

The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No 244

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With this Circular Letter we are enclosing

From Eden to Gethsemane

By Andrew Wilson

An Editor of "The Fraternal Visitor" – J.J.Hadley - wrote, "Very loose talk has been indulged in to the effect that Jesus was possessed of an unforfeited or free life, in contrast to the life of other men which is said to be forfeited. This is language foreign to Scripture"

We are pleased the editor has expressed himself so fully as it enables us at once to prescribe for the perplexity of those who accept his understanding.

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Ernest Brady to Dr H.G.Wood

and

Ernest Brady to Dr W.R.Matthews

Dr Wood is the Author of "Belief and Unbelief Since 1850. While Ernest Brady set out his case very clearly, the reply from Dr Wood was somewhat disappointing.

The letter to Dr Matthews, the Dean of St Paul's Cathedral was again very clear and again the reply showed little hope of further discussion. However, there follows a letter from a certain Mr Bath who considered Ernest Brady's letter to be sheer blasphemy!

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Editorial

Dear Sisters, Brothers and Friends,

Loving Greetings. Israel and Israel's prime minister are facing growing criticism at present because of the latter's policies on Jewish settlements in the West Bank. Now there is another pressing problem with controversial proposals to redefine who has the right to be called a Jew. The row has left Benjamin Netanyahu as an unwilling arbiter in a stand-off of potentially historic proportions between American Jewish leaders and senior figures in his own coalition. There are fears that the dispute could lead to a major schism in world Jewry and the prime minister is facing a choice between further isolating his country or the possible collapse of his government. At the heart of the controversy is the age-old question of identity and the growing influence of ultra-orthodox rabbis in Israel, whose views on the subject are often seen as doctrinaire by Jews outside Israel. Evidently matters came to a head earlier this month when a committee in the Knesset, narrowly approved legislation that could result in many foreign Jews being denied the right to settle in Israel.

The so-called "conversion bill", which still has to be passed by the full session of the Israeli parliament before it becomes law has caused fury in the United States.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, a million Russian speaking immigrants have moved to Israel. But because they either had only a Jewish father or married into the faith, almost 350,000 of them are not recognized as Jews in their adopted homeland and that group also includes 90 thousand who were born in Israel. According to Orthodox doctrine, only those whose mothers are Jewish can be officially classed as Jews. Acc Danny Ayalon, the deputy foreign minister, and whose core constituency is Russian speaking, explained that rectifying this anomaly is vital to the future of Israel. Mr Ayalon said "The 350,000 immigrants who are not considered Jews are a national strategic problem that must be solved now or it could tear our society apart".

Mr Ayalon is a senior figure in the Yisrael Beiteinu party and their original proposals were designed to make it easier for Russian speakers to become Jews by allowing a sympathetic rabbi to convert them. But to have any hope of forcing the bill through the Knesset, it had to make a major concession to religious parties by proposing that the ultra-orthodox rabbinate would have ultimate authority on conversions.

The bill prompted a storm of protest in the US, where more than 80 per cent of Jews are non-orthodox. American Jewish leaders fear that the bill could mean conversions performed by American rabbis will not be recognized in Israel thus meaning that new converts might not be allowed to live in the country.

Natan Sharanasky, the former Soviet dissident who is now the powerful chairman of Israel's Jewish Agency, warned that many foreign Jews could end up feeling like second-class members of the faith. "By recognizing Orthodox conversions and not the conversions of other strains of Judaism, it causes diaspora Jews to feel that they are being made illegal" he said.

With Israel facing growing criticism because of Mr Netanyahu's policies on Jewish settlements in the West Bank, there are warnings that the bill could antagonise American Jews whose support for Israel is considered vital. Unable to forge a compromise, Mr Netanyahu this week succeeded in having a Knesset debate on the conversion legislation delayed for six months. But commentators warn that the dispute has merely been postponed rather than resolved.

These problems in Israel remind us of Paul's words in Romans, particularly where he tells us "For I speak to you Gentiles inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles...." "For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in."

Thankfully we do not have to wait upon an earthly government decree for we know our position, and so until all is accomplished we wait, like the Jews whether they believe it, know it or not, until Jesus our longed for Messiah returns.

"For thou art my lamp, O Lord: and the Lord will lighten my darkness. (Samuel 22:9)

Love to all. Helen Brady.

Correspondence between Frank Williment, A New Testament Jew and Ernest Brady

dated June 1957 – and well worth reading again...

Dear Ernest Brady, Greetings.

Copies of two letters - Mr Hall's to you and your reply to him - have recently been passed on to me both of which I have read with interest.

So many varied views are expressed from time to time upon Biblical matters that the results are fairly bewildering; some insist that Adam was made immortal - others mortal, both parties emphasise their own view is right and salvation dependent upon one's accepting it.

Out of this conflicting welter my own faith - New Testament Judaism - was, in God's great mercy, born. This position enables one to form opinions between contestants and yet expend time and labour on other spheres of service.

With some of the Nazarene Fellowship views I can agree, the Federal position of the two Adams in their respective relations to our race gives no difficulty (Romans 5:17-19); 1 Corinthians 15:22). That Christ was in the exclusive moral position to act as a ransom sacrifice for His fellows (Matthew 20:28; Hebrews 9:26) is, if I understand you correctly, another.

We are told, however, by the Spirit in Hebrews 4:15, that Jesus was tempted in all points apart from sin, though James says the reverse. God cannot be tempted of evil.

Where, then, did Jesus obtain a nature that was capable of temptation? Was it a constituent of the life you say He received from God, or did He derive this faculty for suffering (Hebrews 2:18) from the imperfect Jewish mother? If God cannot be tempted, and Jesus could, and was, the exaltation from fleshly to spirit nature (Philippians 2:9) of the latter, provides evidence that Jesus benefited from His own death, which, I gather, is a fact you deny.

The fact that He, the only one of Adam's race who could say "I overcame" (Revelation 5:21), indicates, I submit, in what way the ransom was provided. Jesus laid His spotless character in the scales.

Your varied images of death, too, in the Magazine puzzles me at times; death is the cessation of being (Psalm 146:4, 89:48). Does it matter as to its cause? You say Adam's death, 930 years after his crime, was "natural" death, the real sufferers being the animals slain to provide coverings.

Is there anything to show he was under sentence to die before his transgression?

The appalling position of the nations, Adam's children, lusting for wholesale annihilation, makes your apologies for the ravages of sin-conceived lust (James 1:15) difficult to follow.

Perhaps at your convenience you would be kind enough to write to me.

With kind regards, Frank Williment.

Ernest Brady's reply:

Dear Brother Frank Williment, Thank you for your letter...

It is perfectly true, as you say, that there are many conflicting views expressed on various points, but I do not think we should despair of deciding where the truth lies, for is it not the purpose of God to reveal it to those who seek?

I have much sympathy with your faith which you describe as New Testament Judaism which is a true aspect of the Gospel, but I gather that while you (correctly) emphasise this point, you are in other respects fairly orthodox Christadelphian in your views.

If my impression is correct you will know where and why I must disagree with you and I need not recapitulate.

At least I am pleased to learn that you understand the Federal Principle, and our relationship to the two Adams; in this you are far in front of present-day Christadelphians.

You say that if you understand us correctly we teach that Christ was in an exclusive moral position to act as a ransom for His fellows.

I should disagree with your use of the word “moral” here and substitute the word “legal”.

He was in an exclusive moral position certainly, being the only one without sin, and this enabled Him to be our Saviour, but it was not His moral position which He sacrificed - it was not (as you say later) His spotless character which Jesus laid in the scales - it was His life; not the life He lived but the life which was in the blood.

He could not sacrifice His character - that was His, and neither He nor anyone else could separate Him from it. His perfect character made His life of value - or I should say, preserved the value it had when it was begotten - but it was His *psuche* that He laid down as a ransom.

No other, however good he had been, could have done so, because of his legal relationship to Adam, whereas Jesus’ legal relationship was to God.

I cannot see any difficulty in your point that God cannot be tempted of evil, whereas Jesus was tempted. You ask where, then, did Jesus obtain a nature capable of temptation – was it a constituent of the life He received from God, or did He derive it from His imperfect Jewish mother?

