

The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 271

3rd Quarter 2015

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Editorial

Dear Brethren, Sisters and Friends, Greetings in Jesus Name.

There is a saying that if you would know the truth on any question you should attend to what your opponents say as well as to the opinions of your friends. You may probably know one side of a question pretty well, so listen to your opponents too, 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 sent billions of Bibles the world over, and in every language. 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 Jesus Christ.

How far removed from this are the ways of men where education is designed towards material gain and success measured by how much one earns and how much of this world’s goods one can attain. How dissatisfied and unfulfilled may those feel who do not or cannot do well in these respects? Again, pre-occupation with whatever is readily available and close to hand is considered all that is necessary for happiness. Pleasure seeking for those with money; survival from day to day for those without; the industrialist and financier seeking how to squeeze more gain from wherever possible and the future left to politicians to sort out if they are able.

The Creator knows the heart of man and has shown that there is an end to man’s rule, for God will set up “one who is held in contempt of men” (for this is the literal meaning of Daniel 4:17), to rule over the world. One who is to rule by putting the ways of God first and foremost – mercy, lovingkindness, goodness and righteousness and the wellbeing of all peoples. This man is Jesus, but when He returns it will not be an immediate state of peace for we read in Psalm 2:1 to 7, “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree.”

Bands and cords to control wayward people. It will take time for the rule of law to be enforced world-wide. Psalm 2 continues, "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

The prophet Micah adds a little more where in chapter 4 and verses 1 to 4 he writes, "In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it."

It will be an age when "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" - Habakkuk 2:14, and a time of "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Luke 2:14. So let us "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good." (Psalm 122:6 to 9)

Love and Best Wishes to all. Russell.

The Gospel As We Understand It

The Nazarene Fellowship has no constitution, creed or statement of faith outside the pages of the Bible. It has reached its present understanding by reading and discussion of Scripture and study of any and every variety of opinion, past and present. If or when anyone feels that he can show that any point is in conflict with reason or revelation, we are glad to discuss it, for if we are wrong our chief concern is to get it right, but we do not attach much value to tradition.

The Things Concerning the Kingdom of God.

The visible world and every form of life in it was created in the beginning by the Eternal God. Within the limits of the natural laws by which they are governed, all things, including man, remain as they were created, very good. (Genesis 1:31).

Man is a corruptible creature with the same physical nature as the lower animals, but being made in the image of God he has a free will and the capacity for reason. To develop character he had to experience good and evil, and for this purpose Adam was placed under law. By disobedience he brought himself under sentence of death. This was man's first lesson in religion - that sinners deserve to die. His second lesson was that God was merciful, because he was spared the judicial death he had incurred.

God's ultimate purpose revealed in the Bible, is to bring the whole creation to perfection under the reign of Jesus Christ, and establish it for ever in accordance with the promise made to Abraham. This is the Hope of Israel - the true Gospel. The selection of a people worthy to take part in that purpose has been proceeding throughout history by the preaching of this Gospel, and will continue until the literal return of Christ to the earth from His present dwelling with the Father.

Those who by faith and obedience have shown themselves acceptable to God are recorded in the Book of Life and will be called from their graves in incorruptible nature as the heirs of everlasting life, to live and reign with Christ in eternity. This is the resurrection of the righteous.

The Things Concerning The Name of Jesus Christ.

The rite of sacrifice introduced in Eden and defined in the Law of Moses, teaches God's way and calls for the exercise of that faith by which He is honoured. In making an offering in which the life of an animal was taken away by bloodshedding, the sinner acknowledged his guilt and unfitness to live and recognised that he could only be saved by reason of God's mercy. But animal sacrifices were only a temporary expedient and could not give effective deliverance because the life of an animal was not a true equivalent for the life of a man; they pointed to the sacrifice of Christ.

The life which had been lost by sin could only be redeemed by a human life. No descendant of Adam could give his life as a ransom, since the life of every natural born man is a continuation of the life which was forfeited, and thus death as a deferred penalty or debt hangs over the human race. Therefore it is evident that man could only be saved from extinction by one whose life was not derived by natural descent, who was not a sinner and who was prepared voluntarily to sacrifice himself. Such was Jesus. As a child of Mary He was a man of flesh and blood, related to the race and of exactly the same corruptible nature, but as Son of God His life came to Him direct from the Source.

In His temptations and physical sufferings, Jesus proved that human nature of itself is not in any way defective, and showed by His example that obedience to the commandments is in fact within the capacity of everyone. Conscience serves to convict us all as sinners personally, but in order that mercy might prevail and one redemptive sacrifice redeem a multitude of people, God regards all Adam's descendants as having lost their life in his and become alienated with him. This is the federal principle.

When He allowed His murderers to nail Him to the Cross, Jesus submitted to a penalty He did not deserve and a condemnation which was utterly unjust in order to cancel, by the surrender of His own life, the debt owed by sinners. Jesus paid at Calvary the debt incurred in Eden. Had it been inflicted upon the sinner he would have perished and the human race would never have been. Jesus, being sinless, was able to suffer the death and not perish; and being raised from the grave in incorruptible spirit nature He ascended to His Father and now awaits the appointed time for His return to reign upon the earth. Thus God provided in His own Son the one all-sufficient sacrifice for sin, a life for a life, and purchased back to Himself all those who put on the name of Jesus who are alienated from Him by sin.

Jesus, as the Heir of all things and God's representative on earth, in carrying out His Father's plan for our salvation by laying down His life as our substitute, upheld justice and law by meeting its claim and at the same time demonstrated supreme love and mercy.

To believe these things and to be immersed in water as a symbol of the death which Jesus suffered for us literally is Christian Baptism, and is the condition of forgiveness of sins and acceptance into the Kingdom of God.

Things We Do Not Believe

It sometimes happens that people read or hear these explanations and realise that they are reasonable and scriptural, and they imagine that they are what they actually believe themselves, whereas, in fact, they hold views which are quite incompatible with them. We therefore append a list of some of the things which we consider are destructive to the true Gospel: -

We do not believe in Immortal Souls, Heaven-going, or a Personal devil.

We do not believe in the Trinity, that Jesus pre-existed or that He had Divine Nature.

We do not believe in Original Sin, or changed nature.

We do not believe in Sin-in-the-flesh or that people are born sinful.

We do not believe that natural death is the wages of sin.

We do not believe that Jesus died for Himself.

We do not believe that those asleep in Christ will rise mortal.

We do not believe that immersion for personal sins without recognition of the federal principle is Christian Baptism.

Brother Ernest Brady.

Forgiveness

Micah 6:8 Matthew 6:14,15

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

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

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

From whence came His strength? His great strength came just by faith. Absolute and complete Faith in the commandments and promises of God. By His great faith He overcame all things.

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

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

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

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

Substitution

Taught in the Biblical Types.

When God appoints, those who love Him may well be satisfied. Such therefore can read with joy, “Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.” Genesis 22:13)

The whole nation of Israel springs from Isaac, and thus the whole nation was then very near to death. The earthly life of the entire nation is symbolically seen to depend on God’s “instead.” Hence every true Israelite must believe in the fact of substitution.

