

The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 257

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Editorial

For almost a year I have been in email correspondence with a university student in Africa who was in touch with some Christadelphians there. I thought I would like to publish part of a recent e-mail where he writes:-

Dear Brother Russell Gregory, Greetings to you in the One name by which we have access to the Father.

There is rich wisdom and life experiences bottled up in our elderly brothers and sisters in Christ. And personally I am most grateful to you for all your wise and encouraging Circular Letters, the various booklets and your huge fatherly contribution to understanding of truths from mistaken assumptions of Christadelphianism; I am most grateful for all your loving concern, care and support.

Sir, I will like to suggest that you try to write articles for younger brothers as part of counsels in the way of truth from your life experiences and walk with God - so as to serve as encouragement to others. Such articles can be published. And I will be greedy enough to have copy plus old magazines or booklets - all much needed to enhance my understanding and growth to get rooted and grounded in the precious Bible truths commonly believed among us as Bible believers.

Thank you for sharing your rich wisdom, life and Bible truths with me.

Your son in the faith / Bible student, Timothy.

I thank Timothy for all his emails and welcome his desire that we provide articles for younger people.

The main efforts of the Nazarene Fellowship since its inception have been to point out the wrong teachings in the Christadelphian statement of faith (BASf) by putting Bible teaching foremost. Most of these studies, together with extensive correspondence are on our website for all to read, so perhaps now is the time for us to put more emphasis on Bible teaching for younger people in its simplicity and common sense.

With this in mind I have attempted here to briefly outline some of the overall Bible teaching from Genesis to the New Testament to illustrate how these things can affect us today.

Jesus tells us that “many are called but few are chosen” (Matthew 22:14); we ask, what are we called to? The answer is that we are called to eternal life - “Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in

faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" (James 2:5). We hope to show here in some small measure why God has chosen such as these.

From the time of Adam and Eve God has asked people to do what is right and good and has given them laws or commandments in order for us to make the choice between what is right and what is not. All God's laws for mankind are moral laws and with them come freewill. Without laws and commandments freewill is meaningless. The most comprehensive teachings in this regard are to be found in Deuteronomy 28. The whole chapter is worth reading but is too long to quote here in full so we will start by quoting verses 1 to 6: -

"Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God: Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country. Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks. Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out."

And the list of blessings continues for the next nine verses. However, if the people turn away from God He goes on to warn them of the consequences, and here we will quote four verses from 15 to 19:

"But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the country. Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Cursed shall be the fruit of your body and the produce of your land, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks. Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out."

And these warnings continue to the end of the chapter when finally God tells them in verses 63 to 68: -

"And it shall be that just as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good and multiply you, so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you and bring you to nothing; and you shall be plucked from off the land which you go to possess. Then the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known—wood and stone. And among those nations you shall find no rest, nor shall the sole of your foot have a resting place; but there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and anguish of soul. Your life shall hang in doubt before you; you shall fear day and night, and have no assurance of life. In the morning you shall say, 'Oh that it were evening!' And at evening you shall say, 'Oh, that it were morning!' because of the fear which terrifies your heart, and because of the sight which your eyes see. And the LORD will take you back to Egypt in ships, by the way of which I said to you, 'You shall never see it again.' And there you shall be offered for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no one will buy you."

From the time that Moses wrote the Book of Deuteronomy, the Old Testament gives an historical record of the nation of Israel confirming their blessings for serving God, while putting Him first and foremost in their obedience, praise and thanksgiving as He had commanded in Deuteronomy 6:4 to 9, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

However, in the course of time came the failures and disobedience with God showing great restraint and longsuffering correction, first of all through judges whom God appointed to lead them; and later God sent prophets to warn and teach them - until, eventually, there was no more remedy. All God's longsuffering patience was rejected. Here are just a few of hundreds of such quotations from those prophets:-

1) Psalm 81:8-14, "Hear, O My people, and I will admonish you! O Israel, if you will listen to Me! There shall be no foreign god among you; nor shall you worship any foreign god. I *am* the LORD your God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt; Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it. But My people would not heed My voice, and Israel would have none of Me. So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart, to walk in their own counsels. Oh, that My people would listen to Me, That Israel would walk in My ways! I would soon subdue their enemies, and turn My hand against their adversaries."

2) Jeremiah 2:13, "For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns - broken cisterns that can hold no water."

3).Joel 2:12 "Now, therefore," says the LORD, Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning. So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the LORD your God, for He *is* gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm."

4) Isaiah 1:3-7 "The ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib; but Israel does not know; My people do not consider. Alas, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers, children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked to anger The Holy One of Israel, they have turned away backward. Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faints. From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; they have not been closed or bound up, or soothed with ointment. Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire; strangers devour your land in your presence; and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers."

5) Ezekiel 2:1-4, "And He said to me, Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak to you." Then the Spirit entered me when He spoke to me, and set me on my feet; and I heard Him who spoke to me. And He said to me: Son of man, I am sending you to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day. For they are impudent and stubborn children. I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, "Thus says the Lord GOD.'..."

7) Amos 3:1-2 "Hear this word that the LORD has spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying: You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."

6) Hosea 6:4, "O Ephraim, what shall I do to you? O Judah, what shall I do to you? For your faithfulness is like a morning cloud, and like the early dew it goes away. Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets, I have slain them by the words of My mouth; and your judgments are like light that goes forth. For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. But like men they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt treacherously with Me."

How sad is the history of Israel! God has ever been true to His word, for not a single blessing has failed to be theirs while Israel chose to do right and serve God and not a single curse has failed to come upon them for their rejection of Him.

Finally then, the Old Covenant with Israel came to an end when they rejected and crucified their Messiah.

While God rejected Israel, He extended the opportunity of serving Him to all the world and introduced a new covenant for any who will serve Him and seek all that is good and right, to come to Him through Jesus. This New Covenant was introduced by Jesus at the Last Supper the night before He was crucified when He said "This is my blood of the new testament (covenant), which is shed for many." The next day, when Jesus died on the cross, (shed His blood) the curtain in the temple which separates the holy place from all else, was torn from top to bottom showing that the old covenant (or testament) was ended by God. While the Israelites had tried in vain to destroy God's only begotten Son, God wove their evil deed into His plan of salvation for those who would come to Him in faith.

But God has not entirely finished with Israel. Even though they still reject Jesus as their Messiah, they are His witnesses even today and while warning them of their impending punishments He also told them long ago of the time when He would again restore the Kingdom to Israel.

So again we turn to the prophets such as Amos:-

8) Amos 9:11, “On that day I will raise up The tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the LORD who does this thing. Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them,” says the LORD your God.”

