

# The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No 162

## Sept/Oct1996

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## Editorial

Dear Brothers and Sisters and Friends, Loving Greetings in the Name of Jesus.

There are many comforting words in the Bible. The Psalms of David reach out to us across the centuries as he cries out to God because of his troubles and David had many troubles. Troubles with his family and friends, with his armies, with his subjects and his kingdom. Some of the worst troubles he brought upon himself but in them all he turned to God and from his heart poured out his afflictions and longings and his pleas for understanding and forgiveness from the source of strength and mercy he knew would never fail him.

When in the depths of despair David cried “...awake, why sleepest thou Lord...stir up thyself and awake unto my cause my God and my Lord.” Whatever our particular situation, sorrows or difficulties we can recognize the anguish and pain that David suffered. Most of us for one reason or another have felt as David did when he said “O that I had wings like a dove” for then would I fly away and be at rest.” But what ever befalls us in this troublous life we can be sure that God is always with us for He never sleeps.

I like what I believe is a true story of a nine year old boy who was learning to play the piano. He found practising every day a bit tiresome so to encourage him his mother took him to a concert given by a world famous pianist. It was the first time the little boy had been to such an event and he had never seen a grand piano until that evening. Before the concert started and before people took their seats his mother was standing about talking to her friends and the boy slipped away to take a closer look at the piano. He crept up on to the platform and had a walk around the piano and then he sat down on the stool and began to play chopsticks. It is not difficult to imagine the electrifying effect this had on the stylish well to do people gathered in the concert hall, dressed in their best and waiting to enjoy an evening of highbrow entertainment. To have their cultured ears assailed with chopsticks must have been quite a shock. An astounded silence fell on those present the boy did not notice but pressed on with his little recital. The pianist was in the wings talking to the conductor and when he realized what was going on he walked quietly on to the platform behind the boy at the piano and putting his hands either side of the child’s hands he began to play melodic variations on the theme of chopsticks, all the while whispering in the boy’s ear “keep going - don’t give up - I’m with you.” Thus the situation was saved and transformed into an event of pleasure and delight to all concerned, particularly for the small boy.

People who believe and trust in God today have a similar effect on the secular world around them as the small boy had playing chopsticks on those around him who were accustomed to more elaborate and sophisticated stuff. But the pianist was generous and understanding and with his kindly intervention and help he transformed the little boy’s efforts in music into something pleasing and acceptable.

So God graciously deals with us and intervenes in our lives if we are willing and open to it, “acknowledge God in all thy ways and he will direct thy paths.” God can transform our lives into something

we never expected. It may not be what we want or what we thought we wanted but we can be sure of God's part in our lives.

Just as the pianist whispered into the child's ear so God whispers into our ear "...keep going - don't give up - I'm with you."

Jesus said "...Lo I am with you always even unto the end of the world."

Love to all, Helen Brady.

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## **Welfare and extracts from your letters:-**

Early in September we were very concerned to hear that Sister Ruth Woodhouse was taken to hospital as a result of an heart attack. She stayed in hospital about ten days. Brother Leo writes to say "I am very glad to tell you that Ruth is back home. They brought her back yesterday (17th September) and I rang her this morning (Wednesday). She sounds quite well, but she has to take things very easy." Since then Brother Leo has been to see her and reports she is going on well and is being well looked after by her family. Our thoughts and prayers are with her, as always.

### **Sister Evelyn Linggood writes: -**

"Many thanks for the C.L. and the books you sent earlier. We are very pleased to hear of The Netherton Debate getting such a good response. Let us hope it will do some good... As usual we found the C.L. interesting; we think you and Helen are doing a good job and we sincerely hope you will be able to carry on as long as it is needed always hoping that it will not be too long now. It's nice to know that you are having correspondence with Christadelphians as it gives a chance to explain what we believe and may be sowing the seed of truth in the minds of others."

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### **Brother Phil Parry sends the following extract from his local newspaper:-**

## **PEELING AWAY THE BIBLE'S VEILS OF MYSTERY**

The Bible contains many veils of mystery which the many competing theologies have done little to dispel. For instance, hitherto there has been no evidence apart from the Biblical references, that King David ever existed. But in recent weeks the veteran Israeli archaeologist Avraham Biran has unearthed a ninth century BC reference to the House of David.

**Quest.** I mention this only to indicate that the Bible's veils of mystery are gradually being peeled away. Professor E.P.Sanders, one of the world's foremost authorities on Judaism and Christianity in the Graeco-Roman world, is engaged in a similar quest in "The Historical Figure of Jesus".

This Texan scholar has produced a fascinating and highly readable volume which lifts Jesus from the realms of theology and mythology and shows him to be a well authenticated historical person.

From the outset we have to remember that nothing survives that was written by Jesus himself, and contemporary documents shed virtually no light on his life or death.

The writings of St. Paul are the earliest Christian texts, and the synoptic gospels - those of Mark Matthew and Luke - have been dated to a generation after Christ's death.

That means that when they were written, people who had known Jesus were still alive, and being written so near to his own lifetime they must count as primary sources.

Paul's letters were written before the gospels but were not collected and published until after the gospels had already been written.

**Tainted.** Thus, Paul did not know the gospels, and the gospel authors did not know Paul's letters. From the historical viewpoint letters and gospels are tainted in that their writers' intended to glorify their hero.

Sanders takes us through Jesus' life distinguishing between the "certain," the "less certain" and the "improbable" to present a fresh and dramatic account of him as a person."

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## Enoch and Elijah.

### What is Revealed About Them ?

The following article is intended to clear up some misunderstandings concerning these two faithfuls. To the majority of people who believe in an immortal soul going to heaven, their record presents no difficulty. They just read into it that both of them have gone to heaven. But such is not the case in view of John 3:13. "And no man hath ascended up to heaven..." So what do we know about them?

All that follows is not my explanation, but I owe it to the late Mr Armstrong, an American publisher of a magazine entitled "The Plain Truth." He was the founder of an organization by the name of "The Church of God." They hold a lot, but by no means all, of the truth. They do however recognize the error of the doctrine of heaven-going. Like us, they look forward to the return of Christ and God's Kingdom to be established on this earth, not in heaven. In his magazine there appeared an article many years ago concerning this subject, which seems to me as good a scriptural explanation as is possible with our limited knowledge.

**The Case of Elijah.** Comparing Scripture with Scripture there is a very similar parallel in Acts 8:26 to the end, especially verses 39 and 40 where we read about the spirit having caught away Philip. The main difference is that we are told that Philip was taken to Azotus. whereas we don't know where the spirit took Elijah. Certainly not to heaven, for some seven years later we find Elijah having written a letter to king Jehoram rebuking him for his sinful conduct. According to the dated margin of my Bible, Elijah's being taken by the spirit dates 896 B.C. (2 Kings 2), and his letter to Jehoram (2 Chronicles 21:12) around 889 B.C. An interval of some seven years, approximately. Nothing further about Elijah is revealed thereafter.

**The Case of Enoch.** All we read in Genesis 5:24 is "And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him." We don't know where to, but again, not to heaven, in view of John 3:13. Not even David, the man after God's own heart, is in heaven (Acts 2:34), nor yet Daniel, the man greatly beloved to whom it was said (Daniel 12:13) "for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."

Now the Hebrew word for "took" is "*laqach*" which is translated in many different ways, but the most common one, occurring some 793 times is "take (away)." This by itself does not convey a lot to those who do not read heaven-going into it. So let us see what we read about him in Hebrews 11, the famous chapter about faith. In Hebrews 11:5 we are told that he "was translated that he should not see death." And to find out about the meaning of "translated" in this context we turn to Colossians 1:13, "...who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son..." So here is the answer. The kingdom of his dear Son, as we have all learned by God's love and mercy, is certainly not in heaven, but will be here on earth. And note well the translation applies to us - "translated us," we read. We, if we hold fast until the end, have already been translated into His kingdom. It reads "hath translated us."

And back to Hebrews 11, Enoch was translated that he should not see death. Now we, who have accepted Christ and have been baptized into Him, have all been translated, but we still die the natural death, unless the Lord returns before then. So the death spoken of here is the death for sin which all in Adam die. So this is how Enoch and many more, including ourselves if we keep faithful, have been translated.

Incidentally, the wording “hath translated us” is another proof to show that, subject to our remaining faithful, we have already been judged worthy, hence no need for a mortal resurrection followed by judgment.

I hope that these thoughts will prove helpful to all who are wondering about what happened to Enoch and Elijah. May we be among those who remain faithful to the end and be found worthy to meet these two and many more, and have the real meaning of these passages explained if we are wrong.

Brother Leo Dreifuss.

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## Correspondence Relating to The Netherton Debate

Over the last three months we have been sending out invitations to request copies of the second edition of The Netherton Debate - a book which includes not only the Debate but also articles and commentaries resulting from it.

The response has been greater than we expected and reflects the level of interest taken in matters relating to the Truth. Hundreds of copies have already been dispatched.

Because the Debate took place nearly 50 years ago it is understandable that we should have some correspondents writing to say they do not wish to receive the book for they see no good can come of resurrecting old controversies, and while we have some sympathy with this view we do not altogether agree with it because the things contended for were not new at the time of the Debate but were already the subject of controversy since the 1870's and are still not resolved today for the majority of thinking Christadelphians. The subjects dealt with are not fairly nor honestly treated within the pages of any of the Christadelphian magazines. It seems they like to cling to some measure of mystery and self-deception in their religion rather than accept the simplicity of the Truth. Others have said they would accept the book and read it with an open mind, which is all we could ask for of anyone, though we might add that we trust their open mind will also be a prayerful mind. And one Christadelphian asked that I should not quote what he had written to me either publicly nor even privately! I find this incomprehensible and naturally ask how can anyone request silence and at the same time contend for their beliefs?

**Below, we reproduce a few of the letters we have received together with our replies:**

**Brother John Higgins writes:-**

Dear Mr Russell Gregory, Thank you for your letter regarding the Netherton Debate, I have had a copy from Miss Brady thank you, and I must say I was very disappointed.

The totally unrepresentative, even malicious depiction of the Christadelphian view in the cartoon was enough to put me off from any serious consideration of the contents. However I did look through the book and remain unconvinced; you people have told us that the Christadelphians believe that Jesus was a sinner, and then you have taken issue with us on that. This is of course absolute rubbish, and totally untrue, you have set up an imaginary “aunt Sally” to knock over, the Christadelphians believe no such thing!

We do not believe, or teach, that Jesus was a sinner and that he had to die for his own sins. You have got things very twisted and it seems to me that you believe things which are contrary to the word of God. Your ideas about violent death being the punishment for sin is in my view unscriptural, that Jesus was of a different nature to the rest of mankind is absurd, but I will try to put the scriptural point of view on this last vital point.