When Israel was in Egypt, God granted His “instead” once more. This time He dealt with the First-born, the chief of all their strength, and every firstborn son lived because the lamb died. That was God’s “instead” was it not?

The chapter that follows the Passover refers to the Lord's possession of the firstborn, and says, "Every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb, and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck, and all the firstborn of man among thy children thou shalt redeem." (Exodus 13:13).

A third time we see the strength of the Hebrew race depends on Substitution.

Indeed, every Day of Atonement the same lesson was repeated. The Law of God is full of precious instruction as to God's "Instead." What wondrous mercy He showed in providing thus. How few realise His love.

When Israel stood under Mount Sinai they, on one occasion asked for a Substitute. "If we hear the voice of the Lord our God any more, then we shall die... Go thou near." (Deuteronomy 5:26,27). The Lord heard the voice of their words. (Deut. 5: 28) and added, "They have well said." But Moses told them that another and not himself should be the Substitute, according to all that they desired, that they might not die (Deuteronomy 18:15,16). Moses once sought to be a substitute, but his offer was not admitted. (Exodus 32:32). One who has some sins cannot atone for those who have more. A perfect Substitute is needed.

The history of Joseph's brethren also is instructive. Judah said, "Thy servant became surety... let thy servant abide instead of the lad." The surety must act on behalf of another, must, if need be, suffer instead.

But where Moses was quite refused and Judah failed, Messiah did not fail. He is still God's "Instead," the Holy and perfect Sacrifice, who bare the sin of many (Isaiah 55:12.)

(From "The Student of Scripture.")

Christ's Appreciation

When we turn to the story of the Master, we see how gloriously Christ appreciated. That was His way of life that blossomed in His company. When the woman broke the alabaster box, He alone appreciated what it meant. When the widow cast her mite into the treasury, He saw in a flash the splendour of her giving. Others appreciated a cup of wine, He a cup of cold water, and that was characteristic of His life. Hating sin as no man ever hated it, because He knew the Father with such perfect intimacy. The wonderful thing about the Lord is how He appreciated the common heart. He saw the worshipping woman in the harlot, the disciple in the despised tax-gatherer, the rock in the unstable will of Simon. Common things were beautiful to Him – the lily was more wonderful than Solomon; sparrows, a drug upon the market, were in His eyes fed by the catering of God

* * *

Sometime ago Brother Pearce sent me a letter he had received from a Christadelphian who is studying our teaching concerning the Sacrifice of Christ, and he raised a question which bears on the subject and which will interest you.

He quotes Jesus' question to the scribes: "Whether is easier to say to the sick of the palsy, 'thy sins be forgiven thee' or to say, 'Arise and take up thy bed and walk'?" And he comments: "I have always previously thought that this passage meant that sickness and disease was the direct result of sin at the beginning. What do you think?"

I don't know what Brother Pearce answered, but when I wrote I said I thought these words of Jesus were intended, like many others of His questions, both to reveal and conceal, to make things plain to those who were willing to see, and to make them difficult for those who were wilfully blind. The power of healing which Jesus used was not an end in itself, otherwise He would have made it His main purpose to find and heal the sick wherever they were. It was a sign, evidence of His authority and origin, and He used it for that purpose. His power to heal was proof of His authority to forgive sins. Thus, when He was faced by hostile scribes it was immaterial whether He said, "Thy sins be forgiven," or "Arise and Walk." The words and the result of the one were no more difficult than of the other - but the effect of the healing was evident, whereas

no one can see when a man's sins are forgiven. On another occasion they asked Jesus, "Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" They also thought that sin was always the cause of disease. Jesus replied, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

I think that the chapter from which this passage comes (John 9) contains some of the very few instances in Scripture where there is an element of humour - the encounter between the man whose sight had been restored and the Pharisees. They knew that Jesus had healed the man, but they dare not face the meaning of it. They tried to find a loophole by questioning his parents, but they were wary - "He is of age - ask him." Then they tried to overawe the man himself, "Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner." (Does this attitude of the Pharisees remind you of anyone?). But the little man had a stout heart, and was not to be terrified by their pomposity, and used his common sense. "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not; one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." After some further questioning and illogical reasoning they got sick of the whole thing and concluded, "As for this fellow we know not whence he is." But the little man had not yet finished - another dash of cold common-sense. "Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes." Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings... With these and a few other biting cracks, which make as entertaining a bit of reading as there can be anywhere in literature, he showed that his mental eyes were as wide open as his literal eyes, and utterly exposed the foolish self-importance and arrogance of the Pharisees. Their last word put the finishing touch to their own defeat. "Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?" And they cast him out.

Their descendants are with us today. In spite of what Jesus says they still tell us that we are altogether born in sins. And when they cannot stand up to logical reasoning and the evidence of common-sense, they follow the example of the Pharisees - and cast us out. Here is one of the gems of that chapter which is worth recalling again; "now we know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth." This is good enough proof for the poor blind, man that Jesus was not a sinner, and I vote Brothers and Sisters, that is good enough for us.

With Sincere and Affectionate Greetings, Your Brother, Ernest Brady.

A Story

A story is told of an old man who lived long ago. Forcible was the way in which he spoke of the struggles he had to carry on. A friend asked him the cause of his complaints, since in the evening he so often complained of great weariness and pain. "Alas," answered he, "I have every day so much to do. I have two falcons to tame, two hares to keep from running away, two hawks to manage, a serpent to confine, a lion to chain, and a sick man to tend and wait upon."

"Why, this is only folly," said the friend; "no man has all these things to do at once."

"Yes, indeed," he answered, "it is with me as I have said. The two falcons are my two eyes, which I must diligently guard, lest something should please them which may be hurtful to my salvation; the two hares are my feet, which I must hold back, lest they should run after evil-objects, and walk in the ways of sin; the two hawks are my two hands, which I must train and keep to work, in order that I may be able to provide for myself and for my brethren who are in need; the serpent is my tongue, which I must always keep in with a bridle, lest it should speak anything unseemly; the lion is my heart, with which I have to maintain a continual fight, in order that vanity and pride may not fill it, but that the grace of God may dwell and work there; the sick man is my own body, which is ever needing my watchfulness and care. All this daily wears out my strength."

The friend listened in wonder, and then said: "Dear brother, if all men laboured and struggled after this manner, the times would be better, and more according to the will of God."

‘Nehemiah The Tirshatha.’

The Body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:4-15 and 26-51

Many illustrations are used in Scripture to describe the things concerning the Kingdom of God and His plan at salvation for the saints in Christ. One such illustration particularly to the point is what we read in the Epistle to the Corinthians, in which Paul compares the Church with the human body.

Let us make a few comparisons between these two bodies to see just how well this comparison was chosen by God. All actions of the organs of the human body are controlled by the brain and are subject to our will. The head of the Church is Christ who controls all activities of His different assemblies - and not only that but every believer's individual life. Everybody is subject to the head, and to His supreme will.

