

The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No 87

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Editorial

Dear Brothers and Sisters and Reader Friends, Warm Greetings in Jesus Name.

As we prepare this issue we are in the throes of a very cold spell here in Britain, said to be a legacy from Russia; conversely we have news from Australia of extreme heat, we pray for all those who are suffering privation from cold and we thank Our Heavenly Father that we are blest with His care.

It is with sorrow that we have to report the death of our brother C. Howells of Victoria, Australia on 24th December 1986. Our deep sympathy is with his sister wife and it is our fervent hope that very soon we shall all meet in the Kingdom of God.

In this issue we have an exhortation from Bro. Leo. Dreifuss on the “Life of Jacob”; an article on Zechariah 9.9 and Hebrews 9.12. Also an article with controverted views of the late Viner Hall a Christadelphian and the late Ernest Brady relating to “The Sacrifice or Death of Christ.”

We also include two letters which have appeared in the “Wydean Forum,” of the Forest and Wye Valley Review concerning that dreadful scourge of AIDS which appears to be mankind’s worry world wide. The first one is from a local Pastor and the second from our Bro. Phil Parry “Answer to AIDS.”

We send our grateful thanks to those who have corresponded with us and phone messages during the past month.

Your brother and sister in the Masters Service. Harvey and Evelyn Linggood.

Answer to AIDS. “It is most distressing to read of the terrible scourge of AIDS which is spreading to all parts of the country. However, there is no need to research for a remedy, for there is already a remedy and it is over 4000 years old; an old man leading the 12 tribes of Israel in a wilderness journey provided the infallible remedy :- Exodus chapter 20, verse 5 – “Do not commit adultery.” Another 30 year old Preacher in AD31 said: - “Go and sin no more.”

We have had marchers on the Greenpeace Movement; marchers because of the unemployment situation; marchers for this cause and marchers for that cause. But I have yet to see marchers marching because of the moral decline of our nation. Britain must wake up before we are all engulfed in disease that is the result of a sinning people. Clean living provides a far greater thrill than stolen intercourse.

Jesus honoured marriage and still does. We have lived the greater part of our lives and have seen the erosion of old truths. You preach the theory of evolution, and hey presto, our young people begin to live like animals. The hooligans in the football stands prove it.

Our clever politicians and, sad to say, some preachers, are setting aside the well-proved truths of scripture, and have substituted so-called modern ideas which are detrimental to our national life. I heartily recommend to any who are disillusioned with narcotics, alcohol, cheap thrills and drugs, that there is a happy and fulfilling life in Christ, who can forgive your past and give you the power to live decent lives.”

- Pastor Sidney Arthur Wickes.

Preventing AIDS. I commend and wholeheartedly accept all Mr Wickes said on the subject relating to AIDS and while complimenting him for his comments of this terrible disease affecting, I might say, the innocent as well as the guilty, I feel he should have used the word ‘prevention’ rather than ‘remedy’ in respect and reference to Moses 4,000 years ago and to Jesus Christ later on. Jesus Christ’s injunctions to the woman taken in adultery, “Go and sin no more” also equally applied and does today to the male participants in adultery and more serious still to male and female homosexuals; a practice on account of which Sodom, Gomorrah and the surrounding cities were destroyed - Lot, a righteous clean-living man being saved. (Jude 1:1-8).

This abominable practice is also spoken of by St Paul in Romans chapters 1 and 2 from which I will briefly quote, beginning with Chapter 1 verse 22, “professing themselves to be wise they become fools ... and God gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves and through vile affections even the women did change the natural use into that which is against nature; and likewise also the man leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working that which is unseemly and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet etc.”

It is shameful in which a so-called Christian civilisation finds itself. Atheism, idolatry, adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism and promiscuity on an expanding scale and treated as a butt for musical joke, T.V. and radio entertainment.

Now the lesson has come in the form of a disease for which medical science has no antidote. It is no more a joke, and Lot’s exit from Sodom no more a fairy-tale to the serious minded. It is time for self-examination and re-assessment of the position.

The British Government has decided to send out the advice-leaflets and spends enormous amounts of money. What effrontery!!

Was not Parliament responsible for legalising homosexuality amongst consenting adults despite perhaps knowing God and His ordained prophets had already stated in opposition? Should it not therefore in admission put on sackcloth and ashes of repentance and rescind such a law before advising anyone, much less including those people who regard and observe a higher Divine law? It needed ten plagues to cause Pharaoh to release Israel from bondage and Pharaoh’s final unbelief destruction in the Red Sea. God is not mocked and there is no respect of persons with God. “For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.” Romans 2:12 and 16.