I would reply: Tell me where Adam obtained a nature capable at suffering temptation? Adam had no imperfect Jewish mother, yet he was capable of feeling temptation. Is it not evident that a capacity for experiencing temptation is the consequence of mankind having been created with free will and reason and placed under law?

It is true that we deny that Jesus benefited from His own death, in the sense laid down by Christadelphians in their Statement of Faith, that He needed redemption in the same way as we do.

If you argue that Jesus’ exaltation from fleshly nature to spirit resulted from His death I could agree, but this is quite a different matter, and if, as I suspect you are seeking to find a justification for some measure of adherence to the Christadelphian position, I hope you will be honest enough to admit that this does not provide it.

Is there any reasoning to prove that there is no way in which flesh can be transformed to spirit except by dying and being raised? Does not 1 Corinthians 15:51 prove that there is another way? And does not reason tell us that having proved Himself perfect, had He not chosen for our sakes to take the path to Calvary He could have taken the other?

I think John 12:23 proves it.

Our varied use of “death” - it is Scripture that has this varied use, not us. We seek to apply and harmonise, and I think we have succeeded. There are 4 or 5 different usages, and while you ask: Does it matter as to its cause? Surely, as a “New Testament Jew,” I do not need to remind you of, for example, Hebrews 10:26-31.

There is nothing to show Adam was under sentence to die before he transgressed but this does not mean to say he was not corruptible - capable of dying.

I recognise fully the “appalling position of the nations” but I do not attribute this to Adam’s sin but to their own greed, intolerance and foolishness.

I do not apologies for the ravages of sin – I just say I do not believe that anything that God has put into man or allowed to develop in him as an inheritance from his ancestors, makes him incapable of ordering his life and his neighbours, in accordance with the commandments of Christ.

I see no reason to charge the wickedness of the world on man's nature, on God who made it as it is, or on Adam who disobeyed a simple command, and brought in the reign of sin and death: I believe that the words of the prophet are sufficient today to put the world right, if they were applied, without any change of nature.

“Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.”

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord.”

With Very Sincere Regards and Good Wishes in Jesus' Name. Ernest Brady.

The Book of Nahum

Nahum was probably native of Galilee or Bethabara beyond Jordan. Opinion is divided as regards time of prophecy but Schofield states “Nahum prophesied during the reign of Hezekiah.”

Comments: Its conduct and imagery of the Poem is truly admirable. It sets forth with grandeur the Justice and Power of God, tempered by lenity and goodness. The Burden of Nineveh. Book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite. God is jealous for His own Glory and thy Lord avengeth His Justice. He revengeth and is furious; nothing can withstand. Vengeance to His adversaries; and wrath for His enemies.

Slow to anger, great in Power and will not at all acquit the wicked. Assyria under Pul. Tiglath-piliser and Shalmaneser employed by a Just God for chastisement of His disobedient people. God is about to burn the rod wherewith He corrected Israel. The Whirlwind and Storm as a penitential wind which slew 185,000 Assyrians. The effects of His Power, the clouds the dust of His feet; (represented as chariots and dust enveloping them in their extreme rapidity) Psalm 18:10, “He rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.” ‘Psalm 97:2-5, Nahum 1:3-6. Majestically represented as controlling universal nature. The Sea and Rivers He dried up (Red Sea and Jordan). The Mountains tremble; the hills melt; and the earth is burnt at His. presence. Bashan, Carmel and Lebanon are withered and languish. Streams of fire are poured out, and the Rocks are cast down to make Him a passage. If then the seas, rivers, mountains, hills, rocks and the Earth itself, fail before Jahweh; or flee from His presence, how shall Nineveh and the Assyrian Empire stand before Him?

The Lord is good in the midst of Judgement He remembers mercy; with denunciations of wrath; promises of mercy are mingled; a stronghold in the day of trouble. And He knoweth them that are His. But the over-running flood, the Euphrates overflowed its banks deluged a part of the city, overturned 20 stadia about 20 furlongs of the wall. (The King burnt himself, Palace and Treasures). In one blow will God utterly destroy, make a full end; no second-time whatever their imagination regarding Jahweh. Thorns and stubble fully dry (folden) united council. As drunken men perplexed and unsteady in all their resolutions (by force a devouring fire). There is one come out of thee that imagineth evil against the Lord, 2 Kings 19:22, “Whom hast thou exalted thy voice and lifted up thine on high even against the Holy One of Israel.” A wicked counsellor Rabshakeh. They are cut down. I will afflict no more. Break his yoke; burst his bands. End of Assyria. The feet of him that bringeth good tidings that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows; for the wicked shall no more pass through thee: he is utterly cut off.

Chapter 2. He that dasheth in pieces = Hammer or disperser. (Chaldeans, Medes. They emptied them out and marred their vine branches. In such language Nineveh is called on to prepare for the approach of her enemies the instruments in the hands of Jahweh. (The military array and muster of the Medes and Babylonians, their rapid approach to the city. The process of the siege, the capture of the place, lamentation and flight of inhabitants. Sacking of wealth and city. Consequent desolation and terror. Allegory of lions, etc. Verse 12, dens of ravin.

Chapter 3. Woe! Her perfidy and violence. Recall her number of chariots and cavalry, burnished arms, unrelenting slaughter. Corpses spread around. Mistress of witchcraft; well-favoured. Harlot, prostituting the nations, enticing nations to her. By a figure exposing her shame. A beautiful city, a heap of rubble and filth, like one in a pillory casting filth at her. Verse 16,17. Her numbers; opulence, multitude of princes as grasshoppers that flee from the hedges when the sun rises. Thy shepherds slumber; thy nobles dwell in dust. (Tributary princes and nobles as good as dead. No healing of thy bruise, all who hear rejoice and clap their hands.

The following by Bishop Newton: Could such befall them? What probability was there that the Capital City of a great kingdom; a city 60 miles in compass which had walls a hundred feet high, so thick that three chariots could go abreast upon them, which had 1500 towers, 500 feet in height, that it would be destroyed. Chapter 1:8,9, "utter end of the place thereof, He will make an utter end."

Brother J. Hembling.

The Time To Love

It is not enough to love others; we must let them know that we love them. We must do it, too, before it is too late. Some people wait till the need is past and then come up with their kindness. When the neighbour is well again, they call to say how sorry they are he has been sick. When he has gotten through his sore trial, they come with congratulations. But the time to help is when your friend is in the floods, not when he has gotten out to shore and is safe. The time for friendship is in the friend's adversity, when evil tongues malign him, and not when he has gotten vindication and stands honoured even by strangers.

J.R.Miller

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians

I find the letter of St. Paul to the believers at Ephesus perhaps the most helpful and readable of his writings. I think this must be because he was writing especially to Gentiles and not Jews and therefore to us English people who are Gentiles his advice and explanations are particularly appealing. It is only short - in itself a recommendation in our over-busy lives - and reading it one feels that the people who received it first were people something like ourselves. In it St. Paul explains certain aspects of the plan of God in more details than was necessary when he was writing with Jews in his mind. His own nation knew very well that they were special people and they were quite used to the idea that all others than Israelites were regarded as outcasts. Indeed, they had become so accustomed to this view of humanity that it had become an evil in them. Instead of recognising their favourable position as an undeserved blessing and accepting the responsibilities it entailed, they merely despised those who were not of the chosen race and became self-satisfied and puffed up. However, their long national observance of the Mosaic Law had familiarised them with the idea of selection by God upon His own principles of those whom He chose. But this was a very strange and difficult idea to Gentiles. They saw that, just as Gentiles of the present day see now, neither sense nor justice in a Divine decree which placed them in a position from which they required deliverance. But for Gentiles to share in the blessings promised by God to those who reverence Him it is necessary to recognise that they are by natural descent children of wrath. They have to see what is "the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God who created all things in Christ Jesus." That is to say that for anyone to understand the gospel, which in the wisdom of God has been wrapped up in parable, analogy, type and symbolism, so that it has to be searched for and puzzled out, he must understand how all things were in God's purpose, created by Jesus Christ. This involves knowledge of the significance of the death of Christ and its relationship to the loss of life in the beginning. Where people are perhaps mentally incapable of or circumstances prevent a fuller understanding, a vague acceptance of His death as a sacrifice might be a sufficient minimum of saving truth. But if St. Paul is to be our teacher, he seems to imply that a good deal

more is requisite. Those whom he speaks of as “being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart” are not just the ignorant and uninstructed - they are those who are in ignorance because of the blindness of their hearts; that is people who knowingly close their eyes to what they could know if they would. But ye have not so learned (of) Christ, if so be that ye have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus.”

