

Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 150

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EDITORIAL

Dear Brethren and Sisters and Friends, Greetings in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sometimes we get despondent and downcast; there is more in this world to depress us than there is to cheer us. We would happily spread the Gospel message but no one listens, and we would gladly talk of Bible matters but others tell us it is boring; and when we think there is no one left who wishes to know the truth about salvation, then we find we were wrong of course. There is always one here and one there who is seeking, knocking, and asking for knowledge, understanding and wisdom from God.

Can you recall the excitement and thrill of understanding the wonder of the Atonement, with all the urgency and zeal it brought with it? By the time you have read pages 4 to 6 of this Circular I am sure you will; and what can we say but 'Welcome in out of the cold, Grant.' Just as you have "been thrilled to bits" with what you have found, we, too, are "thrilled to bits" along with you. Your determination to find and understand the truth of the work of God in Christ is an inspiration and encouragement to us all. Truly "it is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter." Proverbs 25:2. "Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." Galatians 1:3-5.

My Sincere Love to all, your brother is the Master's service, Russell Gregory

THOUGHTS ON THE DAILY READINGS for SEPTEMBER

Our readings at this time of the year take us through the second book of Kings, from Hezekiah, through the reign of Josiah to the fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity.

The tribe of Israel had gone into exile, and when King Hezekiah took to the throne he was faced with a serious crisis. The Assyrians were at the gates of Jerusalem, but through the sincere prayers of Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah, deliverance came by God's intervention. It was a time of severe moral decline, first by the ten tribes of Israel, then shortly after, by Judah. As it happens, we are also reading through the section in Ezekiel where God, through the prophet, points out the severe acts of idolatry and moral abominations committed in the temple. Hezekiah restored the true worship, including the keeping of the Passover which had fallen into neglect, it seems, since the time of Samuel. Also things degenerated into such a low moral state that he could not keep it quite according to the strict Law of Moses; there was not enough time to prepare for the feast and so had to pray to God for pardon; but at least, he showed the right spirit.

After Hezekiah's death, under his successor, Manasseh, things reverted to the conditions as bad, if not worse, than they were before his reign. A little later, Josiah made another effort to restore the true worship. He was more thorough than Hezekiah. He, too, kept a Passover. Under his reign, it seems the Passover was kept just as commanded in the Law of Moses. All idols were destroyed, and the altar at Bethel, in fulfillment of a former prophecy shortly after Solomon, under Jeroboam in Samaria, was also destroyed, and the temple was repaired.

Now Hezekiah and Josiah had something else in common, besides their zeal for the restoration of divine worship. They both started off with great commendable efforts of following the Lord. They put faith in God and realised their dependence upon Him, especially Hezekiah at the time of the Assyrian invasion. But then, when the crisis was past and things seemed to be going well, they became, it appears, somewhat independent and began to trust their own strength, neglecting to ask God for guidance. We read (2 Chronicles 32:25-26), "But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done to him, for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem. Notwithstanding, Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so the wrath of the Lord came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah."

This was at the time of the ambassadors from Babylon. Hezekiah showed them all his treasures without first consulting God; and in consequence, we know about one hundred years later these same people destroyed Jerusalem. Those ambassadors might easily have been spies.

And then later, Josiah came to a sad end, again through trusting in his own strength; a case somewhat similar to that of Hezekiah. Josiah went to war against Pharaoh Necho, king of Egypt, as the latter fought against Carchemish on the river Euphrates. Just what Josiah had against the king of Egypt we do not know, but what is revealed is that God warned Josiah against it through Necho, king of Egypt, and was killed in the battle. It was a bad outcome, not only for Josiah, but for all Judah, for there was no king after him who worshipped the Lord; moral standards fell into decay, idol worship seems to have completely taken over from worship of God; and before long the end came when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and led it's inhabitants captive.

Now what about our position? We, like Hezekiah, Josiah and many others, made a good start in the Lord. But are we all as zealous as we were when converted? Do we seek God in prayer whenever an important decision has to be made, now as much as when we started our life as servants of our Lord Jesus Christ? Do we, as time goes on, fall into the error of trusting too much in ourselves, neglecting prayer?

When I first came to this country I worked in an engineering workshop. My foreman used to say, "You know, it is not when you start a job that you need patience, but when you finish it." That, to some extent, is true of our life in the Lord, to walk with God with the same enthusiasm now as when we first started until the end of our probation, be it at death or the Lord's return, whichever is the earlier.

Brother Leo Dreifuss

Extracts from Your Letters:

Brother Leo Dreifuss writes: “Now in your last C.L. you suggested to look into our drawers to see what material we could find. This I put into practice. When we were more members and had our meetings, everybody in turn took the meeting and gave an exhortation. For a while, my exhortations took the form of remarks on our daily readings (using the Christadelphian reading plan), taking some topic from the current month’s reading suitable for exhortation. Now since the Circular appears once in two months I can send the appropriate ones over the year. I enclose the ones for the next issue.

The general lack of interest in religion is truly a sign of the times. “When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?” While this general indifference is very sad, it gives us confidence in how prophecy is being fulfilled. The same applies to “men’s hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things that are coming upon the earth.” We can consider ourselves blessed in having had our minds opened to these signs but let us beware against any high-mindedness - “I am all right. Jack,” attitude.”

Sister Evelyn Linggood writes: “We agree we need more in the way of exhortation, the trouble is there are so few of us to keep it up. We have sorted out a few old Circular Letters, perhaps you can find something of interest in them to publish.

We liked the summing up of Brother Brady (re: Netherton Debate). It was more to the point than Barling’s, but I don’t suppose it had much effect upon the majority of Christadelphians, many of whom are blinded by misplaced loyalties and cannot discern between their right hand and their left.

I came across the enclosed articles and we have since read through them again and found them most enlightening, especially as we had previously read Henry Sulley’s account of Ezekiel’s Temple and found parts of it very difficult to understand, which we put down to our ignorance of architecture but we can’t all be Architects and I felt there should be a simpler explanation so that all could get a better idea of things, and I find this in the enclosed articles by Brother Gates, who died some years ago. It is what he wrote together with Edgar Willie while they were still Christadelphians. Brother Gates left them over the Atonement. We knew him well; he was a very thoughtful and faithful man... You will find that article No 5 is missing, also that there would be others after No. 7, but we feel there is enough there to make an interesting study. It must be remembered that he was a Christadelphian at the time of writing and saw Christ as a representative; he could see Him later as a substitute and welcomed the truth of Christ being not of sin’s flesh. Do you think it interesting enough to put in the C.L. in instalments? Quite honestly we feel that such stress has been put upon the right understanding of the Atonement to the exclusion of other tenets of truth, especially that of the Kingdom of God, which we should all be familiar with. After all, that was the teaching before the sacrifice was made, but I find some have a very hazy idea of it and this has concerned us for some time. The Temple plays a big part in this understanding, and we can understand how it will not need to be any bigger than Solomon’s when we realise that the various nations will only send representatives up to Jerusalem to worship.”

Brother Phil Parry writes concerning the Netherton Debate: “It was not Brother Ernest’s idea that the debate should form yes and no answers to questions put by either side; this was our late Brother Fred Pearce’s idea and Brother Ernest went along with it (reluctantly, I believe) yet Brother Pearce told us he was quite satisfied with the result because any person with a discerning mind, or who was present, would have seen that Barling could neither say yes or no without committing Christadelphians to believing erroneous doctrine as taught by their pioneers, their Statement of Faith and their current leaders and writers. Barling can be seen to have dug his own pit and theirs in stating that he was not defending their Faith but his own... (one can) see the great mistakes and errors Barling had been forced to admit and (we can) take a more appreciative attitude of what Brother Brady has accomplished in the defence of the Scriptures.”

Thank you for your letters and the material which many of you have sent. It will be most useful for future C.L.s. Would anyone have the missing articles by Brother Gates, i.e. No. 5 and any after No. 6? I could photocopy and return them if you wish.