Brother Phil Parry.

The Life Of Jacob.

An exhortation by Bro. G.L.Dreifuss

Suggested Reading:- Genesis 28; Psalms 16 and 86.

Once more, our daily readings have taken us through the Book of Genesis, the life of the three patriarchs to whom the promises were first made. If anybody had his ups and downs in life, it was Jacob, and often, I fear, there were more downs than ups. When one reads Jacob's life history, the man strikes us as one who, though he had made many mistakes and had his faults, yet he always sought God in all his decisions. He walked with God, and like Job, he showed patience and faith in the midst of trials. The first important event recorded in Jacob's life occurred when Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for some red pottage. In those days the firstborn had great privileges. He was the heir to all his father's possessions; but besides he was a kind of priest to the family. Among God's children, the firstborn was also the one who would normally inherit the Divine promises made to Abraham. But the mere fact that somebody was the eldest did not automatically entitle him to the Divine promises, although it may have entitled him to his father's worldly goods. He had to prove himself worthy in character, before he could claim the Divine blessings. And in this Esau failed. It is a lesson that occurs time and time again in the Bible. Natural birthright by itself is nothing in the sight of God. But God will look to him who walks worthily before Him. God said at Esau and Jacob's birth: "the elder shall serve the younger." He who knows the end from the beginning knew who would prove himself worthy of His promised blessings,

Whatever we may think of the somewhat deceitful method by which Jacob later obtained the blessings of the firstborn, we cannot help but notice that Esau must have thought very little about his birthright, and his duties towards God which it involves. He was in fact "not rich towards God." For a little meat he sold his right to eternal life, all the rich blessings that God promised to his grandfather Abraham and that could have been his, he let go. He was however no different from all other ungodly men of later generations. There comes to mind the treacherous act of Judas who for thirty pieces of silver betrayed His Lord Yes, in this respect Esau and Judas have something in common. They both thought so very little of their service towards God and of God's rewards after resurrection, that they sold the most precious gift of all, eternal life, for a ridiculously low price. The same applies to Israel nationally. As a nation they were God's firstborn. They were Abrahams children, and had they been faithful to God, they all could have inherited Abraham's blessings, both in this life and in the life to come. But they rejected the Lord. So Esau's actions and their consequences serve as an example to us. What happened to Esau? His birthright was gone, and with it the blessings. And when he came to himself, he found there was no second chance; "He found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." (Hebrews xii v 17). This is the inspired warning to those who esteem lightly God's great offer of salvation. And Judas' fate was similar. His office as a disciple - "his bishoprick," as termed in Acts 1 v 20, was taken by another, as David foretold in Psalm 109 v 8. He also sought repentance after it was too late. He returned the thirty pieces of silver to the priests. They could not use it for the Temple service. It was done now, Jesus was betrayed. It was one of those irreversible decisions. Events now took their course. When Judas fully realised his folly, he went from bad to worse until eventually, completely forsaken by God, he put an end to his life. The lesson applies to the nation of Israel. They said so lightly: "His blood be on us and our children! Away with him, crucify him." There was no second chance. Some 40 years later, their nation was overthrown: and the promises made to Abraham were offered to all Gentiles who would take advantage of the offer, provided of course that they would not repeat the offence of esteeming lightly the Lord's invitation.

Dear Brethren and Sisters, we are included in this invitation. Are we esteeming it lightly? Do we always realise that we, too, must prove ourselves worthy before we may inherit the blessings of eternal life. To continue with the life history of Jacob, the next important event was his taking leave of his parents as he fled from Esau, in order to go to his uncle, Laban. On the way there, God appeared to him for the first time, in a dream He confirmed to him the promises previously made to his father and grandfather. What a comfort this must have been! There we see a young man fleeing from home, a completely unknown future before him. And God promised that He would not only keep him where he was about to go now, but that He would bring him back. Yes, back to the very country from which he was just fleeing. Here was an opportunity for Jacob to show his faith. At the time of this dream, there

was no evidence whatsoever of how these promises could ever be fulfilled. He had to exercise patience like his grandfather Abraham before him, to whom in similar circumstances his faith was counted for righteousness,