The gospel preached by St. Paul laid down as a basic truth that naturally we are “without Christ, being aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the Covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” This is a very different gospel from that which is generally preached to-day. Repentance is thought to be required for personal sins and baptism is seen as a ceremonial cleansing. These are certainly elements of the matter, but they are incidental to a more important significance. Alienation is neither recognised nor admitted, and hence the true purpose of Christ’s sacrifice is not understood and the real importance of baptism is not recognised. To be truly inducted into Christ by baptism, it must be seen as a symbolic death and rising again, - “putting off the old man... be renewed in the spirit of your mind... and put on the new man, which is created after (the pattern of) God in true holiness.”

I have not put in all the references to the texts I have quoted but they are all from the letter to the Ephesians which one can read in half-an-hour.

Sincerely your Brother, in the Name of Jesus Christ, Ernest Brady.

SAUL of TARSUS : PAUL the APOSTLE

Frederic W Farrar D.D. a well known theologian of a past generation wrote two principal works, one of which was “The Life and Work of Paul.”

In his introduction he says, “To Abraham God gave a promise which was the germ of religion. When God called His people from Egypt He gave them moral laws as seen in the book of Leviticus which was to serve as a bulwark for the truths of theocracy. During the years of the Mosaic Dispensation, the tabernacle and later the temple had been a sign of His presence, added to which were the prophets, and other signs and wonders. Then the writer to the Hebrews in his first chapter verses 1-5 reminds us of God’s visible sign seen in His Son Jesus Christ.”

Ponder on John chapter 14. The evidence of God’s power was seen in the works and preaching of the Disciples and Apostles. Among whom was Paul, or Saul of Tarsus as he was formerly known.

What of Saul’s early life and education? The scriptures tell us he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. This Gamaliel, whom most commentators are agreed was Gamaliel the Elder, was an advocate for the Law of Moses to be kept to the extreme; most members of the Jewish Sanhedrin in their early days had been through the hands of Gamaliel.

Saul, because of his ancestral line and education may have been looking ahead to the future and had in view the Jewish honour of becoming a member of that body. In today’s language Saul would be classed as an extremist among those who were anti-Christian, and in his early activity may not have had the overt support of the High Priest. But there came a time when he wanted to make an impression and help forward his career. So we come to the events recorded in Acts chapter 9. He went to the High Priest and desired of him letters giving him authority to bring Christians, bound as prisoners, back to Jerusalem. And so Saul sets off to Damascus.

But why Damascus? We are told, apart from Jerusalem, that the city of Damascus was a major centre of Christianity (till the rise of Islam in the 7th century). So Saul sets off on his journey, a distance of some 150 miles which in his days would take about 6 or 7 days. Not even the fiery zeal of Saul the Persecutor would speed up this journey time, with the official retinue who would be with him, with the High Priests blessing, maybe he also had some of the Temple Guard, and maybe even some Levites were among his company too. The verbal defence of the Christians meant nothing to Saul, for the scriptures speak of him as “exceedingly zealous in the traditions of the fathers.”

Dr. Farrar further points out, the Syrian sun shining at noon-day fiercely overhead is an intolerable blaze of boundless light makes the sky seem as molten brass, the white earth would glare as an iron furnace, even the air is full of quivering, under these conditions Saul was pressing forward with impatient and impassioned haste towards Damascus, to fulfil his work, they must press on. No pleas of the entourage could stay him, but as he neared Damascus about midday came that sudden intervention. Suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven. Acts 9:5.

This sudden light was far more brilliant than the mid-day sun of the desert. Up to now the verbal crying and appeals of the Christians had meant nothing to Saul; he didn't want to know or listen to them. This sudden interruption so disturbed him that he fell to the ground and was blinded. But more was to follow, for a reversal of his attitude was to take place. Saul heard a voice and had to take notice and listen to it. Up to now he refused to listen to the Christians, but this voice had caused him to listen and take notice, "SAUL, SAUL, WHY PERSECUTEST THOU ME?"

Then follows those well known verses of Acts 9:5-16, "And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do... 8. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink..."

The message was intended primarily for Saul but it did have an effect on the others with him, for we are told the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no man. The blinding light and a voice. What must have been their fear we wonder? The message for Saul was God is Light. It brought about the most unalterable conviction of Saul's life. He had seen Jesus Christ our Lord. (I Corinthians 9:1).

SAUL of TARSUS: - "And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts 9:1).

Regarding Stephen who was put to death: - "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep. And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; (Acts 7:59-8:1).

PAUL the APOSTLE: - "But we preach Christ crucified." (1 Corinthians 1:23).

"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. (1 Corinthians 2:2).

After such a conversion we are told in the epistle to the Galatians He went into seclusion in Arabia. He no doubt received more fully the Gospel message before returning to Jerusalem.

"But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: and profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus." (Galatians 1:11-17).

May we have and keep such an hope as that of Paul.

Brother Harvey Linggood.

Exhortation

Dear Brethren and Sisters,

“Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.”

The knowledge of all that was pending, as regards Himself, love for His own was uppermost. The Chief Priests and scribes sought to kill Jesus but they feared the people. Luke 22:4-6, “And he (Judas) went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains how he might betray him unto them, and they were glad and covenanted to give him money, and he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude.”

Christ knew this and warned Judas as we read in Luke 22:21, “But behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. And truly the Son of man goeth as it was determined; but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed.” Then at Peter’s request John asked Jesus who it should be - John 13:26, “Jesus answered, He it is to whom I give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.” A last appeal.

In washing their feet, verse 10, Jesus said “Ye are clean, but not all.” Verse 18, “I know whom I have chosen; but that the scriptures may be fulfilled. He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me (figure as a restive horse).

Then to Peter, (Luke 22:31, etc.), “And the Lord said Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said, I tell thee Peter, the cock shall not crow this day before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.” And in verse 36, - “Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered and said, Whither I go thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterward.” And in John 21:18,19, Jesus tells Peter, “Verily, Verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkest whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying what death he should glorify God, and when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.” Later Peter wrote (2 Peter 1:13,14), “Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.” But for now, back in Luke, “They all forsook him and fled.”

Christ had knowledge of Gethsemane, betrayal, Pilate, Herod, Sanhedrin, the scourge and mockery, exhibited in mock robes, rod or sceptre and crown (crown of thorns); numbered with the transgressors. Note Psalm 22:12-18, “Many bulls have compassed me; strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. The dogs have compassed me, the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me; they have pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones; they look and stare upon me, they part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture:”

Yet in Psalm 22:9,10 we read, “But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother’s breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb; thou art my God from my mother’s belly.” O, the strong crying and tears! - verse 19-23, “But be not far from me O Lord, O my strength, haste thee to help me. Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion’s mouth; for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns. I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee. Ye that fear the Lord, praise him; all ye seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him all ye seed of Israel.”

“And he shall see of the travail of his soul.” (Isaiah 53:11).

Verses 30 - 32, “A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.”

Jesus' integrity upheld; consider the witnesses - Judas, the thief, the centurion, Pilate, Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, the darkness (for three hours), the earthquake (graves opened), veil of temple rent from top to bottom, then the Resurrection.

In amidst it all, the disciples feet were washed – “If I then your Lord and Master have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another’s feet.” “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.”

“Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you. A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. (John 13:33-35).

Brother James Hembling.

Following on from Page 11 of our last Circular Letter I wish to continue the review of John Launchbury’s book:

“Change us, not God”

In order to do this it will be necessary to quote fairly extensively from John Launchbury’s book.