And Micah wrote:-

Micah 4:1-5, “Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.” For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken. For all people walk each in the name of his god, but we will walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever.”

This is the time Jesus spoke of when He taught His disciples to pray “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as *it is* in heaven.”

Love in Jesus to all. Russell

(Quotations above are from the “New King James Version”)

THE LAW OF FRIENDSHIP.

“Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.” John 15:14.

The close and dear relation in which we stand to Christ, viz., that of friendship, makes it more necessary that we should be obedient to him in all things. He tells us he does not call us his servants, but his friends. There is a closer and a freer intimacy established between us than if we were mere servants. The servant knoweth not what his lord doeth. There is a certain amount of necessary reserve towards the former. He is not permitted to enter into every secret, and a degree of distance must be maintained towards him.

Besides this, the servant does not act in any serious matter on his own responsibility; he acts only upon instructions, and simply does what he is told. It is said to him ‘ go,’ and he goeth; “come” and he cometh; “do this,” and he doeth it. When he has fulfilled all his instructions, he has ended his responsibility.

This was exactly the position in which the Jew was placed under Moses. He was most emphatically a servant. There was a “thou shall,” or a, “thou shalt not,” for every tittle of duty demanded of him. The strictest regulations governed his whole life.

Now the position is quite changed in the case of the friends or brethren of Christ. This is given in the words: "Ye are not under the law, but under grace." There is a greater freedom for such, and also a greater responsibility. We are in such terms of intimacy with Christ that more is expected of us than if we were merely servants.

Of course, we are servants, and that in the deepest sense of all; yet we are not mere servants, and it is important to grasp the distinction between the enforced labour of a hireling and the spontaneous devotion of those who are in the obligations of love. It is true we are spoken to in the way of commandment, or rather of request, but it is love that speaks, not law, or if law, then not cold law, but law softened and gentled to the necessities of this new and tender relation. How different are the appeals and requests of friendship to the stern demands of the legal code! The warm persuasiveness of the former is altogether in contrast with the cold imperativeness of the other. Now Christ speaks to us as our dear, best friend, and when he commands us, it is with the tone of affectionate counsel, and with a sympathetic cadence of manner that reveals his unutterable grace. So when he says, for instance, as he breaks bread before them, "Do this in remembrance of me," who can take such words as a mere formal command, and not feel in them a beseeching affection, which will evidence itself also in the glistening eye and the tremulous voice? And so of all Christ's commandments, though importing to us the highest law, they do not savour of anything legal to us; the chain with which he binds us is a golden one, which we feel to be an ornament about our neck. The master is in this respect forgotten in the friend, though we never lose the consciousness of honour being put upon us by being called by him "his friends."

We have said this relation in which we stand to Christ widens our responsibility to him. We have certainly not done all our duty when we have fulfilled the bare letter of Christ's words. Indeed, generally, the words of Christ cannot be so fulfilled, as not containing a specific injunction applying only to one act, but being rather a general rule, applying to many acts. His precepts have much of principle in them. They are canons of conduct generally, rather than specific measures for particular acts. Hence there will be many occasions of duty arising for us when we shall be called upon to act, in which it will be impossible for us to run to the New Testament, and putting our finger on a certain verse, say, "Ah, there are my instructions in regard to this particular act." No doubt all our necessary acts are provided for in the counsels of the Spirit, but not, as we have said, by each act being distinctly named and considered, as was in the case of the Jew, and it is here where the distinction between servants and friends comes in. A servant would be at a standstill in such a case, having received no instruction, and not being empowered to act independently; but the friend, intimate with the Master, and knowing his mind on other things, and on all things generally, will be free to act from his own instructed and cultivated moral feeling. This, then, is the wider responsibility and larger prerogative of friendship, to take the greater intimacy and understanding of Christ's mind which it possesses, as ground for the interpretation and fulfilment of his will on those occasions where he has not left explicit instructions; which gives us the reason of the apostolic dictum, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." It would be sin to do anything which our instructed heart tells us is not consonant with the mind of Christ. But this is a private rule, which a man can only apply to himself, not being applicable by a man to his brother.

Oh, how clear is this law of friendship! You are my friend. I do not need that you should tell me all your mind or your desire. I am so intimate with you; I have lived near your heart so long that I anticipate all your wishes. I know what you would say before your lips are parted. I do your bidding, though you do not speak a word. Whether you are absent or present it is just the same; indeed, perhaps absence secures my better attention, for I am thinking how pleased you will be when you return to find all things done and ready. I want no statute enforced by penalties. My only law is that I love you; my only fear, that I should miss your smile. Friendship like this exacts nothing, but inspires all things; it makes no demand, but gets more than it could ask. Its wistful eye is more potent than the sternest mandate; and leaving its object with a delightful sense of freedom, at the same time casts over it a more fascinating spell!

And Christ says we are his FRIENDS if we do what he requests of us.

Brother Joseph Chamberlain

Veritas and his Friends

“I cannot shut my eyes,” said Pietas, “to the fact that a great change has come over the mind of Christendom on the subject of future retribution, but I don’t know how far it may have arisen from what our friend calls ‘the recoil of reason,’ or from a better understanding of the language of Scripture.”

“I think,” said Veritas, “that no single explanation will account for this change; that is, several things will have to be said to make the explanation complete. Many may have come to see that the Scriptures do not teach endless sin or endless torment, while others have been affected by the teachings of Universalism, captivated by the rose-colour of that philosophy; and others again have simply shrunk back from the dogma as too hideous for belief but have no definite view upon the subject.”

“I confess,” said Pietas, “that just describes my own mental condition I feel that an infinite rolling on of endless ages of pain and anguish can’t be true for any creature God has made; but what the truth is I hardly know.”

“My own opinion,” said Mentor, “is that the Creator has made nothing in vain, and that He will find means by which all the fallen and erring will be brought home to Himself at last.”

“If human opinions were worth anything at all on the subject,” Veritas replied, “I think I should come to very much the same conclusion. As a philosophy, a good deal could be said for Universalism, but as an interpretation of the Scripture, it won’t bear examination. Take the short and simple statement in Philippians 3:19, where it is said concerning the enemies of Christ, ‘whose end is destruction.’ How impossible it would be to extract universalism out of those few words.”

“Yes,” said Mentor; “perhaps it would; but there are many texts where the love of God is seen effecting the recovery of the world, and triumphing over sin; and your own canon requires you to take all the teaching into the reckoning.”

“One thing at a time,” was the answer. “No interpretation is the true one which can’t find a place for all the testimony; and in dealing with retribution, the first thing to do is to ascertain all that is said about it before passing on to inferences from texts about the love of God.”