Jacob next comes to his uncle, and there followed some 20 years of service. They were hard years. Laban deceived him over his wife by giving him Leah instead of Rachel. Although he eventually got Rachel as well, Laban's deceitful act over this matter caused Jacob much family trouble. Rachel, his beloved wife, was barren. This was a great humiliation to a woman in those days: and so jealousy arose between Leah and Rachel. It must have been a grief to Jacob, too, that his beloved wife Rachel should have been barren, and when God did eventually hear her, she died over her second son, before Jacob was settled in the land of promise. Laban dealt deceitfully with Jacob in other matters as well. He changed his wages ten times. Then there was trouble over Laban's cattle that were part, if not all of Jacob's wages. After those twenty years Jacob had to flee again, this time from his uncle who overtook him on the way. At this point God intervened. He appeared to Laban in a dream to prevent him from doing any harm to Jacob. Shortly afterwards, he had to face his brother Esau. It appears that Esau's anger towards Jacob had abated during the twenty years while Jacob was away. But when Esau went out to meet Jacob, though peaceably, Jacob of course did not know his intentions. Of course he had every good reason to fear the worst. And in his distress, we find he takes his troubles to God in prayer. That was the occasion when an angel of God wrestled with him. And the outcome was a Divine blessing. What courage this must have put into Jacob's heart. The re-union with Esau was a happy one; his fears did not come true after all. Unfortunately Jacob's trials were by no means over. He was now back in the land of promise, but like his fathers, he was a sojourner in it. His first stay was in the country of Shechem among the children of Hamor. There the son of Hamor committed an offence against Dinah, Jacob's daughter. Her brethren Simeon and Levi avenged her, but in doing so they dealt very deceitfully with the inhabitants of the city. After pretending to make a covenant with them, they came upon them and slew the male population and spoiled the city. This brought such a disgrace upon Jacob that he did not dare to remain in that part of Canaan, for fear that the inhabitants would kill him in revenge. At that time God appeared again to Jacob. Once again he took his journey to Bethel the place where God appeared to him at the first, when he fled from Esau. From there he went on to Ephrath. That was the journey on which Rachel died. For a time after that, things seemed to be a little more quiet for Jacob, until Joseph grew up. Joseph was his favourite child. This is understandable under the circumstances. He was the son of his beloved wife, now dead. But his father's love to Joseph was not entirely sentimental. It seems that Joseph was worthy of it. He must have been living a better life than his brethren for we read that Joseph brought unto his father their evil report. It appears that his brethren did not wholeheartedly follow God, for on a previous occasion, before they went to Bethel, Jacob had to exhort them to put away the strange gods (Gen. xxxv. v2). They were probably the idols Rachel had stolen from Laban and hidden in her tent. And once we depart from following God, as Joseph's brothers had done, how difficult to pull oneself together again. But Jacob's love toward Joseph caused jealousy among his brethren, and so did his prophetic dreams. His brethren did indeed bow to him when they went for corn in Egypt. But Joseph was instrumental in God's plan. His plan was that Abraham's seed should sojourn in Egypt for some 450 years and there become a great nation. And Joseph was to go there first to prepare for them. But what circumstances that brought him there! God brought him through trying experiences, through slavery and imprisonment on a false charge, to an exalted position next to Pharaoh's throne. But all that time Jacob was ignorant of the facts. He thought that Joseph was devoured by a wild beast. That was the lie his brethren told their father. What a grief on top of all that had befallen Jacob throughout his life. But then at long last, at the very end of Jacob's life, things took a turn for the better. When his sons returned from Egypt the second time, he not only learned that Joseph was still alive, but there even was the prospect of seeing him again. In the household of God, as in the world, it is to some extent true that history repeats itself. When Abraham was commanded to offer up Isaac, he was to him as good as dead, and from the dead he received him back again in a figure. To Jacob, his son Joseph was dead. And now he, too, received him back from the dead. What a type of the resurrection!