Regarding the point Brother Phil made about the yes and no answers which Brother Ernest requested of Barling in the debate, I believe this was essential to prevent Barling’s verbosity from taking over the

proceedings. I had the feeling, when reading the Debate, that Barling, having an audience willing him on, and he would have “made an oration unto them” given the chance.

Russell.

CORRESPONDENCE.

Some of the Nazarene Fellowship have been corresponding with Grant Pearce of Tasmania for some time and here are some extracts from those letters:-

This first letter, dated 15th December 1993 was sent to Brother Phil Parry:

“I have obtained your address off the cover of a Nazarene pamphlet... and I thought I would write to ask if you can help me or even refer me to someone in the U.K. who can.

For the last ten years I have been with the Christadelphians and have recently begun to have some serious misgivings about some of their teachings. I have embarked upon a very comprehensive investigation into these matters and I have discovered with some dismay so far that things are no as they should be. The more I looked for answers, the more I found.

What I would like to ask of you is if you could please send me every booklet, pamphlet, that you can ever lay your hands upon. Anything written by A.L.Wilson, Ernest Brady, F.J.Pearce are the sort of things I am after.

One item I would like especially, if it can be found, is a copy of Edward Turney’s lecture “The Sacrifice of Christ” which I suspect contains some very relevant information and hopefully some of the missing pieces to my jigsaw.”

Grant then lists some fifteen titles that he asks if possible to be sent him, and continues,

“I do have a copy of E. Brady’s “The Truth about Clean Flesh” from where I got the information so far. Any other would be appreciated... anything at all... in fact, everything. Please help, or refer me to someone who can. I could be fighting for my eternal salvation with this project.

Thanking you in anticipation and the sure return of our Lord. B. Grant Pearce.”

All the titles Grant asked for were sent and a few others besides. Then Grant wrote another very refreshing letter, this time to Sister Helen Brady:

“I’m not sure who I am talking to here but I am pleased to be able to make contact anyway. Mr Phil Parry on your end of things has just sent me a shipment of gear to read and by jingos it’s going to take a fair bit of mowing down by the look at it. Your name was in amongst it on a pamphlet “Come now Let us Reason Together” so I thought I would whack a letter in the mailbag and see if you can get me please some of the things listed below that I so far have been unable to get a boo-peep at.....

About twelve months ago I got to the stage where I was having some very serious misgivings about the show, it seemed to me that there were a lot of things that just did not add up to make a full and complete picture, the pieces just did not seem to fit no matter which way round you tried to make them go....

A small bi-annual publication came into my hands by accident, written by two brethren in Queensland and called “The Small Voice.” In this I found a couple of bits that seemed to fill in a gap or two. I wrote to these and found out quite a bit more... Very recently, after a talk on the telephone, a photocopy of “Outrage on Justice” by one E. Brady came in the mailbox and hence my letter to Parry. I spoke to one of the

publishers of Small Voice about this “Outrage on Justice” and while they certainly agreed about the error of the sin in the flesh and changed nature, and died for Himself bunkum, he was not too sure about “Jesus my Substitute”... and I am not either, and so am searching furiously for more clues whatever and wherever they may be... The brethren of Small Voice belong to a small group of renegades who have the guts to buck the party line and endeavour to point out the errors... This little meeting is a real pain in Australia because of its magazine and the blues they get going with the hierarchy. They will not shut up and go away, even efforts have been made to try and stop Christadelphians from reading “The Small Voice” and cooperating and meeting with them. The hierarchy have not got any answers because they get mowed down every time and instantly retreat into their respective holes of what some brother said or wrote instead of recourse to the Scriptures and even a little common sense. The established orthodox traditional party line is unassailable and must prevail - blind, deaf and dumb!

During the course of the last twelve months or so I have been able to work out a few things for myself and I have been thrilled to bits when I have been able to find agreement with some one else, and elsewhere in things I find to read searching for clues and simple explanations. I feel I must have anything and everything to assist me in my investigations and so I would like to ask if you can please provide for me the following Nazarene information which I have discovered listed but not yet in my possession and not included in any of Phil’s gear even though he sent me as much as he could possibly lay his hands on.

Another twelve titles are listed. In addition Grant gives a list of twenty titles of Nazarene literature already in his possession. He continues:

“You might think that if I have all this already then it should be sufficient for me to sort it all out. Yes, that may very well be true but I must not leave one stone unturned, I must have all the evidence, the arguments and the counter arguments, to solve this project to a stage where I just cannot find out any more. I hope I will be satisfied then...

Kind and sincere Regards, in the search for God’s TRUTH. B. Grant Pearce.”

Again, all the titles Grant asked for were sent to him. In his next letter to Brother Phil Parry, Grant covered much of the same ground as in his letter to Sister Helen, but one paragraph, caught my attention:

“One man I wrote to asking for information... ended up giving me a telling off and that I shouldn’t be wasting my time messing about in the past. If I hadn’t got to looking into the history to prove what was going on I wouldn’t have found out anything at all! Anyway, I’m thrilled to bits with what I have so far, and, one step at a time, if the Lord wills, I hope to work out quite a lot more and see if I can get back on the straight and narrow.”

Shortly after these letters, at the request of Brother Phil, I started sending the Circular Letters to Grant which he appreciated very much and asked for all the back numbers. I was only able to send numbers as far back as 104, October 1988. I do have a few older ones and hope to send photocopies of these in due course. In his letter to me Grant said how much he liked the Brady/Barling Debate and asked if he could have an advance copy of the complete debate. This is now complete and in the next few Circular Letters we shall have various comments as a result of the debate. To continue with his letter, he writes:

“The Recorder (of Hobart ecclesia) has advised me to “recant” before they have their next meeting or I would be awarded the dubious Christadelphian honour of a highly commended W.D.F.S (Withdrawal from Fellowship)...

I feel a lot better now, and at ease with myself, confident I’m on the right track, with bits that add in logically and pieces that fit.”

The next letter confirms that the Christadelphians of Hobart withdrew from Grant about which he writes:

“How a majority decision could be made upon scant information they had about my crime is beyond me. To disagree with Thomas or Roberts or the Statement of Faith is regarded as high treason and under

Christadelphian law obligates the outfit to implement their law of expulsionism to the full. I could have given them more information... but I reckon the outcome was a foregone conclusion anyway...

More recently, Grant wrote again to Brother Phil Parry:

“... However, in answer to your concern and query my position is as follows... I cut myself off from the Christadelphians and completely abandoned that name because of their very bad and erroneous, even God-dishonouring teaching concerning their theories about the nature of man and our Lord’s nature and sacrifice... I had the mistaken idea that as I “progressed in the truth,” as they call it, I would get the extra info to fill in the gap which I reckoned existed when I was baptised...

Nazarene, “The Small Voice” and myself are certainly in agreement as far as nature of man is concerned and also in the fact that Jesus Christ’s obedience stemmed from His abstinence from sinning (as we can too, if we try hard enough) and not from any so called “half God, half man” special strength theory that Christadelphians have bunkumised themselves with... That is where “Small Voice” agreement ends as they have (I assume) traditional Christadelphian teaching on the resurrection for judgment theory.

After reading Nazarene information upon resurrection and judgment I find I must agree that it is in agreement with the Scriptures.

Because of Christadelphian brainwashing... I had trouble fitting in Jesus as a Substitute and after re-reading much of the information many times I am now satisfied that this is the satisfactory and proper go of the business... what I wish to clarify, however, is that “Small Voice” and Christadelphians object to substitute for the reason that they look at it in the sense of the apostasy’s teaching of it and not in the sense that Nazarene’s have it. There is a big difference and distinction between the two and I think told “Small Voice” as well, I think Nazarene’s prove this point rather well when the types of lessons of the sacrifices under the Law of Moses are properly connected and defiled flesh bunkum bias is put aside.

Anyway, I intend being re-baptised. God willing, before the end of the year.

Kind Regards and may the Lord come soon. Grant Pearce.”