“As far as I understand it,” remarked Pietas, “the love of God’ is as surely illustrated in the punishment of the impenitent as in the salvation of the believer. To make God incapable of destroying anything is to contradict Scripture, to contradict the teachings of Nature, and to put forth a doctrine that pules and whines.”

“You are quite right,” Veritas chimed in, “and furthermore, the ‘restitution of all things,’ referred to by our friend Mentor, which will make at last a triumphant display of the love of God, is a restitution which will be accomplished in part by the weeding out of the bad elements of society, leaving the rest to the educating action of truth.”

“If that’s it,” broke in Dubitas, “then I can’t understand why all this has not been done before. If the world is simply waiting for some supernatural power to step in, to put it right, why has not that power operated long ago?”

“For the simple reason,” Veritas responded, “that every process takes time, and moral processes are no exception. Time conditions all finite things. The surgeon does not set a broken bone the moment after the fracture. The father waits for the passion to subside before reasoning and remonstrance with his child begin. It was ‘in the fulness of time’ that God sent forth His son. It will be when ‘the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled’ that the kingdom of God will come.”

“But,” said Dubitas, “when you are apologising for miracles, you tell us how God is able to cut short these processes of nature, and bring his own fiat and the wished for result together. I want to know if God knew of no miraculous short-cut to produce a sinless and a happy race of men.”

Veritas said that if Dubitas would give him time he would answer on every point.

“The miracles you speak of in which God is seen shortening the processes of nature, are all in the realm of material things in which nothing exists but what is the product of force - the dynamic force of the universe. Now this force, all of it, is centred and focussed in God, so that by those waves of energy, called in the Scriptures ‘Spirit,’ it is easy for God to perform all he wishes or wills. But the problem how to work a miracle in the moral world is not so simple. Of the apparent metaphysical impossibility of there being moral creatures who should be under the compulsions of God in the way miracle implies, I will not speak, as being out of my depth, but I may point to the fact that if God could have miraculously shortened the world’s probation, one of the main purposes of that probation would have been missed. I cannot perhaps illustrate this better than by referring to that process by which, when at school we used to shorten our exercises in arithmetic. I mean, cancelling. That was very useful in turning a long sum into a short one. But we were not permitted to ‘cancel’ until by the ‘long-hand’ arithmetic we had thoroughly mastered the reasons that underlay our ciphering. Now our probation is for the purpose of grounding us thoroughly in the reasons of existence. Much experience and reflection are necessary to this knowledge. It is not only an individual experience, but a national one, that will be required.

Veritas paused here to take a drink of lemonade, and Pietas remarked “I think Veritas would have made a good parson, don’t you?”

(To be continued).

The Seventh Chapter of Romans

“This seventh chapter of Romans is almost a touchstone by which a man’s whereabouts in spiritual understanding may be ascertained.”

So asserts the editor of the Christadelphian in an article which appears in the September number of his periodical. Now, suppose we endeavour to ascertain the writer’s “whereabouts” on the principle laid down by himself in reference to this chapter. While with many of his comments we can quite agree, on the other hand there are some from which we altogether dissent; and with the latter it is that we have mainly to deal. The editor starts well by observing that

“this chapter forms part of a chain of reasoning, but may, nevertheless, be considered apart without disadvantage, if its relation to the chain is recognised.”

He thinks it presents an illustration of Peter’s remark about the Epistles of Paul in his second letter, third chapter, and sixteenth verse, which is not improbable. However that may be, certain it is the chapter under consideration has been found somewhat difficult of interpretation, for there has been much contention about it, even among those believed to possess spiritual discernment. There are some indeed who have gone the length of quoting the Apostle’s words in justification of their own evil practices, and such persons would thereby seem to belong to the class denounced by Peter as the “unlearned and unstable (who) wrest (this), as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction.” No doubt it requires spiritual-mindedness to understand Paul’s statements and to see their truth, as the Editor observes, but at the same time we must be careful to distinguish between the statements of an Apostle and those which are made by uninspired men, however high their reputation for “spiritual mindedness.” To elucidate his idea that “a carnal man does not know what a carnal nature is,” the editor brings forward a lion, which beast, he says “does not know itself a lion, though it be such.” The illustration, however, is not apt. The parallel would be, a man does not know himself a man, though he be such. But this is not true, so we will dismiss the illustration and enquire what “a carnal man” really is? Paul defines him as one who minds the things of the flesh, who fulfils the desires of the flesh or who does the works of the flesh; and of these works he gives a long catalogue in the fifth chapter of his epistle to the Galatians.

Now, when a man lives in the practice of the vices enumerated, does he not know that he is guilty in these particulars, and that he is gratifying the appetites of his carnal nature? Does not an adulterer know that he is an adulterer, a murderer that he is a murderer, a drunkard that he is a drunkard? Undoubtedly he does, and not only so, but he will often take the greatest pains to conceal his iniquities from the eyes of others. In the same way a man who takes no heed to religion is fully aware of the fact. How common it is to hear such a man say openly - I am a man of the world, I am not a religious man, I make no profession of religion. We maintain, then, that a carnal man is not ignorant that he is carnal, but that his ignorance consists in his being unacquainted with divine things, and this is in perfect harmony with the Apostle's teaching that "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them "because they are spiritually discerned."

In writing to the Saints at Rome the Apostle was addressing himself to a mixed assembly, composed partly of Jews and partly of Gentiles, a circumstance which gave rise to many disputes between them, and caused the Apostle to pen much that he has written not only in this Epistle to thy Romans but also in others of his letters. While the Jews would in all probability be conversant with the law of Moses, such would not be the case with the Gentiles and we believe it is for this reason that, in addressing them collectively in the parenthetic words of the first verse, Paul does not say "I speak to them that know the law," but "I speak to them that know law" there being no article in the original; thus alluding to law as we conceive, in a more general and extended sense, and not specially to the law of Moses. The illustration of marriage, as used by the Apostle would be readily understood by both classes, and would prepare their minds for the argument that was to be based upon it. In subsequent verses, beginning at the fourth, it is evident the Apostle referred particularly to his Jewish brethren, for to them only had Jehovah sustained the character of a husband. Thus in speaking to that nation by His prophet Isaiah, God declared, "Thy Maker is thy husband" (Isaiah 4:5). The Jews then stood in the relation of a "married wife" to the Almighty, and such being the nature of the union between Him and them, the law had dominion over them as long as they lived. In Paul's illustration, therefore, it follows that the woman is representative of the Jewish nation, and the husband of Jehovah; who may be said to have died representatively in the person of Christ. At this crisis the law was abrogated and the Jews became free to be married to another, "even to Him Who is raised from the dead." The Jews died legally and the Christ died really, "blotting out the handwriting of ordinance that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His Cross." (Colossians 2:14). In this manner, then, the bond of union, or old covenant between God and His people was dissolved and the new covenant, or law of the Spirit of Life, in Christ Jesus, brought into force. In the prescribed way, that is, by Baptism into Christ, the Jews individually could, be united to another, although nationally in the condition of a widow, and thus desolate they must remain until the time indicated by the Prophet Ezekiel, when the Lord will bring the whole house of Israel into the bond of the covenant, Ezekiel 20:51.

