's position anterior to the fall, we would remark, that there are two natures, the animal and the spiritual.

We call the animal human, because it comes from humus, the ground, and returns thither. The other nature is called "Spirit of Holiness," or spirit of a holy state, which is exactly opposite to the human.

Spirit in a holy state is an incorruptible, glorious, powerful body - dust, organized by, and combined with spirit, so intensely as to become spirit, as it is written, "that which is born of the spirit is spirit." "Spirit of Holiness," or HOLY SPIRIT NATURE, covered by the name of EHYEH. Now, human nature, or ground soul, is terminable, that is to say, left to itself, will wear out and return again to its original elements. This is inseparable from its constitution. Hence all ground souls of the animal kingdom all die at earlier or later periods, although they none of them sinned. It is then, the nature of ground soul, at some time or other, cease to be.

If therefore Adam, whose nature was not Holy Spirit nature (for if it had been he could not have sinned, for the Divine Nature does not sin, and cannot sin against Divine Power,) had been left to himself in paradise, as he was from the day he was created to the day he sinned; if he never had sinned, he would some day or other have wasted out of life.

Under the hypothesis, therefore, of not having sinned, we may say that if he had not been permitted to eat of the Tree of Lives, he would have died. But it is not to be inferred from this supposition that he was mortal, in the sense of being certain to die. His future state was conditional. If he ate of the forbidden tree he should surely die. The certainty was made consequent upon the eating. We may therefore, say that the certainty of his condition was not established until he sinned, and that, in this view, Eve could not have said to Adam, "We are not mortal" or, "We are immortal."

Their horizon being bounded by the Eden Law, nevertheless, abstractly from this, they could each have put the other to death, as far as the dying quality of their nature was concerned. "But," asks an inquirer, "suppose Adam and Eve had not transgressed, what then?" Then one of two things must have resulted. If they had been left to themselves, they would still have died; if they had not been left to themselves, they would have lived. In the latter event, something must have been done to enable them to live for ever; in the former event nothing required to be done.

They did transgress and nothing more was necessary than an act of exclusion from the Tree of Lives. Their nature was left to itself, and they died like other ground souls. If they had not transgressed, the necessity in their case would have been a change of nature, a transformation of the human nature. To have "been the subject of this, it would have been necessary to eat of the Tree of Lives. If this had been permitted, they would have been changed in the twinkling of an eye and the terminable nature would have been, swallowed up of life. If Adam had been created immortal, there would have been no occasion for a Tree of Lives in Paradise. For if he had been placed under law, the object could only have been to abase him; for had he lived obedient, life could have been no reward, seeing that he already possessed it.

It is evident, then, that mortality and immortality were set before him as a matter of destiny, which he was allowed to determine for himself, according to certain specifications, as if it had been said, "Thy nature is human, and, therefore, terminable. If thou wilt obey my voice thy nature shall be changed into Holy Spirit nature, which lives for ever; but if thou wilt not obey, then thy human nature may take its course, and unto dust thou shall return." The Eden Law he transgressed, was given that he might live, for though the penalty of going back into the ground was attached to transgression, yet obedience to the same, would, doubtless, have resulted in commendation and permission to eat of the Tree of Life, that they might live for ever.

United Nations Security Council resolution 1701:

United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon According to Security Council Resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978) of 19th March 1978, UNIFIL was established to:

1. Confirm the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Southern Lebanon;
2. Restore international; peace and security;
3. Assist the Government of Lebanon in ensuring the return of its effective authority in the area.

According to Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) of 11th August 2006, UNIFIL, in addition to carrying out its mandate under resolutions 425 and 426, shall:

1. Monitor the cessation of hostilities;
2. Accompany and support the Lebanese armed forces as they deploy throughout the South, including along the Blue Line, as Israel withdraws its armed forces from Lebanon;
3. Coordinate its activities referred to in the preceding paragraph (above) with the Government of Lebanon and the Government of Israel;
4. Extend its assistance to help and ensure humanitarian access to civilian populations and the voluntary and safe return of displaced persons;
5. Assist the Lebanese armed forces in taking steps towards the establishment between the Blue Line and the Litani river of a free of any armed personnel, assets and weapons other than those of the Government of Lebanon and of UNIFIL deployed in this area
6. Assist the Government of Lebanon, at its request, in securing its borders and other entry points to prevent the entry in Lebanon of arms or related materiel.