Finally, from a letter to Brother Harold Dawson, a few more lines from Grant:

“...I started writing to the Nazarene Fellowship when I checked up on an address... from a booklet that got sent to me accidentally by someone from “Old Paths” in Melbourne. This man just doesn’t know what he’s done and praise the Lord, it has opened up a whole new world.... If E. Brady and F. Pearce and others hadn’t been giving the Christadelphians the run around, I don’t know where I would have ended up... I reckon I have sorted out the truth from the rot...

Thanks and Kind Regards. Grant Pearce.

Most of us gained our knowledge of the Scriptures while we were with the Christadelphians and are grateful for it, but we learned more than our teachers there, for we were taught of God. We saw the truth regarding the atonement, present forgiveness of sins, immortal resurrection for the faithful but we were mystified when our friends would not listen to us and so quickly became unfriendly.

These letters from Grant Pearce highlight our responsibility to keep our lamps burning brightly and held up high. If we don’t who will? We know of no one but ourselves. Surely this is our reasonable service “for by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works lest any man should boast, for we are His workmanship, created in Jesus Christ unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” 2 Ephesians 8-10.

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In recent months I have also been in correspondence with an ex-Christadelphian; one Esleigh Feltham of Leamington Spa, though he holds onto most of the Christadelphian views. In a letter dated 4th July 1994 he wrote:

“There is some difference of understanding Christ’s and His work which I would summarise as follows... that He was miraculously conceived cannot nullify His descent from Adam. The issue between God and man required Christ to be thus related to Adam and mankind. The issue which required Christ’s sacrifice was not a legal one (such as a financial debt being paid off) it was a moral one.

When Christ of His own free will allowed Himself to be crucified He was publicly recognising that the nature He wore had been justly condemned to death; and because He Himself had lived an entirely righteous life God was able, on the basis of that recognition, to raise Him from the dead without even appearing to condone sin - Romans 1:17, 3:21-25.

Before God could nullify His sentence of death for sin, His righteousness had to be publicly manifested, so that those who acknowledge Christ’s work in the divinely appointed way, through belief and baptism, could, through Him obtain remission of sins.

Had the price been simply a legal one Christ should now be lost in death while man would be free from the penalty. To punish an innocent man in place of a guilty one is never an act of justice or righteousness. Even those reconciled by Christ’s work cannot claim eternal life as a personal right simply because a legal debt has been paid.”

In reply I wrote:

“I whole heartedly agree with you that to punish an innocent man in place of a guilty one is never an act of justice or righteousness. That is most certainly not what happened in the case of Jesus Christ and Adam. Neither of course, can anyone who has been reconciled by Christ’s work claim eternal life as a right. It is by grace that we are saved. However, you say, “the issue which required Christ’s sacrifice was not a legal one - it was a moral one.” I cannot see the difference between legal and moral when it comes to God’s laws for our guidance. Certainly in the case of human government there is very often a difference, for we see that the laws of this country for example, allow immoral practices, and we may hear a case in court where the jury are told “We are not here to judge this man’s morals. We are here to uphold the law.” But such is the folly of human justice! When it comes to the perfect law of God for man to follow I see no difference at all between moral and legal. If you can see a difference I would be grateful if you could tell me what it is. I believe all God’s laws for mankind are moral laws. The repayment of a debt is as much a moral issue as it is a legal.”

The salient points in Esleigh’s next letter to me are contained in my next reply to him as follows:

“Let me take your point regarding your understanding of Genesis first.

You write: - “My understanding of God’s words in Genesis may be a little different to that of others – “dying, thou shalt die”... means ‘being of a dying nature thou shalt indeed become subject to death.’

But Scripture does not agree with you in this. The meaning of the words MUTH TEMUTH are made very clear in about a dozen passages in the Old Testament and I here quote from an article entitled “The Usage of MUTH TEMUTH”: - “In every passage cited the same word appears in the Hebrew Scriptures, the only variations being grammatical variations as the verb is used in the 2nd and 3rd person.

Genesis 2:17, “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in -the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

Genesis 26:11, “Abimelech charged all the people, saying, He that touchest this man or his wife shall surely be out to death.”

Leviticus 27:29, “None devoted, which shall be devoted of men, shall be redeemed; he shall surely be put to death.”

1 Kings 2:37, “For on the day that thou goest out, and passest over the brook Kidron, thou shalt know for certain that thou shalt surely die:”

1 Samuel 14:44, “And Saul said, God do so and more also: for thou shall surely die, Jonathan.”

In 1 Kings 2:37 and 1 Samuel 14:44 the words used are exactly the same as in Genesis 2:17 viz 2nd person, singular.

Other examples of the same threatened penalty will be found in Genesis 20:7, 1 Samuel 14:39, 1 Samuel 22:16, 1 Kings 2:42, Jeremiah 26:8, and Ezekiel 33:8.

I think, Esleigh, the above should convince anyone of how Adam understood the threat to himself and to Eve. No wonder they hid themselves when “they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden.” They had every reason to be afraid. In no case could anyone construe the meaning to be death at the end of one’s natural life span.

The second point I wish to take from your letter is were you write:

“I could not agree that Christ paid the penalty imposed on Adam. Rather, God provided a remedy which harmonised with both His own righteousness and mercy.”

God most certainly provided a remedy which harmonised with both His righteousness and mercy, but to give His Son a body which needed to be destroyed because it was (supposedly) full of sin displays neither.

Human flesh is not sinful, nor can it be. It is a nonsense. Sin is transgression of God’s law. It is abstract, and therefore cannot be applied as a characteristic to physical substance.

“Sinful flesh” is not an expression Paul used. In Romans 8:3 where we read “God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” is a translation engineered for the purpose of giving support to the doctrine of Original Sin in which the translators believed. It does not convey the meaning intended by Paul, which could be paraphrased in this way: - ‘God, having sent His own Son in the form of sin’s flesh, as an offering for sin, condemned sin while in the flesh.’ “Sin’s flesh” is the correct translation and refers to the fact that we belong to sin in as much as we have been “sold under sin”; we are, or were, “sin’s flesh” but we have been “bought with a price.” This understanding agrees with all of Paul’s writings, and indeed all of scripture.

God is concerned with our characters; and our flesh, which God made “very good” was not changed when Adam sinned. Our flesh forms a convenient body in which to house our characters during this present life. Our change is still future.

You opened your letter by saying: - “Since you recognise that no one reconciled to God by Christ’s work can claim eternal life as a personal right, there is surely no radical difference between us.”

Only Jesus Christ had a right to eternal life, which He could have lost by disobedience to God’s law. Adam was placed in a similar position but he failed; Jesus Christ did not.

The plan of salvation is very simple; Adam sinned but was not put to death. His life was spared in the offering of a provisional sacrifice. Jesus Christ having succeeded where the first Adam failed, and then offered Himself as the effectual sacrifice for the sin of the world – i.e. Adam’s sin.

What had been taken away by Adam’s sin was the opportunity to obtain eternal life, both for himself and for us. This is what Jesus Christ restored as we read in Psalm 69:4, “Then I restored that which I took not away.” The sacrifice of Jesus Christ did not grant anyone eternal life. Our present natural life, which has been passed down through all generations from Adam, is our redeemed life. Our redemption took place on the Cross. Jesus sacrifice gave the opportunity of eternal life to all who will avail themselves of it on the terms set down by Jesus Christ Himself - “Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.”

The slaying of the animal in Eden provided a covering for Adam, and thereby he lived. The animal died in his place. It was a temporary covering over of his transgression or sin. All the sacrifices for sin in the Old Testament are similarly substitutionary. If an Israelite broke the law, he was required to bring a lamb to the tabernacle, lay his hand upon its head and confess his sin. The lamb was then killed. The offerer recognising that the offering had died and not the he, the sinner. Jesus Christ is the anti-type of those sacrifices, and He bore our sins. Therefore He died instead of us. Our guilt is transferred to Him in the same way as it was transferred to the lamb under the Law of Moses - by the confession of ones sins.