Considering Jacob's life as a whole, he had many faults. And among them was his tendency to deceive and to deal subtilty. He had dealt deceitfully with his father Isaac, when he pretended to be Esau, taking advantage of his father's short-sightedness. It came back upon him when he had to flee from Esau, and what an upheaval in Jacob's life was brought about by this act! His twenty years of

servitude to his uncle with all that befell him there were immediate consequences of that. It must however be admitted that whatever means Jacob employed, he only attempted to obtain what God had in any case given him already. It was because of Esau's unworthiness that God gave Jacob the birthright. And then we must be very careful to distinguish between faults which a person may have, and we all have our faults, and actual sins. On surveying Jacob's life, we find that there is no sin recorded against him. Sin we are told is transgression of Divine Law. Transgression of Divine Law is one thing, and a very serious matter: but to judge another person, especially a brother, and let it be remembered that Jacob is our brother, if we are approved at that day - to judge a brother on his dealings with other people, when we do not know all the circumstances of the case, must not be undertaken too readily. I think a very good aspect of Jacob's life which we all do well to try to imitate is that on all important decisions in his life, in all his troubles he consulted God. And God always appeared to him to give him guidance. We know that God does not reveal Himself to a person who forsakes Him. But Jacob never did this, and so God always guided him. Now although Jacob did not sin, in his dealings with Esau he has perhaps been foolish. As it was no sin against any commandment of God, he did not lose the promises. But it caused him a lot of trouble in his life. God chastises his children whom he loves and lets no foolish act go by altogether unpunished. This applied to Jacob. It applied to David. But there are various degrees of sin, and for sins not unto death, there is forgiveness. Jacob with all his faults and foolish acts did not sin, and like David, he always walked with God. And that counts a lot with God. Not the amount of foolish acts he is guilty of, provided of course that there is sincere repentance afterwards, but the attitude towards God is what matters. A humble person is the one God will deal with, and one who values God's offer of salvation and eternal life. This is where Esau failed. Perhaps Jacob's last few years in Egypt were his quietest and happiest, and perhaps as a consolation after all his troubles he had the privilege to see the promises made to Abraham taking shape. Israel and his family were now in Egypt, where God had told Abraham they would stay some 430 years and become a great nation. We also, in our day, have this blessing of seeing prophecy concerning the last days taking shape. That to us, too, should be a consolation to many trials and setbacks. Finally, Jacob's life was certainly a life of moving about. He was truly a sojourner in the land of promise. And we are to regard ourselves as sojourners. We really have no claim to any possession. What we have and what we do is all subject to the will of God. We are bought with a price, the blood of the Lamb.

Let, us then take Peter's exhortation to heart to "pass the time of our sojourning here in fear." And a good example of this we find in Jacob's life. Tossed to and fro; setback after setback, yet never losing sight of the promises, never forgetting his service to God who rules over all. As we have just said, we are bought with the precious blood of the Lamb, and this we are, once more, about to remember. Let us endeavour to prove ourselves worthy of the promises, the thing that went so much in Jacob's favour throughout his life, and that covered so many of his faults, as it will cover many of ours as long as we walk humbly in the sight of God and do not forsake Him.

For The Honour Of God, His Son And His Word.

Zechariah 9:9. and Hebrews 9:12.

The Sinful Flesh theory, debasing as it is from many stand-points, is not satisfied without including the Precious Lamb of God who was Without Blemish and Without Spot. (I Peter 2:9).

Those who contend for this sinful flesh and God dishonouring doctrine try and make the above Scriptures fit their theory. Now in face of so many passages of Scripture which prove that Jesus died for us, and the challenge of Christ (John 8:46) and Apostles (I Corinthians 12:3 and I Peter 2:22) we wish to examine the above Scriptures from another angle, with the idea of helping those who oppose themselves to the plain simple teaching of the Scriptures, to see the Beauty and Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, which cannot otherwise be seen when the eyes of understanding are closed and darkened by the counsel of manmade rules. God hath shewn us the exceeding Riches of His Grace (Eph. 2:7) in many ways, and no one should have the audacity to think that man has a right to enter through the gate into the

City (Rev. 22: 14) and a right to eat of the Tree of Life (Rev. 2:7) without conforming to the conditions laid down by Him who is LOVE (I John 4:8). By grace are we saved through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is the Gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast (Ephesians ch. 2 vs 8 and 9).

Even so at the present time also there is a remnant according to the election of Grace. And if it is by Grace, it is no more of works; otherwise Grace is no more Grace (Romans 9:11. and 11:6). But to him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned as of Grace, but as of debt (Romans 4: 4).