By this resolution, the Council also authorised UNIFIL to take all necessary action in areas of deployment of its forces and as it deems within its capabilities, to ensure that its area of operations is not utilized for hostile activities of any kind, to resist attempts by forceful means to prevent it from discharging its duties under the mandate of the Security Council; and to protect United Nations personnel, facilities, installations and equipment, ensure the security and freedom of movement of United Nations personnel, humanitarian workers and, without prejudice to the responsibility of the Government of Lebanon, to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence.

Defence officials: UN Resolution 1701 on the verge of collapse United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701, passed to stop the Second Lebanon War, is on the verge of collapse as Syria continues to rearm Hizbullah. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert convened the cabinet to discuss the rearmament of Hizbullah since the Second Lebanon War and to discuss ways to curb the flow of weapons from Syria to the guerrilla group. During the meeting, the ministers were briefed by Military Intelligence on Hizbullah's rehabilitation and preparation for another round of violence with Israel. Defence officials said Israel's only course of action at present was to attempt to place pressure on diplomatic officials from European countries that contribute to UNIFIL. "Syria is rearming Hizbullah at a rapid pace and this is proof that 1701 has completely failed," one official said. By not carrying out their mandate they are potentially laying the groundwork for another round of violence between Israel and Hizbullah. UNIFIL should be much more proactive - more aggressive in going after Hizbullah - in detecting and identifying arms depots. They should be going in there, not just relying on Lebanese armed forces to do so, who often work in collusion with Hizbullah. . . So even in their own interest and for their safety, they should be more proactive and go after Hizbullah, and find a way to control the Israeli-Syrian border."

Hizbullah gets veto power in Lebanon. Lebanon's prime minister formed a national unity Cabinet on Friday after six weeks of wrangling over how to distribute posts among members of the country's Western-backed parliamentary majority and the Hizbullah-led opposition. Plans for the 30-member Cabinet were laid out in an Arab League-brokered deal in May, which also gave Hizbullah and its allies veto power over all government decisions. It gave 16 Cabinet seats to the parliament majority, 11 to the opposition and three to be distributed by the president

Hizbullah personnel have moved into every town and village in southern Lebanon, reinforcing its presence by buying land and using it to build military positions and store its 40,000+ missiles and build missile launchers.

There is as yet no clear indication of what Hizbullah will do; on the one hand, it is now part of the Lebanese government and has veto power in cabinet. Hizbullah is viewed not just as a terrorist group in Lebanon but even more as a political player and opponent of Israel

While the Lebanese Armed Forces are still separate from Hizbullah, they have a common aim in claiming territory from Israel. The LAF have built a road and set up military positions within 300 metres of the Israeli border in the disputed Shaba Farms area, a 20 square kilometre area which Israel took from Syria in 1967 but now claimed by Hizbullah. Syria and Hizbullah have not settled their dispute over ownership and so it remains with Israel. However, it is the Lebanese armed forces who have built the road. No doubt Hizbullah will use it in due time for they claim they are in a state of war with Israel.

A cease-fire began on 19th June between Hamas and Israel. Hamas agreed to no more attacks from the Gaza Strip on Israel in exchange for no Israeli retaliation and the opening of crossings between Israel and Gaza for the purpose of providing humanitarian aid. However a few rockets have still been fired from the Gaza strip into Western Negev though Hamas has denied responsibility saying they were fired by the Al-Aksa Brigade. One cargo crossing into Gaza was closed again because of the attacks, otherwise Israel has made no other retaliation. If the cease-fire lasts, Israel will further ease restrictions at cargo crossings. If progress is made, Israel has said it will consider reopening the Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt. The truce is for six months during which time a new settlement is being worked out

A large scale Israeli Air force exercise in June was believed to be a warning to Iran to halt their nuclear weapons program and rumours continue to circulate that Iran may find itself a target of a military strike aimed at destroying its nuclear capabilities. In response Iran has stepped up deterrent efforts by moving ballistic missiles into launch positions and targeting various sites in Israel, including Israel's Dimona nuclear plant. The missiles have a range in excess of 1,250 miles

Iran's Revolutionary Guard has warned "Should a confrontation erupt between us and the enemy, the scope will definitely reach the oil issue" and Iran will take control of the Strait of Hormuz through which 60% of the world's oil passes. "Oil prices will dramatically increase. This is one of the factors deterring the enemy from taking military action against the Islamic Republic of Iran," one official said.

A bitter anniversary for Sderot. 10,000 Kassam rockets have been fired at Sderot, a town of about 20,000 people, in the last seven years. Sderot is less than three miles from the Gaza border which means people have only 15 seconds warning to take cover. While causing millions of dollars in damage, remarkably only 13 people have been killed plus a further 8 people in surrounding communities.