We are in the privileged position of being offered forgiveness for our sins. Indeed, this forgiveness is so utterly complete that our guilt is wiped out and we are looked upon as though our offences had never been committed, with the result that those who are "in Christ" are counted as perfect as He is - without spot or blemish. What wonderful grace this is! Now there is no bar to immortal resurrection, or change to immortality for those still alive at His coming.

Finally you write in reply to my earlier query regarding any difference between legal and moral:

"If one is legally entitled to anything, he does not have to express gratitude or thanks when coming into possession. It is his own by right. Anyone who deprives him of assets legally due commits a form of robbery."

I said in my previous letter that I could see no difference between legal and moral when we are considering God's law, and in the example you give here the word moral could be put in place of legal without any change in the meaning. Indeed you say here that "anyone who deprives him of assets legally due commits a form of robbery" - but isn't robbery an immoral act? However, I see a difference in some cases; for example, adoption is a legal matter rather than a moral one. Again, once we belonged to sin, now we belong to Christ. This is a legal change. We were legally accounted as unclean, but when we put on Christ in baptism we were accounted as clean. We pass from our relationship to the law of sin and death into the relationship of the spirit of life. In these cases legal fits better than moral.

We make no claim that there are always clear statements of Scripture to support everything we say, but it is evident, having "searched out the matter" that every portion of Scripture concerning our redemption fits beautifully into this plan and there are no exceptions.

I have endeavoured to set out our views and some of the reasons for them as clearly as I can. I know I have limitations in my ability to express myself as I would wish; thoughts do not flow easily, and never in the best order, but I hope to have shown soundness in all things and ask your forbearance in anything that is not clear.

Sincerely your brother in the hope of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour,

Russell.

GIDEON'S INTERVIEW WITH THE ANGEL

Judges 6:11-16, "And there came an angel of the Lord, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abi-ezrite and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the wine-press, to hide it from the Midianites. And the angle of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all His miracles, which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? but now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.

"And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites; have not I sent thee? And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save

Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my Father's house. And the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man."

One writer says, No method of preaching, I believe, has been found more instructive and edifying than that which brings before people historical facts, remarkable transactions, and various characters of those engaged in them, as set forth in the Holy Scriptures. They answer the purpose of leading our minds to the contemplation of the higher matters of doctrine, by a reference to practice. They hold out warning in some cases, and encouragement in others; and show how God will deal with us in our earthly pilgrimage, by telling us how He has dealt with others, in the Past Ages.

With this view we dealt with the history and character of Gideon. Among the various important lessons which the history of Israel set before us, none are more plainly marked than this, viz, "Sin becomes its own punishment." In Judges 6:1 we read, "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord delivered them into the hands of Midian, seven years." That was the punishment. It is remarkable how completely this punishment was the execution of a former threat (see Leviticus 26:14 onward), even to the 7 times, not 7 years above.

"He would bring terror upon them, and sorrow of heart; that they should sow their seed in vain, for their enemies should eat it; and they which hated them should rule over them;" in the earlier verse of Judges chapter 6 is its literal fulfilment.

"The Midianites came up and destroyed the increase of the earth, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep nor ox, nor ass." 7 years did this bondage and misery continue.

In all that time we do not hear one cry of repentance, nor see one act of faith in the true God, on the part of Israel. They hardened their heart under the sore affliction and stiffened their necks under the galling yoke. Their sustenance was gone, their enemies held them in cruel subjection, and yet the cause of all the calamity was fostered and maintained. Israel worshipped Baal instead of Jahweh. Oh, how hard the heart becomes in following its own devices. How seared with a hot iron when restraining grace is withdrawn, and when the Holy Spirit is grieved. Israel seemed to have tried every expedient before they go to the God of mercy and ask pardon.

But at last, being convinced that no other means would bring relief, that no other method would answer "they cried unto the Lord." In all probability they had cried before to Baal and had shouted, "Oh, Baal, hear us! But there was no voice, nor any that answered..." So, finding no help from the idol, they were compelled to cry unto the Lord. As the first verse of this chapter connects sin with punishment, so the seventh connects the prayer with the answer.

God might have said by the voice of the prophet. It is too late to cry for deliverance. The door of mercy has been open during the seven years of your captivity and you would not enter; now it is too late and ye cannot enter. But Israel's God is "merciful and gracious, slow to anger and of great goodness."

This reminds us of the message to Laodicea in Revelation 3:18, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."

God's long suffering waited during the six years (6000 years!) and when the seventh came, which, had we witnessed its approach, would have thought, "The year of vengeance; the year for which God had been waiting, as the period when the measure of wickedness of Israel would be filled up," but God was at work when, at length, those wretched back-sliding people did cry unto Him and He instantly heard their cry and helped them. "It came to pass, that when Israel cried unto the Lord because of the Midianites, the Lord sent them a prophet," as a token that He would still hold communication with them, and then He sent a deliverer to intimate that though He had visited their sin with a rod, and the iniquities with stripes, yet His long-suffering (loving kindness) He had not utterly taken away nor suffered His truth to fail.

And now beloved brethren, whose history is this? Is it the history of the perverse and rebellious Israelites only? No! It's our own history, too. It is the history of the sin-distressed, who even may weep to hear it told that their sins are sins of omission as well as commission; none escape, and truly we can say it is of His mercy we are not consumed. We may try every expedient to satisfy conscience, without repentance, and to be happy without real peace, and to walk in the way of our heart and in the sight of our eyes, trusting it will yet be well with us at last. I began to think that for all these things God would bring me into judgment; "I cried unto the Lord and He heard me." He might have frowned me from His Presence; He might have upbraided me for my long rebellion, but like the tender father of the prodigal son. He welcomed me back and gave me to understand the mercy which is contained in that declaration "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." (Every soul knoweth its own bitterness).

The Angel who came to Gideon was no doubt Michael; One like God. It was told to Moses, "Behold I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him." (Exodus 23:20,21),.

Surely this is a national concern, Michael shall stand up; the great prince that standeth for the children of thy people (Daniel 12:1). Shall not the chief men of the nation receive the first intimation of it, a matter of national importance. Shall not immediate publicity be given it?

The Lord raises up any instrument and works by any means that the pride of man may be abased; the loftiness of man brought low, and the Lord exalted. Therefore, instead of the sound of the trumpet throughout Israel to proclaim the glad tidings to the nation, instead of a revelation to the princes and nobles of the land. God will do it in a private way. He comes to a poor humble individual, and the beginning of the mighty work which He was about to perform is told us in these simple words, "And there came an angel of the Lord, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained to Joash, the Abi-ezrite:" God is a God of Sovereignty and giveth not account of His matters. When He saw Israel's suffering under the Egyptian yoke He communicated His purpose in the same manner. He appeared to Moses as he was feeding the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law. Pass from this to the Great Event - the child born in Bethlehem, the Saviour of the world; not to Herod, not to the Sanhedrim, not to the Roman governor, but "there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angle of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord," Note the same Sovereignty revealed even in the proclamation of the Gospel.

Though it was to make its way through all the opposition of infidelity, all the cavils of the learned, all the influence of the great and opulent, as well as all the prejudices of the heart of man, the Lord would have it preached, by the poor despised fishermen of Galilee (Christ Himself a Nazarene, a carpenter, ye Son of God). Thus God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the things that are mighty, and the base things of the world, and things that are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.

We have dwelt on this point because the whole history of Gideon seems to preach to us the power and sovereignty of God as displayed in the manner and means of accomplishing His purpose.

Gideon's character; first his consistency and decision, notwithstanding his retired situation, he had testified, it seems, against the prevailing idolatry and even in his father's house, had kept himself from his father's sins. He appears to have gone on quietly and consistently in the ordinary course of his lawful occupation, serving the true God, and praying for those who were worshiping idols.