All muscles and organs of the human body have their own functions. No two organs are alike; look alike, or are even equipped alike; they are all quite distinguishable from one another. Every member of the Church is a different person, with different features, different gifts and abilities. Everyone has his own task within the Church according to his or her abilities, yet, just as all the members of the healthy human body work together as a well organised team, so also the members of a healthy Church co-operate for the Master's task such as preaching the Gospel, caring for the sick, and so on. The Church thus appears as one body, or should appear so, with no member unduly in the foreground to emphasis his own personality, nor unduly in the background and not using his abilities that might be of service to God.

Then we are told if one member suffers all suffer with it. We all knew from our own experience that when something is wrong with one organ we feel generally ill, and it has an effect on all the other parts of our body. So also when one member of the Church is sick or comes to some other personal grief, all the others try to comfort that member and shew a general concern for him and by prayer ask God to heal him or, as the case may be, to ease his burden and strengthen him. In a healthy body all members respond quickly and instantaneously to the will of the mind. If I want to raise an arm, or to turn my face to look at an object, the muscles act as soon as I decide what I want to do.

So in a healthy Church the members will respond quickly and with readiness if work for Christ has to be done. All muscles and organs are equipped with some special gift of strength or some ability that distinguishes them from the others, and they make use of their gifts from the general well-being of the body; furthermore, by contributing of their strength for the common good of the body, they derive more strength themselves. So all of us are blessed with some special gift, may be something we possess, or some ability we have.

Let us be sure that we don't use any such blessing just for our own selfish ends but, if possible, for the good of our service for the Master; if we use our talents according to His will He will bless us and we shall receive more gifts: for we have the Master's assurance that "whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance" - and also the warning that "Whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath."

If we want to move a muscle it has to get some extra energy to do its task. This energy comes from the food we take in; but it is by the action of the brain, the head, that this energy is fed to the right muscle at the right time. Our spiritual food is the word of God which by regular study of the Bible we take in and Christ, the Head of the Church, gives us the necessary strength for what He wants us to do just at the right moment, that is what He knows is the right moment, even if we don't understand it at the time.

If we have to face some special ordeal in the course of the Master's work we can rely on Him to be with us and to strengthen us at the time; and don't let us forget that we need His strength for the ordinary daily tasks as well as the special trials, just as the organs of the human body require some strength to live all the time, not merely when we require them for some special effort.

In a healthy human body the movements and actions of its parts are perfectly timed and perfectly organised. The activities of the parts of the human body are thus like those of a well-disciplined

organization; there is also discipline in the Church, though not the sort of discipline which we know in a world organisation.

In the world the governments, the fighting forces, and even teachers at school maintain discipline by instilling the fear of punishment; but in the Church it is rather the discipline brought about by the willing response of people of one mind and a common purpose in view. There is a unity of purpose and of mind between Christ and the Church; but there is an even greater and, until Christ's return, a more perfect unity between Christ and His Father. This really is a model of co-operation and like mindedness.

As all the members of the human body fulfil their task with a keen response and readiness, and as the members of the Church fulfil theirs, so Christ fulfilled His mission with an even greater readiness. Like in a disciplined body of believers His actions were not determined by fear at punishment, nor yet in order to get a reward like a young child doing the will of his parents, although He knew that He would rise to the glory of the Father after three days; but His actions were determined out of pure love for His father and for man.

Out of love to do the will of His Father He resisted the temptation to call to His aid twelve legions of angels; and He gave His life out of love for you and for me, for all believers of all generations past, present and future, and He did that while we were yet sinners, before our conversion, while we were of this world, completely astray from God and His will.

It is because of this love that we meet together. Let us, then, take our example from this ready response to do the Father's will at all times, for the sake of doing it and out of love for it, and not merely with the reward at Christ's return in view, nor yet out of fear of punishment. One of the first things where we can show our readiness to do His will is in the love for our fellow man and the other Brethren and Sisters - for God is love

The apostle John tells us, more than any other, how important it is to love our neighbour - he goes as far as to tell us that unless we show such love we are not of God, though we may profess to be. He says, (1 John 5:14), "we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the Brethren."

Only when we practise that love can the Church fulfil its task like a healthy body - each member being concerned in the welfare of another, not a busy-body like curiosity, not probing into the affairs of other people, but a discreet and sincere and warm-hearted concern for one another and a readiness to help.

Let us close with another message from John - (1 John 4:21); "And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also."

Brother G. L. Dreifuss.

Helen Brady and The Vicar

Dear Readers,

I belong to a Youth Fellowship connected with a Church, and when a new Vicar had been installed. He came to our Youth meetings and asking us to help him canvas the housing estates, springing up all around our homes, to ask the people to come to Church.

It was not long before questions of Church doctrine were raised. I had asked why it was taught we had immortal souls that went to heaven when we died, when there is no Scriptural basis for this teaching. I explained as best I could that I believed death was a sleep and the grave a resting place, and that being raised, if found worthy, by Christ at the resurrection would be our next conscious action.

The Vicar replied that he, too, believed in the second coming of Christ, but that he did not see what difference it made to our going to heaven, as the people who died between now and then had got to go somewhere. I asked why they could not just stay in the grave - he said if I wanted to believe that I stayed in the grave I could, and those that believed in heaven-going could believe that; in fact, whichever idea

appealed to us and we believed so would it happen to us, and in any case it was immaterial as long as we were brought back from where ever we were when Christ appeared again.

This all seemed very peculiar and muddled to me, but as he did not seem to mind where he was going, and I knew where I was, there did not seem much point in pursuing the subject.

Later in the evening the Vicar called Christ divine - so I asked him if he thought Christ was the same as us: he said, "no, certainly not" - He was God's Son and had special powers. I asked if he did not think we, too, could draw on those special powers if we prayed perfectly and sincerely? He replied that we could, but because we are only human we are incapable of perfection.

I then asked him, in what way Christ was different from us? He said, "He was God;" I said, if He was God, He must have been praying to Himself when He prayed that the cup might pass from Him in the garden of Gethsemane; he said then, He was only a part of God; but when I asked if he meant part of God in the same way that we are he did not answer. But he asked me if I thought I could really do no wrong, as Christ did; I said, yes - we all could if we tried hard enough. He wanted to know; then why somebody had not succeeded in doing that up to now? I replied, I thought some people had done - but how should we be sure; only God knows those sort of things. He said I was the first person he had met who said those things and that he wished me luck, but I should soon discover as I went through life that I could not help doing wrong, as it all started with original sin which he expected I knew nothing about. I rather surprised him by saying I did know a bit about it, but that I did not believe in it. He maintained whether I did or not, something happened in the Garden of Eden to Adam which has altered us all. I asked where in the Bible such a thing is explained - he said it was not, but we were full of sin and that was the reason.

I asked him then if he thought the world was full of wicked people who could never be any better however hard they tried, with Christ as a pattern that could never be copied; he said that was about it; I then said it was a very odd and unfair situation - and everyone agreed with me.