The main problem seems to revolve around the way Jesus was tempted, so let us start first with a definition of temptation; James 1:14, "Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed, then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin: and sin when it is full grown, brings forth death." We readily accept that this is the case with ourselves, can we deny that this is also the way it worked with Jesus? The writer of Hebrews states that "He (Jesus) was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." So from this we must conclude that part of the temptation of Jesus came from his own desires, this must be so, if he is tempted in exactly the same way as us.

Can we find any evidence that the desires of Jesus did tempt him, in other words, that part of his mind had thoughts which were contrary to the will of his Father? We need only go to the garden of Gethsemane for a clear example; what did Jesus pray? "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." There are clearly two wills in conflict, (conflict is not too strong a word), the will or desire of Jesus, was in conflict with the desire of God his Father for him. What Jesus did in fact was to subject his rebellious desire to the will of God, he "killed off" his own will, in order that God's will was supreme. This is precisely what we are required to do ourselves, we should "put to death (or mortify) the deeds of the body" Romans 8:13. In killing the deeds of his body (see Matthew 5 where even the thought of doing something is a sin!), Jesus avoided committing the sin. In the terms of the definition of sin which we saw in James, Jesus had stopped the temptation at the first stage. The desire is there to do wrong, but it is not allowed to go further and conceive sin.

So coming to the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness, we can surely apply exactly the same principles as those which we apply to our own temptations.

How does your mind work? Where do ideas come from? How do we make decisions? This is important, for sin is all about choosing.

I have never had time to read a book on this subject, but it seems to me that the human brain works mainly on three different levels; there is the memory where all the experiences are stored. There is the conscious mind which governs our actions and thoughts; and there is the subconscious mind, which pours out a steady stream of data, like a conveyer belt racing along, covered with all sorts of things, some good and worth saving, some not so good, and some downright strange.

Where do subconscious thoughts come from? From associations with our environment, or our present circumstances, from various stimulus, of which we are only half aware, half forgotten memories brought back by an association with a recent event. All this continuing jumble of thoughts are presided over by the conscious mind, which, drawing on the memory of past decisions and experiences, plus a persons natural bias, chooses which thoughts to retain and which thoughts to dismiss as incompatible with the personality and beliefs of that particular person. These random thoughts often start with something real and then almost like a chain reaction, drawing on the past, lead sometimes to concepts you would not entertain, and as soon as you are aware of these alien thoughts in your mind, your conscious mind usually rejects them. To prove this, just sit down of an evening and think that you have had thousands of thoughts running through your mind during the day. How many do you remember? Very few.

We are, of course, very complex individuals and what I have said so far is rather simplistic. Each individual is made up of many conflicting biases, this is why we can invariably see both points of view, or be in 'two minds' about a problem. Sometimes we have to think long and hard about a problem, drawing on a lot of previous experience and biases. Sometimes we never come to a decision, being unable to reconcile long-held conflicting opinions. At other times we are able to make a decision almost instantly. All these things contribute to the personality of an individual human being.

Strongly held opinions or biases create emotions which could get out of control without the conscious mind using a contrary bias to control it. Thus we may encounter a situation which makes us very angry, but our conscious mind, looking through the memory of similar situations, recalls that we moderate our feelings of anger with our commitment to trying to live a "Christ-like" life of love, so our anger is abated, controlled and even removed altogether.

However, sometimes the right course of action is not easy to take; perhaps our bias for self is strongest. We may continually remember some time in the past when we made a major mistake in judgment and regretted ever since. Thoughts can come back to haunt us, they bob up like corks in water when least expected.

What of the conscience? This is a bias toward what we know is right, often in conflict with our bias to please ourselves and perhaps even those hidden biases which would actually prefer to do evil. The scriptures talk of having a “good conscience.” This is the untroubled mind confident that it has made the right decisions.

When we first believed in the things of God we had to overcome the things of the world in our minds, they were pushed down by our new faith, but they were not eradicated. We see in Paul’s life that there is a constant battle between the old man and the new. But if we desire to “mortify the deeds of the flesh,” we need to replace them with the things of God.

Jesus was no less complex a person than ourselves, he had this mix of conflicting biases, whether to please self or do the will of his Father as we have already seen, I think in Luke 4, the record of the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, we have a wonderful example of how a stream of wrong thought, brought about by circumstances, can be overcome with the word of God.

Firstly, I do not believe there was any other person with Jesus in the wilderness. If it was recorded that he experienced a series of temptations in a city, we could possibly have thought that these propositions were put to him by another person. The fact that the spirit took him into the wilderness, surely indicates that he was to be alone.

To propose, as some churches do, that he was tempted by a supernatural being for evil does not require serious consideration. But a few brief thoughts are as follows: A) There is no such being. B) Such a being would not have been allowed by God to tempt Jesus. C) Such a being would not have owned the world, God does. D) The temptations do not bring any advantage to a being opposed to God, what did it hope to accomplish? E) All the temptations were personal to Jesus and his circumstances. God put him in those circumstances to test him. Would God be in collusion with the mythical Devil?

Let’s examine the passage in detail; Luke 4:2, “Being tempted for forty days by the devil, (Tempted is also tested. Devil = Adversary, or that which is opposed to God’s will). And in those days he ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, he was hungry.” What an understatement, he was hungry! Note that the testing had lasted 40 days up to this time, now that he was at his lowest ebb comes the final testing. Just imagine the circumstances, he had wandered in the blinding tropical sun by day and the extreme cold of that region by night for a month and a half, he had no food, he must have been in an advanced state of exhaustion from starvation and exposure. He was alone with no distractions, only his thoughts as they ran through his mind, small wonder that his thoughts took the course they did!

His extreme hunger caused him to remember that he had the power to create bread from the very stones. Verse 3, “If you are the son of God, command this stone to become bread.” But because the overpowering bias of our Lord was to do the will of his Father, his conscious mind rejected the idea, but so as not to have this temptation continually coming to the surface, he buries it with God’s word; Verse 4, “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.”

The other temptations are also typical chain-of-thought streams; “I have great power, if I served myself, I could own the whole world,” answered by Verse 8, “...it is written, you shall worship the Lord your God and Him only you shall serve.” “God has promised that no harm will come to me until the appointed time, what happens if I tested that promise?” Answered by Verse 12, “It has been said, you shall not tempt the Lord your God.” The lesson for us is clear, Jesus overcame temptation in himself because he subjected himself to the will and to the word of God, so much so that it could be said that God was in him reconciling the world to himself. Jesus said “I and my Father are one.”

Was Jesus different from other men? The Nazarene Sect claim that the verse which says that he was “separate from sinners” somehow makes him different from other men. But I believe the Bible teaches that he was not separate from sinners until the moment of his death when he was finally victorious over sin. The

struggle Jesus fought against his own nature was not won until he had paid the ultimate price, then as death could not hold him; he was raised from the dead, the “first fruits of them that slept.” In John 16:33 Jesus says he has “overcome the world.” To overcome anything implies a struggle, and what he is talking about is the struggle against the prince of this world. The world “serves” sin, sin reigns supreme, but where all other sons of Adam have failed, Jesus of the same line succeeded, he triumphed over sin and death, and by his triumph he became our righteousness and received “a name that is above every name.”

One final point. Jesus was born of a woman, so he was a human being, but he was also born of the power of God, so he was the son of God. Did the divine aspect of Jesus give him an “unfair” advantage over other men? I do not believe so, for whatever advantage he gained by his closeness to God and the gift of the spirit he lost in his greater vulnerability to temptation. Which of us could contemplate changing stones into bread or taking possession of the whole earth? No, Jesus was sorely tried from within and without like any other human being, and let us thank God that he held fast to his commitment to do the will of his Heavenly Father.

I have no illusions that the foregoing will move any of you to return to the truth, but I feel there is even less likelihood that your people will persuade any clear thinking Christadelphians to turn aside to your odd ideas.

Your Sincerely,                      John Higgins,

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**In Reply:-**

Dear John Higgins, Thank you for your letter of the 5th September.

I am sorry you were disappointed with The Netherton Debate book, but the first part of your letter I cannot understand, for you write: “You people have told us that the Christadelphians believe that Jesus was a sinner, and then you have taken issue with us on that.” This is indeed a strange statement to make and is quite untrue. We know what Christadelphians believe and teach - in my own case I was brought up in a Christadelphian family, went to Christadelphian Sunday School and was baptized at Suffolk Street at the age of 21. I was then an active member of the Erdington ecclesia for nearly forty years during which time I listened to several thousand Bible talks and never once heard any Christadelphian say that Jesus was a sinner, and neither does the Nazarene Fellowship say it of the Christadelphians. For us to set up such an “aunt Sally” would be utterly stupid. We know Christadelphians believe no such thing.

Again you say that our idea of Jesus being “of a different nature to the rest of mankind” makes me wonder where you have been getting your information, or should I say mis-information, for, again, we say no such thing, and you will not find such a teaching in any of our writings. These things are hearsay and malicious gossip. We are keen Bible students and most of us were Christadelphians; we studied and learnt from the Bible. We have the utmost respect for the Scriptures. We have yet to be proved in error in any of our views and if it should happen that we are proved wrong in any matter then we would forsake that view immediately.

What we do take great exception to in Christadelphian teaching is the notion of sinful flesh. This doctrine has been built on a wrong understanding of Romans 8:3 and this wrong understanding has very far reaching consequences. I will not go into this subject here for we have dealt with it time and again in our literature but I am enclosing one booklet, “The Work of God in Christ,” which sets out what we believe.

The rest of your letter I found most welcome and interesting and consider it to be something of an exhortation to be received by all of us and I wish to thank you for going to so much trouble in writing it for us whom you believed to be a lot of crackpots.

No, we are not crackpots but we love to discuss the Scriptures as much as anyone - it is our life and in it is our Hope.

With Love to Joy and yourself, in Jesus Christ our Lord,                      Russell Gregory.

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**Brother Michael Craddock writes:-**

Dear Brother Gregory, Thank you for your circular dated July. I cannot see any real good can come of resurrecting old debates, controversies, arguments and the disagreements which accompany them.

This is not to say 'Let sleeping dogs lie,' i.e. slumber as far as the things of God are concerned. On the contrary, we all of us have - or should have - more important things to do than dogmatize, point-score and argue over theological niceties - namely:

Directing all our efforts to preaching the gospel of the Kingdom. Striving individually to conform to the image of the Son. Doing good to all men, especially those of the household.

These should so occupy our lives and our time so as to have little if any time at all for dissension and disagreement amongst ourselves - as the Jews of old disagreed amongst themselves whilst the enemy battered at the doors - and look what happened to them!