Accordingly, God manifests to Gideon, owns his work of faith and labour of love and tells him he is not alone, for God is with him. Let it comfort those who are serving God alone in their families, to think of Gideon and God's favour toward him. You are not alone, for greater is He that is with you than they that are against you. Though your foes may be those of your own household, ye fear not to go on straight forward, serving God whatever others do, for depend upon it, the God of Gideon is with you. Pray for those who are yet afar off that they may be brought nigh; you know not whether your prayers and example may not have

such an effect upon them as that they may be brought eventually to the acknowledgement of the truth. This appears to be so with Gideon for you find afterward that his father, Joash (Jehovah is strong), actually justifying the pulling down of Baal's altar.

Mark next Gideon's ardent patriotism. He does not distinguish himself from the rest of Israel (though God does) but identifies himself with his country. When the angel said "The Lord be with thee, thou mighty man of valour." Gideon says, "If the Lord be with us (the nation), why is an this befallen us?" His thoughts were bent upon the welfare of Israel, as his prayers were offered up for it. It would be well for us to .widen our horizon from self and home to the whole commonwealth of Israel. If only one talent, we have to account for it, not lay it up! Gideon's prayers were heard for his country, his testimony against idolatry was acknowledged of God; his example was not without its influence in a national as well as a private point of view. And the man who lives according to the Gospel, a life of faith and practical holiness, who denies all ungodliness and worldly lusts and lives soberly, righteously and godly in the world, the man who distributes the word of God and is himself a living commentary on its excellence, the man who reproves sin, as Gideon did, by consistent and holy conduct, such a man may convert a sinner from the error of his way and save a soul from death and hide a multitude of sins. Christ's blood was shed to cleanse all from sin and His righteousness a spotless robe to cover them.

Men may not have their names among warriors and statesmen of a nation, but it is written in heaven and it will be declared that this man was born there. (Psalm 89:5,6).

The Lord says, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." Lastly we are told whence Gideon's might and valour were derived, "The Lord looked upon him and said. Go in this thy might," and in verse 14, "and thou shalt save Israel."

"The Lord looked upon him..." Oh! What a look it was! What a smile of encouragement was cast upon Gideon by his God, what a token of love, what a communication of strength and faith - there was the might the angel spoke of! "Go in this thy might." Gideon had said before, "How shall I deliver Israel?" but these words gave him courage. He had said before, "Why has all this befallen us?" but this look of the angel showed that God had not forgotten to be gracious.

"Go in this thy might" says the angel, "I will be with thee." Gideon need not any longer doubt or hesitate after such encouragement as this. May we be as sensible of our own insufficiency as Gideon was of his, at the same time as strong as he was in the Lord and in the power of His Might.

Numbers 6:24-26, "The Lord bless thee and keep thee: the Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

Brother James Hembling.

THOUGHTS ON THE DAILY READINGS for October

The readings of this season takes us through two temples - Solomon's and Ezekiel's. The former was the temple built by Solomon and was in use until its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar. The latter is not in existence yet. It was seen by Ezekiel in a vision pointing to the future temple after the return of Christ. And then there was another temple, rebuilt by Zerubbabel after Judah's partial return from their Babylonian captivity.

Now the first, Solomon's temple was a splendid building but as time went on and the people departed further and further from following the Lord, it was gradually desecrated. King after king took the golden objects put in by Solomon and replaced them by the inferior quality of brass. The gold was given to heathen

rulers who had defeated Judah, which by itself was the result of their sinning against God. Then came the final end when most of Judah was led into captivity and the temple was burnt.

This first destruction was the result of sin and of forsaking God. The temple which Ezekiel saw in his vision, on the other hand, will be the future temple under Christ's rule. So this won't be destroyed; Christ won't allow its being defiled as happened to the first temple at the time of Ezekiel when he was shown in vision the abominations practised there.

Besides the actual physical temple, there is also a spiritual temple. When the Jews questioned with Jesus about His authority and asked for a sign. He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2; and we are told He spoke of the temple of His body, and the sign pointed to His death and resurrection after three days.

Then there is the great spiritual temple spoken of in 1 Corinthians 3, the Church of God of which we are all part (verses 16 & 17) "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."

So we have been privileged to form part of the Church, part of that great Temple. It is entirely through God's mercy that we have been called to be among those who, in the future age, are to rule with Christ to put a wrong world right.

Let us not forget our great responsibility, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy." It comes back to the fact that privilege brings responsibility. Let us never forget that. That mistake was made by Esau when he so lightly esteemed his birthright. It was made by the nation of Israel (faithful individuals excepted) when they fell into idolatry. Then later, by the Pharisees and rulers at Christ's day, who consented to crucified Him. They thought being Abraham's children they needed no personal Saviour. Their idea of the Messiah was only concerned with their liberation from the Roman yoke. This attitude persists among the Jews to this day. I remember a Rabbi saying to us when I went to school "We don't need a Christ; we have an inherited right to the land of Israel," which merely echoes what the Pharisees said to Jesus - "Abraham is our father."

And the lesson for us: let us not fall into the mistake of taking our position for granted. If we fall away we shall be guilty of destroying the spiritual temple (And let us heed Paul's warning, "Be not high-minded, but fear"). But at the same time remember we have Christ as our High Priest interceding for us if we fail and sincerely repent. So let us hold fast unto the end, knowing that there has never anyone been tempted beyond that which he is able to bear.

Brother Leo Dreifuss

THE NETHERTON DEBATE

A Personal Statement by Brother Ernest Brady

Many people know that in 1949 I engaged in a Public Debate with Mr. Barling of London, sponsored by the Nether-ton Christadelphian Ecclesia. For some months past I have been receiving enquiries about the verbatim report which was to have been published, and I have had to explain that the delay was solely on the Christadelphian side and not due to any neglect or obstruction on my part.

It has come to my notice, however, that a rumour is being industriously spread in Christadelphian circles that I am responsible. I should not think it worth the trouble and expense to defend myself against false accusations, to which I am well accustomed, but as the purpose is to discredit what I believe to be the

Truth concerning the Name of Jesus Christ, I have felt impelled to publish the gist of the letters which have passed between me and the Recording Brother of the Netherton Ecclesia.

NOTE. In explanation of one or two passages which might otherwise seem obscure, the following facts are recorded. The Debate was reported independently by writers attached to Stenotype Ltd., at a fee of £20, which was to have been shared by the two parties. In the event, a collection was taken during the meeting from members of both communities, but was devoted by Netherton Ecclesia towards their share only, and we were afterwards called upon for the full £10 of our share. This minor financial transaction should have prepared us for what was to come later. The Debate took place on May 7th 1949, and early in June I received from Stenotype Ltd., a full transcription, an original and two carbon copies. I immediately read it through and made on the original such corrections to my portions of the debate as I considered necessary, and on the following day I personally delivered that and one of the copies to Mr. R. W. Dudley at his home. Take note that this was within a month of the actual debate, and within three days of my receiving the report. Also note carefully the dates of the letters from which the following extracts are quoted:-

22nd June 1949. Mr Dudley to Mr Brady.

“... I should like to have a further talk with you regarding the revisions which will be necessary to the manuscript. Will you let me know which evenings you are free.”

In reply I wrote and proposed an evening in the following week.

6th July 1949. Mr Dudley to Mr Brady.

“...I regret I shall not be able to come and see you during the present week, and suggest if you are free that you call at the above address next Monday evening, July 11th, when I hope, God willing, to be home after 7.30 pm.”

8th July 1949. Mr Brady to Mr Dudley.

“...I am not impressed by your attitude (in reference to using the money collected jointly for their own expense) and in future will keep our financial affairs very distinct. You proceed with your own arrangements for publication and we will do the same. With-regard to your summons “to the above address,” you will remember I waited on you on the last occasion we met. I regret will not be convenient for me to get to Dudley in the near future, and I think it would be nice if you called on me as proposed in yours of June 22nd.”

I heard nothing more for several weeks, during which I sent a letter and a postcard urging them to get on. I also asked for a copy of Mr Barling’s speeches, as it had been arranged beforehand that the opening speeches of the Debate should be written in full for accuracy and to save the reporters labour, and these were to be handed in for the purpose of completing the report.