With respect to the death of Christ, the editor says,

"When He rose again He was 'another man' in relation to what He had been before, a free man, by marriage with whom we may obtain freedom also."

Which, of course, implies that He was previously a bond man. But to be under law is not necessarily to be in bondage. The first Adam was placed under laws but will any one venture to say that he was in bondage before he transgressed? Paul rejoiced in a certain law which had introduced him to a state of freedom. By implication, we are accused of teaching "it would have been sufficient to be married to the first Christ - Christ before crucifixion," which is about the most monstrous charge that has yet been brought against us. Such a charge involves the absurdity that Baptism into Christ before He suffered would have been efficacious as a means of salvation and thus, in effect, entirely overturns the plan of redemption for a belief so "vain" would render the death of Christ unnecessary, leave the promises unconfirmed, and falsify the divine word, which proclaims from Genesis to Revelations, that without shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins. The imputation, however, is one "carrying weight only with the simple." We do indeed teach that Christ was "free" the free-born Son of God, and that He never lost that freedom by any act of transgression; maintaining with the Editor, that Christ was not "*a sinner by birth, or any other means.*" See Christadelphian for June, p. 281. Even here the writer is not consistent with himself, for in the very next sentence, he affirms, "*I believe He (Christ) inherited in His flesh the result of Adam's sin as we do.*" Other contradictions occur in the same paragraph of this June number; but the above sample of the Editor's "*spiritual discernment*" may suffice for the present.

The next statement we have to combat is that Christ was “*subject to death like His brethren.*” These words “*subject to death like His brethren*” are added by the writer to those of Paul in Galatians 4:4 where, speaking of the Son of God, the Apostle says He was “made under the law.” Hebrews 2:9,14,16, are also quoted in the same connection; but these passages fail to establish the likeness contended for. What they certainly prove is that He was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death; that He was a partaker of flesh and blood, and of the seed of Abraham; which was requisite in order that the purpose of God in Him might be fulfilled. But unlike His brethren, His death was sacrificial; a sin offering for the sins of others, and a voluntary act of obedience to the will of His Heavenly Father. His own words prove this: “Therefore doth my Father love Me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, I lay it down of Myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father.” John 10:17,18. Could Jesus have uttered such words as these if He had been “like His brethren” already dead in Adam? Impossible: there is no parallel between the two cases. Apart from His mission, there was no reason why Jesus should die; for death is the wages of sin, and He was without sin. On these grounds, then, we hold that Christ was not “subject to death like His brethren.”

Passing over matters concerning which there is no dispute among us, “we must pause for a moment,” as the Editor says, to consider the “*I*” of this (the seventh) and the succeeding eighteen verses. We concur with him in so far that in some of these verses “*Paul speaks of himself at different stages of his life.*” The question, however, arises - Does the Apostle refer to himself exclusively or does he not also speak of others in a similar position to himself, making the “*I*” of these passages representative of a class? Further, was not Paul an “unregenerate man” at one period of his existence? Was he not in this condition when he describes himself as “a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious?”

We question whether the Editor’s “*very rapid glance*” had not been rather too “rapid,” and whether the charge of using “*the language of Ashdod*” does not recoil upon his own head? Did Paul himself “with the mind serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin” (verse 25) at any stage of his life? Hear what the Apostle says about the matter, “There is therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” Romans 8:1,2. “I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection.” 1 Corinthians 9:27. “Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe,” 1 Thessalonians 2:10. “This say I, then, walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” Galatians 5:16. “Be ye followers of Me, even as I also am of Christ.” 1 Corinthians 11:1. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” Romans 12:1. These quotations show conclusively that Paul having been made free from the law of sin and death, not only served God with the mind, but also with the body, and that his members were the members of Christ. He did not exhort others to do what he did not perform himself, but was an example to them in all things. The fact is, the Editor has been misled, partly by his preconceived notions about “sinful flesh” and the Law of Moses, and partly by the English rendering of the apostle’s words. The verse under consideration is interrogative, and should read thus: ‘Do I, myself then, serve with the mind the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin? And the answer is, by no means.’ This at once removes all ambiguity and shows the Apostle to be in harmony with himself. To use the Editor’s own phrase,

“nothing but the requirements of a wrong theory could have suggested such an application of the words of Paul as would make him declare himself to be still serving with his flesh that very law of sin and death from which he had been made free.”

McKnight has an excellent note on this verse, which we here transcribe:

“Do I, myself, then, as a slave, serve with the mind the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin? *Apa ouv auros eyw* etc. Here *apa* is a particle of interrogation. This question is an inference from what the Apostle has said concerning his being delivered from the body of death, through Jesus Christ. Being delivered, Do I myself then, as a slave, serve with, etc. Translated in this manner, interrogatively, the passage contains a strong denial that the person spoken of, after being delivered from the body of this death, any longer serves as formerly, with the mind only, the law of God; and with the flesh the law of sin in his members.

Whereas, translated as in our English Bible, So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin, it represents the delivered person as still continuing in that very slavery to sin, from which he says he was delivered by God through Christ, and utterly overturns the inference drawn, chap. eight 1) from what is said in this passage. There is, therefore, no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit, 2), For the law of the Spirit, etc. But if those to whom there is no condemnation walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit, it surely cannot be said of such, in any sense, that with the flesh they serve the law of sin; so that the common translation of verse 25 is utterly wrong, and even dangerous.” - (Apostolic Epistles, vol. 1, p. 291, note 2.)