He would not say any more, but told me that even if I shut myself away from everything and everybody I should, not be able to help evil thoughts coming into my mind - and that was the result of original sin; which I could not help however much I might try. I replied, if that was sin Christ was a sinner, too, as we are told He was tempted in all points as we are. In the wilderness the devil tempted Him to make the world His footstool, and turn the stones to bread - how else could those temptations be like ours if they were not evil thoughts?

He did not answer, as he thought no useful purpose could be served by arguing about these things, as none of them mattered anyway - it was all hair-splitting and pointless.

However, it served, one excellent purpose - to make me feel how real was the belief and the Truth I had been baptised into and what a clear and logical doctrine I had grasped: a doctrine with a truly wonderful message and theme, one that that I was able to match up with so little skill and knowledge to a qualified clergyman, a point of view and emerge so well.

It was my first real encounter of this sort; I hope I have set it down to interest you a little,

With Love to all, Helen Brady. [May 1956]

The Goodness Of God With Contentment.

"Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart," (Psalm 73:1). We have been accustomed to think of God being good to a person or to a group of persons when everything is working together just right for them, when they are prospering, and when no ill fortune overtakes them. But when we continue reading this psalm we cannot help but be impressed with the idea that whosoever wrote the psalm did not have everything that heart could wish for, and he was conscious of the prosperity of the wicked in comparison with his own state. He says: "But as for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh

slipped. For I was envious of the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.” Now, the average person would no doubt incline to think that God was not so good to him when he once became envious at the foolish and saw the prosperity of the wicked. He would rather like to think that the wicked have something that he has not and which he would also like to have. And when he does not get what he would like to have he may blame it on God. But the psalmist knew better, even though he did nearly slip. He felt sure that God was good to Israel (according to the spirit) even to such as were of a clean and pure heart. He knew that such people had things which could not be reckoned in value in terms of money. Then again those who love God and acknowledge all of His blessings have another advantage over those who ignore their Creator in that they can see so many things wherein they are fortunate that they have no time to think about things which they do not have. In other words they are so appreciative of the simple blessings of health and enough for their present needs that the mere fact that they look upon these things as blessings makes them satisfied and happy in their God. Paul wrote to the Philippians; “But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak to respect of want; for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need, I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” And here is what Paul wrote to Timothy: - about some evil men - supposing that gain is Godliness: from such withdraw thyself. But Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having goods and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and, into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

There is no doubt that God is good to such people as heed the advice which Paul gave to Timothy, and furthermore they have such implicit confidence in God that they feel sure that everything is working out for their good. They can look at the prosperity of the wicked and not feel the least bit envious. They know that Godliness with contentment is great gain, and that the love of money is the root of all evil. After all, why are riches so much sought after? Is it not because they think that with them they may also have contentment? So then if a person may have contentment without riches and their attendant evils he is most fortunate. In most cases even after riches are finally accumulated, people still find that contentment is not theirs, because the mere riches they heap up unto themselves the more do they want. And so the proverb says; “Wisdom is before him that hath understanding: but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth.” A foolish person is for ever looking elsewhere to find contentment, and he does not know that he may have it right where he is and without any trouble.

Also in Hebrews 13:5 it says: “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have, for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what men shall do unto me.” The reason that a lot of people are deceived about God’s way of doing things is mostly that they do not know much about His word and just base their conclusions on what they see. In other words one who is not familiar with God’s word is brought into contact with one who is, and in many cases he does not agree that the way of the righteous man is so much better than that of the unrighteous, for he promptly points out the seeming prosperity and success of those who do not care at all about the ways of God. They see, like the psalmist did, “For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. ...Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.” Just about at this point they stop their investigation and perhaps think that it shall always be so. But the psalmist went further; “When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understand I their end. Surely thou didst set them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment, they are utterly consumed with terrors.” So we see that if a person lets his mind dwell on the prosperity of the wicked, especially when he may be in want himself, he may very easily work himself into a state of discontent, and he may have difficulty in getting himself out of it. Such is also the unhappy state of those who seek first the necessities of this life and who think that after they have accumulated a store of these then they will have the time, or take the time, to seek the kingdom of God. As long as they are minded this way they will never find true happiness or contentment. These are two things

which come from God only, and He will not give them to any person who does not seek them in the right way.

Then again there are only a comparatively few people who really have clean or pure hearts - such hearts which God chooses to write his laws on and which He knows will be of such a good character that God's goodness will be recognised in everything and also will always be appreciated. Job, too, was not deceived by what he saw, that is, he did not let the apparent prosperity of the wicked deceive him into thinking that perhaps after all it would be better to do so as they did. (Job, 21: 7-15). When we carefully consider the subject of contentment we cannot help coming to the conclusion, that it is a state of mind which is within the reach of any person, regardless of what his state may be. The reason for this is that no matter how unfortunate one may think himself to be, there are always many who are in a worse state. By this I mean that as long as one has life, and hope in God, he is far from being the most unfortunate human being. (Ephesians 2:11-15). There are many who are so unfortunate as to have no hope and be without God. We know that a child can be very happy and contented with inexpensive playthings, but when it sees something which it cannot have and centres its attention upon it, then does it become dissatisfied and cries for what it sees. If we would stop interesting ourselves in things we do not have and spend more time in being thankful for what we do have, we would be more happy and contented.

If we were as little contented with what we have of mental and spiritual treasures as we are with worldly goods we would have plenty to do to keep our minds occupied and have no time to worry about lack of temporal things. We feel either contented with our spiritual progress when we should not be, or else try to quiet our conscience by thinking we do not have time to build ourselves up spiritually or lay up treasures in heaven. We have a number of treasures which we have found in the word and if we are not careful may lose them. We cannot give all our time to looking after temporal needs and also keep our minds fixed on things above (Colossians 5:1-2). We think the most of things we value most, and so should learn as quickly as possible the relative value of things which come to our attention and then choose the most valuable and keep our minds centred on them. There is no use in worrying over what we do not have, and at the same time neither should we neglect the valuable things which are within our reach but may not see the value of. A person is only as wise as he is able to choose the things which are the most valuable and then takes good care of these when he has them.

Brother E.M.Denko

Misunderstood Passages

The Law of Sin and Death

A reply to W.J.Livermore by Brother F.J.Pearce

I have just read a leaflet entitled as above by W.J.Livermore of Ontario, Canada, and have come to the conclusion that it is based, on a very faulty conception of the Nazarene Fellowship belief.

For about thirty years I have received matter from him concerning Christadelphian belief of which, incidentally, there are a number of different Fellowships. This fact alone spells grave error; there is and can be only one Truth. Truth is Unity, one, the same as God is One. Although divided upon different and varying aspects of God's Word, nevertheless they are united in mind by the belief of this one great error, which is more than probably why there is so much schism in their body - the error is the God-dishonouring belief of "sinful flesh" which erroneously makes the Saviour of mankind an unclean sacrifice.