Under the heading “**Dissecting Substitution**” he writes,

“If the substitution theory is understood to be just a metaphor, then perhaps it can help us appreciate some aspects of salvation. But instead, the substitution theory is accepted by many Christians as if it were literal truth.

Remember that it’s important to see metaphor as metaphor, symbol as symbol and parable as just parable, not the reality itself. So let us see now why substitution cannot be taken literally. We’ll do this by treating the theory of substitution as if it were literal truth, and then showing what contradictions arise as a result.

Here are five serious challenges:

- 1). Substitution is unjust.
- 2). The penalty is wrong.
- 3). Nothing left to forgive.
- 4). Salvation would be universal.
- 5). Substitution puts the problem in the wrong place.”

I will deal with all five of his challenges but will start with his third challenge first:-

Challenge No. 3) “Nothing left to forgive.”

Under this heading John Launchbury writes:

“Substitution leaves no room for forgiveness. Suppose Bob owes me money. I keep saying, “Come on. Bob, you owe me five bucks. Pay up! Pay up!” Then Alice hears this and says to me Hey, I’ll give you the five bucks that Bob owes you.” Would it be fair for me now to go to Bob and say: “I forgive you your debt!” Not at all!

Alice has already paid the debt; there’s nothing left to be forgiven. It’s all been dealt with.

Do you see the implications for salvation? If Jesus has paid the debt, if he has satisfied the legal requirement, where is the need for forgiveness? There's no role for it at all; the debt has been paid! Yet again and again and again, the Scriptures say that we come to God through forgiveness. For example:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

We have to conclude therefore that there is a real debt outstanding! God says: "I forgive!" But substitution would say it's been paid, and hence there's nothing left to forgive."

My response to challenge No 3:-

Having correctly condemned the substitutionary theories introduced by theologians since the 3rd century John Launchbury went on too far when he wrote:

"Suppose Bob owes me money. I keep saying, "Come on, Bob, you owe me five bucks. Pay up! Pay up!" Then Alice hears this and says to me, Hey, I'll give you the five bucks that Bob owes you."

When John wrote this he should have jumped for joy and shouted "Eureka! I have found something I have never seen before!" But no, he went on to say "There's nothing left to be forgiven. It's all been dealt with;" and then he went on to say, "Do you see the implications for salvation? If Jesus has paid the debt, if he has satisfied the legal requirement, where is the need for forgiveness?"

Precisely, and that's the point! It's all been dealt with.

Bob owes John five bucks and John demands payment. Alice pays John the five bucks. So now Bob doesn't owe it to John but he still owes it to Alice. But Alice forgives Bob utterly.

Now let's change the names – Adam owes his life to the demands of the law. Along come Jesus and says, 'I will pay the debt of life that Adam owes; I will lay down my life in place of his; please let Adam live.' The law is satisfied and Adam owes his life to Jesus. Jesus forgives Adam utterly.

Ever since Adam all the human race belongs to Jesus. He bought the whole race when He laid down His life as the ransom (1 Timothy 2:6 and Mark 10:45.) Adam's life was passed on to us and so we owe our life to Jesus also and in Him is forgiveness.

Jesus was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8) and when He came to John for baptism, John proclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

Jesus laid down His natural life so that Adam could continue to live out his natural life and thus began the human race. Jesus never received His natural life again. That life was in the blood shed at the foot of the cross and gone for ever.

Regarding forgiveness; the sacrifices under the Law of Moses could not take away sin or they would have continued to this day (Hebrews 10:2) but God had no pleasure in continuing them once Jesus came into the world, because here was something better - "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God, (v.7). "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me". Thus Jesus ended the first covenant to establish the second covenant.

The first covenant was made with the children of Israel as we read in Exodus 24:6-8, "And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words."

This covenant was established with the shedding of blood of the animal and this sacrifice was never repeated as it had established God's covenant with His people until the time came for it to be replaced.

The second (better) covenant was established with the shedding of the blood of the Son of God when the “the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake” (Matthew 27:51) which finished the first covenant and replaced it.

Baptism into the death of Jesus brings us into this legal covenant relationship with Him. Jesus’ disciples are no longer “in Adam.” They are now “in Christ.”

At the Last Supper Jesus “took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament (i.e. covenant), which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:27,28).

Jesus’ death was a reality. Jesus’ death was a sacrifice in the truest sense of the word. Jesus’ death established a legal covenant for His disciples to come into covenant relationship with Him and His Father.

It is covenant relationship that is essential for salvation, and this covenant relationship is a binding legal matter established on the shedding of blood in sacrifice of the Son of God.

Challenge No 1. “Substitution is unjust.” On this John Launchbury writes:

“The first problem of substitution is one of justice. Or, rather, injustice. Since when is it a mark of justice to punish the wrong person? The whole notion of substitution is based on the idea that the justice of God has to be upheld, and so he does what? He punishes the wrong man! Do you see how it erodes the very core of the idea of justice? The Bible never considers it just or right to punish the wrong person. A major theme of Isaiah’s whole prophecy is to condemn those who take bribes, who allow the guilty to go unpunished, or who punish the innocent. For example, “Woe to those ... who acquit the guilty for a bribe, but deny justice to the innocent” (Is 5:22-23). Proverbs has quite a bit to say on the topic too: Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent - the LORD detests them both (Prov. 17:15).

Does it make sense that God might then go and do so himself? Of course not. God states the principle directly through Ezekiel: The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him (Ezek 18:20).

Substitution is a theory of legal justice, but contains a legal injustice at its core.”

My response to this 1st challenge, that “Substitution is unjust”:

It makes me very sad that people can write this sort of stuff, as though the Bible teaching of Jesus being our substitute is one of punishment; of punishing the wrong person. Do not such people know the supreme and unconditional love of both God and of Jesus?

Of course Jesus was not God’s ‘whipping boy’! To imagine that the Bible teaching of substitution should be based on something so unethical beggars belief.

Dr Edersheim, in his book “The Temple at the Time of Christ” makes a valid point when he writes (page 32), “on one point the authorities of the old synagogue, previous to their controversy with Christianity, are agreed. As the Old Testament and Jewish tradition taught that the object of a sacrifice was its substitution for the offender, so Scripture and the Jewish fathers also teach that the substitute to whom all these types pointed was none other than the Messiah” and he points out that this agrees with what the writer to the Hebrews said in chapter 10, verses 11 and 12, “And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.”

That these sacrifices were typical of Jesus’ sacrifice was foretold numerous times in the Old Testament and as an example we can take Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12 where the substitutionary sufferings of the Messiah are referred to no less than twelve times.

Never was substitutionary sacrifice about punishment or appeasement but about saving whosoever will come into the legal covenant relationship with God through baptism into Jesus' death. This requires faith.

If a mother sees her child drowning will she not jump into the water in an attempt to save her child? And should she unfortunately drown and her child saved, would you not commend her for her brave attempt? Should we not commend Jesus for His courage in saving us? For giving His life so we could live?

Law is supreme and God subjects Himself to the principles of His own Law; He will not violate Law to exercise mercy. As we read in Psalm 138:2, "For thou hast magnified Thy Word (Law) above all Thy Name (Love)." When man breaks the Law, he places himself in a position where God will not deliver him by an arbitrary act of forgiveness. To do so would vitiate, or lower the moral standard, of Law and introduce a doubt as to the supremacy and sanctity of His Word to us and would leave room for doubt as to whether God is in all things faithful and unchanging. Although there is no literal third party, no personal devil, there is a legal principle of relationship and allegiance involved which takes its force and strength from the principles of justice.

To say that "Substitution is a theory of legal justice, but contains a legal injustice at its core" shows lack of understanding of what Jesus has done in laying down His life for His friends. John 10:14-18, "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself."

There is no punishment in Jesus death. Jesus excludes it and so must we.

Challenge No. 2, "The Penalty is wrong." Regarding this, John Launchbury writes:

"Note that the penalty Jesus bore is not the one we were condemned with. The penalty of sin is death itself, not simply the process of dying. The penalty of sin is eternal separation from God it is eternal destruction, oblivion - for ever. That punishment has not been borne by Jesus.