Far be it from us to make “sport” of a law of God, or “dare” a “presumptuous question.” To make sport of a divine law, and to make sport of those who by their false interpretations pervert a divine law, are two totally different things, and they must not be confounded. There is nothing either “presumptuous” or “son of Belial like” in exercising our reasoning powers in what God has caused to be written. On the contrary, we are expressly invited to do so, for instance, God says by His prophet Isaiah, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord,” Isaiah 1:18. And again, by His prophet Ezekiel, 18:29, 29, addressing the house of Israel, “Are not your ways equal, are not your ways unequal?” What are such passages as these but invitations to His creatures, on the part of the Almighty, to examine and search into the justice and equity of His proceedings in relation to them? We believe, as the Apostle affirms, that “the law is holy, just and good,” and on this account we cannot accept the conclusions arrived at by the Editor: in our judgment they would prove that the law was the very reverse in all these particulars, and would in effect make the Almighty the author of sin. Not in this fashion can the “apparent paradox” in Paul’s writings be reconciled. The conflict between the propensities of human nature and the new man of the spirit is felt and admitted by all who are under the influence of the latter: but it is a mistake to suppose that it is impossible to obtain the victory over the flesh. Such an idea is contrary to both precept and example, not only as set forth in the writings of Paul, but throughout the New Testament. In addition to what has been already quoted we add the following “Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not.” “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin: for His seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” “We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.” 1 John 3:6 and 5:18.

The difficulty of understanding verses 14 to 24, we are informed, “*arises from a superficial view of the case.*” This may be granted without, however, committing ourselves to the editor’s view of the case, which does not appear to us to be a following of Paul “*in the depth of his argument.*” The writer says of the Apostle that

“he carried about with him the spiritual burden of the old man, whom, though held in subjection, he found, to be an ever-present obstacle to the full flights marked out by the new mental man created in him in Jesus Christ.”

According to the Editor’s reasoning, the case of the Apostle was that of a man who had not put off the old man with his deeds, as he counselled others to do, but who still carried the burden about with him! If the “*spiritual burden of the old man*” was held in subjection, how, we ask, could it at the same time be an ever-present obstacle? Are obstacles held in subjection obstacles still? We confess we have not yet soared high enough to comprehend such logic as this. Speaking of Paul having become spiritually minded, the writer remarks,

“but this was an engraftment from without.” “It was superimposed on the natural Paul by the education of the truth. It was a new man united with the old or natural man.” “There was thus a duality created.”

This is the editor’s idea of the Apostle when he had become spiritually minded; he was a “*duality*” composed of a new man united with the old or natural man. A sort of co-partnership had thus been established between sin and righteousness! The Apostle consequently was at one and the same time both carnal and spiritual, in the flesh and in the Spirit, sold under sin and redeemed by Christ, under condemnation and not under condemnation, under the law of sin and death and yet free from that law! If

Paul's "duality" is to be admitted, it cannot certainly be allowed in this sense. The engraftment from without transformed the natural Paul into the spiritual Paul. It did not unite the one to the other as the editor teaches. Thus transformed, the Apostle was no longer in the flesh, but in the Spirit, having passed from under a sentence of death into a state of justification to life eternal. The editor has mistaken the struggle between the natural impulses of our nature and the new man thus created in Christ Jesus, for a struggle between the old man of the flesh and the new man of the Spirit, as if the two could co-exist in the same person and constitute him a duality.

The writer continues,

"It is necessary, to have this duality in view in order to appreciate Paul's remarks in question."

And these are summed up in what the Apostle said to the Galatians,

"The flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

In brief, the Editor's position with respect to the "spiritually-minded" Paul is that so long as he was physically in the flesh he was unable to accomplish what he would, and necessarily submitted to things he would not. And keeping this in view we see the Editor's "whereabouts" in relation to the Apostle and the seventh chapter of Romans - a position which we entirely repudiate as not only false but most pernicious in its tendencies, for it would not only countenance but excuse all sorts of shortcomings in those professing to be spiritually minded. The application made of the passage just quoted from Galatians does not savour much of "spiritual discernment." The words used by the Apostle do not teach, and could not possibly be meant to teach, that a man could not in the absolute sense do the things that he would. Such an interpretation would not be in harmony with the previous verse which reads, "This I say then, walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." Campbell translates the last clause of the 17th verse thus: "So that ye do not do the things that ye would." And in the Diaglott it is rendered, "ye do not perform" etc. Such a rendering does away with the notion of impossibility and harmonises the Apostle with himself as well as with the Apostle John. "We will (shall?) not be held accountable for non-performance of the impossible" says the editor in the last paragraph but one of his article.

"Shall we presumptuously dare to impugn Almighty justice and charge Him with commanding us to the perform the impossible? God forbid."

The natural impulse or desires are not sinful in themselves; they were originally implanted in man by his Creator, and only became sinful when allowed to pass over the boundary line which the law of God lays down. Within this limit all is well: to go beyond it is transgression of law, which is sin. Paul doubtless was fully conscious of this warfare within him, but in the conflict he overcame and "crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts." In his sanctified state Paul, though of course still in the flesh in a physical sense, did not do things which he hated and allowed not. To cite the observation of Archbishop Whateley on this point, the Apostle did not live "a life of wretched contradiction to his own judgment."

In his Epistle to the Romans Paul says - "Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Romans 6:6. But according to the Editor's reasoning the "old man" in Paul, instead of "being crucified," had formed an alliance with the new, and the Apostle still served sin. He calls upon the Ephesians, chapter 4:22, to "put off concerning the former conversation the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." Taking the Editor's view, the Apostle, while thus exhorting the Church at Ephesus, had himself failed to comply with the injunction, and so far from putting off the old man had united him to the new! Again, in writing to the Colossians, the same Apostle says: "Ye have put off the old man with his deeds." Colossians 3:9. But the editor would persuade us that Paul had neither put off the old man nor his deeds; no wonder then he could not do the things that he would! In the same paragraph we are gravely informed by the writer that:

"The implantation of the mind of the Spirit by the word, does not extirpate the natural man with his affections and lusts; it imposes but a check, a control, a power to restrain and

crucify and bring into subjection. From which it results that although this implantation of the mind of the Spirit has the power to do all this, yet it is not done or only in an imperfect manner! There is power to bring into subjection, but the person under its influence is not subjected, and can still say: "I am carnal, sold under sin."

If this was Paul's position we should just like to ask the Editor how the Apostle could be a follower of Christ? Be ye followers of me as I also am of Christ." 1 Corinthians 2:1.

Paul could triumphantly say at the close of his career: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," 2 Timothy 4:7.

The Editor will of course repudiate the results arrived at from this examination of his article, but they are nevertheless logical deductions from the promises he has laid down, and convict him, we will not by any means say of teaching intentionally what is not only contrary to sound doctrine but most dangerous in its tendency, giving room for those so disposed to excuse themselves on the plea that they are no worse than the Apostle, for he did things that he hated, and the good that he would he did not, but the evil that he would not that he did; and further induce such to comfort themselves with the notion that it was not they who did it; "but sin that dwelt in them! It is much to be regretted that a man like the Editor, who has reasoned so well about the Kingdom, the mortality of man, etc., should be so far astray on other points; but so long as he continues to adhere to the dogma of "sinful-flesh," he will not only be out of harmony with the Scriptures but inconsistent with himself, we are sorry for him, and also for those whom he misleads, but we still venture to indulge a hope that he may live to see his error and have the moral courage to renounce it.