May I respectfully commend to you and all the factions within Christadelphia, the following:

“Ah, Church of Christ, the proclamation of such faith is your task today. You fritter away your strength on trivial sectarianism. You insult the intelligence and alienate the serious with petty dogmatisms that don't matter. You fiddle trifling tunes while the world burns. But back of all that still the glory of the church is a message without which mankind is doomed. If you really believe the Christian gospel - “God with us,” His cause committed to us, His power available to us - proclaim it, live it, implement it, for humanity's hopes depend upon it. It is indeed a faith for tough times.”

Whilst the above was not written by a Christadelphian, the sentiments expressed are, nevertheless, appropriate for us in these last days.

Sincerely your brother Michael Craddock.

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**In Reply:-**

Dear Brother Craddock, Thank you for your letter of 24th July which I greatly appreciate and agree with. You do not seem to me to be one who would reject an argument until you had given it serious consideration. I say this because in the last part of the quotation you reproduced, the view is expressed: “If you really believe the Christian gospel... then proclaim it, live it, implement it, for humanity's hopes depend upon it.”

Resurrecting old debates, controversies and arguments is not the way forward for the Christian, nor can they often honour our Heavenly Father or His Son, unless of course there is some content in such debate, controversy or argument which has not been appreciated for the good it contains.

Indeed we have much better things to do than dogmatize, point-score and argue over theological niceties and I agree all our efforts should be directed to preaching the gospel of salvation while personally endeavouring to conform to the image of the Son. As Jesus said “Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.” All these things we strive to do and exhort one another to this end, and so it is because of our love for our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ that we are content to “spend and be spent.” That is why we have reconsidered and reproduced this debate on “Why The Cross?”

The scriptural arguments put forward by the Nazarene Fellowship are second to none and present a better understanding of the Gospel message than is available elsewhere. I know this is a bold claim but it is made in all thankfulness and humility before our Heavenly Father.

In 1949 the debate was suppressed by a shameful and dishonourable faction within the Christadelphian body and a false report of it was given out to satisfy those who were not present and could not know what was said, nor the implications of the false doctrines all too commonly held in ignorance.

It is because of our great love of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ and in thankfulness of what we have learned through the Word that we do this work – to enlighten those who wish to know.

There are two things the Almighty has invited us to do. The obvious one is that we are invited to accept Jesus Christ as our Redeemer so that we can have life more abundantly through His atoning work. The other is that God has invited us to reason with Him over the Atonement when He said, through the prophet Isaiah, “Come let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet they shall be made as white as snow. Though they be like crimson they shall be made as wool.” It is reasoning from the Scriptures upon this matter which is the message principally dealt with in this debate; of how the sacrifice of Jesus Christ works for us and the evidence for the views put forward from the Scriptures makes a most rewarding study. To know God necessarily includes knowing His plan of Redemption and the reason for it, and to see in it His love, wisdom, justice and mercy; all of which are revealed in God’s work in Christ.

Whether any good can come from republishing this debate depends upon how the questions are resolved for each individual. As we develop our characters and grow in Christ we are sometimes required to change our views in accordance with our deeper understanding and so as we appreciate more completely what Jesus Christ has done for us, so we find that the correct understanding of this subject carries a greater influence upon our character than anything else.

The truths we proclaim are proven from Scripture and not assumed just because someone else says its true, nor because it has been accepted by so many for so long. No one had ever proved sin-in-the-flesh from Scripture nor will they, simply because it is not to be found there. It had its origins in the Apostate Church and has to be rejected for a true understanding of why Christ died.

Sincerely your brother in Jesus Christ,      Russell Gregory.

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**Brother Allen R. Harding writes:-**

Russell Gregory, Greetings! ... ‘Debattre’ the French word for debate brings out the deeper meaning of ‘Battle’ which I feel is not the correct way to solve Bible problems, “All Scripture is given that the man of God might be thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” 2 Timothy 3:15-17. I have read many of these “Battle Stories” which inflame our fleshly feelings but leave the Spiritual mind depressed.

Robert Roberts had a nervous breakdown trying to solve this very question, yet if we go back to the first rungs of the ladder in Genesis chapter 1 all becomes clear.

I look upon Genesis chapter 1 in the impression the shepherds received in Luke 2:8. “Shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. Suddenly a brilliant light overcame the darkness. Lo, The angel of the Lord came upon them and the glory of the Lord shone round about them.” Verse 13, “Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host praising God.” They had reason to praise the Most High God by the work of their hands already proclaimed to be good. Verses 10,12,18,21,25.

The proposal “To make man in the image after our likeness,” did not become fact until Christ was made perfect on the third day. One man only of the proposed ‘many.’

The “making” started by (1) “...So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created he him. (2) Male and female. (3) God blessed them and said unto them...” Chapter 2 tells us how (1) and (2)

were accomplished but all is silent regarding item (3). Alas! Cursed is the ground (3:17) for thy sake, in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.

Proverbs 1:7 says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,” Had the man and woman been obedient, under trial, in their state of espousal, (3) would have been their wedding day. The curse falling upon the man in disobedience, in obedience would have proved “Blessing.” Their offspring to be sons of God to have dominion, the Tree of Knowledge used with wisdom and the Tree of Life sustaining their being until the multitude of men and women became a temple in which the Most High would make His dwelling. Instead, God’s will was thwarted and what is not of the will of God is sin.

The offspring of the man and woman multiplied to fill the earth with inhabitants with no right to possession and no access to the Tree of Life. They were the product of sin and whose wages each fell victim.

God’s purpose revealed to the angels was put in abeyance and God has not yet declared “Behold it was very good;” it was far from perfection but “as truly as I live all the earth shall be filled with my glory.”

The making process goes on, perfection accredited alone to the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice Christ’s mother’s rejoicing, “All generations will call me blessed.” All nations will be blessed through Abraham and his Seed. The cup of wine is termed the cup of blessing. Why? Because John 1:12, “As many as received Him, to them gave he power to become sons of God even to them that believe on His name.”

Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man (Adam), but of God. Mary performed this vital act by submitting to the will of God that the New Creation in contrast to the old should not fail. Joseph also obeyed in not divorcing his espoused wife. That “blessing” we should acknowledge as we drink the cup of wine.

The old creation did not call their progenitor “blessed” as they struggled for food by tilling the earth. Christ was not born of the will of the flesh but His body was formed in one of the stock of Adam. He read the cleansing words of Scripture. Psalm 1, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night.”

As Adam’s walk showed him unworthy of blessing so Christ’s upright walk gained for us the blessing of dominion over the work of God’s hands. Hebrews 1:2. “Whom he hath appointed Heir of all things.” The inheritance Adam forfeited. Christ had to renounce His Adamic ancestry for it was without hope and cut off from God. The only way He could do this was by willingly laying down His life. The joy that was set before Him of the New Creation with children born out of His death to be sons of God was the wonderful vision of a cleansed earth. He is to return with the angels to finish off God’s will... “Let us make man in our image after our likeness.”

The wonderful future humility of our Lord when 1 Corinthians 15:28, “And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the son also himself be subject unto Him that put all things under him.” In other words He is to put away His title of Lord to form one united Temple that God may be all in all.

The blessing of Genesis will be at last proclaimed, “And God saw everything that He had made and behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.” The point of my letter is that God did not say the body formed from the dust of the ground was very good. Not when He had set cherubim to stop access to the Tree of life. It will be when the “making” is finished.

Yours sincerely, Allen R.Harding.

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**In reply: -**

Allen Harding, Greetings in Jesus Great name. “Debattre” may mean “battle” but why should we not battle so long as it is with spiritual warfare, having put on the whole armour of God? Was there ever a man of God mentioned in the Scriptures who did not seriously and vigorously contend for his faith?

You quote from Genesis 1:26, "Let us make man in our own image." If the sentence ended there I would consider you had a good point in believing God was saying that eventually man would be in the image of God at the end of the Kingdom age, but the sentence goes on to tell us that man was also to have dominion over the natural creation of the world, and it has been so ever since Adam, so I look upon your view with interest but also with doubt.

Regarding the point of your letter stated in your final paragraph we are clearly told God made all things "very good," and I take this to mean that they were made to His satisfaction and very good for the purpose for which He created them. If God had made man in His image and Spirit then man would have been perfect and that would have been a different matter. It is of note that after they had sinned it was said of Adam and Eve by the Elohim that they had "become as one of us." Before that therefore they were not like the Elohim, but nevertheless made very good.

Yours sincerely, Russell Gregory.

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**Letter from Brother Paul Watson:-**

August 1996

Dear Sister Helen

In reply to your editorial letter dated July 28th 1996 I wish to acknowledge the receipt of your various publications which have been of great interest. I enclose a further summary of my thoughts and observations, though I expect it to receive a muted response as did my earlier correspondence. Indeed I shall be surprised if you even consider printing it this time. But just in case: -

Dear Brethren and Sisters, Having read of your thoughts on the true nature of Adam and his fall from grace might I offer my own thoughts on this matter for your consideration?

In the beginning God created heaven and earth (Genesis 1:1...). God saw all he had made, and indeed it was very good (Genesis 1:31). This goodness was not like our understanding of goodness. For Yahweh's thoughts are not our thoughts nor our ways his ways (Isaiah 55:8). In this newly created world all creatures and plants lived, died and regenerated as they do today. For most living creatures rely on the destruction of other living plants and creatures for their own well being. Without this the planet would be in stasis, even the universe about us requires the destruction of the very stars, our own sun included, to provide the energy for the creation of heat, light and new elements from which all things are made.

Yet among all this turmoil God made one exception, Adam. For at creation he was made from the dust in the likeness of God, yet possessing a material body similar to the rest of the animals. Requiring nourishment, capable of being destroyed, or else the threat of death from God would have been pointless if he was immortal.

For Yahweh God planted a garden in Eden, which is in the east, and there he put the man he had fashioned. From the soil, Yahweh God caused to grown every kind of tree, enticing to look at and good to eat, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Garden is translated from the word 'gan', which is from a root signifying 'to cover' or 'overshadow,' is used to express a piece of ground, differing from the open fields by being enclosed by a hedge (Isaiah 5:5) or a wall (Proverbs 24:31). It was planted with trees (Job 8:16; Song of Solomon 4:15; 6:11), it sometimes had lodges (Isaiah 1:8), or even watch-towers (Mark 11:1), and was under the charge of a keeper (Job 27:18; John 20:15). In other words it was a place different from its surroundings, and protected from the events without its boundaries, which in this case was the world immediately after the creation.

Here dwelt Adam, in a sinless state, as without knowledge of sin, no sin could be imputed. Then Yahweh God gave Adam this command, "You are free to eat of all the trees in the garden. But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you are not to eat; for, the day you eat of that, you are doomed to die. It is not

unreasonable to assume that Adam having access to the fruit of the tree of life, ate of it and whilst doing so was not subject to natural death.