29th July 1949. Mr Dudley to Mr Brady.

“I am now in a position to reply to your letters of the 8th and 10th July postcard of the 20th inst.

Our final decisions on the points raised were made on Wednesday last. We are sorry that you have made up your minds to publish a report of the Debate independently. This is a further (sic) breach of the original proposals to which you agreed. Clause 5 lays down that “Netherton Ecclesia should be the publisher.”

We do not propose letting you have, for the time being, copies of Mr W. F. Barling’s opening speech, or our own stenographer’s report...”

Note this last paragraph. What was the purpose of their refusal?

3rd August 1949. Mr Brady to Mr Dudley.

"I fail entirely to understand your letter of July 29th. It has been fully understood and agreed from the start that Netherton Ecclesia is to publish the Debate, and I have never questioned the matter.

As soon as I received the report I submitted to you the corrections I considered necessary and asked you to get W.F.B. to approve them and submit his own to me. Many weeks have elapsed and I have neither received these nor replies to my enquiries regarding them.

There is need for neither discussion nor co-operation; the report is substantially correct and so far as I am concerned can be printed as it stands; the few points where confusion has arisen can easily be adjusted if you will kindly do as I asked in my letter in June.

Kindly send me a receipt for £10 and also inform me in what particular I have broken the original agreement.

I am frankly amazed at your refusal to supply me with a copy of W.F.B's opening speech, or to let me see your stenographer's report. I suppose that as the same thing happened after my debate with Mr P. Handley at Portsmouth and in view of your unjust appropriation of the money collected I should not be surprised, but it never occurs to me until too late that people making a profession of Christianity could act so dishonestly."

10th August 1949. Mr Dudley to Mr Brady.

"We notice that you express amazement that we have refused to let you have copy of W, F. Barling's opening speech. We again respectfully ask you to consult our letter of the 29th July, and you will notice that we said "for the time being," which is not a blank refusal, but a qualified one."

11th August 1949. Mr Brady to Mr Dudley.

"It has been understood from the start that the Netherton Ecclesia is to publish a verbatim account and they are indeed under a moral obligation to do so, having already published a tendentious report in 'The Christadelphian.' Had your side attended to the business instead of bickering it could have been in print by now.

Again I have to ask your answers to the following:-

- (1) Have my tentative corrections been submitted to Mr Barling?
- (2) Why have you not complied with my several requests to submit his to me in accordance with Clause 5 of your letter of January 5th 1949?
- (3) What is the purpose of your refusal to supply me with a copy of his opening speech, when I have supplied mine to you?

I am sorry to say that in these needlessly protracted wranglings you are acting more like a firm of shyster lawyers than men seeking to establish the Truth.

I can well understand that the verbatim report by "an approved secretarial bureau with no knowledge of the subject" came as somewhat of a damper to your childish glee, and I expect that when one of your less bewildered members discovered that Barling was neither representing Netherton Ecclesia nor defending the Christadelphian Statement of Faith and that he abandoned both Dr Thomas and R. Roberts, you had a few shocks, but jibes at my mental gymnastics come ill from you at present"

9th September 1949. Mr Dudley to Mr Brady.

"Now that we have your assurance that you do not intend to proceed with your own arrangements to publish the report we have pleasure in enclosing a copy of Mr Barling's opening speech.....

Mr Barling, you will appreciate, is a very busy man.... A copy of the text of Stenotype's report, together with our own report, and the emendations from both parties, will be submitted to Mr R. A. Overton for consideration... We shall expect you then to discuss with W.F.B. and the writer..... Our report would then be available.... I shall be away for the next two weeks on holiday."

28th September 1949. Mr Brady to Mr Dudley.

"...With regard to the part of Mr Barling's speech which he did not actually give, while I personally should have no objections to these being put in, as it is to be a verbatim report it would be bad in principle for either party to ask for the insertion or deletion of anything which was or was not actually said?"

In reply to the other points I must draw your attention again to Condition 5 of your letter of January 1st. 'Report to be published verbatim (except for minor grammatical corrections to which both parties must consent) by the Netherton Ecclesia.'

Your proposal to bring in the Chairman does not meet with this condition, and while you are fully at liberty to consult whomsoever you please, I would prefer that we adhere to your original proposal. I made such minor corrections as I consider necessary and submitted them to you nearly four months ago, and while I understand, of course, how busy Mr Barling will be, I cannot account for all this delay. If it is causing him undue trouble I have already proposed that the report be published as it stands; the few instances in which confusion has arisen will be evident to the careful reader.

I cannot, of course, pass an opinion on your independent report, as you have so far refused to let me see it. Is the writer a Christadelphian? If so, you will appreciate the application of your sixth condition and the obvious and correct course is to follow the report of 'an approved and independent secretarial bureau with no knowledge of the subject.' "

2nd November 1949. Mr Dudley to Mr Brady.

"I am not yet in a position to give you any further information regarding the progress of Mr Barling's revision of the two reports of the Debate... Mr Barling's wife has been seriously ill.... (he) had already arranged, earlier this year, to give a series of ten addresses in London.... I enclose a programme.... you will appreciate the difficulties.... be prepared to exercise a little more patience... We hope you will not interpret this delay in terms of any desire on our part to avoid publishing an accurate report.... trusting you will give your sympathetic indulgence to this delay,"

19th December 1949. Mr Dudley to Mr Brady.

"You will no doubt be pleased to learn that W. F. Barling advises me he has commenced work again on the remainder of the report... He is very hopeful of having this completed by the end of the year.

Mr Barling will be in Birmingham on the 8th of January 1950, and has suggested.... meeting you at your house.... to discuss his emendations to the report."

22nd December 1949. Mr Brady to Mr Dudley.

"I informed you in a letter several months ago that I saw no occasion for a discussion with Mr Barling, and much less with you and Mr Overton, and I have not changed my view.

In accordance with the conditions, I made my proposed corrections on the original copy of the only report I have seen, nearly 7 months ago, and submitted it to you for Mr Barling's approval. When he has done the same you should let me have it back with any comments or objections he wishes to make,

In the meantime I would like to ask you again why you have not let me see a copy of the other report you spoke of. I am getting many enquiries for copies of the report and some I have referred to you. I trust you have made it clear that this prolonged delay has not been due to my neglect and I hope that you will now proceed at once to get it printed in accordance with your advertised intention."

9th January 1950. Mr Dudley to Mr Brady.

“...I have had an opportunity of talking this matter over with Mr Barling, and my Committee and we have decided that after Mr Overton has reviewed... they shall be passed on to you.... We hope to let you have these manuscripts during the next month or so.... In the meantime, would you be good enough to enlighten me as to why there are so many corrections in your closing speech compared with the rest of the manuscript?”

11th January 1950. Mr Brady to Mr Dudley.

“I am pleased to hear that Mr Barling hopes to let me have his corrections during the next month or so. As he has apparently not yet completed these I am at a loss to imagine what we could have discussed supposing I had agreed to a meeting.

With regard to your final paragraph, as it is now something like 8 months since I saw them I fear I cannot help you, but I should suppose that the corrections I have proposed are due to mistakes in the transcription. As you have the advantage of a second report you will no doubt draw my attention to any discrepancy between my tentative corrections and what was actually said. May I say that for one so precise on some points you have a singular facility in overlooking others; could I have an answer to my request for a perusal of your other report.”

16th January 1950. Mr Dudley to Mr Brady.

“...we are surprised you have not apparently kept a record of the corrections you submitted to us.... When we return our copy, together with Mr Barling’s compiled report, and Miss Sinnett’s report, you will be able to observe that you have only submitted some 40 corrections on the question and answer section.... compared with over 80 to your final speech.... Mr Barling had by that time completed roughly 80% of his corrections... to form a basis of discussion.”

This is the last communication I received and the complete correspondence can be perused by anyone who is interested.