Brother S.G.Hayes.

Is The Prince of Ezekiel 45:22 The Messiah?

"And upon that day shall the prince prepare for himself and for all the people of the land a bullock for a sin offering."

This question has been answered in the affirmative by some, and the suggestion that such could not be true of Him has been described as a lie, along with other complimentary remarks, the stock-in-trade of those who do not look closely at what is written.

Our reasons for rejecting the idea that the Prince is the Messiah are:-

- 1) Jesus never offered for Himself and supposing the Prince's offering to be simply memorial, it would not be a memorial by Him of what He never did. Jesus is now, and ever will be, the living memorial of His offering up of Himself for us.
- 2) The Prince's offering (memorial if it be) is simply for Himself and the people of the land. The Lord Jesus Christ once offered for all the sons of Adam.
- 3) The Prince's principality extends simply to the people of the land. The Messiah at the time referred to is the God of the whole earth, before whom all kings and princes shall fall down and worship. The saints, the Messiah's sons, are noble princes in all the earth, and do not require a gift of a small patch in Palestine.
- 4) The Son of Zadok are sons of Levi and not immortalised saints as erroneously supposed, seeing they marry and are given in marriage, contrary to what Jesus says shall be the condition of those who are counted worthy of that age and the resurrection from the dead.

Brother William Ellis (Extract from "The Lamp").

EXHORTATION.

Matthew 17: 1-6.

We are all acquainted with the incident in which Moses and Elijah appeared in a vision to Christ and two of His disciples on the mount of transfiguration. Moses and Elijah occupy two special positions in the Word of God. They are symbolic of two dispensations; Moses' service introduced the dispensation of the Mosaic Law which was to be observed by the Children of Israel with the tabernacle which was then the centre of worship. Elijah is a typical example of the ministration of the prophets although it must not be overlooked that Moses, too, was a prophet. At the time of Elijah's ministry, the tabernacle had been superseded by the more permanent temple. At that period, the prophets were the only messengers of God apart from the angels, among the children of Israel. At the time of the vision on the mount of transfiguration, the third dispensation was about to start, the one that has gone on to our day and will continue up to Christ's return. The "Gentile dispensation" as it is called, because all believers. Gentiles as well as Jews, have now the opportunity to have a part in the blessings of faithful Abraham. Today I want to consider one incident in the lives of each: Moses: Elijah and Christ. They were different incidents, but the circumstances under which they happened were somewhat similar. In each case, there was some crisis at which God openly intervened in order to show that the servant whom He had sent did the miracles not on his own account, but that it was God who worked through him. The first incident happened in the wilderness of Sin (Numbers 20), during the 40 years of wandering of the children of Israel in the wilderness. They were 40 hard years. Many sorrowful things had happened before. Repeatedly the children of Israel had shown their discontent, they provoked God, questioned the authority of Moses and Aaron. They had been severely punished on many occasions. Yet they had not learnt their lesson. There was lack of water. Although on so many previous occasions God had provided them with food and drink. He sent them Manna and quails, yet they strove with Aaron and Moses. Here was a climax: once and for all God intended to show that His hand was not shortened, that it was He who provided all their needs. And Moses was His chosen servant. God commanded Moses to speak to the rock. He did not command him to smite it. On a similar occasion previously (Exodus 17), shortly after they had come out of Egypt, Moses was indeed commanded to smite the rock. But on this occasion, he was to speak to "it. However Moses smote the rock twice, as well as spake. It appears that Moses was very angry and that in his anger he failed to acknowledge God when he spake. He said "Hear now ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" And God answered "Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." Yes this was Moses sin, he failed, to sanctify God and. to show forth His power and His might in the sight of the congregation. Instead he gave the impression that it was he himself and Aaron who "brought the water out of the rock. Failing to acknowledge God, especially at a moment of crisis, is a grave sin in His sight. And of this Moses was guilty on this occasion.

We now move in our thoughts a few centuries further forward, to the time of king Ahab of Israel, and the ministry of Elijah. There was a great falling away at that time from following the Lord God. The children of Israel had gone after Baal, and only Elijah with a small remnant of faithful people served the Lord. God, as a punishment, withheld rain from them. The drought had by then become unbearable. But the children of Israel still would not recognise that all this was of God, that they themselves were the cause of the trouble. So it fell to Elijah to bring them back to God. As always in God's dealing with man, God does not expect a blind faith from anybody, but He manifests His power by signs and wonders wrought through His chosen servants, the prophets. This time it fell to Elijah to show before all people who was God: Jehovah, and not Baal. We all know what happened on the mount of Carmel, and need not dwell o-n that in detail. But let us just look at Elijah's prayer and compare it with the words of Moses under somewhat similar circumstances. Here are Elijah's words (I Kings 18:56-57), "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again." How different from Moses' words!

First he said "Let it be known this day that thou art God." Yes the first thing in any prayer is to recognise God as the supreme Lord and power. Then he requests Him to let this fact be known, Elijah as a faithful servant wanted to manifest God's presence before all people. He did not want to glorify himself. He wanted it to be quite clear to all people that it was not he, but God, whose servant he was, who did the works. It was God in whose power is the sun and the rain who withheld rain all these years in order to bring the