I have written to W. J. Livermore many times when I was a Christadelphian and I though he excelled in spending time and money for the Truth, and I particularly appreciated how he attacked popular teachings of error, and on one occasion I sent him an exhortation on "The Cities of Refuge," of which he printed a number for me.

I have a photograph of him and his wife and the place where they lived.

Whilst in hospital suffering with heart trouble, I well remember receiving a letter from him in which he denounced me, denying having any Fellowship with my belief. That day I had just read Joshua 22, which I ask you all to read. Here can be seen the mistaken ideas of the 9½ tribes when the 2½ tribes built an altar for the memorial of their relations and work. It struck me that this was exactly what Mr. Livermore had done to me. I had not said he was in fellowship with me, nor had I left the God of Israel; though I had left the Christadelphian Body in harmony with my exhortation on “The Cities of Refuge,” and of the Bible in opposition to Clause 5 and others who make Jesus as unclean as those for whom He died.

In referring to it, and mentioning the fact that W. J. Livermore had reproduced it, he accepted it as a fact that it inferred that he was fellowshipping me - I deny saying or inferring that he fellowshipped me, but affirm that he reproduced the “Cities of Refuge,” and therefore uphold my belief. Would it not be most peculiar for a man to reproduce an article for distribution in which he disbelieved if not otherwise stated? Since then I have reminded him that he can openly attack others, but was never courageous enough to attack my belief. He has on more than one occasion referred to various aspects of our belief with such phrases as “the wrong idea,” etc., instead of personally replying to us as he does to those that he can tie in a knot. He has been supplied with several of our writings to Christadelphians, and yet, as I have previously stated, was never courageous enough to openly attack us. Why? Simply because Truth cannot be answered with error, but error is easily refuted with Truth. Hence this short article in answering to the numerous errors he prints under the title above.

He commences his leaflet by referring to the heading, “The Law of Sin and Death,” saying, “As we have seen – this could not be a ‘law’ which condemned Adam and all his descendants to death as punishment for his one sin.”

Now we are quite surprised that Mr Livermore should commence with a statement like that, because this is precisely what his own belief amounts to, but certainly not ours. We would remind him that God is absolutely just and holds no man responsible owing to the sin of Adam. Responsibility is an individual matter and when by Grace one becomes enlightened to the requirements of his Maker, he realises that by reason of Adam’s transgression (by being in his loins) he was sold unto sin legally and is therefore in a position whereby he can, by his own disobedience remain in that position – a servant of sin – or his own obedience accept redemption from that position by symbolically dying to sin in the water of baptism.

Cannot one perceive the equity and Divine justice in this marvellous scheme of God’s creation. “Hear now, O house of Israel, is not my way equal?” “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” We answer by asking the question: Can one iota of scriptural evidence be found to show that due to Adam’s sin the flesh of mankind had to physically suffer death? This unjust theory is the means whereby millions of human beings have been, and are being deceived.

The only person who suffered physically for the death of Adam was the Son of God, and we stress the fact that He, being sinless, had no need. He willingly and voluntarily laid down His life in order to destroy the power of legal condemnation as it is in Adam.

During this present life no man suffers physically for Adam’s sin, but upon a realisation of the facts stated, he is in the position of either becoming related to the “law of sin and death,” which is the Second Death, being eternal, or to Eternal Life as it is in Christ Jesus. “For the law of the spirit of Life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2). “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power.” (Revelation 20:6).

Mr Livermore, when Paul said that he had been made free from the law of sin and death could he have possibly meant natural death? If he did then he is still alive. You are very careful in the writing of your leaflet to avoid directly stating that natural death is the result of Adam’s sin; but nevertheless this is exactly what it adds up to. For instance, you say, “The wrong idea is that Adam was sentenced to a sudden and violent death on the very day he sinned.” You warily avoid informing us what the sentence upon Adam was; but from other statements you have made, such as “inbred sinfulness,” you intimate that as a result of the

transgression a change took place in the nature of Adam which rendered him incapable of continued obedience and saddled him with a body which, by reason of implanted decay, was grave-bound.

If this was true, then Paul told an awful lie when he said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." (Philippians 4:13). "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God . . . that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Timothy 3:16-17). We have numerous examples where death has been a God-sent reward for obedience, in order that the evil which was to come to pass might not be experienced, e.g., King Josiah. Would this be sensible if natural death was in any way a punishment for the sin of Adam?

The shallow thinker would read your leaflet and come to the conclusion that no man suffered for the sin of Adam, which of course, is true; no doubt you, yourself, realise the justice of each individual being responsible for his own sins: but by what you have written you contradict much Scripture and your own belief to get there. For instance, where in Scripture do we read about the terms you use – "inbred sinfulness," or "sin within"? You use those terms by believing that the flesh of Adam, by transgression, was reduced to a polluted condition by having sin impressed into its very substance. In this way you envelope all mankind, "being begotten through his loins, as partaking of his fallen physical flesh," which you believe to be sinful or, more correctly stated, full of sin.

Here we would ask you: Who has the wrong idea? Who infers that Adam's descendants suffer because of his sin? You record that men in all stages of ignorance or full enlightenment, in every age and country, are sinners - this would include newly born babes, jungle dwellers, mental defectives, and a host of others: a flat contradiction of the Scriptures. "Sin is the transgression of the Law" (1 John 3:4), "for where no law is, there is no transgression" Romans 4:16). It is also recorded that "sin is not imputed where there is no law" (Romans 5:13).

Would you say that God's law is applicable to an infant or an uneducated person? Because by your theory you impute sin to them where God does not. "Man that is in honour and understandeth not is like the beasts that perish." The irresponsible person is not related to God's plan of salvation, either to eternal life or condemnation; he was created and by reason of natural decay he dies and remains in the congregation of the dead.

Knowledge by grace is that which brings responsibility, either to a relationship with the law of sin and death, which is the second death, or to an incorruptible resurrection which is the first resurrection, and blessed and holy is he which has part in the latter, for on such the second death hath no power; to him, by his faith in the efficacy of Christ's blood; this power has been destroyed, that is, as he upon enlightenment became legally alive to sin by Adam's transgression, so he became legally dead to sin by symbolically dying with Him who paid sin's price with His life in the blood. "Sin revived and died" (Romans 7:9). "For he that is dead is freed from sin (Romans 6:7); "the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).

Mr Livermore, I have never yet met a person who has been freed from natural death; this is the experience of all by reason of being created corruptible. Is it not very obvious that by the wages of sin one is freed from is the second death, a punishable judicial death, both final and eternal? This is the "law of sin and death" instituted by Adam's transgression, under which all mankind has been concluded in order that God by His beloved Son might have mercy on all. Before Adam sinned he, being the first human being upon the earth, and probably never witnessed death, and could not fully comprehend the awful result of his disobedience until he witnessed the suffering of the slain lamb, his eyes were then fully opened to the fact that apart from God's provision of this sacrifice, this penalty would have been his due, literally that day, but although Adam, by the mercy and love of his Maker, did not suffer this violent death literally in that day, he did so symbolically, that he might be subjected to hope, by faith, of being redeemed by the shed blood of Christ, which the slain lamb typified.