Yahweh God said “It is not right that man should be alone. I shall make him a helper.” Thus was Eve made from Adam’s rib and brought to him. She having a nature similar to Adam. God saw all he had made, and indeed it was very good. Adam’s (and Eve’s) apparent longevity can be answered by assuming that as they had access to the tree of life they both ate freely of it and could have lived for ever had they not disobeyed God’s command.

Now, the snake was the most subtle of all the wild animals that Yahweh God had made. It asked the woman, “Did God really say you were not to eat from any of the trees in the garden?” The woman answered the snake, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden. But of the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden God said, “You must not eat it, nor touch it, under pain of death.” Then the snake said to the woman, “No! You will not die! God knows in fact that the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, knowing good from evil.” Thus came to Adam and Eve the knowledge of good and evil, and with it, the ability to sin.

Then Yahweh God said, “Now that man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil, he must not be allowed to reach out his hand and pick from the tree of life too, and eat and live for ever.” Thus were they cast out into a world which had not changed since it was first created, from which they had been sheltered whilst being within the garden. Thus sin entered into this world where previously only sinless creatures lived, in the form of man who by reason of his knowledge was now able to sin. Having no access to the tree of life he was doomed to die because of the nature with which they had been created. Their children, sinful or sinless would also suffer a similar fate for no other reason than that they had no access to the fruit of the tree of life.

This was not a punishment, just a simple fact that all things would die. Though in each of us is a nagging doubt that it is not possible for our Id to die, echoing the serpents words “No! You will not die!”

These words have tempted mankind down the centuries, leading to all the strange cults and beliefs which bedevil us today. From this predicament the Creator has provided us with a solution. That by a sacrifice which will follow a prescribed pattern, we, by accepting and recognising this sacrifice, can be given the gift of that which we never had; eternal life. Symbolic of this was the sacrifice of animals to provide skins to cover the bodies of Adam and Eve and also to inspire sorrow in the minds of thinking persons, the sorrow that their actions have caused the death of innocent creatures. Later to be in the form of our Lord Jesus Christ whose barbaric and unjust death would also inspire sorrow in the mind of the believer.

We are informed in the scriptures that Christ fulfilled the law and for this reason could have claimed the right to be delivered from the natural death which would be his eventual fate, for this is the way of all living things. With the possible exception of Enoch and Elijah, who may have also fulfilled the law, the scripture is not explicit about these two. Yet Christ chose a death on the cross as a sacrifice, that we may also have the right to be delivered from the natural death which is our fate also. He obviously did not die for his own sins as he had never sinned, though he would have died by reason of his animal nature had there been no divine intervention.

We are required to accept these facts as a child would, with absolute faith and denying our ability to reason and question, as a child accepts its first instruction from its parents. Having no previous knowledge it must believe what it hears. Reasoned thought and lengthy debate only cloud the issue and have led to dispute and disillusionment for the participants, their wisdom being brought to nothing and their actions becoming more and more demented.

We are told to judge a tree by its fruit, the fruit of all these debates and schisms is sour indeed. For not one of you has considered our Lord’s additional command that we should love one another. For though you command languages both human and angelic yet speak without love you are no more than a gong booming or a cymbal clashing. Though you have the power of prophecy, to penetrate all mysteries and knowledge and have all the faith necessary to move mountains, yet do these things without love you are nothing.

The Nazarene Fellowship has followed a course of action which, by reason, may appear justifiable, yet has by its very nature become a perversion. Likewise the Christadelphian fellowship has stood by its statement of faith as though it and not baptism is the required pre-requisite for entry into our Lord's kingdom. Though each side speaks of love, by my own experience, there is no love but only a desire to please each other and to look good in the sight of our fellows. Continually looking over your shoulders lest someone should hear a chance un-bridled remark. Forever listening to new wisdom and mighty exhortations from so called learned brethren who speak to captive audiences. Alas wisdom like unto beauty is in the eye (or ear) of the beholder.

Recently a parable has been enacted in the cross party talks in Northern Ireland. The debating politicians spent best part of the day arguing about if a union jack or some other flag should fly above the building in which the proposed talks would be held. Later in the day a more observant person pointed out that there was no flag-pole on the building.

Perhaps if the Nazarenes and the Christadelphians went outside their walled beliefs and re-read the scriptures with a child-like faith they might get a better insight of our Lord's action. Thus realising that the truth they claim to possess is not complete and is not reserved for them alone.

Until this happens I can only repeat another's words: "A plague on both your houses."

Your brother in Christ, Paul Watson.

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**In Reply:-**

5th September 1996

Dear Paul, Thank you for your letter. I am glad to hear you find the various publications sent to you of interest.

I am surprised you think we believe in a perversion. I do not agree that we do of course. Nor do I experience what you describe as "...no love, but only a desire to please each other and to look good in the sight of our fellows. Constantly looking over your shoulder lest some-one should hear a chance unbridled remark, etc., etc." In the Nazarene Fellowship most are in isolation - ones and twos - so pleasures come in trying to be pleasing to God, rather than our fellows. I do not know if your comments are applicable to Christadelphians, I have never been one, nor do I know any of them personally any more.

As a follower of Jesus I do not feel I am "walled" as you put it, in my beliefs and I would not claim that I possess the complete truth or that it is reserved for me alone or to those I happen to know of, who believe like me. I have no fixed ideas about who belongs to God, only He knows that. I think in that regard we may be in for many great surprises at the resurrection when Jesus returns. I am sorry too that you think we lack love, I expect you are right and we must and we do strive to do better in that direction as in all other things also.

You say we should "re-read the Scriptures with a childlike faith." And this should "preclude reasoned thought and lengthy debate which only clouds the issue and leads to dispute and disillusionment." I think that is childish not childlike. Paul speaks of putting away childish things and he spent his life before and after his conversion putting forth complex reasoning, argument and debate for the benefit of his contemporaries and those who followed down the ages to the present day. Our reasoning powers are God given and differentiate us from the animals. God expects and intends us to use those powers. He gave us the Scriptures to search for our salvation in, and to exercise our minds on. I am amazed that a grown person should suggest that the way forward in discovering the truth about why we are here and what the world is for, the most important questions that face us, should be resolved by suspending and denying our reasoning powers. We would hardly do such a foolish thing when facing other questions that arise in our normal everyday life, such as deciding the right and proper way to conduct ourselves amongst our friends, family and neighbours, so why should we not use to the full these God given faculties when considering and learning the truth about the most vital matter of all, the good news about the Gospel of Salvation?

How did you come to the knowledge expressed in the outline of your beliefs in your letter to me? By denying reasoned thought? I doubt it. The whole Jewish ethos from which our hope and Christ Himself springs is based on discussion, dispute and debate. Ask any Jew. What was Jesus doing in the Temple when He said He was about His Father's business? What did He do most of His life but discuss and debate with His friends as well as His enemies?

I found your views confused. I think it is unreasonable to assume that Adam was not subject to natural death whilst in the garden of Eden and with access to the tree of Life. Nor do I think he lived for 800 years outside the garden because of the fruits long lasting effects. That could be a matter for discussion and debate not to mention reasoned thought, couldn't it? You also say that Christ delivered us, by His sacrifice, from "natural death which is our fate also." But He didn't deliver us from it did he for we still die don't we? You do not mention the word redemption or the redemptive powers of Christ's death on the Cross. You have either forgotten or do not know of the federal principle which Paul expounds by discussion and debate "as in Adam all die - so in Christ all are made alive." I will not enlarge any further, if you read the things we send out you can read of this explained by others far more capable than I and if you are prepared to use your reasoning powers.

Shakespeare's phrase, "a plague on both your houses" with which you conclude your letter, is not very constructive nor an entirely "loving" response is it? Understandable perhaps, but not loving!

I wish you well and thank you for writing, Yours, Helen.

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**The following article by Anthony Hone is taken from The Dawn Fellowship Magazine for December 1995 and January 1996 in which it appeared under the heading of "FUNDAMENTALS."**

**Correspondence follows the article.**

## **THE NATURE OF CHRIST**

(1) This subject is a first principle one; it concerns matters on which we were all instructed and which we understood before we were baptized. Yet it is one which has probably given rise to more controversy than any other. From the very earliest times of the Christian era, right down to the days in which we live, the question of the nature of Christ has given rise to false teaching - teaching which attacks the very foundations of the hope of salvation which God has provided through Jesus Christ.

(2) You will remember how the apostle John refers repeatedly to this in his epistle. He writes, "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist." Again, "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." Even while the apostles were still alive, false teaching concerning the nature of Christ was thus being promulgated. And so it has been ever since. It was wrong teaching on this matter which was the cause of the very first division among the brethren and sisters after the revival of the Truth by Dr. Thomas and Brother Roberts. In the year 1873 Brother Edward Turney gave a lecture, and subsequently published a booklet, entitled "The Sacrifice of Christ" in which he set out unsound ideas on this subject. He claimed that Jesus did not inherit the curse placed upon Adam, and was therefore not mortal; that he had what Brother Turney termed "a free life," and could if he had chosen have avoided death and entered into eternal life alone. His sacrifice, it was contended, consisted of offering up an "unforfeited life" in payment of the penalty incurred by Adam, and this unforfeited life was given in the room and stead of the forfeited lives of all believers of Adam's race.

(3) We will look at these ideas in more detail as we proceed; but you will immediately see that they go to the very root of the meaning and purpose of Christ's work. Some thirty years later, in the early years of this century, somewhat similar ideas were put forward by Brother A.D. Strickler of Buffalo, U.S.A. He set them out in a book entitled "Out of Darkness into Light" which received a wide circulation and is, I

believe, still in circulation to-day. Brother Strickler's teaching did not have much influence in Britain, but it did in America and Australia, and his ideas are held today by many in those countries. Indeed, false teaching on this subject is still actively promulgated. A booklet entitled "To The Law and To The Testimony," which strongly advocates many of the ideas put forward by Edward Turney was published in 1943 and is in active circulation today.

(4) It is therefore important that we should be reminded from time to time of the teaching of the Scriptures on this subject. Some of the arguments put forward in these writings are very subtle, and we should all be in a position to be able to discern the unsoundness of the reasoning put forward, should we be confronted by it at any time.

### **A Positive Approach**

(5) Now we will not get too involved in the somewhat tortuous arguments put forward by Edward Turney. While it will be necessary to examine some of the basic concepts and to show that they have no foundation in Scripture, we will adopt as far as possible a positive approach to the subject, to see what the Scriptures do tell us, in clear unmistakable terms, concerning the nature of Christ. We can then look at what may be regarded as more contentious passages and see how they fit in with the positive teaching.