Grace is said to be the unmerited favour or Gift of God. He is the very source of all good (James 1:17), and the Fountain of Life (Psalm 56:9). He brought Adam into being and gave all that was necessary for his natural sustenance and placed him under law for the trial of his faith, so that he might be a partaker of Divine Nature (II Peter 1:4) (which he did not then possess) so that he could live for ever. He failed and earned the wages of sin which was death (Rom. 6:23). Therefore it must be obvious to all who have the least knowledge of Love that if God did not put into operation His Loving plan of Eternal Redemption, Adam nor any other could live (naturally) let alone Eternally, He in Loving Wisdom and Justice satisfied (or paid) all law (or Sin) could claim, and above all made a way of escape for Adam (and all in him) and in type saved him by providing the way and the means on the basis that without the shedding of Blood there is no Remission (Heb. ch. 9 v 22), thus the necessity of The Lamb of God which taketh away The Sin of the world (John 1:29). Not only in Eden can this be seen, but in Abraham's triumphant victory by Faith. God will provide Himself The Lamb... in the stead of his son (Gen. 22 vs. 8 and 15).

Therefore His own Arm brought salvation unto Him (Isaiah 59:16). For the Grace of God hath appeared, BRINGING Salvation to all men (Titus 2:11, and 3 vs. 5 and 7). The birth of Jesus should be enough to seal this Gospel of Grace, but let the words of Simeon be read: - "For mine eyes have seen Thy Salvation... and the Glory of Israel" (Luke chapter 2 vs. 28-32). Jesus was Holy (Luke 1:35) and was raised up for this very purpose as seen in v 69 of Luke chapter One and Galatians 4:4. Will any thinking person say that this Great Salvation (Heb. 2:3), this Unspeakable Gift (II Cor. 9:15) had to be Unholy, Physically unclean and a polluted Sacrifice? Why the special miracle to provide Jesus if this sinful flesh theory is right and plenty of such (according to their theory) unholy and unclean flesh about? Yet this is the shallow reasoning of this theory. Is it not outrageous to say that the Blood (the life of the flesh) of Jesus which through LOVE was willingly laid down for His Sheep was condemned and under Adamic condemnation and was not Precious? (I Peter 1:19). A condemned person cannot save himself let alone any other, and if this could be done by injustice then we can say without fear that God Redeemed us by fraud and not by Grace. Did not Jesus invite us to take His yoke upon us, which He said was easy and light? (Matthew 11 vs 28-30). Did not Jesus come that we might have life and that more abundant? (John 10:10 There are many more such passages the reader can bring to mind and question themselves to see if they can (by any stretch of imagination) see a condemned person offering what He did not have to offer? If the sinful flesh theory is true then not only the above but I Peter 2:19 and many more like it have no meaning at all. Try and leave that theory and look at the Birth and Death of Jesus BROUGHT to us by the loving Grace of God. "We see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death... that He by the Grace of God should taste death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9).

Did not Jesus say to Peter: "Get thee behind Me, Satan"? (Matt. 16:25). Why? Was not this because Peter (with good intention) did not realise the plan of Redemption, that it was necessary that ONE man should die for the people? (John 18:14). Is not Peter's thought and action much the same today? "For thou savourest not the things of God, but those that be of men." The types from Eden to the end of the law pointed to Jesus, as Isaiah chapter 53 so plainly states and was confirmed by Phillip (Acts 8), which was the fundamental principle laid down by God, that without the shedding of Blood there is no remission (Heb. 9:22. Lev. 17:11).

Can we see the Grace of God in Isaiah, where it pleased the Lord to Bruise Him. Is it not recorded of Christ that "It was for the joy set before Him that He endured the Cross"? (Heb. 12:2), and in the words of the context of Hebrews ch. 2 vs 9 and 10 "in bringing many sons unto glory"? and in the words of John 12 v. 24 "Except a corn of wheat die it cannot bring forth much fruit."

Let us look at these two passages in the light of the Grace of God and the Joy of Jesus, that they did for us what we could not do for ourselves. Zechariah 9:9. Rejoice Greatly, O daughter of Zion, Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem, Behold; Thy King cometh unto thee: He is Just and having Salvation. Is not this verse consistent throughout? Is it not the essence of joy? Rejoice Greatly. At what? That Jesus is a physically defiled sinner? Perish this thought. Shout! What? Jesus offered for His sinful flesh? That He was as unclean as those whom He came to save? NO! He is Just, Holy, free from sin, without Spot, yes, and having Salvation to offer to whosoever will. Now for the margins of the A.V. and R.V. "Saving Himself." The Justice of God (not being Redeemed by fraud) and the Principle of His scheme of Redemption, (a clean, innocent Lamb) and the use of Personification, (Sin, the Devil) forbid this marginal choice. Now the R.V. The word "Having" is rendered (Heb) "Saved." Is there anything here to savour the sinful flesh theory? NO! He was Just and Saved Having Victory. What is the victory that overcometh the world? (I John 5:4). Faith. Did even Jesus lack this? Would Adam have been condemned if he had the Faith of his Brother? When every textual argument is over we still come to the question: In what way does that phrase "saving himself" prove that the Lord Jesus Christ made atonement for Himself as well as for the sins of the people? We too are exhorted to save ourselves from this untoward generation (Acts 2:40). That does not mean that we must atone for ourselves by sacrifice. From which we see that the marginal words even if they could stand textually could in no way prove that the Lord Jesus Christ made atonement for Himself. The words "Having Salvation" have more in its favour than the sinful flesh theory have for theirs. Jesus was able to save and offer Salvation and there is no Salvation in any other (Acts 4:12).