children of Israel back to Him, and who was shortly to send rain in great abundance. And then in his last words Elijah, a man of faith, looks into the future and sees his prayer already fulfilled. He closes with the words "that this people may know that thou art the Lord God and that thou hast turned their heart back again." We know that God had indeed turned their heart back again. Elijah, Abraham, and all other men of faith look into the future with a certainty of God's will being fulfilled. Abraham in faith saw himself in the future kingdom with Christ in the land in which he was a stranger. "Abraham rejoiced to see my day," Jesus said, "and he saw it and was glad." David in prophesying of Christ's resurrection saw himself raised bodily to everlasting life. "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption." Job had the same strong faith when he said "and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." And here we have Elijah speaking of a future event as though it were already accomplished (like God Himself speaks of future events) "hear me that the people may know that thou hast turned their heart back again". Another few centuries later, at the time of Christ's ministry, there was another crisis. This time not a crisis which affected the whole nation of Israel, but only one family: Martha and Mary had just lost their brother Lazarus. And Jesus was sent by God to raise him. That God had sent Jesus we gather from the conversation between Him and His disciples, for He said "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." Like Elijah before him, only this time not before a large congregation, but only before a small circle of friends & relations of the dead-man. Jesus prayed to God to manifest before all people that it was God who through His Son wrought all these miracles. He said, "Father I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe thou hast sent me." The prayer is rather similar to Elijah's prayer. It is a prayer of supreme faith. He said: "I thank thee that thou hast heard me," speaking of the future as if it was already past. And then like Elijah, He prays that God may manifest that He had sent Him. With these two prayers of Elijah and Jesus before us, what lesson can we derive therefrom? Well, although we are not likely to be called upon to do as great things as Moses, Elijah and Christ, we have nevertheless to recognise God first in all our prayers. One thing that stands out in the case of Elijah and Christ, and also in the case of Moses apart from this one failure, is that as they were standing in front of a great crowd, knowing that some unusual event was about to happen, they did not fail to acknowledge God as the prime cause of the miracle. Suppose some of us would have been in their place. Would we have declared in front of a faithless crowd with that certainty that God was about to perform a great miracle? or would we have tried to give the impression that at least in part, our own ability in a certain direction, played its part as well. Part of our emotions which may be used rightly or wrongly is vanity. We all like to be respected by our fellow men. We all like to be patted on the back, and we all dislike to some extent our faults and failures pointed out. But it is when we stand in front of a crowd that if we don't guard ourselves, our vanity may become most apparent. When we go in front of a congregation to speak, it is right for the audience to look upon us as the centre, for the time being; it is right that while we speak all the attention of the audience should be centred upon us. But let us beware lest this concentrated attention play on our vanity. Let us make it clear to the congregation that what we preach is not our own wisdom, but God's wisdom as recorded in His Word. Let us make it clearly understood, that while we speak, we do so as the ministers of God. And let us be clear about the motive of our speaking. It should be with the aim of proclaiming the word of God, and not of making ourselves seen and heard, and occupying the centre of everybody's attention.

I think it a good idea that when we speak to let the prayers of Elijah and Christ serve as examples. Their action did not show the least sign of vanity. They did not fail to let it be known that they were merely the Divine tools used for the work in hand. Moses on the occasion mentioned acted unwisely. He said "must we (Moses himself and Aaron) fetch you water out of this rock? But let us not judge harshly. Moses only failed on this one occasion, and then it was in a moment of being overwrought and in great anger. As far as Moses was concerned, it was certainly not vanity. Both these incidents are recorded for our learning. And the lesson to be learnt we have already stressed: To glorify God and not ourselves; to recognise God as the doer of all the works.

This applies of course not only when speaking, it applies throughout our lives. Let us then follow the example of Noah, Abraham, David, Elijah, Daniel, and Christ, and walk with God to glorify Him in all our actions and utterances - so that people may look upon us as God's ministers.

Brother G.L.Dreifuss.

WHAT CAN BE SAID FOR “THE TRINITY”?

We have no objection to the word “Trinity” simply on the ground of its being an unscriptural expression. The necessities of nomenclature may sometimes push us into using a word for which Scripture usage cannot be pleaded. Our more serious, and indeed (if sound) fatal objection is that the thing denominated by this word is unscriptural. Mosheim says that the word first occurs in an apologetic work of Theophilus, bishop of Antioch in Syria, in the later half of the second century. Accepting this, then it follows that for more than a hundred years of doctrinal history there existed no word to denominate one of the most fundamental features of Orthodoxy. The “Trinity” could not have found expression, for there was no word to express it. If it be said that though the doctrine may not, at that time have crystallised in a word, it may have been in a state of solution in the teachings of the age, we reply that the Bible knows nothing about doctrines “in solution.” Doctrines are “faithful sayings,” having a distinct “form” and a decided tone. Titus 1:9, 1 Timothy 3:10. A doctrine is a crystal; an exact statement of God’s truth about man in his highest moral relations, and if the things necessary to be known concerning God are the first items of that truth, then a “form of sound words” will be prepared in order to its expression. So we find the principal facts of faith have their own appropriate expressions and formulas. God - the Spirit - the Christ - mortal man - sin and death - redemption - immortality - regeneration - restitution - all that is necessary to an embodiment and expression of the Truth are there given. The fact that no expression whatever, neither “the Trinity” nor its equivalent, is to be found, is presumptive proof that no such doctrine is contained in the Scriptures.

And when we ask, on what evidence does this assumed doctrine rest we are met with a mass of ingenuities, rather than an array of plain statements. It seems that all the plain and explicit testimony is on one side, and the “inferential” evidence on the other. We think there ought to be as plain declarations of the Trinity as of the Unity of God, if both were equally true. But in the absence of these, we are pointed to peculiarities of grammar; the use of a threefold expression in the prescription of baptism; as also in the apostolic benediction, and to some texts in the Scriptures, in which it is supposed a plurality of persons is implied.

We think it absurd in the highest degree to put such an important article of faith on such slender and obscure ground as the use of a plural pronoun as in Genesis 1:27, 3:22, 11:7, and Isaiah 6:8. Suppose we could not say why the plural is employed, what then? Would the Trinity therefore be a rational conclusion? The fact that this plural form is only occasionally used shows that the intention of its use could not be to set forth the nature of God, for then would it have been invariably employed. The quotation from Isaiah particularly reveals the weakness of the argument, for there the pronoun “I” is used as well as “us. If “us” proves the plural personality of God, then “I” proves the oneness of that personality, for they are both personal adjuncts, and it would be quite arbitrary to assume that one pronoun refers to the personality and the other to the essence of Deity. It is positive trifling to say that the peculiar use, two or three times in Scriptures, of the pronoun “us,” affords ground for believing that God is a trinity, or that the plural name of God indicates this, for the name of the land of Egypt Mizraim is in the plural also, but nobody would infer from this a plurality of countries.

Neither can the threefold benediction of the apostles, as in 2 Corinthians 13:14, or the threefold reference in the prescription of baptism prove anything like a trinity. The former shews on the face of it that the apostle sees a distinction between God and the Lord Jesus Christ, else why should he say “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit?” Why should only one of these three be called God here, if each were personal Deity? We know that Christ is called God elsewhere, for the very Scriptural reason that “in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily”; “that the FATHER was manifested in him”, but why is Christ distinguished from God here? This benediction, instead of proving, disproves by its very terms a trinity of co-equal persons in the Deity. It has no connection with or reference to the nature of God, but looks in another direction altogether, to the blessing which the apostle desires may rest on the disciples at Corinth. With that blessing he enfolds them, wrapping his love around them in a threefold manner of expression, which is a kind of natural metre for all warm or solemn feeling, making a symmetry of expression very suitable as a conclusion of his salutations. It has no doctrinal significance at all; it is the last breathing of apostolic regard and prayer, and as all imaginable blessing can be

grouped in this way, as it may more visibly connect itself with God, with the Lord Jesus, or with the Spirit, so his benediction frames itself in this threefold form.