The term, "the second death," most certainly implies a first death, and if this first death is natural, to which all succumb, keeping in mind that "the wages of sin is death," then it is very obvious that Christ has not freed us from it, but rather each single individual, as well as animals, pay it when they expire. Would you affirm, Mr. Livermore, that animals are sinners? Because when you record that men in all stages of ignorance to full enlightenment are, by the same theory you must include them. "By one man sin entered

into the world, and death by sin” (Romans 5:12). This death was suffered literally by the slain lamb and symbolically by Adam, a violent judicial death, not because the lamb was a sinner, or sinful flesh, but because it was spotless, a substitute, which pointed to Jesus Christ in whom alone is redemption and the forgiveness of sins. “Know ye not that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into His death?” (Romans 6:3). Are we not required by faith to die unto sin symbolically as Christ did literally? Has not Christ destroyed the power of sin to those who abide in Him?

Paul does not say “for he that is dead is going to be freed from sin,” but rather that he is freed from sin now, and this is not personal sin, but the “law of sin and death,” which one becomes related and responsible to upon enlightenment, and under which all mankind has been concluded.

When by Grace this knowledge is acquired the recipient is then entirely responsible for his own behaviour, by which he either becomes related to Eternal Life through Christ, or the Second Death by his rejection of Christ who alone is able to destroy the power of it for him. The wisdom of the Scriptures is fogged by the idea in your leaflet of natural death being sin’s wages. This mistaken theory is the reason why you have to label all mankind as being responsible sinners, because all men die; yet you are satisfied to ignore the Scripture which tells us that “man that is in honour and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.”

Are beasts sinners? If Christ has paid the price of sin, as the Scriptures so very plainly teach us, then does it not make it a mockery for man to pay it again by naturally dying?

If this was true, then God requires double payment.

If during our natural life we live in sin, will the penalty be paid when that natural life ceases, or will it not rather be paid, as the Scriptures inform us, by being raised to suffer the Second Death?

Christ has not destroyed the Second Death but the power thereof to those who abide in Him; and to those who reject Him the Second Death remains.

“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection, on such the Second Death hath no power (Revelation 20:6 and 2:11).

This is the death to which forgiveness of sin applies, being the penalty for sin; if it was otherwise, natural death being meant, then our approach unto God through His beloved Son is useless, for this has been the process of nature since creation, a process which needs no forgiveness, simply because “sin is the transgression of law” and not the widely held belief of the embodiment of corruption.

If this was true, then every responsible person who dies pays the price of sin after being forgiven the penalty of it.

We would remind you that sin entered the world by one man, and the price was paid also by one man, the man Christ Jesus, by a violent death.

He died unto sin once, literally, as we are required also to do symbolically that we may be released from the power of the “law of sin and death” under which mankind had been concluded by reason of being in Adam’s loins at the transgression.

You state, Mr. Livermore, that it is a wrong idea that Adam was sentenced to a sudden and violent death on the very day he sinned, and that Jesus suffered that sudden and violent death instead, thus freeing those baptised into Him from it.

The words of the sentence are very plain and precise: “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

Can you, Mr. Livermore, give us one reference to prove that those words mean the process of a number of years? We think not; but rather discern that this erroneous belief is forced upon you by the mistaken

theory of man's fallen nature. Then you go on to say: "but all the unbaptised do not suffer this violent death, nor are the baptised free from it – sometimes they die violent death by accidents." By this statement it is obvious that the principles of the Truth we contend for must be a mystery to you, otherwise it is unthinkable to confuse God's law of sin and death with natural death, or violent death by accident.

An ignorant person is in the same position as the beasts that perish, he can die any death, natural, violent, commit suicide, or any other, and it will make no difference whatsoever - he will remain in the congregation of the dead. If a person in Christ dies a violent death it will not make the slightest difference to his to her resurrection, for this violent death is not the wages of sin.

The enlightened person, whether baptised or not, if they fall away or reject the Word of God, are actual sinners and earn the wages of sin which is death, not natural death which all experience, but the Second Death, executed by God, not by accident. The Second Death is the punishment due to sinners who, after enlightenment, do not avail themselves of the opportunity of being released from the power of the law of sin and death, by reason of being, by faith and baptism, transferred to the law of the Spirit of live in Christ Jesus, or by wilful life of sin after such enlightenment.

In the words of Jesus we are told that "he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). If "the law of sin and death" is, Mr. Livermore, as your leaflet suggests, a law governing the physical organism of man, causing death by physical exhaustion, however do you reconcile the above statement of Jesus which very plainly informs us that a believer is not going to pass from death unto life, but rather has passed from death unto life. Is it not very obvious that the "law of sin and death" is the Edenic law which Adam transgressed, a law which mankind has been concluded under by reason of being in the loins of Adam when he sinned?

When a man realises this then it is by his own free will to determine whether he remains under the power of the "law of sin and death" or whether he accepts the free and unmerited gift of God, of eternal life as it is in His beloved Son – upon such the Second Death hath no power; he has passed from death unto life, "For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death (Romans 98:2).

By the same reasoning the apostle Paul is able to say, "so then they that are in the flesh cannot please God... but ye are not in the flesh but in the spirit, if so the spirit of God dwell in you." Did Paul mean they had passed from literal flesh in that statement? or he meant that it was impossible to please God whilst being literal flesh?

According to your mistaken theory of inbred sinfulness being the law of sin and death, you overlook the fact that Adam sinned whilst his nature was "very good" and also the fact that God could say regarding Jesus, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Yes, and he that denieth that Jesus came in the flesh is anti-Christ. Is it not clear that Christ pleased God whilst He was on earth, clothed with the same flesh and all the impulses thereof as you and I? Is this not proof that the Scripture, "so then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" cannot possibly mean literal flesh? Do you imagine that Daniel would have been greatly beloved if the law of sin and death was the law of inbred sinfulness which rendered him incapable of obedience and was also the means of his death?

Does it not lable our Creator as being unjust to shackle mankind to physical incapability of righteousness, not because of his own sin but for the sin of which he had not the slightest control over, even Adam's? Man does not ask to be born, why therefore should he be under the sentence of judicial death as soon as he leaves the womb? Such a belief is neither just nor scriptural, and we emphasise the fact that no man except Christ ever has, or ever does, suffer for the sin of Adam.

W. J. Livermore quotes Romans 3:9-23, Jews and Gentiles all under sin, to mean all are inbred sinners whether responsible or not., all sinned, in contradiction to the Scripture that where there is no law there is no transgression;" also that such people will die without law.

We are well aware that God hath concluded all under sin, but, Mr. Livermore, is there in every man that knowledge, for it is knowledge that brings responsibility, the person devoid of such being in no better or no worse position than the horse or the cow which perishes.