Hebrews 9:12. In the Epistle to the Hebrews we have a continual contrast between the Old and New Covenants. Better Promises, hope, sacrifices, resurrection, etc. "But Christ" ("having" R.V.) "being come an High Priest of good things to come by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say not of this (creation R.V.) building; neither by the blood of goats and calves but by His own blood, He entered in once into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal Redemption." Because the words "For us" are in italics the advocates of the sinful flesh delight to think that they have proof of the physical sin principle, even in Jesus. While we agree that the words "for us" are not in the text, we would remind you that neither are the words "For Himself." Are not the words "for us," "on behalf," "in place of us" used many times, and in not one place can we find one "For Himself," or that human nature had to be offered for.

Did Adam need Redemption before he sinned? No! He needed a change of nature to live for ever. So did Jesus need a change of Nature to live for ever, but He never needed Redemption from sin any more than Adam before he sinned. The death of Christ or His shed Blood was for us. He had the Redemption Price. He gave His life as a Ransom for many, for all (Matthew 20:28. I Timothy 2:6), but not for Himself. Daniel 9:20. The English New Testament renders it thus: "Having provided an Eternal Redemption." Are not these the facts of the whole Scriptures? See Weymouth. To make this verse to prove an impossible thing (sinful flesh) and to count the Blood of the Covenant an Unholy thing despite the spirit of Grace is beyond our comprehension. We say the least to be said of this interpretation is, any must be hard up for Scriptural evidence. "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which HE PURCHASED with His OWN Blood." (Acts 20:28). For ye know the GRACE of our Lord Jesus Christ that though He was RICH, yet for your sakes, He became POOR, that ye through His Poverty might be made RICH (2 Corinthians 8:9).

If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; but if we walk in LIGHT, we have fellowship one with another, and the BLOOD of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth US from ALL sin. (I John 1: vs 6 and 7).

F.J.Pearce.

One of the most important subjects among Christians which has been the cause of many divisions is that of The Sacrifice of Christ and His death. Among Christadelphians it raised its head during the latter part of the nineteenth century in the persons of Robert Roberts and Edward Turney. Periodically it has cropped up and continues to do so. During the 1950's a well known Christadelphian named Viner Hall of Weston-s-Mare set forth the Christadelphian view in an article of seven paragraphs, a copy of which dated June 1950 came into the hands of our late bro. Pearce. The Christadelphian view and belief on this subject is still the same in the 1980's. During the 1940's a number were very concerned with this subject as put forth by the Christadelphian body and their associated beliefs, among whom was our late bro. Ernest Brady and in October 1945 felt compelled to reply, to the article of Viner Hall. "The Sacrifice Or Death Of Christ." Each paragraph will be quoted in full, as will the reply before passing on to the next paragraph.

The Sacrifice Or Death Of Christ.

Par.1. Viner Hall: "Christ died a Representative death not a substitutionary death; that is to say he died for us or on our account or behalf, - as our representative - not in our place; otherwise, had he died in our stead and paid our debts there would have been no place for forgiveness. Because where there is forbearance and forgiveness there cannot have been payment; and God says that He forbears with those who come unto Him through Christ and forgives them for His sake."

Reply. Ernest Brady: Christ certainly did not die in our stead or in our place. He died in Adam's stead: He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. I agree that if He had died in our stead to pay our debts there would have been no place for forgiveness. But apart from Christ's Sacrifice we should still be alienated from God and under Adam's condemnation and therefore debarred from approaching God at all to receive forgiveness. It is Adam's sin (Romans 5:12) which caused the breach and which is imputed to us by Scripture (Galatians 5:22), or law and from which we are redeemed by the blood of the Saviour. I have a strong objection as yourself to what you imagine to be the theory of Substitution - that God demanded the life of an innocent man to induce Him to mercy; but I have an equally strong objection to your theory of Representation - that a man was born with sinful and defiled nature which had to be ritualistically destroyed. But the truth runs between the two extremes - each as obnoxious as the other - that in order to uphold the just Law of God and at the same time to deliver some of the race, God Himself gave His own Son, who voluntarily bore the penalty due to His brother.