(6) The first point to draw attention to is the constant emphasis which the Scriptures place upon Christ's descent from Adam. This, of course, is in contrast to the Trinitarian concept, which lays all the emphasis on what they call the "incarnation," namely that Christ was really God come down to earth in the form of a man, and that for this purpose he had to be formed in the womb of Mary. If that were so, and Mary was "immaculate," as the Roman Catholics claim, then Jesus was not, in any real sense, descended from Adam. But the Scriptures emphasize again and again that he was of Adam's race. In Eden it was foretold that the Saviour was to be "the seed of the woman," Abraham was told that "in thy seed (that is, his natural, fleshly descendants) shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;" David was told, "Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne;" the New Testament opens with the words, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham," Romans 1:3 speaks of "Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;" in Galatians 4 Paul says that "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law."

(7) These and many other passages teach very clearly, not only that Jesus was a member of Adam's race, but that the fact was fundamental to his mission as the Saviour.

(8) Having established that, we must now go on to examine what were the implications of him having been descended from Adam. That takes us back to the Garden of Eden and what happened there. We all know the details well enough. Adam had been told that if he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he would surely die and when he disobeyed, the threatened sentence was passed upon him: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

### **Death Passed on All**

(9) So what happened as a result of Adam's disobedience? He became a corruptible, death-stricken being. Prior to his disobedience he had been "very good." He had been in a state of innocence, suffering no evil, no pain, no weakness, no grief; although not immortal, in the sense of being incapable of death, he was not corruptible. But with the curse that was pronounced upon him all that was changed. By nature - by constitution - he became corruptible, subject to frailty, to illness, to suffering and, in the end, death. And this became the nature and constitution of all those descended from him. As Paul writes, "In Adam all die" (1 Corinthians 15:22); and again, "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men." (Romans 5:12).

(10) Now the question arises - and this is the crucial question as far as our subject is concerned - did Christ partake of the condemnation passed upon Adam? Did he inherit Adam's nature and constitution, that is a constitution subject to the same infirmities, the same weaknesses as ourselves, condemned to decay and death?

(11) Those who follow the teaching of Edward Turney claim that he did not. While asserting that he had the same kind of flesh as Adam, they claim that he did not possess the same nature. We quote from the booklet "To The Law and To The Testimony." "Jesus was not constituted in Adam." "He had the same kind and quality of flesh as Adam, but not Adamic life." "Jesus received his life direct from God."

(12) They are saying, in effect, that Jesus did not inherit the curse placed upon Adam. They say that, just as Adam when he was created received life direct from God, so did Christ, and thus he had the same nature as Adam before the fall; and they then go on to say that "he did not forfeit that life by disobedience" and so was not subject to death as a natural inheritance. It is then asserted that it was this unforfeited life which Jesus gave as a ransom price for mankind.

### **No Scriptural Support**

(13) Now, this idea of Jesus having received a "free life" direct from God is not to be found in Scripture. No attempt is made by those who advance it to provide any Scriptural evidence for it. The idea is a myth, an invention, a fantasy. As far as I am aware, the only Scriptural passage ever advanced (though not in this booklet) is Christ's words in John 5:26: - "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." But it is quite clear from the context that Christ is not here speaking of the nature he had before his crucifixion, but of the resurrection: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live" (verse 25). Jesus then goes on to speak of the power given to him by his Father to bestow life upon those who will be raised from the dead at his return. It has nothing whatever to do with a "free life" given to him at birth.

(14) The fact is, this teaching conflicts with all that the Scriptures have to tell us concerning Jesus. Take, for example, the contention that Jesus possessed the same nature as Adam before the fall, that is, before the sentence of death was passed. As we have seen, before the fall Adam suffered no evil, no pain, no weakness, no grief. Was that true of Jesus? We know it was not. It was testified of him that he was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" that he "offered up prayers with strong crying and tears;" that he "learned obedience by the things which he suffered;" that he "was crucified through weakness." In other words, he experienced in himself those consequences that came from Adam's disobedience,

(15) Again, what do the propounders of this theory mean when they say that Jesus "had the same kind and quality of flesh as Adam, but not Adamic life? Such a statement seems to suppose that "life" is some abstract essence which can exist independently of the body, like a 'soul' of popular orthodoxy. But this is a fallacy. The Scriptures tell us that "the life of the flesh is in the blood" (Leviticus 17:11), which is a well-known scientific fact, for it is the blood which transmits the life-giving oxygen in the air we breathe to all parts of the body. If, therefore, Jesus possessed the same kind and quality of flesh as Adam, then he must have possessed the same kind of life. Indeed, the Scriptures equate his life with his body: his sacrifice is variously spoken of as "the laying down of his life" (John 10:17,18); "the giving of his body" (Luke 22:19); "the pouring out of his soul" (Isaiah 53:12); "the offering up of himself" (Hebrews 9:25). His body, or his flesh, and his life were inseparable; so that if he possessed the same kind and quality of flesh as Adam, then he must have possessed the same kind of life. The only alternative is to say that he was a spirit being energized directly by the power of God, and that is exactly what was believed by those in the first century who were so strongly condemned by John in his epistles.

(16) The teaching of the Scriptures on this point is quite plain and very emphatic. The passages are well known, but let us look at them. First Hebrews 2 (a chapter not as much as mentioned in this booklet). We usually quote from verse 14, but we will go back to get the context: "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me" (Verse 9- 13).

(17) Note the repeated emphasis which the apostle lays upon Christ's relationship to his brethren. He then develops the theme: "Forasmuch then as the children (that is the children whom God had given him - v.13; his brethren -v.11) are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same" (v. 14).

(18) We will be coming back to the rest of the verse, but let us go straight on to verse 16: "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted he is able to succour them that are tempted,"

### **One of Our Race**

(19) You will see that the whole point of what the apostle is saying is to emphasize the kinship - the natural flesh and blood relationship - between Christ and his brethren. He makes the point again and again. He was a partaker of flesh and blood; he took on him, not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham; he was made in all things like unto his brethren - not like unto Adam before the fall, but like unto his brethren, those descendants of Adam who inherited the condemnation passed upon the father of the race.

(20) Now what does all this tell us about the work of redemption Jesus came to do? If Jesus was made in all points like unto his brethren, then he was subject to the feelings, the temptations, the promptings to sin that we have. This is all part of human nature, of which he partook. Paul speaks very graphically of what this human nature really is in Romans 7: -

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (verses 18-23).

(21) Those verses very tellingly describe the human nature which we all possess – the struggle in which all those who try to do God's will are engaged. We know what is right - we have learned it from God's Word - but how often we fail to do it, due to the weakness of our human sinful flesh. And Jesus possessed the same human, sinful flesh as ourselves – he was engaged in the struggle as we are. It is testified that he was "in all points tempted like as we are" (Hebrews 4; 15), but, unlike us, who so often succumb to the temptation, he successfully resisted; and so the verse continues: "yet without sin." Again, we are told that "he suffered, being tempted" (Hebrews 2:18); "who in the days of his flesh... offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears... though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Hebrews 5:7,8).

(22) It was because Jesus possessed the same nature as ourselves - a nature subject to the desires and promptings of the flesh - that his victory over those temptations was able to achieve our salvation.

(23) Let us go back now to the latter part of verse 14 in Hebrews 2. Paul says: "He also himself likewise took part of the same (flesh and blood); that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

(24) What does that mean exactly? The devil is sin-in-the-flesh - those promptings to do wrong of which we have just spoken. Unless Jesus had had those promptings by reason of his inheritance of Adamic (sinful) nature, how could he have destroyed the devil by his death? The same truth is expounded elsewhere. To the Colossians Paul writes (1:21,22): -

"You...hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death." It was not an "unforfeited life" that Christ offered; it was a human body in which God's Name had been glorified by obedience to His will. "He offered himself (that is, his flesh and blood body) without spot to God" (Hebrews 9:14); or, as Peter writes (1 Peter 2:24), "His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree," and again, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sin...being put to death in the flesh" (1 Peter 3:18). In what sense could these things be

said of him unless his body, his flesh, was of the same sin-stricken nature as ourselves - a body in which he had triumphed over the temptations of the flesh, and was thus an acceptable sacrifice to the Almighty? If it were not so, what do we make of Paul's quotation from the Psalm in Hebrews 10:5; "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me"? And again, verse 10: - "We are sanctified through the offering of the body (not the unforfeited life) of Jesus Christ." Why, it is this same important truth to which we testify each week when we partake of the emblems. We partake, symbolically, of his body and his poured-out blood in recognition of the fact that we "who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ, (he) having reconciled us unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby (margin:" in himself") (Ephesians 2:13,16). All these passages teach that the acceptability of Christ's sacrifice lay in the fact that it was the offering of a human, Adamic body, in which all the frailties and temptations of the flesh had been over-come by complete submission to the will of God.

(25) Now it must be clear from what has been said that when we speak of "the flesh," both in relation to ourselves and to Jesus, we mean that corruptible human nature which we have inherited from Adam - that constitution which is inherently frail, and subject to the desires and temptations which come from within. But some have found a difficulty here. They refer to such a passage as Romans 8:8, which reads, "they that are in the flesh cannot please God." How could Jesus be "in the flesh," they ask, if they that be in the flesh cannot please God? This does call for an explanation, so we will spend a few moments examining more closely the way in which this term "the flesh" is used in Scripture, so that we can be quite clear that there is no contradiction between the statement of Paul in that verse and the statements elsewhere that Jesus Christ, who did no sin, came in the flesh.

### **The Flesh Defined**

(26) As we have seen man, by reason of his descent from Adam, is inherently sinful. He has within him the desire to do things which are contrary to God's will. Those desires come from the mind, of course; but because we inherit them by reason of our fleshly descent from Adam, they are frequently spoken of as pertaining to the flesh. For example, in those verses we looked at in Romans 7 the apostle says, "in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." Jesus used a similar form of speech when he said that "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, thefts" and so on. These things do not literally proceed out of the heart, but from the mind; it is a figure of speech called metonymy - using one thing to represent something closely associated with it. Thus it is that the term "the flesh" is used to represent anything which is sinful and out of harmony with the mind and will of God. We find, particularly in the epistles of Paul, that two contrasting concepts are used. On the one hand there is what is described as "the mind of the flesh," that is a mind which is attracted to all those things which are contrary to God's will, such as those sinful practices enumerated by Jesus in the passage just quoted; on the other hand, there is what is described as "the mind of the Spirit" - another metonym, since what is meant is not literally a mind belonging to the Spirit, but a mind, a human mind, which is influenced in all its thinking by the teaching of the Spirit, as expressed in God's Holy Word.

(27) It is quite clear from the context, that this is the sense in which Paul uses the term "the flesh" in Romans 8:8. In verse 7 he says; "the carnal (fleshly) mind is enmity against God... so then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." It has nothing to do with the physical constitution. Christ came "in the flesh" inasmuch as he was descended from Adam, and inherited his sin-cursed nature; but he overcame his fleshly tendencies, and by his absorption of the teaching of God's Word he exhibited the mind of the Spirit at all times. We are expected to do the same, although, whereas Christ fully succeeded, we often fail.