Because Jesus is no longer dead, he has not borne the true penalty of sin. He tasted death, certainly. He experienced the agonies of death went into the grave and was dead for three days. But if he was supposed to be bearing our punishment, God should have left him dead.

Did God then change his mind and decide not to punish him with the punishment that was due to us after all? In the circus parable, it's as if the father says to the son, "You stay at home and I'll take the younger brother, and then, halfway to the circus he telephones home and says I've changed my mind. Come after all!" He's not bearing the punishment.

Substitution is a legal theory, but it contains a mismatched penalty at its core."

Here are my comments concerning the second challenge:

God did not change His mind. The penalty of which Adam was warned was that in the day he ate of the tree he would die. He didn't die, he didn't suffer the penalty, but in due time Jesus, by taking the penalty on Himself took his place.

Neither the process of dying nor our death is the penalty for sin. And neither is eternal separation from God, eternal destruction, oblivion for ever, the penalty of sin, but, for the sinner it is the result of suffering the penalty.

The penalty that Adam was warned of was judicial death and Jesus suffered this instead of Adam. The penalty for sin we are warned of is also judicial death - the second death - and this will be suffered by those who reject Jesus as their Saviour with the result that they will cease for ever. One ought not to confuse the result of the penalty with the penalty itself as John has done.

To say that “Because Jesus is no longer dead, he has not borne the true penalty of sin” is to totally misunderstand or ignore the obvious facts of the doctrine of redemption. Jesus bore Adam’s penalty in order to give life to mankind. The whole of mankind was redeemed when Jesus died on the cross but that did not and does not give eternal life to anyone. What Jesus sacrifice did was give the opportunity of eternal life to as many as come to Him in faith of what He has done for them. “Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends.” Sin is forgiven us because of Jesus love for us. It is Jesus who forgives us and without His sacrificial death that would not have been the case.

God so loved the world that He gave, in Jesus, the one needful sacrifice for sin, and purchased back to Himself all those who put on the name of Jesus Christ by faith and by baptism as a symbolic passing through the death which He suffered for us. Jesus carried out His Father’s plan of salvation by laying down His life as our substitute, and upheld His Father’ law by meeting its claim and at the same time revealed the love and mercy of the Father from the beginning.

Challenge No. 4, that “Salvation would be uiniversal.” John writes:

Regarding this claim John writes, “If Christ has fully borne the punishment due to sinners, if he has paid the price and earned salvation on behalf of sinners, then there’s no reason why anybody should be condemned at God’s judgment. Or put the other way around, why would God condemn any of us if Christ has removed the whole legal basis for any of us being condemned? There would be no reason. If the theory of substitution was true, then it would lead logically to a conclusion that salvation should be universal. But this is a problem. Most Christians agree that the Bible is quite clear that there is going to be a separation between those who are saved, and those who are not. To take just one example, Daniel says: “Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.” (Daniel 12:2).

Salvation is not universal, so the substitution theory cannot be an accurate description of the mechanism of salvation.”

My response to John’s 4th challenge:

Regarding John’s first sentence that “If Christ has fully borne the punishment due to sinners, if he has paid the price and earned salvation on behalf of sinners, then there’s no reason why anybody should be condemned at God’s judgment”, this would be an obvious conclusion if his assumptions were correct. But he has only considered false substitution theories introduced by theologians since the third century and has not Bible teachings.

And neither has Jesus “earned salvation on behalf of sinners.” While salvation is a free gift to the faithful, it is not given because Jesus earned it for them but, because of their faith, Jesus asked “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me...” (John 17:24).

And Jesus has not “removed the whole legal basis for any of us being condemned”. Of the unbelievers Jesus said, “he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

Obviously, salvation was never meant to be universal. If it were then there would be little point in building characters well pleasing to Him.

Challenge No. 5 is “Substitution puts the problem in the wrong place.” About this John writes:

“The final problem, and this is a big one, is one of shifting the blame. We have a great tendency to blame others, to focus on someone else as the one having a problem. It’s a natural human act to say: You know what? It’s not really our problem! It’s really God’s problem.

The theory of substitution falls into this trap. It says that the real problem with salvation is that God

was in a legal fix, that Jesus had to die to get God out of the legal problems. It allows us to say, “The problem is not with me, it’s with God!”

In fact, all the theories of atonement we described in the previous section fail in this same way: God found himself needing to ransom us from the devil, God’s honour was upset, or God found himself in a legal bind.

The real problem, of course, is not with God, the problem has never been with God. The real problem is with us! The real problem is our opposition to God - opposition and rebellion in my heart, in your heart! That’s where the challenge is, the rebelliousness of the human being. So that’s where the work of salvation has to be focused.

Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? (Rom 6:1-3)

In other words, the real purpose of the death of Christ was not to change God, but to change us!

Understanding this shifts our whole perspective by introducing a radically different possibility from what we may have had before. In my own spiritual development, I had wrestled with all the transactional theories but it had never occurred to me to question the very idea whether the death of Christ was a transaction at all!

As I read Scripture more and more, I came to see that the death of Christ was not designed to deal with God’s difficulties; it was designed to make me different! It is to change me!

This is not being self-centred. It’s saying: “The problem is here with me. Whatever the death of Christ is designed to accomplish, it is designed to accomplish it by changing me, where the problem actually lies.

This approach to understanding the death of Christ is sometimes described as a moral influence interpretation, because it addresses the moral problem of sin: the damage sin does to us and to other people.”

My response to the 5th challenge:

There is little to say in reply to this fifth challenge. The writer calls it “a big problem” but I see no problem except one of his own making. God is Almighty and does not get Himself into “legal fixes” or make problems for Himself.

We have seen how the writer has made a good job of showing the weaknesses of false substitution, but true substitution has no problem associated with it, though it seems some people have difficulty in accepting the supreme and unconditional love of God and of Jesus in releasing us from our bondage to sin at the cost of Jesus life – working together for our redemption.

God said “For I am the LORD, I change not;” (Malachi 3:6) and neither should anyone ever expect Him to change; it is we who must change for the better, and the writer’s continual exhortation is for us to do better, to be Christ-like.

On page 6 of his work, John writes:

“This section is called Atonement Theories. That sounds grand and maybe complicated. So before we dive in, let’s take the mystery out of the words ‘atone’ and ‘atonement’, because they have come to mean different things to different people. They are words that come with their own baggage.

The origin of atone is very simple. According to my dictionary, it was invented by William Tyndale in sixteenth century English, coming from a contraction of the phrase at one. Tyndale was trying to express the ideas of forgiveness and reconciliation. So, atonement just means to be united, or perhaps, to

be reunited. Since the purpose behind the life and death of Jesus is to reunite human beings with God, the word is very appropriate. Notice that the word atone doesn't imply any mechanism or method. So if you think sacrifice whenever you hear the word atonement, you may be reading too much into the word. Whenever we use it here, we shall just take it to mean reuniting, without any assumption about how that may be accomplished."

But John says that, atonement is to "reunite human beings with God," and also says "that's where the work of salvation has to be focused." In a sense this is true. But atonement is only one part in our salvation, a part which we did not do for ourselves. Jesus reunited us with, or reconciled us to, God. It suits John Launchbury's purpose to say he will not assume how atonement was accomplished but nowhere in his book does he distinguish between atonement and salvation and treats them as one and the same thing. They are not.

While exhortations are helpful and encouraging in order to help each other develop our characters, this is not atonement. To say it is atonement is to teach salvation by works. Though John says he does not agree with this as he asks, on page 20, "How could our participation in salvation be squared with the idea that we are saved by grace rather than by works?" However, his comment on Titus 3:3-8, is that "If salvation occurred through a transactional process, then this would be inexplicable. Paul couldn't have left out the one absolutely critical step. On the other hand, if the work of salvation is a process of transformation, a process in which we are changed then this list is exactly what we would expect." – and this is salvation by works which he tries to deny.

However, Atonement is through Jesus reuniting man with God by His sacrificial death, while salvation is through our faith in Jesus Atonement, and our works are our thankful response to both God and Jesus supreme and unconditional love. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." (Ephesians 2:8).