Then, Mr. Livermore, like multitudes of others, you, by your desecration of a body which is fearfully and wonderfully made, misapply quotations from the 7th chapter of Romans and apply them to the apostle Paul as if they were applicable to him in his regenerated state, when it is obvious the apostle was speaking as an unregenerated Jew.

You quote Paul as saying, "What I hate that I do," "the evil that I would not, that I do;" then, in the very next verse you contradict yourself by saying only Jesus Christ can deliver him from this "body of sin and death" on condition of obedience! According to this nonsense Paul did not obey, but rather, although his mind told him to act otherwise, his flesh served the law of sin. Prior to this the substance of the leaflet informs us that it is personal sins that merit death as wages; we gather therefore that the Apostle Paul, seeing he did the evil things he hated, ought to die. Contrary to this false teaching Paul could say, "be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."

When he said, "those things which ye have learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do, and the God of peace shall be with you," did he mean those things evil things he did which he hated or was it not rather those things which were true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report? We are quite certain that W. J. Livermore, or anyone else cannot find one sin of Paul after his conversion. He knew very well that the "law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus" had released him from the "law of sin and death" and his every effort was directed in presenting his body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable, unto God which was his reasonable service, "for ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's. Would it be possible to glorify God, Mr Livermore which according to your mistaken theory is a body of sin and death?

When a person delights and directs the members of his fleshly body to perform good and noble deeds, by your faulty estimation the substance of the said members being sinful, must be opposition to itself unless of course it alters to a condition of righteous flesh. Such is the confusion which arises from your belief of "ingrained sin." Is it not proved by scientific evidence that every action of one's body is co-ordinated with mind and brain? Are the impulses and desires of the flesh sin, or is it not recorded that lust must first conceive before sin is brought forth? (James 1:15). Sin is a disobedient act - in scriptural language, "transgression of law," and the law which Jesus manifested was one of LOVE, which gives weight to the statement of Paul when he said that he brought into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

According to your theory, Mr. Livermore, when Christ said, "which of you convicteth me of sin," the reply ought to have been "everyone of us." Seeing that He partook of a body like unto ours He, like Paul then, as the quotation in your leaflet, could have said, "Evil is present with me;" therefore if Paul brought into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ, did he do it as to one whom evil was present with, or would it not rather be to one who is designated as being the altogether lovely one? Is it possible to be altogether lovely if evil is present?

Your leaflet is full of "inbred sinfulness," an altogether spurious term, due to the faulty conception of sin being an element of the flesh; is it not possible for the flesh to do that which is good? Yet we do not read in your writings anything about righteous flesh. Why is this? Simply because the terms "sin" and "righteousness" rightly belong to disobedience and obedience, two opposites by which is formed character.

When we read of a sinful or a righteous nation is this a description of the people's flesh? Can we have a righteous person if the substance is full of sin?

By your double aspect of sin you condemn the irresponsible person to death as wages for unfortunately being born flesh whilst the responsible person, if found unworthy, you condemn to death as punishment twice – once for unblameable birth, and once, or again for his disobedience or sinful life

For our information your leaflet says “In Romans 7, Paul makes it quite plain what he means by the law of sin and death, it is an indwelling tendency to sin and the personal sins resulting therefrom which bring death.” You also inform us that men in all stages of ignorance to full enlightenment in every age and country, are sinners and worthy of death.

Then to cap it all you say, “this is the ‘law of sin and death,’” inbred sinfulness producing disobedience, knowledge bringing responsibility for personal sins, judgment before Christ and death.

I have been trying to ascertain how the ignorant man can apply knowledge which makes him responsible to the “law of sin and death” if this said “law of sin and death” is, as your leaflet implies, a law which by reason of an indwelling tendency to sin and the personal sins resulting therefrom, claim him in natural death?

Is it not obvious that the death to which the ignorant man succumbs is not the “law of sin and death”?

This law is the penalty for sin, having its foundation or inception in the command of the Creator to Adam: “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shall surely die” - a command which resulted in the violent death of God’s beloved Son by Adam’s transgression thereof, and also one which will result in a violent death to every enlightened son of Adam that does not avail himself of the opportunity of being released therefrom by the liberty that has been obtained by Christ Jesus.

This almost generally believed theory of yours, Mr. Livermore, of “inbred sinfulness,” “sin within,” “sinful flesh,” has been the means of some of the adherents thereto hating their own flesh to the extent of terribly torturing the same, and we say if this abominable theory was true, then they were justified in so doing, but rather, listen to the words of Paul; “for no man ever yet hated his own flesh: but nourished and cherished it even as the Lord the church, for we are members of His body (which was not suffered to see corruption) of His flesh and of His bones.” (Ephesians 5:29,30).

If the flesh is naturally defiled from birth then it is an impossibility to defile it – we would draw your attention to a class of people who, in Jude 8 defile the flesh.

By the logic of this leaflet W. J. Livermore reveals a Creator who exacts and expects from all a response which is impossible to perform; we reply: flee such nonsense, accept God’s redeeming Word and the Word made flesh as pure and undefiled, and know, as Paul did, that he could do all things through Him that strengthened him, “for this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and his commandments are not grievous.”

Oh yes they are, says the leaflet, in which Paul says in effect, “I have the law of sin and death within me, for what I hate that I do,” “evil is present with me,” “evil which I would not that I do.”

Does not this make one doubt the truth of his statement when he said, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give to me at that day.”

Do not these words of the Apostle reveal unto us that he had been released from the penalty of sin? Would a crown of righteousness be laid up for Paul if, at the same time he was under the “law of sin and death,” and still had to pay its penalty by naturally dying?

The only conclusion one can arrive at by such mistaken logic is that the beloved Son of God, by His sacrifice, could only obtain for us punishable forgiveness, which is ludicrous!

Mr. Livermore, the title of your leaflet, “Misunderstood Passages,” referring to Romans 8:2, is applicable to your theory of the same, due to the faulty conception you have of natural death being the result of Adam’s sin, instead of the violent death which Christ suffered so that we might be released from its power by symbolically dying by faith to sin in the water of baptism.

“Upon such the Second Death” which will be violent, or the “law of sin and death,” “hath no power,” “for the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”

The law of sin and death is the law given to Adam, apart from which sin and death would not be known.

The law of the Spirit of Life is given to Christ, apart from which life would not be known, and that includes both natural and eternal life.

The physical constitution can be good, bad, or indifferent, there would be no knowledge of sin without law. Sin is not “inbred,” it is “transgression of law.”

We conclude with a statement of Dr. Thomas: “Wrong consists not in any particular act of which we are capable, but in that act being contrary to the letter and Spirit of Divine Testimony.” (“Elpis Israel.” Page 92).

F.J.Pearce.

Earth To earth and Dust To Dust

“Earth to earth, and dust to dust;”
Here, the evil and the just,
Here, the youthful and the old,
Here, the fearful and the bold,
Here, the matron and the maid,
In one silent bed are laid;
Here, the vassal and the king
Side by side lie withering;
Here, the sword, and the sceptre rust
“Earth to earth, and dust to dust!”