At the date of writing - the 14th April 1950 - we have heard nothing further, and it will soon have been a year that this business has been hanging fire. It should be quite clear who is responsible for the procrastination, and when it came to my ears that A.D. Norris is going about the country spreading the falsehood that I have obstructed the publication of the report I felt it necessary to put the facts on record.

[This same A.D.Norris wrote to me anonymously some years ago, under a Monomark address BM/KBOY London W.I., and proposed a written discussion. When I refused to correspond with a man who could not sign his name he threatened me - still anonymously - with public exposure! I discovered his identity a year or so later by comparing the characters of his typewriter with another communication made in his own name.]

Thus from early June 1949 to April 1950, ten months has elapsed during which periodic proddings have produced a variety of excuses and promises but no action. Compare this with the promptness with which they got the report of a more recent debate into print. At Netherton the Christadelphians were highly elated at what they thought was the success of their champion. Although any average Bible reader knows well enough that comparatively few truths are categorically stated in Scripture, Mr Barling made much of the fact that I made no attempt to produce precise passages to prove certain of the beliefs I hold. But why have they not been more anxious to exploit their victory by publishing the report?

I think the reason is that when they came to study it in black and white they discovered that in the course of answering the 300 odd questions which I put to him Mr Barling had contradicted himself over and over again and so stultified himself and the Christadelphian position that his smart tactics probably sicken even himself now. The Netherton Committee knows that when the report is eventually published, it is our

intention carefully to analyse these questions and answers, and this is a very different kettle of fish from a cheap success on the platform.

One can understand them deciding that it could do Christadelphianism no good to publish the report and determine quietly to stifle it. But how are we to account for men like Norris and Barling and a whole ecclesial committee behaving so badly? They must have two entirely different standards of honesty. When it is a question of refuting the Clean Flesh Heresy anything goes. If they conducted their business affairs on similar lines they would be shunned by decent people.

Note that in their letter of July 29th, when, desiring to put together a complete record for the information of our own members in other places, they refuse even to let me have a copy of Barling's opening speech. This was later forthcoming, but to this day I have not seen the report which is supposed to have been taken down by a Miss Sinnett.

We must sympathise with Mr Barling's domestic troubles and can understand him being busy on more important tasks, though we note from the programme that the ten addresses referred to in the letter of November 2nd were only "planned at a meeting on July 22nd," at which date he had already had the report before him for six weeks - surely time and to spare for the "minor grammatical corrections" provided for in the conditions which I was required to accept and to the letter of which I have been held: but I cannot understand what appears to be a deliberate policy of lying to cover their own unworthy behaviour.

E.Brady.

COMMENTS ON W. F. BARLING'S CLOSING ADDRESS OF THE NETHERTON DEBATE.

By Brother Phil Parry.

One obvious and great betrayal of his Christadelphian Brethren and Sisters was the statement Barling made in answer to E.Brady's question, Did he believe what Dr Thomas stated, etc., etc.? His answer was, "I am not defending what Dr Thomas said, but my own individual faith and what I believe." Yet he had been appointed to defend the beliefs of Dr Thomas and R. Roberts, the pioneers of the Christadelphian Faith as contained in their Statement of Faith document. No wonder they declined to publish the Debate as promised. Yet these same people expected God to fulfil His Promises.

In opening his address Barling denies expressing the things E. Brady had said of him, but I know Brother Brady spoke the truth, for I have read the extracts from what Barling stated in articles printed in The Christadelphian - February to October 1946; "My Life For The Sheep" booklet being a reply to them by Ernest Brady and F.J.Pearce, men I knew personally to be honest and sincere.

I must draw notice to question 294 (C.L. 149, page 17) and Barling's answer to it by quoting Hebrews 13:20, which appears ambiguous but can be understood if the reader understands that the emphasis of the Apostle is for the God of peace to make them perfect through the blood of the everlasting covenant shed by the Great Shepherd of the Sheep, Jesus.

It is ironical that on page 29 of this C.L., third paragraph down, Barling confirms this interpretation in the quotation "He has sent Jesus to be a propitiation for our sins." Is not this the purpose of Christ's death and His resurrection? Did not God raise Him because He had done nothing to forfeit His "Free-born" state and had done nothing worthy of inflicted death? Now at top of page 27 he says "much assertion has been made, airy assumption has taken the place of scriptural proof. I think this is a fair summary of the attitude that has been shown by my opponent. What then is the position? There is no scriptural proof." Further back in the Debate Barling was asked if the nature of Adam was corruptible (capable of decay) and he replied, "I

don't know." Why did he not say "There is no scriptural proof" in this case? The man who asked him the question could show it to him in 1 Corinthians 15:45-49, yet Barling said "I don't know," and Brady who did know, and could produce the proof, both in Genesis and 1 Corinthians 15:45-49, concerning the first man, is accused of lack of scriptural proof!

In the fourth paragraph down on page 27, Barling says that the emphasis in the Nazarene theory is not on personal sins or transgression, but on a legal condition (he should have said, position), for which we are not responsible. This is true. But he tries to refute this theory by quoting some scripture out of context, for they applied to the Jews who were responsible under the Mosaic Covenant for their transgressions. Peter accused them for these and told them to repent. Barling destroys his argument by saying, "What is indicated in the scripture is not the condition in which we are born, but the sin that results from that condition and our failure to observe the law of God... The punishment, if the term can be used, is on account of personal transgressions. So "death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Barling is therefore saying that God has passed the penalty of death upon all men even before they became responsible to His law - in fact, before Adam was placed in the garden of Eden as a living soul - a natural body of life of the dust of the ground, and placed under God's law, the continuance of this natural existence being contingent on obedience. The Barling assumption being that natural death is the penalty for sin. Listen - were you, the reader, a sinner in the personal sense when Christ died on Calvary's tree? How could you have been, when you were not even alive and responsible? Paul says, "God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). There must be a different concept in the way Paul declares this - it cannot mean personal sin, and therefore must be in the Federal position under Adam's sin that God chose to place all men, so that through the righteousness of one man, Jesus, the free gift of Grace and justification of life could come upon all men by belief and faith.

Barling has certainly supported the apostate false doctrine of 'Original sin' almost universally held, yet refuted by Dr Thomas and Robert Roberts when David Handley sought immersion by them with that very doctrine in mind, then when E. Turney supported the views of Thomas and Roberts that Adam's nature was not changed to physical decay and a bias and tendency toward sin and finally natural death. Roberts went over to Handley's error and falsely accused and misrepresented Turney's views by stating that Turney was a Renunciator and did not believe Jesus Christ came in the identical physical flesh of his brethren.

I must give Mr Barling credit for admitting to Brother Brady that he knew the Nazarenes believed the physical flesh of Jesus was the same quality as all men. Yet this misrepresentation has continued by the Christadelphian community and must be partly due to the fact that they have not read the copies of the Debate, neither the literature that has been sent out to them.

It can be seen that Mr Barling missed and ignored the fact that we are all "constituted" sinners for a Divine Purpose centred in Jesus, but we do not come under the sentence for personal sin until we are enlightened to both aspects, i.e., alienation from God by Adamic sin, and personal sin under law to God. Barling has aptly stated and demonstrated the general Christadelphian view that because we are human nature and descendants of Adam, we are sinners by physical descent and have a compulsive tendency to sin on account of a miracle whereby God defiled Adam's nature after he sinned, and caused that defiling element to be transmitted by reproduction into Adam's posterity thus making God the Author of sin and injustice, by giving man laws impossible for him to keep. Mr Barling, when alive, was asked in a letter from Brother Brady if he had changed his views on these matters but he received no reply. They are now both off the scene but not their writings. It is for Christadelphians to correct their untenable position.

Mr Barling's belief is that we are not the subjects of Redemption until the second coming of Christ, yet he contradicts himself on this by saying, on page 29, "We are all sinners (present tense), and God commended His Love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us; so in Him and in His blood we have redemption, even the forgiveness of sins. That is the simple Bible story." Either Dr Thomas was right or Barling was wrong on this subject of redemption. Dr Thomas said (and it was quoted to Mr Barling in the Debate), "Redemption is release for a ransom, all who become God's servants have been released from a former Lord, the Purchaser is God and the Ransom paid the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without spot and blemish."