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Whenever we read the scriptures concerning the crucifixion of Jesus we constantly come upon such terms as ransom, redemption, purchase and bought. All these have one thing in common – substitution. Yet substitution is denied by some. If we consider only the false ideas on substitution introduced and taught by theologians since the third century, then we can understand their rejection of such God dishonouring teachings. We reject them too.

However, rather than denying the bible teaching that Jesus died instead of us would it not be better to try to understand the reasons why we are told that He died for/instead of us, and how the atonement works and what it does for us and why? All the answers are there for us if we inquire and they are all naturally based on the unconditional love of God for His creation.

Some of the objections to the idea of substitution have been answered, such as 'If Jesus died instead of us He should have stayed dead' and the answer is that Jesus natural life (Greek – psuche) did 'stay dead' and He was raised in Spirit life (Greek – zoe) - 1 Peter 3:18. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit."

Another objection is 'how can the life of one man substitute for the countless lives of the faithful?' – and the answer to this is that Jesus laid down His natural life instead of Adam's natural life. A single life for a single life. And note too that Adam lost the right to his natural life which hitherto had been unblemished and without spot, and Jesus freely chose to lay down His natural life which remained unblemished and without spot in place of Adam's forfeited life, in other words, the exact price, an unblemished life, was paid in order to release Adam from the penalty for his transgression. This allowed Adam to continue to live out his natural life and pass it on to his children - and so, eventually, to us.

Therefore the laying down of Jesus' life in place of Adam's life resulted in Adam's life being given to the whole human race, and in that sense Jesus died for us all for without Jesus sacrifice the human race would not have started. Jesus was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8).

These matters relate to our natural life - Jesus' natural life in place of Adam's natural life so that the human race could have natural life. This is only a part of the story of course because we have to consider eternal life. But before we go any further we may ask why it was that Jesus alone could give His life for the sin of the

world and not anyone else who had lived a blameless life? And the answer to this lies in the 'virgin birth.' Jesus was never "in Adam". God was His Father and no man ever had two fathers. Our life has been passed down from Adam and we all receive this forfeited life from our fathers but Jesus life was not passed down from Adam and so He did not receive Adam's forfeited life. The 'Virgin Birth' made sure of this. For everyone else "The scripture hath concluded all under sin that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ be given to them that believe" (Galatians 3:22). The result of receiving forfeited life is that we are concluded under the one sin of Adam, so that the faithful can receive the promised blessings.

The importance of this is seen in 1 Corinthians 15:22, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." When we realise we are 'in Adam' we can accept the gospel and be baptised into Jesus. We are then 'in Jesus' and no longer 'in Adam.' We cannot be in Adam and in Jesus at one and the same time. We are either in covenant relationship with God through Jesus or we are not. We have, individually, to come into this covenant relationship through baptism in order to receive the blessings of grace and escape the destruction that is in the world. If we are in covenant relationship with God then we are redeemed, ransomed, purchased and bought.

This is redemption; this is reconciliation; this is atonement; this is deliverance by paying a ransom. "He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that ye believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life" (1 John 5:12-13).

Let us go back to Adam.

Adam, by his transgression failed to seize his opportunity of earning eternal life and so God, rather than destroying Adam, in His loving kindness provided another way – not through perfect obedience (that way had failed for Adam) but through forgiveness and faith, yet even this depended upon Jesus' perfect obedience. Therefore our eternal life depended upon Jesus' perfect obedience in stead of ours. Substitution again.

The opportunity to serve God through forgiveness and faith has been provided in and through the various covenants which God has made with and for the benefit of mankind. The covenants of God are the action of God in which He bestows grace upon the subjects of the covenant in question as for example in Genesis 6:18 where God says to Noah, "With thee shall I establish my covenant, and thou shall come into the ark, thou and thy sons and thy wife and thy son's wives with thee." By grace they were saved from the destruction of the flood. God provided the covenant; Noah accepted. Any thought of a bilateral agreement is excluded.

The covenant God made with Abraham required that "every man child among you shall be circumcised, and it shall be a token of the covenant between me and you" (Genesis 17:10). Those not circumcised were barred from the covenant (verse 14). Separateness, or holiness, is an essential aspect of covenant blessing.

There were other covenants but I will mention just two more:

The covenant God made with the children of Israel in Exodus 24:3 follows on from where all the people promised to obey God in all that He commanded - "And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do. 4. And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. 5. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD. 6. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. 7. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. 8. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words."

The covenant under which we come in this dispensation was established when Jesus was crucified and "the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom" (Matthew 27:51) signifying the end of the Mosaic covenant. This last covenant is far superior to any that preceded it; the one that all other covenants anticipated and the only one that was truly efficacious - Hebrews 9: 13,14, "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

We see from this that God has worked through Jesus as He said “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent” (John 6:29).

In John Launchbury’s book there is little recognition of the work of God in Jesus Christ and the emphasis has been on what we can do to please God and so receive eternal life. This is salvation by works and eternal life cannot be earned; it is the free gift of God.

The good we do should be our own natural response to Divine Love. The free gift is assured for all the faithful.

With Love in Jesus. Russell.

Knowing The Truth

We say to all who would know the truth on any question: attend to what your opponent says as well as to the opinions of your friends. You may probably know one side of a question pretty well: listen to your opponent, and then you will be acquainted with the other. After that your conclusions will be doubly sure.

It was the spirit of suppression that kept the Bible out of circulation for centuries; it is the spirit of enquiry after truth, on the basis of the supreme authority of the Word of God that has scattered many millions of Bibles over the world, and in hundreds of languages. It is the unfettered search of modern times that has brought to light the grand foundations of truths of the Scriptures: the nature of man - the promise of life - the inheritance of the earth - and the government of the world by Christ.

It is this untrammelled search that has revealed, and is still revealing, the rotten foundations of many religious beliefs; it is the spirit of Popery which says you shall read this, but you shall not read that. “O,” but the inquisitors cry, “evil communications corrupt good manners.” Verily that saying is a wise saying; but whoever had his good manners corrupted by an earnest examination of earnest views of the Bible? As of yore, the inquisitor is always gentle and has a tender conscience: he could gag your mouth; smash your pen; burn your writings; forbid the world to read them, or even to look thereon; then light a fire for your own special purification and refinement, while from his chair he devoutly assured you of his mental sufferings through your “crooked ways” and that he should ever “preserve for you a tender spot in his heart.”

But enough! Works rather than words: deeds rather than creeds! “By their fruits ye shall know them.”

Observation regarding Herbert Armstrong

One of the strangest features of the present mad world is the commercial success of some of the newer religious movements. Their leaders adopt the advertising and salesmanship methods which have been developed to sell things like washing powders and patent medicines and in spite of the fact that often the product is worthless or nearly so it can be disposed of in almost unlimited quantities because of the skill and determination of its promoters. One of the outstanding examples is the movement led by Herbert Armstrong and largely built up on the radio broadcasts from the pirate “pop” station which have now been suppressed. These were very lively and topical and concentrating on the fact that we are living in the last days and are to expect the return of Christ they had a very big impact on the comparatively simple and scripturally ignorant people who listened to these stations. Any current political or scientific event or any of the many and varied ways in which human governments mess things up was discussed in the light of scripture and the listener invited to ‘write up’ for literature and information. All who did so got a packet of lively literature and regular follow-ups by mail and by personal contacts from propagandists trained in “The Ambassador” Colleges and the Armstrong brand of Christianity was sold with the same efficiency and success as soap or brushes.

No doubt religion of any sort is better than no religion at all but as we know only too well truth will never be a commercial success and it is axiomatic that the bigger a community becomes the worse it will be. One member sent me Armstrong's August letter in which he quite appropriately discusses the moon lunacy of the American's and suggests that it is an indication that we are in a period analogous to that when the Tower of Babel was built. Quite true. Unfortunately, the radio church itself is part of the Babel of conflicting voices and is a hotch-potch of truth and error which turns the stomach of any self-respecting Bible student. Just look at this for a specimen of his exposition. He asks the question, "What is God going to do about man cavorting about on the moon," and says:-

"Let me tell you what He says. The instruction book our maker has given for our guidance begins with these words 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth'. That may have been millions of years ago - we have no way of knowing. But in other parts of the Bible we find much revealed about what happened between the first verse and the second. If you do not understand this write for our special booklet on the origin of Satan. These numerous other passages show that originally God populated this earth with angels - long before the creation of man".