(28) It is a failure to recognize, or acknowledge, these forms of speech which has led to some of the more absurd arguments put forward by those who hold the "free life" theory. For example, in this same chapter of Romans, verse 3 speaks of God having sent His Son "in the likeness of sinful flesh?.." "Sinful flesh" is a phrase to which they take the strongest exception. They insist that it should be translated "flesh of sin," although what difference that makes to the idea expressed by the apostle I do not know. They say that there is no such thing as sinful flesh - it is the mind that sins. Taken absolutely literally, that is true; but, as we have seen, the term is used to describe the constitution we have inherited from Adam, and that Christ also possessed. It does not mean that Christ was a sinner. Although subject to the same temptations as ourselves, he resisted them; and it was because of this that he, as the apostle continues in this verse, "condemned sin in the flesh." He overcame sin, he condemned it, he conquered it, in that nature which he bore, a thing he could not have done if he had not inherited the same nature as all Adam's descendants.

## Day of Atonement

(29) Finally, I would like to look at the matter from a somewhat different angle, but one which forms the basis of much of Paul's argument in the letter to the Hebrews. A study of the book of Leviticus reveals that virtually the whole of the provisions of the law of Moses, as regards sacrifices and offerings, pointed forward to and typified the work of Christ; and nowhere does this come out more strongly than in the ceremonies which took place on the Day of Atonement. Those provisions of the Law teach us fundamental truths concerning Christ and the nature of his sacrifice. So let us remind ourselves briefly of what took place on the Day of Atonement.

(30) Firstly, the High Priest had to wash, and then to clothe himself with the garments of white linen. What does that teach us? Why, that atonement could only be procured by one who was morally perfect - one who was cleansed from sin, and was clothed in purity and righteousness.

(31) Thus attired the High Priest then made two offerings. The first was for himself, the second for the people. These two offerings were dealt with differently, and by this means teach important truths. It was not until he had killed the sin-offering for himself that the High Priest was permitted to enter the Most Holy Place, This he did bearing incense, and the blood of the sin offering, which he sprinkled seven times on the Mercy Seat. There is no need for our purpose now to look at the details of the offering for the people; it is this offering for himself on which the apostle Paul particularly comments in Hebrews: "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's; for this he did once, when he offered up himself" (Hebrews 7:26,27). So Paul is clearly applying the type under the law to Christ. Just as the High Priest offered first for himself, so did Christ, except that whereas the Levitical priests had to do it repeatedly, Christ did it once for all time.

(32) Now this does not suit those who hold the "free life" theory. According to them Christ did not inherit Adamic condemnation and so, as he was personally sinless, he did not need redemption. There was nothing to be redeemed from as he already had an unforfeited life. So they try to argue that this 27th verse does not mean that Christ offered for himself. I do not intend to examine their arguments: it is not necessary, because the apostle makes the same point several times elsewhere in this epistle in passages which are completely ignored in this booklet: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin... For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity. And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins" (Hebrews 4:15; 5:1-3).

(33) Note that the high priest must offer for himself because of his infirmity - a characteristic of Christ to which the apostle has drawn attention in chapter 4:15. He then continues, concerning Christ: "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications (foreshadowed by the incense offered up by the High Priest when he went into the Most Holy Place with the offering for himself) with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death (Note; if Christ had a free life he did not need saving from death), and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect (Note: he was not already perfect, as the "free life" theory postulates - he was "made perfect" after being saved from death by being raised from the tomb), he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (verses 7-9)

(34) The apostle reverts to the same theme in chapter 9:7 and 11, "But into the second (the Most Holy Place) went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people... Christ 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 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."

(35) The words "for us" in italics should not be there; the grammatical sense of the phrase is "having obtained for himself eternal redemption." Just as the high Priest went into the Most Holy Place with the blood of the sacrificial bullock as an offering for his own sins, so Christ did likewise with his own blood,

and thus obtained eternal redemption – redemption from the condemnation to death he had inherited from Adam. The apostle concludes this part of his dissertation by saying: “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin (NIV “not to bear sin”) unto salvation” (verse 28). This again parallels the Day of Atonement. Just as the Israelite on that day waited for the reappearance of the High Priest from within the Tabernacle, having offered for himself and for them, so we await the reappearance of the sinless and glorified Christ, to bestow salvation on those who look for him.

(36) This dissertation of the apostle in Hebrews on the parallels between the enactments under the Law and their fulfilment in the work of Christ can leave us in no doubt about the nature of Christ, and that wonderful means of salvation through him which has been provided by our loving and merciful Father in heaven. So we cannot do better in conclusion than to quote the exhortation of the apostle in the following chapter, where he draws together the threads of what he has been saying concerning the work of Christ as both the offering and the priest; “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering...and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.”

(37) That, surely, should be the effect upon us of a full appreciation of all that God has done for us, in providing His only Begotten Son, that we might be redeemed from the curse which came upon Adam’s race because of sin.

Anthony Hone (Dawn Fellowship)

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### **In Reply:-**

Dear Brother Hone,

25th August 1996

1. Thank you for being patient with me in waiting for my commentary on your article “The Nature of Christ” (which I have retyped with numbered paragraphs for ease of reference). Indeed even now I have not completed a full analysis, but at this stage have limited my observations mainly to your presentation, noting some contradictions, although a certain amount of doctrine inevitably comes into it.

2. First then, we will go to paragraph 8 where you state that “the threatened sentence was... in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return unto the ground...” Adam was not foretold of this, so strictly speaking it cannot be said that this is what he was threatened with.

3. In paragraphs 11 and 12 I see a direct contradiction where you state in paragraph 12 “They say... Christ had the same nature as Adam.” But in paragraph 11 you say “They claim that he did not possess the same nature.” This is confusing; if they said both can you please give references?

4. Now in paragraph 15 you find fault with Turney and his followers in suggesting that they make a difference between the life of Adam and the life of Christ yet they had the same flesh as each other, thereby making a distinction between the flesh and the life. Then you correctly state, “indeed the Scriptures equate his life with his body.” However, you go on to do as you accuse others, for in paragraph 24 you make a difference between Christ’s body and His life where you state, “It was not an unforfeited life that Christ offered; it was a human body... He offered... his flesh and blood body without spot to God.” Perhaps you can clarify this for me. (I notice you say “unforfeited life” but whether forfeited or not it is still Jesus’ life we are considering).

5. Also I wonder if you have been taken to task for saying that Jesus offered a spotless body to God when the Christadelphian teaching is that His character was spotless but His body was full of sin? But then again, you have it both ways for you go on to say, “In what sense could these things be said of Him unless his body, his flesh, was of the same sin-stricken nature as ourselves?” How is it possible for His body to be spotless and yet sin-stricken?

6. Also in paragraph 24 you say that “sin-in-the-flesh” is the Devil. But if sin-in-the-flesh is the devil then it should be possible to use the expression in at least some of the places where the word devil occurs, but we can’t, as it never makes any sense; for example “resist the sin-in-the-flesh and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). I cannot find a single occurrence of “devil” where we can put “sin-in-the-flesh” in its place.

7 The best definition I know for “Devil” is that it is the personification of man’s will when opposed to God’s will; and this idea is expressed in the words you quote, “the mind of the flesh... contrary to God’s will.” Again, you write, in paragraph 26, “the term ‘the flesh’ is used to represent anything which is sinful or out of harmony with the mind and will of God,” Do you not think this is a very much better definition of the devil than that “the devil is sin-in-the-flesh.”?

8. Once again I find contradiction in what you say in paragraphs 25 and 27 where you write in paragraph 25; “When we speak of the flesh...we mean that corruptible human nature which we have inherited from Adam” but you confuse this by stating in paragraph 27, “It has nothing to do with the physical constitution.” I’m sure you mean to clarify, but feel you only add confusion to the ways in which the term “flesh” is used in Scripture.

9. Finally, a query regarding the way you use the letter to the Hebrews which tells us that Jesus Christ was not of the priestly tribe; Hebrews 7:14, “For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood,” and was therefore not a priest, let alone a High Priest. In fact He was the Offering, the Lamb of God, not the Offerer. He first prepared himself to be the Offering - the Lamb of God (“A body hast thou prepared me”), and He brought Himself to His Father without spot or blemish to be offered as the Lamb. He became our High Priest after He ascended into heaven.

10. Considering this, how can Jesus Christ have been as the Levitical High Priests who had to offer for themselves? Where is the parallel, for the priests were not the offerings? I feel I have gone on long enough for now, but I would be very interested in your views after considering the above comments and look forward to hearing from you in due time.

Sincerely your brother is seeking Truth, Russell Gregory.

\* \* \*

Dear Brother Gregory

30th August 1996

Thank you for your letter of the 25th August relating to my article on “the Nature of Christ,”

I was expecting that some matters of substance would be raised, although I could not imagine what they would be. As it is, the points you mention are little more than quibbles, arising from a less than careful reading of the article. Let us look at them:

Paragraph 2 of your letter. You say that the sentence passed upon Adam in Genesis 3:19 was not what he had been threatened with. But Adam had been told that if he ate of the forbidden tree he would “surely die.” After he had sinned he was told (as I quote) that he would “return to the ground” and that “unto dust shalt thou return.” Was not this what he had been threatened with?

Paragraph 3. What I wrote was “they say... Christ... had the same nature as Adam before the fall.” You omit the operative words “before the fall.” The claim of E. Turney was that Christ did not possess the same nature as Adam after the fall, which is clear from the context of my paragraph 11.

Paragraph 4. The term “an unforfeited life” is one used by Turney, not by me. The whole point of my argument is that we cannot make this distinction (which Turney tries to do) between the flesh of Adam and the life of Christ. Please read what I have written more carefully.

Paragraph 5. The phrase “Without spot” in Hebrews 9:14 clearly refers to Christ’s character. The margin of the A.V. gives “without fault.” His body was sin-stricken, but his character was without fault.

Paragraphs 6 & 7- I did not write that “sin-in-the-flesh is the devil.” I wrote that “the devil (referred to in Hebrews 2:14) is sin in the flesh.” But I do not understand your objection. I used the term “sin in the flesh” because that term is used by Paul in Romans 8:3. This verse is virtually a parallelism of Hebrews 2:14. Romans 8:3 reads, “God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh... condemned sin in the flesh;” Hebrews 2:14 reads, “He also... partook of (flesh and blood); that through death he might destroy him that hath the power of death, that is, “the devil.” The ‘devil’ of Hebrews 2 is therefore the “sin in the flesh” of Romans 8.

Paragraph 8. Again, your supposed contradiction arises from taking quotations out of context. Paragraphs 26 and 27 of my article contain an explanation of Paul’s use of the term “in the flesh” in Romans 8:3. If you read those paragraphs carefully you will see that there is no contradiction with the statement in paragraph 25. Also read again paragraph 28.