There is probably some contemplation of doctrine when the baptismal prescription is delivered, but no countenance whatever is given to the “Trinity” therein. Where is the notion of “trinity” in the words, “baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit?” “The name” does not necessarily carry with it even the idea of a “person” for things have names as well as persons - indeed, the word “name” just means the things of or the truth concerning the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The name of the Spirit literally means the things of the Spirit, and so of the other two; so that baptism (which is symbolic death, burial, and resurrection,) into the name of these signifies entrance upon a new living relation to God, the Christ, and the spiritual.

The “Trinity” could not be proved from this verse even though it were shown that each of the three names referred to distinct persons. It would still have to be shown that each of these were co-partners in the Deity. All that this verse states or implies is that believers are to be connected by baptism with the things of the Father, of the Son, and of the Spirit. Nothing is said about Deity here, much less of persons mysteriously related to each other in the Godhead.

As for the many passages brought forward in which Jesus Christ and the Spirit are referred to as God, and credited with divine attributes, they are all simply explained by the understanding that God was in Christ, and that the Spirit is none other than this same God in his creative and other operations. The argument is not strengthened by multiplying such texts, for what explains one, explains all. Christ is God to us, though not God to the Father, and the Spirit is God, for “God is Spirit.”

Brother Joseph Chamberlin

Behold the Lamb of God which Taketh away the Sin of the World

John 1:29

“Those who were listening had heard our Lord speak of laying down His life for His sheep, and for His friends, and Isaiah declares that the servant of Jehovah, whose sufferings he is describing, “Was wounded for our transgressions, was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him. He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken. They had heard Him say that He came to give His life a ransom for many; the prophet says “He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows... with his stripes we are healed.” John the Baptist pointed to Him as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world; the prophet declares that Jehovah will make the soul of His servant “an offering for sin.” Isaiah says “All we like sheep have gone astray, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all... He bare the sin of many... By his knowledge (the knowledge of Him) shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities;” and Christ told His disciples that His blood was to be “shed for the remission of sins.” So we think that anyone who has decided that it is repugnant and reprehensible to associate salvation and forgiveness of sin with sacrificial bloodshedding has rejected the only way, the Divinely appointed way, by which we may have hope.”

“There is no substance in the argument that the paying of a debt by another does not allow forgiveness since it is God who gave the price of His own Son so that forgiveness was possible. But one should notice that the Bible does not say anywhere that the sin of the world under which we have become alienated from God was or ever will be forgiven - it was taken away by Jesus for us. The fact is that we do not need forgiveness for the sin under which came by our relationship to Adam, because we are not guilty of it - we are in a legal position of separation because of it, and the only way of deliverance from that state is by the healing of the breach, which is what Jesus did for us while we were without strength – He died for the ungodly. In Colossians 1:14 we read, “We have redemption through his blood even the forgiveness of sins” proves that redemption through His blood is the means and the way by which we may have forgiveness of

sins. Would anyone be stupid enough to say in the face of this text that we could have forgiveness without redemption? Surely not. So that when anyone rejects the sacrifice of Christ as a substitutionary sacrifice, His life laid down as the equivalent price of the life of Adam, which was the life we inherit, they are rejecting the possibility of forgiveness. We might say loosely that Adam himself was forgiven because he did not bear the punishment he had incurred, but strictly it was not forgiven; it was expiated for him personally by sacrifice but in the curse it passed upon the race descended from him until it was removed for those who believe and accept what Christ did when He took it away by the payment of the ransom price.”

- From the writings of Brother Ernest Brady

THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE.

The Bible says that this tree was the Tree of Knowledge (of good and evil), and I believe it. It is not called the Tree of Physical Change, and Adam did not experience a physical change. His was a mental change, something to do with knowledge. We read in other parts of Scripture concerning “knowledge of good and evil,” and concerning the “opening of the eyes,” and these occurrences amply explain what happened to Adam. For instance, Deuteronomy 1:59, “Your little ones... which in that day had no knowledge “between good and evil.” They did afterwards know. How is shown by Isaiah 7:16, “Before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good...” Knowledge is a mental, not a physical process. A child at school attains to knowledge without the necessity of a surgical operation. At home it duly learns what is good in the sight of its parents, and what is not. So with the opening of the eyes. Saul on the way to Damascus had his eyes opened (yet physically shut). We have had our eyes opened. We once imagined that ‘heaven was our home,’ for example, and we are still physically the same.

W.L.

The above on the Tree of Knowledge gives us some room for thought. So I thought I could add some Scriptures that would verify and help us to discriminate between things that differ.

The first thought that came to my mind, many years ago, when contending for the natural creation, was “In the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened,” were they created blind? The evidence, “in the day” proved what we contend. When the woman saw (mental) that the Tree was good for food, pleasant or a delight to the eyes (literal sight), and a Tree to be desired to make one wise...” there we have the three lusts, or the three means which are natural and right in their place. They are also the three means whereby sin can be committed if law forbid. James shows how lust, or desire when conceived brings forth Sin, and Sin when it is finished brings forth death –all in the natural order.

There is no doubt that the Scriptures explain themselves – God is His own interpreter, as we have seen in “thou shalt surely die” having an exact parallel in Shimei (I Kings 2:56,57), and a further one is observed in Luke 24:51, “and their eyes were opened.” The people were no more blind than Adam and Eve. It was their understanding that was at fault, being open to the consequences either for good or evil. In verse 45 we have the answer; “Then opened He their understanding.” Have not we experienced the same thing? Have not the Scriptures and other things been dark to us, and suddenly have seen a truth which had previously been hidden? Thus we see there is the natural sight and blindness and the Spiritual Sight and Blindness. When the difference is seen the right understanding can be applied. ““Open thou my eyes,” says David, “that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law” (Psalm 119:18), but better expressed, shall I say in Ephesians 1:18. “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened.”

One could go on, but I leave you to take up your concordances and look up words regarding the “opening of the eyes,” for you will get much profit from your study. Jesus opened the eyes of the literally blind as well as the eyes of their understanding. May we not be as the Pharisees who say we see and our sin remaineth, (John 9:41) but like the literally blind man saying, “Once I was blind and now I see,” (John 9:24) in the spiritual sense and be among those who shall see the King in His Beauty.

Brother F. J. Pearce.