Age on age shall roll along
O’er the pale and mighty throng;
Those that wept and those that weep,
With those sleepers all shall sleep.
Brothers, sisters of the worm:
Summer’s sun, or winter’s storm,
Song of peace, or battle’s roar,
Ne’er shall break their slumbers more:
Death shall keep his sullen trust -
“Earth to earth, and dust to dust;”

But a day is coming fast,
Earth, thy mightiest and thy last!
It shall come in fear and wonder,
Heralded by trump and thunder;
It shall come in strife and toil,
It shall come in blood and spoil,
It shall come in empires’ groans,
Burning temples, trampled thrones:
Then, ambition, rue thy lust -
“Earth to earth, and dust to dust!”

Then shall come the judgment sign
In the East the King shall shine,
Flashing from heaven’s golden gate,
Countless myriads round His state,
Spirits with the crown and plume:
Tremble then, thou sullen tomb?
‘Mid the blaze of living light,
Heaven shall open on our sight;
Kingdom of the ransomed just -
“Earth to earth, and dust to dust!”

Rev. GEORGE CROLY. M. A.

The Perverted Parable.

The Rich Man and Lazarus.

Luke 16:19-31

In spite of the many plain statements of Scripture regarding the utter unconsciousness of the dead, such as “The dead know not anything” (Ecclesiastes 9:5) “The dead praise not the Lord, neither they that go down into silence” (Psalm 115:17). “When man’s breath goeth forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish” (Psalm 144:4), this parable is constantly brought forward as demonstrative evidence to the contrary.

Surely this, to say the least, is making a different use of the parable from what our Lord intended. Besides, it is a fair rule to apply to the teaching of Scripture that those parts which are parabolic, metaphorical, or obscure, must be understood by the light of those parts which are plain, direct, and explicit.

We must not understand parables literally, if, by so doing, we require to make plain, direct, or explicit statements figurative.

Dr. Kitto wisely remarks;

“The rule seems to be, that in parabolical discourses, provided doctrines inculcated are strictly true, the terms in which they are inculcated may be adapted to the prevailing ideas of those to whom they are addressed. If any question arises about the particular circumstances, in such a discourse, the clue for our guidance to the correct interpretation must be sought in those parts of Scripture which speak to us plainly, and not in parables.”

Thus, in the parable before us, two dead men are represented as conversing with each other - suffering, desiring, and reasoning; while, in the Scriptures already quoted, we are distinctly told that “the dead know not anything”, that in the same day that man “returns to the earth, his thoughts perish.”

These direct statements regarding the condition of the dead are not to be understood by the representation given in the parable, but as containing in themselves an expression of absolute truth; while the representation in the parable must be understood in a sense harmonious with these direct statements regarding the condition of the dead. This we submit, is fair dealing.

No one supposes that the story told by Jotham in the book of Judges 9:8-15, of the trees electing and anointing a king to reign over them is a description of facts; and we read of the blood of Abel crying unto God from the ground (Genesis 4:10), and that “the blood of sprinkling speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.” (Hebrews 12:24). We never imagine that a real voice was heard.

If shed blood is represented as speaking, as well as other inanimate objects, such as mountains breaking forth into singing, and trees of the field clapping their hands (Isaiah 55:12), is it at all wonderful that dead men, who know not anything, should be (for a purpose) represented acting as they were alive? Surely not.

This is not the only instance in which the dead are represented as speaking. In Isaiah 14:10, the inhabitants of Sheol are represented as lifting up to meet the King of Babylon, and exclaiming with astonishment, Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee; yet no one would affirm that those thus covered with worms in the grave were at the same time in a state of conscious being; and it requires no great endowment of ideality to perceive the beauty and of the figure.

Let the parable in question be viewed in a similar way and its teaching shall be found, in no degree contradicting the direct testimony of Scripture regarding the unconscious state of the dead.

To understand the parable to be a real description of the condition of the righteous, and the wicked, before resurrection and judgment, is to ignore not only the plain and direct teaching of the Bible regarding the condition of the dead, but also its positive testimony that we “must all appear at the judgment seat of Christ, to receive the things in body, according to what we have done, whether it be good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10).

The Lord Himself taught plainly that it is “At the resurrection of the just” that recompense shall be given to those who are worthy (Luke 14:14), and this truth is strikingly illustrated in His memorable words; “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, 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.” (Matthew 7:22,23). The Day here referred to is evidently the day of judgment, and the parties introduced are represented as being surprised at the fate awarded to them.

But why should they be surprised at their rejection if they had been suffering in Hades ever since the day of their death till they came forth to judgment at the resurrection of damnation? (John 5:28,29). The idea that the wicked dead are punished by the Judge before resurrection and judgement is thus utterly at variance with the teaching of the Lord, as it is opposed to the principles of reason and justice.

Whatever, therefore, be the import of the parable, we cannot believe our Lord used it to teach a doctrine so utterly opposed to His own testimony on other occasions, and at variance with the uniform testimony of Holy Scripture. Here the matter might be left to rest: but in confirmation of what has been advanced, we submit a few animadversions on the common method of understanding the parable as setting forth a conscious state of disembodied existence between death and resurrection.

The representation in the parable gives no countenance whatever to a disembodied state of conscious existence. By what process of reasoning could we infer the consciousness of a disembodied spirit from the declaration that in Hades the rich man lifted up his eyes, and felt his tongue tormented in a flame, requesting that Lazarus might dip his finger in water to cool his burning tongue? Besides, the scene of the representation is in Hades - the grave, or state of the dead, where there is neither “knowledge, wisdom, nor remembrance,” and where the blessed Redeemer Himself lay for three days (Acts 2:25-30).

The rich man died and was buried, and in the grave he lifted up his eyes being in torments. Does it not meet all the requirements of the case to understand our Lord as making use of a parable to convey reproof or instruction to His prejudiced auditors, the Pharisees?

According to Whitby, this same parable was contained in the “Gemara Babylonicum,” and was probably familiar to the Jews at the time our Lord repeated it in their hearing. His object seems to have been to reprove the Pharisees for their covetousness (see verses 14, et seq.).

While this parable by no fair means can be held to militate against the positive declarations of Scriptures regarding the condition of the dead, it contains strong presumptive evidence against the theory that men exist consciously, as spirits, between death and resurrection. Observe that the rich man is represented as pleading that Lazarus should be “sent from the dead” to warn his brethren. From the answer given it is assumed that in order to do this Lazarus would require to “rise from the dead” (verses 27-36).

This certainly does not favour the notion that at death the soul, or men proper, only bursts the cerements of his chrysalis covering and soars forth unfettered to the exercises of nobler and transcendent powers, capable of performing far more arduous duties than that of carrying a message of warning to men in the flesh. Having never ceased to live such a person had no need to rise from the dead to perform that service.

The spirit mediums manage such affairs otherwise, though unfortunately for them and the philosophy which sustains them, the words of the living God proclaim them “deceiving and being deceived.”

William Laing.