Paragraphs 9 (and 30). In Hebrews 7 the apostle shows that although Jesus was of the tribe of Juda, not Levi, yet he was a priest after the order of Melchisedec. He then shows in verses 26,27 that he was both the offering and the priest; “For such a high priest became us...who needeth not daily, as those high priests (under the law of Moses) to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s; for this he did once, when he offered up himself.”

A proper understanding of the nature of Christ is absolutely vital to an understanding of the means of salvation God has provided through him. The ideas propounded by E. Turney, and still propagated by some today, subvert the whole teaching of Scripture on this subject, and thus undermine the basis of our faith and hope. I hope that you will again read carefully what I have written... I do not know what your views are in this subject, but trust that you will allow them to be guided by the teaching of Scripture, that you may truly be one of Christ’s followers.

Sincerely your brother, Anthony Hone.

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Dear Brother Hone, Thank you for your letter of the 30th August.

I wish to refer to your last paragraph first and say how I wholeheartedly agree with you that “a proper understanding of the nature of Christ is absolutely vital to an understanding of the means of salvation God has provided through him.” And I wish to assure you I have read your article through again and again and I pray always that my views on this subject be guided by the teaching of Scripture, that I may truly be one of Christ’s followers.” I trust this is also your supreme aim, for it is because of these things that I first approached the Dawn Book Supply for a copy of your article and why I wrote to you in July; I also believe that no teaching is harmless which may put a stumbling block in the path of any sincere Christian.

My response to your letter of the 30th August, carries far more weight than you seem to have realized and is not easily dismissed as “little more than quibbles.” I made several strong points and I disagree with you when you say “the ideas propounded by E. Turney, and still propagated by some today, subvert the whole teaching of Scripture on this subject, and thus undermine the basis of our faith and hope.”

I do not need to deal with your letter separately but will now go to your article “The Nature of Christ.” In the middle of paragraph 2 you write “It was wrong teaching on this matter which was the cause of the very first division among the brethren and sisters after the revival of the Truth by Dr. Thomas and Robert Roberts.” The matter you quote from John is whether or not Jesus Christ came in the flesh but the division you go on to talk about had nothing whatever to do with this, but had to do with whether or not Jesus Christ had sin-in-the-flesh.

You give a fair and brief summary of Turney’s views when you write: -

“He claimed that Jesus did not inherit the curse placed upon Adam, and was therefore not mortal; that he had what Brother Turney termed “a free life,” and could if he had chosen have avoided death and entered into eternal life alone. His sacrifice, it was contended, consisted of offering up an “unforfeited life” in payment of the penalty incurred by Adam, and this unforfeited life was given in the room and stead of the forfeited lives of all believers of Adam’s race.” (Though I would prefer to say that Jesus took Adam’s place in death).

It is perhaps a good place here to mention that Turney makes a distinction between mortal and corruptible so that in saying Jesus was not mortal he is not teaching that Jesus was immortal nor that He was incorruptible. In his book “The Sacrifice of Christ” he explains his understanding that “mortal” relates to a legal position, while corruptible indicates that there is a natural end to all flesh. Before the law was broken Adam was corruptible just as any other animal. He became mortal when he broke the law.

Regarding the term “free life,” we see Paul’s teaching in his letter to the Romans that Adam lost his freedom when he came into bondage to Sin at the fall, therefore previous to this he was not in bondage, that is, his life was free from bondage - he had a “free life.” It is a scriptural concept and teaching and not at all difficult to understand.

You mention A.D.Strickler in paragraph 4 and while I have never seen the book you refer to I quote from a letter he wrote to F.J.Pearce of the Nazarene Fellowship dated 10<sup>th</sup> December 1936:- “Your unscriptural teaching that the one sin of Adam affects his posterity federally, as also the one sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, ransoms that one sin federally - there is no foundation for such speculation in the word of God.” I quote this simply to show that A.D.Strickler had very different views to the Nazarene Fellowship in some respects, and his refusal to see the federal principle undermines his understanding of the whole plan of redemption, though he, too, rejected the notion of sin-in-the-flesh, held by the whole of Trinitarian Christendom along with Christadelphians, as unscriptural. I shall deal with sinful flesh and Romans 8:3 a little later.

In paragraph 8 you insist that Adam suffered the threatened penalty of death for sin and that Genesis 3:19 was the fulfilment of that threat. We say this is not so and I am enclosing our booklet entitled “The Usage and Meaning of *Muth Temuth* and *B’Yom*” which shows beyond dispute that the proper meaning of the Genesis account is that Adam was to have been slain in the same day in which he sinned; that he was threatened with judicial execution, not natural death, as is shown by more than a dozen other similar passages of Scripture. One cannot make Genesis 2:17 the exception. Adam and Eve were not put to death, but neither were they left without punishment altogether, and the punishment declared in Genesis 3:19 was for their reprieved position and new circumstances in which they were placed. Though punished in measure Adam and Eve were given wonderful promises and hope for the future. I consider the booklet “The Usage and meaning of *Muth Temuth* and *B’Yom*” essential reading for all Bible students for it straightens out the true meaning of Genesis 2:17 once and for all. Consequently your view expressed in paragraph 9, that Adam “became a corruptible death-stricken being” is seen not to be Bible teaching but the result of building a theory based on a false premise. 1 Corinthians 15:42 to 56 shows that Adam was created corruptible. We will quote verses 45 and 46: “And so it is written, the first Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. However that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.” The Scriptures teach no other condition; from creation it has been first the natural, then the spiritual. Adam and Eve were still in the very good state of creation after they sinned and nowhere in the Bible can it be shown that there was any change in their physical make-up.

When Paul wrote “As in Adam all die” (1 Corinthians 15:22) he was explaining the federal principle in salvation; the position we were in before being baptized into Christ. At baptism we were no longer “in Adam” but “in Christ” in whom we were made alive. It is again the legal position which is being explained by Paul. Legal matters have to do with law and when Adam broke the law then death by sin passed upon him; he was now in bondage and indebted to the Law of Sin and Death. (See Romans 5:12). While we remain “in Adam” we are under the law of sin and death so we must come out from under this law by being baptized into Christ, for those “in Christ” are under grace; they have passed from death to life.

Paragraph 10 asks “Did Christ partake of the condemnation passed upon Adam?” The answer to this has to be, No. The first Adam had been given a life free of condemnation and this freedom he lost the day he sinned and became the bond-servant to Sin. The second Adam was also given free life from God and did

not lose it by sinning. That was the real purpose of the virgin birth. He also continued sinless all His life. You ask “Did Jesus inherit Adam’s nature?” and the answer is, Yes, through His mother, Mary, He was of the same physical nature as all men; but you go on to make the false assumption that Adam’s constitution was condemned to decay and death, which it was not. Natural death is not a punishment, but the natural outcome and condition of his creation as a natural corruptible human being, naturally corruptible like all animals, and made very good for the purpose for which God created it. We see no reason to suppose that Jesus Christ was made differently.

Paragraphs 11 & 12. When in the booklet “To The Law and To The Testimony” one reads that “Jesus was not constituted in Adam” it should be clear from the context what is meant by the word “constituted.” A Thesaurus shows there are five definitions and to choose the wrong meaning and then criticize it is not the way to understand anything. The writer is certainly not making distinction between the flesh of Adam and the nature of Adam. The distinction is between the origin of Jesus life and the origin of ours. Our life originated in Adam, and is the life which has been passed down from generation to generation to everyone that has ever been born - except for Jesus Christ. Adam sold his life to King Sin as Paul explains. Jesus life was the exception. It was for this very reason that Jesus Christ had His life direct from God - so that it was a life not sold to Sin. It was a life He could give for the purchase of the world – a life of His own possession, given freely and voluntarily. “Know ye not that ye have been bought with a price” - “Even the precious blood of Christ” - “Who gave Himself for the life of the world”? You correctly quote Turney:- “Just as Adam when he was created received life direct from God, so did Christ,” and that “He did not forfeit that life by disobedience.” But you are in error when you add that Jesus was therefore “not subject to death as a natural inheritance.” It does not follow as a logical sequence and is an unjustifiable supposition. Jesus was made with a corruptible nature just as was Adam and the rest of the human race.

Contrary to your assumption made in paragraph 13 we have shown that the idea of “free life” is proven in Scripture by the very fact that since Adam no one is born with a free life but one sold to Sin; also the need for baptism shows that we must come out of Adam and into Christ that we should no longer be under the Law of Sin and Death but under grace, that is, under the Law of the Spirit of Life as Paul expresses it in Romans 8:2. Those in Adam will perish, those in Christ will not, because they are free from the law of sin and death. What more proof does one need to show that Adam had a free life at creation? Those in Adam are subjects of the law of sin and death while those in Christ are freed from this bondage and are now subjects of God’s grace and have a free life even now. Free life is opposite to life in bondage and this is seen in Paul’s arguments in Romans and elsewhere. Paul’s reasoning is not myth, nor invention, nor a fantasy.

Personally I do not recall ever seeing John 5:26 [“For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself”] used for supporting this matter. Perhaps you can enlighten as to where I may find it.

Your paragraph 14 is indeed a muddle. To say that before the fall Adam “suffered no pain,” and “no weakness,” is pure fantasy. Certainly there seems no reason why he should suffer evil while in the Garden of Eden because God was overseeing his welfare, and grief is an evil he had no experience of until after he sinned. Jesus Christ was never in the same situation as Adam and neither did He come into the world for the same purpose. He was born to be King.

Paragraph 15. Your suppositions and alternatives are curious indeed. It seems you want to misrepresent what “the propounders of this theory mean.” Did Christ receive His life direct from his Father as we do from ours? The Scriptures make it very plain that God was the Father of Jesus Christ - His only begotten Son. Did He then have two fathers, Adam and God? Life is passed down from father to child. No descendant of Adam passed his life on to Jesus. Did the Holy Spirit overshadow your mother in order to conceive you? What then of this nonsense - “such a statement seems to suppose that “life” is some abstract essence which can exist independently of the body, like the ‘soul’ of popular theology”? And “the only alternative is to say that he (Jesus) was a spirit being energized directly by the power of God, and that is exactly what was believed by those in the first century who were so strongly condemned by John in his epistles”? You pretend to know “exactly” what others believed over nineteen hundred years ago and yet in your article you have shown your inability to quote correctly what we believe today.

Paragraph 17 notes “the repeated emphasis which the apostle lays upon Christ’s relationship to his brethren.” This is of course an essential to His position and work as Redeemer and shows the need for Him to have been born of a woman in order to be the next of kin as required by and taught in the Law of Moses in matter of redemption (Kinsman Redeemer). A matter of the law being “our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.”