Par.2. Viner Hall: The meaning of death as a representative is death for or on account of or as one of us - one of our race - whose sin and death-smitten nature He bore, conquered and then carried to the cross where it was put to death and destroyed .

Par.2. Reply. Ernest Brady: Your reasoning that Christ died as a representative of the human race and suffered what was due to Himself on account of His own "Sin and death smitten" nature, amounts to a denial of His own words "I am the Good Shepherd; the good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." On your reasoning, Jesus Himself was one of the Sheep - yet He calls Himself "The Shepherd." He cannot be at the same time the Shepherd and the sheep. Again He says "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." If He was Himself under condemnation, He laid it down first of all for Himself or on His own account and our benefit is merely by the way. Jesus says He laid His life down for his friends. Do you think he was wilfully concealing a part of the truth when he failed to give any colour to the idea that He was compelled to lay it down on His own account. There are literally scores of passages which tell us it was for us, for mankind, for the unjust, for sinners. There is not one which expresses your view. There is one which gives a direct and explicit negative to your view, Daniel ch. 9 verse 26. "Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself."

Par.3. Viner Hall: Christ was the last Adam - "tempted in all points" like the first Adam whose identical nature He possessed; for He was "the Son of Man" (Adam) as He so often declared. Christ was therefore under the same condemnation of death quite irrespective of his sinlessness. He possessed Adam's death condemned nature and was therefore as much in need of redemption from death as any other son of man. Matthew 5:15, Hebrews 5:7.

Par.3. Reply. Ernest Brady: I am in entire agreement with the first part - that Jesus possessed identical nature and was tempted in all points etc.

I do not agree that either Adam or Jesus, or any man has a “death condemned nature.” I do not believe there is any such thing as sinful flesh or sinful nature, any more than that there can be righteous flesh or righteous nature. A man can only become sinful by committing sin. He can become righteous by forsaking his sin and repenting. His flesh remains the same in either case. In regard to the purpose of God, Adam was the actual sinner and all men are regarded as ‘in him’ when he sinned, legally sinners and therefore under sentence of death. Christ was not in Adam when he sinned because God was His Father, not Adam. Therefore Christ was not under Adamic condemnation. He could not become a sinner except by committing sin and as he did no sin he retained his life under the same conditions as Adam forfeited his. Thus it was that he was in a position to give his life as the price of redemption.

Para. 4. Viner Hall: His own salvation from death and the grave was contingent upon a perfectly obedient or sinless life, consummated by an obedient death. Christ overcame the flesh with all its affections and desires, which no other son of man could have done: and for this reason - having conquered sin in conquering the native desires of the flesh, which he possessed - sin had no power to hold Him in the grave. Because, in thus subduing sin He had in Himself put sin to death in conquering His flesh.

4. Reply. Ernest Brady: I agree that his deliverance - I should not say salvation - from the death was contingent upon perfect obedience, for had He been a sinner He would have been in the same position as Adam – i.e. in need of a Saviour. I also agree that He overcame the flesh with its affections and desires but I do not agree that in this He did what no other man could have done. I believe that all men are capable of overcoming and the fact that “being tempted in all points like as we are” Christ did so, proves it. The fact that very few men are wholly righteous merely proves that men love evil rather than good. But there have been some who have come very near to perfection - see Genesis 5:9; Numbers 14:24; 2 Peter 2:7; Luke 1:6. - and there are some of whom we have testimony that they were perfect - see Hebrews 11:4; I Kings 15:14; Job 1:1; Philippians 3:6. Of course, I understand you will quote I John 1.8 but this refers to imputed Adamic Sin - and this is the sin from which the blood of Jesus cleanseth us. No man’s perfect life or obedience could deliver him from the Sin under which God has concluded all men, not even Jesus, had he not been free from it on account of being the Son of God.

Par. 5 Viner Hall: This enabled God to raise Him from the dead and give Him eternal life because of His righteousness. Thus, by the perfect obedience of the last Adam, the breach which had been caused by the first Adam’s disobedience was repaired or healed, and a way opened ‘through righteousness’ (or through a perfectly righteous man) to reconciliation and eternal life.