This is a bit tall! We know that God created the heavens and the earth in the beginning but what bearing has this on men reaching the moon? And where are all these numerous passages telling about an angelic creation which happened between verses 1 and 2? Why does he not quote one or two of them? But it gets even better.

"At the very throne of God, thoroughly experienced in the administration of God's government, was a super archangel, the Cherub Lucifer. God set him on earth to administrate the Government of God over the angels. In Isaiah 14:12-15 and Ezekiel 28:11-17 we find Lucifer let pride, vanity, lust for power fill his mind. He organised his angels into an invading army, and swept UP TO HEAVEN (in big capitals) to knock God off the throne, to try to seize the power of Government over the Universe. But God's power is supreme. Satan was cast back down to the earth. As a result of this Universal SIN, - - a rebellion against God's Law, against the Government of God (I John 3:4) - - a universal destruction befell the earth."

This is a fantastic load of rubbish and the marvel is that apparently intelligent people can put it forward as scriptural religion. This story about Lucifer was largely developed by John Milton in 'Paradise Lost' and the few snippets of scripture on which it is based are themselves poetic prophetic utterances referring to tyrants like the Kings of Babylon and Tyre who suppressed Israel. To build up a farrago of mythical nonsense may be forgiven - even appreciated - in a poet, but it is unforgivable in one who claims to be a teacher of religion as Bible exposition

To account for the evil in the world we do not need to invent Lucifer or Satan or go back to mythology. There are plenty of devils about. There are the devils who get themselves elected as governments and then use their power for evil purposes. There are devils who invent and manufacture weapons and poisons and pollute the sea and land with their noxious effluents. There are devils who tour the world and who are responsible for wars in various countries where their own helpless young men are forced to burn, bomb and destroy in the name of peace. There are the devils who make and sell under the label of medicine, all kinds of substances which can cause babies to be born with deformities, or to reduce the blood pressure by destroying the liver. There are devils who for monetary gain will falsify and prostitute every means of communication and entertainment, foul up the countryside and make the cities unbearable with noise and stinks. When men, made in the image of God, can be found to do such evil things and on such a scale we don't really need to worry about Lucifer, even if he had ever existed. Only a very impoverished intelligence could write of a God whose power is supreme and at the same time of a super archangel sweeping on up to heaven to knock Him off the throne. It reveals a curiously infantile concept, not only of what the devil in scripture really means, but of the Deity as well. God is a spirit; with parts and personality certainly but not to be thought of as an old gentleman up there sitting on a throne and at risk of being knocked off it by one of His own creations. Honest religion is scarce enough goodness knows and the last thing I would do is poke fun at even the feeblest effort to awaken faith but this sort of thing brings Christianity into ridicule. If Satan was cast back down to the earth where is he now? They would probably reply that he is going about invisible doing his evil work. Well if he is, and God is almighty and has allowed him to go on. God has only Himself to blame for all the sin and wickedness. I cannot see any sign that Satan is operating. As I have indicated, there is plenty of evil but I can see where it comes from - from men's own evil actions, their meanness and selfishness and it doesn't need Satan to produce it. They might answer, you believe in God whom you cannot see. Certainly; but we can see the works of God. We know that God has created us and given us sight and mind and senses - unless we are Atheist or Humanist or Agnostic and imagine that everything just happened. But we see none of the works of

Satan, and no evidence that he exists or ever existed and indeed the very concept of a super-natural tempter is alien to what we infer about the wisdom and beneficence of the Creator. What we see is a variety of manifestations of man's freewill to act contrary to the wish of God if he chooses and this is what in scripture is personified as the adversary or the Satan spirit.

We can only hope that given time the Armstrong Church will grow up and shed these silly old misconceptions but unfortunately it has become so materially and financially prosperous that no-one will ever dare to change the formula of the product in case it loses its appeal for the masses who buy it. Mr. Armstrong's report on the work would be a credit to almost any business executive:-

"It is sky rocketing due to our giant world wide advertising campaign - purchasing double page space in magazines in many editions in many parts of the world, besides FULL pages in Life in the U.S., in the London Sunday Times and other mass circulation magazines. This work getting out the GOSPEL - has expanded about 60% this past year."

Unfortunately, like any other business, where the real test of success is the money, this is not coming in as it ought.

"Only the income is lagging - running considerably under the 30% increase of past years. We must get it back up. Otherwise I have to cancel about 100 radio stations and cut PLAIN TRUTH circulation in half. That would be an unthinkable tragedy. It would be disastrous, but I will be forced to do just that unless income picks up."

He concludes with a heart-cry,

"PLEASE brethren in Christ, let's not let Christ down. Try to increase the amount you send."

I would impute no evil or dishonest motives to Herbert Armstrong - he probably thinks his giant advertising campaigns are serving the purpose of bringing people to Christ and that he is entitled to ask for the money to run them.

Personally I do not think it is any service to Christ to turn his life and teaching into this kind of business and I would not worry if popular magazines never got another penny of advertising income in his name.

The true gospel is not promulgated in these ways even if the Ambassador College had it to teach. They do not see themselves as one of the satanic agencies of this world, making merchandise of the Gospel, but this is what they really are and it is a sad pity.

E. BRADY. August 1969

The Gifts Of The Spirit

The 13th Chapter of Paul's 1st letter to the Corinthians is a continuation of the subject commenced in Chapter 12. In that chapter, Paul had introduced the subject of various endowments which the holy Spirit conferred on Christians and had shown that these endowments, however various they were, were conferred in such a manner as best to promote the edification of the Church. In the close of Chapter 12, verse 31, he had said that it was lawful for them to desire the most eminent gifts conferred by the Spirit, and yet says that there was one endowment that might be obtained by all.

The sense seems to be this: 'I have proved that all endowments in the church are produced by the Holy Spirit; I have been showing you that no one should be proud or elated on account of extraordinary endowments and that on the other hand no one should be depressed, sad, or discontented because he has a more humble rank; I have,' says Paul, 'endeavoured to repress and subdue the spirit of discontent, jealousy and ambition.'

The Apostle Paul thus endeavours to give a practicable and feasible turn to the whole subject, and further, to produce peace and contentedness of mind, the main thing which he was desirous of producing in the 12th

Chapter. This therefore, is one of the happy turns in which the writings of Paul abounds. He did not denounce their zeal as wicked; he did not attempt at once to repress it, he did not say that it was wrong to desire high endowments; but he shows them an endowment which was more valuable than all, and which, if possessed, would make them in the Church contented and produce the harmonious operation of all the parts of the Church.

That endowment was Love. 'I will show you a more excellent way of evincing your zeal than by aspiring to the place of prophets or rulers, and that is by cultivating universal charity or love.'

1. The excellency of love above the power of speaking the languages of men and of Angels (or messengers): above the power of understanding all mysteries even of the highest kind, and above the virtue of giving all ones goods to feed the poor, or ones body to be burned; all these endowments would be valueless without love,
2. A statement of the characteristics of love, or, its happy influence on the mind and heart of the Christian.
3. A comparison of love with the gift of prophecy; the power of speaking in a foreign language, and with knowledge.

It is evident that, among the Corinthians, the power of speaking a foreign language was regarded as a signally valuable endowment; and there can be no doubt that some of the leaders in that Church valued themselves especially on it. (Chapter 14). To correct this, and to show them that all this would be in vain without love, he says, in effect, 'O, were I endowed with the faculty of eloquence and persuasion which were of Angels; and the power of speaking to any of the human family with the power which they have!' It is possible that the Apostle Paul may have some allusion here to what he refers to in 2nd Corinthians 12:4, where he says that when he was caught up into paradise he heard unspeakable words which it was not possible for a man to utter. Of that scene he would retain a most deep and tender recollection, and to that language he now refers, by saying that even that elevated language would be valueless to a creature if there were not love.