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown visited Israel towards the end of July. In a speech he said that Britain was "a true friend" of Israel, "a friend of difficult times as well as in good times." He told the Knesset (parliament) he believed a hard won and lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians is within their grasp and declared his support for a two-state solution based on 1967 borders with Jerusalem as a capital for both. He told reporters that Britain will always be a genuine friend of Israel, and guaranteed that the Jewish State's security is of top concern for the United Kingdom.

Gordon Brown on Iran, "We say with one voice: It is totally abhorrent for the president of Iran to call for Israel to be wiped from the map of the world... Our country will continue to lead, with the United States and our European partners, in our determination to prevent an Iranian nuclear weapons program... To those who question Israel's very right to exist, and threaten the lives of its citizens through terror we say: The people of Israel have a right to live here, to live freely and to live in security."

Barack Obama, the U.S. Democratic presidential contender also visited Israel towards the end of July. At his meeting with President Shimon Peres he said "For the most part of 60 years you have been deeply involved in this miracle (of Israel) that has blossomed and we are extremely grateful, not just as Americans

but as world citizens to your outstanding service to your country.” He also said that as president he would preserve the close ties between the United States and Israel, and Israel’s security would be a top priority in his administration. “I’m here on this trip to reaffirm the special relationship between Israel and the United States and my abiding commitment to Israel’s security and my hope that I can serve as an effective partner, whether as a US senator or as president.”

Obama also met with the Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and other PA officials in Ramallah. He said that if elected as President in November he would work seriously to boost the peace process in the Middle East. He said that he would like to see concrete steps on the ground by both Israel and the Palestinians so as to give Palestinians a sense of hope regarding peace. At the meeting, Abbas reiterated his commitment to the peace process and the continuation of the negotiations with Israel. A Palestinian spokesman said that Obama came to the region only to learn about the problems and listen to the views of the different parties. PA Negotiator Saeb Erekat described the Obama-Abbas meeting as “very significant.” He said Abbas briefed Obama on the latest developments surrounding the peace process and outlined “mechanisms” for implementing the Road Map for peace in the Middle East

Israel is planning to build 1,300 homes in the east Jerusalem on the sector which they annexed after capturing it during the Six Day War. This has angered Palestinians who want to establish their capital in east Jerusalem. U.S. Secretary of State, Chondoleezza Rice, supports the Palestinians and says “This is obviously a roadmap obligation that is not being met.” Abbas, President of the Palestinian National Authority who has asked her “to exert real pressure on Israel” to prevent any building in the area. The disagreement is threatening peace talks between the two sides.

Palestinian group to sue UK over Israel. Representatives of the Watanuna Palestinian Youth said the biggest crime the British government committed was when it promised a homeland for the Jewish people in the 1917 Balfour Declaration. The group announced that it plans to demand compensation from the British government for “committing a series of crimes” against the Palestinians. “We hold Britain responsible for the suffering of the Palestinian people over the past 60 years, a spokesman said. The decision to go after the UK government came after a thorough study of all the legal aspects related to Britain’s responsibility for the Palestinians’ catastrophe - the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. Preparations had already begun to file the suit in a British court.

Israeli Health Ministry warns hospitals of possible quake in northern Israel. The Health Ministry has instructed health officials in northern Israel to prepare for the possibility of an earthquake in the region. The alert, is a result of new assessments by a committee that studied seismographic data and concluded that an earthquake in the north of the country is a real possibility.

The water level of Lake Kinneret, which supplies some 25 percent of Israel’s drinking water, has dropped dangerously low. The level of the lake stood at 213 meters below sea level - the lowest level in five years. Below this level water quality falls and the concentration of pollutants rise to endanger the water source. The pumping of water is then prohibited. Israel has still the hottest part of the summer ahead and there is danger of irreversible damage being done to the Lake. Other sources of water are also drying up and while desalination plants are being built it will be several years before they can supply sufficient water for the country’s needs.

How is it, we wonder, Israelis are so confident about their future.

They are in such a vulnerable position their future seems bleak to onlookers. They have natural hardships as well as being vastly outnumbered by those who want to destroy them. If they, as a nation, had faith in God we could understand but for the most part they have little or no faith.

Yet God has a purpose with them. They are His witnesses, and God will yet reveal Himself to the world with great power when Jesus returns to establish His reign from Jerusalem.

Zechariah 12:6-9. “In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem. The LORD also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah. In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.”

Luke 21: 25-28. “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; men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. 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.”

Revelation 22:20,21. “He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

He who sows seeds of kindness enjoys a perpetual harvest.