5. Reply. E.Brady: I am in agreement except that I believe that on the authority of John 12:23 Jesus by perfect obedience established His right to life without dying.

Par. 6 Viner Hall: Christ is therefore our representative in that in carrying our condemned nature He “tasted death for every man” so that in dying, He died as our representative. So that in dying as our representative, we so to speak died with Him – our sinful nature was put to death in Him - as it is written: “if one died for all, then were all dead;” so that if we are to benefit by His death, His sacrifice, His blood - which all mean the same thing - for His sacrifice necessitated His death which involved the shedding of His blood - and for this reason His blood is used as a memorial, figure or symbol of His sacrifice - I say then, if we are to benefit by His sacrifice, or blood, or death, and obtain God’s favour in the present forgiveness of sins unto eternal life in the age to come, then we must identify ourselves with His death - must partake of His death - in being “buried with Him by baptism into His death” and then from the grave of our baptism rise as from the dead to a new and sanctified spiritual life in Christ - as men alive from the dead.

6. Reply. Ernest Brady: I do not believe our nature is condemned. The condemnation is a legal condemnation which only becomes effective when enlightenment comes. Jesus said “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world and men love darkness rather than light.” Paul says “where there is no law there is no sin” and again “I had not known sin but by the law.” These and similar passages illustrate the Scriptural principle that although the Law of Sin and Death by reason of Adam’s Sin, hangs over the race, it does not come into operation until enlightenment comes. Similarly, the Law of the Spirit of Life is hanging over the race but it does not come into operation upon individuals until they become enlightened and follow the prescribed course for putting off the former and putting on the latter. I agree with your views re identifying ourselves with His death but I think it a pity that you cannot see the real meaning of the scriptural text you quote “As men alive from the dead.” If we rise from “baptism as unto a new life how can we be still under the law of Sin and death - in that as you hold our natural death is the penalty of Sin? I am thankful to have been delivered from such contradiction and confusion of the real truth as it is in Jesus.

Par.7. Viner Hall: So that as death passed upon all men through the disobedience (sin) of the first Adam, so likewise the salvation from sin and death now becomes available for every man through the obedience (righteousness) of the Last Adam (Christ) – a salvation available for every man who puts on the name of the Last Adam. This clearly means identification with Christ; as it is written: “Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:26-27). By this act, upon a belief of the true gospel, we become one with Christ - we are “made nigh by the blood of Christ;” blood here being used as a figure for the sacrifice or death of Christ. This, as I have shewn, is a partaking with Him as a representative - necessitating a subsequent walking with Him in “newness of life” steadfastly unto the end in hope of God’s favour unto eternal life in the age to come - when Christ will return from heaven to bestow the blessing of God in the gift of immortality upon all His faithful servants in “changing their mortal bodies, and fashioning them like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself.” (Philippians. 3:20-21).

Par.7. Reply. Ernest Brady: I entirely agree with the paragraph and in particular with the necessity for a belief of the true gospel before we can be considered as “in Christ,” but I reject the representative doctrine which you outline as I believe this amounts to a denial of the necessity for and the purpose of, our Saviour’s death; I believe it reduces Christ’s Sacrifice to a kind of “ritual ceremony” instead of a loving and willing sacrifice on our behalf. I believe it demonstrates, not what it is designed to do, the justice and mercy of its Author, but injustice and lack of mercy. In your view, God said “The wages of Sin is Death,” and that death is inflicted upon every man, woman and child, whether they are actual sinners or not. It was also inflicted upon God’s own Son who was admittedly, wholly sinless and perfect, while at the same time we are expected to believe in God’s willing forgiveness. Can you find justice - not to say mercy, in this? The true facts are that no man, yet, has received the wages of sin (with the exception I should say of presumptions sinners like Koran who “bore their sin”) but in God’s gracious forbearance all who will may escape because Christ has delivered them. It will be only those who “neglect so great Salvation” who will receive the penalty - the “second death.”

I would be true; for there are those who trust me;
I would be pure, for there are those who care:
I would be strong, for there is much to suffer;
I would be brave, for there is much to dare.

I would be learning day by day the lessons
My heavenly Father gives me in His word;
I would be quick to hear His lightest whisper,
And prompt and glad to do the things I’ve heard.

I would be prayerful through each busy moment;
I would be constantly in touch with God;
I would be tuned to His slightest whisper,
I would have faith to keep the path Jesus trod.