The English word 'charity' is used in a great variety of senses, and some of them cannot be included in the meaning of the word here. It means (a) In a general sense love, benevolence, goodwill. (b) In theology, it includes supreme love, God's love, Jesus Christ's love. Pauls illustration, however, is chiefly drawn from the effects of love towards mankind. It properly means love towards the whole Christian church of God in Jesus Christ.

The Apostle writes in verse 2, "And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries..." This passage refers us to note Chapter 2,7. "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory; which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." None of those rulers, who were engaged in the crucifixion of the Messiah, neither the Jewish rulers nor the Roman governor, perceived or appreciated the excellency of his character, the wisdom of God's plan, the glory of his scheme of Redemption. Their ignorance arose from not understanding the recorded prophecies and from an unwillingness to be convinced that Jesus of Nazareth, had been truly sent by God, His Father.

Had they seen the hidden wisdom in God's plan of Redemption - had they understood the glory of His real character, the truth respecting His Son's Sacrifice, they would have understood the words of Caiaphas, "that one should die for the nation" (John 10-50).

This passage in Chapter 2 verse 7 proves that it was one part of the prophetic office as referred to here, to be able to understand and explain the hidden mysteries of religion, the things that were concealed, unknown, or unrevealed. It does not refer to the prediction of future events, but to the great and deep truths concealed, connected with the Sacrifice of Christ, that were unexplained in the old economy, the meaning of the types and emblems; and the obscure portions of the great plan of Redemption.

Paul, here, had this fact doubtless in his mind, 'I am nothing.' 'All would be of no value.' 'It would not save me.' 'I should still be an unredeemed, unpardoned sinner.' 'I should answer none of the great purposes which God has designed'. 'I should not by all these endowments secure the Salvation necessary, proclaimed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and him crucified. All would be in vain in regard to the great purpose before God, as a ground of acceptance, in the day of Judgement.'

'Unless I should love thy word of Salvation, I should still be lost.' A similar idea is expressed by the Saviour in regard to the day of Judgement, in Matthew 7:22, 23, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have

we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

Every man is bound to pursue such a course of life as will ultimately secure his own Salvation, no man is a Christian who does not deny himself; or, no one who is not willing to sacrifice his own comfort, time, wealth, and ease to advance the welfare of the true Church. It is a principle which is yet to be understood by man, to convert whomsoever will. But this principle has been replaced by self-esteem, hence the hundreds of religions in the world and yet only one Revelation of God’s word. Mankind without the Gospel manifests a different feeling; and it is only as the heart is subdued by its influence can there be a true understanding of the tone and tenor of its teaching. Christ came to save sinners (those in Adam) and to reconcile them to God,

The Apostle has been labouring the need for a true understanding of the value of love; love will not cease to be necessary, and love will live for ever. But as the diversity of tongues is one of the fruits of sin (Genesis 11) it is evident that in those who are saved, there will be deliverance from the disadvantages which have resulted from this confusion and error.

The Apostle Paul in verse 8 here proceeds to illustrate the value of love and its permanency as compared with other valued endowments. It is to be sought because it will be valuable and always abide.

The word ‘faileth’ denotes properly to fall out from, or off; and may be applied to the stars of Heaven falling (Mark 13-25) or to flowers that fall and fade (James 1-11) to the chains falling from the hand (Acts 12.7) etc. Here it means to fall away, to fail, to be without effect, to cease to be in existence. The expression means that it was adapted to all the situations of life, and is of a nature that had existed, but the sense is, that while other endowments of the Holy Spirit must soon cease; love would abide and would always exist. The argument is that we ought to seek that which is of enduring value, and that therefore love should be preferred to those endowments of the Spirit on which so high a value had been set by the Corinthians.

“But whether there be prophecies,” or the power of speaking as a prophet, that is, of delivering the truth of God in an intelligible manner under the influence of inspiration, the gift of being instructed to edify the Church, this could not be possible without the supreme love of the great creator, Almighty God (John 3-16).

Verse 13. “And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is charity (love) references - Hebrews 10:35 - “Cast not away therefore your confidence which hath great recompence of reward.” 1 Peter 1:22, 25 - “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit (word of God) unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not with corruptible seed, but of incorruptible by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever... But the word of the Lord endureth for ever, and this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.”

Here, it must be understood that the word of God is used to denote permanency; when the other things (endowments) which he had spoken of had passed away, and the sense is that, and the connection certainly requires us to understand Paul as saying, “that faith, hope and love would survive all those things of which he has been speaking.” I believe the Apostle is speaking here only of his lifetime, these three existed in this scene only. 1 Corinthians 13:11, 12, “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.”

The word “darkly” refers us to the 2nd Corinthians 3-16-18, “Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

The essential idea in this argument is, that all the knowledge which we now possess shall lose its effulgence, be dimmed and lost in the superior light of the great love of God who “is not willing that any should perish” but that all should come to repentance,”

In verse 10, “when that that is perfect (upright) is come,” - this proposition is couched in a general form, it means that when anything which is perfect is seen, then that which is imperfect is forgotten. Thus in the full and perfect light; the imperfect and feeble light shall be lost in superior brightness all our present, unsatisfactory modes of knowledge shall be unknown, but by enlightenment all shall be clear; bright and eternal. The idea here is, that the knowledge which we now have of our deliverance from the law of sin and death is foremost in our minds,

The Apostle makes another illustration in verse 12 to show the imperfection of our knowledge before enlightenment, which indeed to our horror presented a defiled sacrifice, but a true understanding of the great principle of God's love through His Son's Sacrifice binds the universe in harmony, and which unites God to His elect.

"But when that which is perfect (upright) is come." This does not allude to Christ's Second Advent, as it will be too late then; we must have now the true understanding of the truth of the doctrines required, the Apostle Paul is teaching, and is saying to those in the true Church: "That he was called to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God." Chapter 1:1, 2, "Unto the church of God, which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be Saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours."

The Apostle is exhorting the Corinthians who were called out of idolatry, to realise that the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts now, and that they should value the position in which they stood, as for the gifts of the speaking with tongues - prophecies etc., they shall fail, and they have failed: "Where are the seven churches of Asia?" What has happened since Constantine gave religious liberty? Did not the Mother of harlots and her daughter churches introduce original sin, sin in the flesh? Where was the holy Spirit that it allowed this error to pervade the whole of the religious word?

God does not show partiality to any man, as this would not create a sense of fellowship in any body of religious people.

These gifts served their purpose to establish the true church upon an understanding that God was responsible and was behind the churches in Christ Jesus, with a view to filling the earth with his glory. Our Lord Jesus came to declare His Father's will and purpose and this was the reason, He said, that after His death and resurrection He would pray the Father to send the comforter the Spirit of truth - John 14, 16-17, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

Brother David Phillips.

NEVER LOOK BACK

There Sodom and Gomorrah stood, two wicked cities on the plain
Whose dwellers, rather than do good, so often took God's Name in vain.
They loved the pleasures of the day, the fleeting joys that license brought;
They ate and drank, and rose to play - God was not in all their thoughts.

For many years God's mercy flowed, but they continued deep in sin,
And failed to show their gratitude by striving to be clean within,
Till God said they should flaunt no more their wickedness, or be employed
In seeking pleasures by the score; for they were doomed to be destroyed.

But there was one, a righteous Lot, whose soul was vexed from day to day
By what he witnessed: He would not take part with them in any way.
To him two angels came one night, and, warning of disaster near,
Said, "To yon mountain, take your flight, with every one you hold dear."

Then Lot went to his sons-in-law, and warned them that they, too, should flee;
But with a saddened heart he saw they would not listen to his plea.
He seemed to them as one who mocked, so calloused were their hearts, and seared;
And so they shrugged his kind words off, and revelled while disaster neared.

At dawn the angels gave command to Lot, his wife and daughters, too,
And, taking each one by the hand, they bade that wicked place “adieu”
Saved by a just and righteous God, they pressed ahead, until Lot’s wife,
With heartstrings where her kin abode, looked back and thereby lost her life.

The record of events long past, all kept for our instruction now,
Will aid us if we will hold fast the angel’s hand, and not allow
The things of earth to interfere, lest we should make a crooked track;
For once again destruction’s near, and we must never once look back.

L.L.S.