Barling now says of Jesus, "His own death had efficacy for Him." We agree in the sense of Isaiah 53 - "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied - my righteous servant shall justify many," but we do not accept that His death was necessary for Himself as Barling implies, that is, to remove by the shedding of His life-blood him that had the power of death in His body (Hebrews 2:14) the Devil. He continues, "It is right that every man should receive redemption in his own order, Christ is the first-fruits, afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming." This is not redemption he is talking about, but the glorification of the bodies of God servants in Christ at His coming. Dr Thomas got it right here and Barling terribly wrong. Take your pick but follow neither. Follow the Lamb whithersoever He leadeth, for His own sheep hear His voice. A final word from Mr Barling; "The faith which is dear to me is not one that debases man..." What hypocrisy! In his writings he has debased man and especially the Lord Jesus of whom he stated, "There was no injustice in his death," when, in fact, Peter said to the Jews "Ye killed the Prince of Life."

I hope something of value will be gained by the Debate and some of the points raised. I have only touched upon a few, but it would be profitable to read the booklet "My Life For The Sheep."

Brother Phil Parry.

COMMENTS ON W.F.BARLING'S CLOSING ADDRESS.

By Brother F.J.Pearce.

The first thing to be remembered is that W.F.Barling was not representing Christadelphian belief. "My view was misrepresented," "My teaching in my address..." "My teaching on Scripture..." etc. Hence while professing Christadelphian belief, he could say that E. Brady's statements were "sayings attributed to him he never made;" yet they are statements from their own works, a man-made constitution which he was supposed to be defending.

In regard to his saying that "very little proof has been put forward," this can be compared with the view obtained when he (Barling) is put to the test in the article "Haman Hung With His Own Rope."

If what E. Brady has said is foreign to the Scriptures, this test will prove that W.F.Barling had not the "clear, crisp proof" that he wishes others to give and it will show that he has more "airy assumptions" than E. Brady. Anyone listening to, or reading W.F.Barling would think that it was only a one-sided affair, that there was no room for controversy, and that the reason for this debate was not on "Controverted Aspects." Why did he complain, on more than one occasion, that he was "not having a fair chance," and that "much time is needed to explain fully all aspects"?

It will be seen on every occasion that Scripture used for proof must not be ambiguous, and Barling says, in his book "Redemption in Christ" that "it is therefore clear that in appealing to the Word we must seek other pronouncements on this subject which are not susceptible in this way of double interpretation" (page 11). That the proof he has advanced must have a dual application is evident, as others of his Body have said the opposite - "Jesus died for us and for Himself" (See "Contradictions," with a dual application)

When Barling thinks we place more emphasis on the legal than on personal transgression, we ask who recognises this most - the person who cannot help sinning because of his sinful flesh or the person who knows that if he sins he is responsible? Again, when W.F.Barling can get rid of Romans 5 and the use of the word legal, as used by him in this debate and by others in their writings, then will be the time to cast stones, and not before.

We have shown in another place (“Enlightenment and Responsibility) and from Dr Thomas’s writings, that we uphold what we have received from him, and of what Mr Barling is ignorant. When the latter says “Paul was not concerned ... that the slave paid the money, but with the fundamental transformation in the slave’s relationship to his God.” Is not this first a legal transformation - passed from death unto life; from darkness to light; delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the Kingdom of the Son of His love?

When W.F.Barling asked for an “elucidation of the wages of sin,” anyone could see that this was an evasion. Here, in his closing address, he says, “Before, he was the slave of sin; he observed sin; and sin, for his service paid him wages - death.” According to him, we should not reason from the Scriptures, as “it is a sorry state of affairs,” but he “needs much time” to explain his view of the Scripture, the meaning of which his leaders have decided long ago.

We need not put up again the argument in the article “Haman Hung With His own Rope” but we will point out that when Barling says our faith must be built upon the foundation of the Apostles, Prophets, and Jesus Christ, it should be for him to put a clear, crisp and unambiguous Scriptural proof by the side of the questions we ask.

While he has made some beautiful statements, he has failed to see their beauty because he looks through a condemned looking glass. “One Sheaf all the believers were involved.”

One Sin, one sinner - Adam. One Act, One Righteous - Christ. Each of these Federal Heads are the means of One involving all in being constituted under the Sin by a rule or Law - Scripture. Jesus extricated all who will accept Him; hence we see the goodness and justice of God, and not, as Christadelphians believe, that we were redeemed by a sinful flesh Redeemer who needed to sacrifice for Himself.

What weight Mr Barling thinks he carries by speaking of D. Handley we fail to observe because if it is a sad story for him it is not so for us. If the renouncing of anything is of any account, why, people have been doing this since Adam; but it is no criterion as to Truth. We earnestly pray that all lovers of the Lord Jesus will accept Him as the Unspeakable Gift of God, and renounce the man-made traditions of the Constitution of an unclean Saviour. Renounce it and accept the Unblemished Son of God who shed His blood as a ransom for many: He whom we have not seen, except through the eye of faith, and whom we love. We rejoice greatly with Joy Unspeakable and full of glory

Brother F.J.Pearce.

FACT AND FIGURE

Having read the Netherton Debate I was aware of the gap in communication between the disputants, which reveals the doubtful use of this form of witnessing.

However, the most revealing misconception of the Gospel message was illustrated in W. F. Barling’s summing up when he said (C.L.149, page 27, paragraph 4):

“The truth is that there are many metaphors in scripture to describe our new state, and “ransom” is one of them... “true ransom” is the forgiveness of sins,”

This elementary misuse of language is so apparent that it may have been one of the several reasons why the Netherton ecclesia went back on their word and refused to allow the publication of the whole debate.

Two serious grammatical errors are evident; no rules of grammar will allow a ransom price to be confused with the results of the ransom, which is redemption. The use of metaphor in the context of ransom,

according to its dictionary definition would remove the reality of the price paid, and the reality of the ransom for that price to be met, also the reality of redemption.

The definition of metaphor being: “A figure of speech in which a word or action is applied to an action that it does not literally denote, in order to imply a resemblance.”

Are we dealing with resemblances, or facts? Were we in bondage because of Adam’s sin, or not? Did our heavenly Father provide a ransom price to pay for a release from that state, or not? Did our Lord Jesus give His literal life as a true ransom, and did He really accomplish all that He strove for?

Have we in fact, a covenant of redemption through the giving of His life as a ransom?

Where is metaphor or figure of speech?

When our Lord suffered in His body before and on the Cross it was to make an atonement for our sins, and when He allowed His blood to be shed it was the giving of His life as a ransom price to redeem us.

When we go through the waters of baptism, we accept a covenant based on a figurative washing to take away our sins; as we are immersed, we are buried as He was, but only in figure, to die to sin. Then we are raised up out of the water to a new life, washed from our own sins and freed from our old life in Adam.

Although we die in figure in baptism, we have a real covenant; although we are figuratively washed in the waters of baptism, our sins are removed in fact; and as we rise from a figurative grave, we do in fact enter a new life.

There is a place for metaphor, but not in the real and practical work of God in Christ Jesus.

* * *

IN APPOSITION ?

Ref: C.L. 147, page 35, Barling’s Questions to Brady, Nos 77 to 79.

One passage which can cause confusion is Colossians 1:14, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”

The word “even” is not in the Greek, leave it out and the implication that the terms “redemption” and “forgiveness of sins” are synonymous disappears.

Ephesians 1:7 helps us here, though misused by this teacher of language, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace.” - A better rendering would be ‘Redemption through the shedding of His blood, i.e. His life; and forgiveness of sins, according to His grace, i.e. loving favour.’

Brother Ray Gregory.

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good
and what doth the Lord require of thee,
but to do justly, and to love mercy, and
to walk humbly with thy God?

Micah 6:8