In paragraph 20 you introduce Romans 7 and use it in the wrong way. You have referred to the booklet “To The Law and To the Testimony” and yet you completely ignore the writings of its various authors who prove their cases from the Scriptures. I quote from the booklet:

“There is reason for deep sorrow and concern at the general ignorance of the true exposition of this chapter (Romans 7). Not only because the mistaken understanding of its teaching clouds the whole conception of the Plan of God, but because the indiscriminating acceptance of the idea that, on account of the inherent sinfulness of human flesh, it is impossible for us to keep the commandments, is endangering the salvation of many sincere and well-meaning people. It should not be necessary to remind Bible students, that to arrive at a correct understanding of any passage, it is essential to keep in mind the context and make proper allowance for their various figures of speech employed, and also not to seek to interpret one passage in a way which contradicts another or the general tenor of scriptural teaching. Failure to observe these rules will make a true understanding impossible, and if the questions involved are vital, the mistake may amount to a wresting of Scripture, as the apostle says, “to their own destruction.”

Your paragraphs 6 and 7 establish the Bible teaching that Jesus Christ was a human being just as much as was Adam, but you make Christ a Son of Adam rather than the Son of God and nowhere in your article do you show the need for Jesus Christ to have been the Son of God. Even in your paragraphs 21 and 22 you show that anyone who lived a perfect life could have been the Saviour of the world. In paragraph 22 you claim that “it was because Jesus possessed the same nature as ourselves... that his victory over temptations was able to achieve our salvation.” No one should minimize Christ’s wonderful achievement in overcoming every trial and temptation and in an article elsewhere in this Circular Letter Brother John Higgins shows something of what was involved in those temptations, but our salvation required also that our Redeemer should be free from Adamic condemnation just as the type in the Law of Moses shows us that one who redeems a slave must himself be not only a near kinsman but also be in possession of the redemptive price. No fellow slave can ever have the price of redemption in his possession. We see Jesus Christ, however, as the great Anti-type, the near Kinsman of Adam and his descendants, free and rich but who made Himself poor for our sakes when He paid the price of our release.

Paragraphs 23 and 24. Here you talk of sin-in-the-flesh and quote Romans 8:3. Let us again refer to the booklet “To The Law and To The Testimony” where we read under the heading of “The Sinful Flesh Delusion”: -

“The doctrine of inherited “Sin-in-the-flesh,” which involves the obnoxious theory that it is impossible for human beings to keep the commandments because of their sinful flesh, is embedded in both Christadelphian and Orthodox theology and makes utter confusion of facts which are in reality the perfection of simplicity and harmony.”

In Elpis Israel, page 137, Dr.Thomas writes, “The law of sin pervades every particle of the flesh,” and again on page 128, “Sin could not have been condemned in the body of Jesus if it had not existed there.”

In “The Slain Lamb,” page 20, R.Roberts says, “This flesh is weak, unclean and sinful.”

The Birmingham Statement of Faith, clause 5 states, “A sentence which defiled and became a physical law of his being and was transmitted to all his posterity.”

If these statements are compared with the Word of God and considered in the light of Challenge and Contradictions already dealt with, it will be seen that they are doctrines and commandments of men, and not only have they no foundation in the Bible, but they are destructive of vital elementary principles of Gospel. To continue to give even tacit support to such errors after enlightenment is to merit reproof at the lips of our Master.”

The fact is that “sinful flesh” never once occurs in the original Greek and the expression means “flesh belonging to Sin” - the possession of Sin. We are in flesh belonging to Sin and Jesus Christ came into the world in flesh like ours which did not belong to sin, as we read, He came in the likeness of sin’s flesh, that is to say, it looked like sin’s flesh but was not sin’s flesh - a difference of ownership. I quote again from “To The Law and To The Testimony”: -

Adam and Jesus were both of one and the same human flesh and nature, and both were Sons of God; the first by creation, the second by begettal. Adam, by disobedience sold himself into bondage to sin; Jesus by obedience retained his relationship and then, by the sacrifice of Himself, He condemned sin (while He was) in the flesh, by bearing Himself the penalty due to His brother Adam and those federally in him.”

In the Atonement, it was not unclean flesh, the imaginary physical Sin-in-the-flesh, which was condemned. It was SIN or transgression of God’s law which was condemned, by a man of the same flesh and blood nature proving that obedience was possible, by living a sinless life, and then by becoming the offering for sin, Jesus did what the Law of Moses could not do, set humanity free from the bondage of sin. It is more than strange to find that almost without exception Christadelphian writers have at one time or another given expression to the true interpretation, but few have so far had the moral courage to throw off the shackles of “changed flesh.” Here are a few examples: -

**C.C.Walker:** “Jesus was the subject of a change of nature from the human to the divine... but he was never the subject of a change of status... as to adoption... still less does this apply to our Lord.”

**J.Carter:** “Jesus could and did say “My Father,” while he taught his disciples to say “Our Father.” He never joined them in the use of “our Father,” thereby maintaining the difference between their sonship and His, for he was Son in actual fact, but they are sons through him, sons by adoption.”

**Robert Roberts:** “Our friend imagines there was a change in the nature of Adam when he became disobedient. There is no evidence of this whatever and the presumption and evidence are entirely the contrary way. There was a change in Adam’s relation to his Maker, but not in the nature of his organization.”

**Dr.Thomas:** “We dissent from our correspondent’s notion that all creation became corrupt, by which we understand him to mean, constitutionally impregnated with Corruptibility at the Fall. We believe that the change was MORAL not PHYSICAL.”

If the recognition of the true doctrine of alienation and redemption, which is evident in the above quotations had been consistently applied in their interpretations, Christadelphians would not now be facing the world with a jumble of truth and error which make it impossible for them to preach the basic facts of the Gospel, the power of God unto salvation.

You quote in paragraph 36 the exhortation to be found in Hebrews 10:19-24 but you seem to assume Jesus Christ was both the Offering and the High Priest at one and the same time. This is not so. Under the Law of Moses it was necessary for the High Priest to offer for himself in order to make himself acceptable to God before offering for the people. Jesus Christ was already acceptable and in offering Himself it was not for Himself but for us. If He first offered for Himself He would not have been alive to offer for the people! Was the blood of the lamb presented in the Holy of Holies while the lamb was still alive? Of course not. The lamb’s life had been taken never to be given back - before its blood was presented at the altar. Jesus Christ had His life taken by wicked men, and not given back to Him, but it was spirit life He was given at His resurrection and before He entered into Heaven it self, and here He became our High Priest for evermore after the order of Melchisedec.

Dear Brother Hone, early in your article you say “Some of the arguments put forward in these writings are very subtle, and we should all be in a position to be able to discern the unsoundness of the reasoning put

forward, should we be confronted by it at any time.” You are now in that position and we challenge you to prove where we use Scripture in any false way,

Sincerely your brother earnestly contending for the faith, Russell Gregory.

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**COMMENTS by Phil Parry on “The Nature of Christ,” an article by Anthony Hone appearing in the Dawn Magazine, December and January 1995/96, under the heading of “FUNDAMENTALS”:-**

With the many divisions of the Christadelphian Community and on reading Mr Hone’s views in the above article, one wonders what it is that they are divided on, seeing that all seem to be united on the Apostate doctrine and false theories set forth by Dr. Thomas and Robert Roberts concerning Adam’s nature at creation, his sin, and the penalty he incurred. Yet it was necessary for God to provide His Son Jesus as the beginning of a new creation, a new man of the same flesh and blood, but by begetting a life independent and unforfeited to the dominion of Sin under which all Adam’s posterity were sold, being the teaching of Jesus himself and of the Apostles especially Paul, and accepted as the Truth of the Gospel by the Nazarene Fellowship yet rejected by Christadelphians subservient to “The Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith,” in other words “The Robert Roberts formula.”

It is plain to me from the beginning of his article that Mr Hone is not only biased against Nazarene views but ignorant and misinformed on those views and on the plain record of Genesis which supports them.

Paragraph 1. Mr Hone says concerning the nature of Christ, “This subject is a first principle one, it concerns matters on which we were all instructed and which we understood before we were baptized. Yet it has given rise to more controversy than any other.” Who were the instructors Mr Hone? Moses, the Prophets, and Jesus and his Apostles? Or was it the followers of the Roberts formula which accepted the Apostate teaching of changed and condemned nature as a result of Adam’s sin? If, for example, I were to impersonate an immortal soul believer and declare to you or one of your “instructed” that I would not really die but that my soul would live on after death independent of my body, what would be the reaction? No doubt about it, an immediate reference to Genesis describing the creation of Adam and its application to man as he is at the present time, a living soul or natural body of life, yet you quote the Genesis account of what constitutes a living soul in order to counter the false teaching of immortal-soulism in other people. Thus the result is that you must accept that Jesus was of the same corruptible nature at his birth as was Adam at creation and that after he sinned no change of nature took place neither was it in any way necessary.

If you had taken the trouble to read correctly the Genesis account instead of accepting the false views of your instructors who followed the error of Roberts, you would have known that the sentence or penalty for sin was to be by infliction at the time or day in which the Divine decree had been violated.

It is Robert Roberts’s changed view to that of the Apostasy which has caused the greatest error imaginable throughout the history of Christadelphians, for change he did, from the very views he and Dr. Thomas first advocated when they stated, “Our friend imagines there was a change in Adam’s nature when he transgressed. There is no evidence of this whatever, and the presumption and evidence are entirely contrary. There was a change in Adam’s relation to his Maker, but not in the nature of his organisation” - “The Ambassador,” March 1869. “We believe that the change was moral not physical” - Dr. Thomas in “Herald of the Kingdom” page 159.

The leaders and writers of present day “Christadelphia” may try to hide these statements from their younger candidates but the evidence is in print and eternity will not efface the facts.

In effect it is spiritually barren on its failure to understand “Death by creation” and “Death by Sin” - the former of God, and the latter by Adam. The former applicable to human and animal creation in whose nostrils is the breath of life - the latter to all under the legal dominion of Sin and Death who come to that knowledge by enlightenment and have the option of release through Jesus, or choose to remain under it and accept Sins Wages – Death in whatever form. Release from such a position requires no physical change of nature, and this fact is the stumbling block introduced onto the Christadelphian scene by Robert Roberts - a position which Edward Turney sought to rectify in his zeal for truth and the spiritual welfare of his brethren.

Look where you choose in the written works and statements of Edward Turney and nowhere will you find him teaching that Jesus was of a different nature from Adam, or his brethren. It is you, Mr Hone and your instructors, who have and are inventing these misrepresentations of what Edward Turney taught, thus the wrong teaching which you say in your article was the cause of the very first division among the brethren and sisters, and of which you accuse Brother Turney, was in fact attributable to Robert Roberts in 1873.

In 1869 both Dr Thomas and Robert Roberts had supported what E. Turney was contending for in 1873. We give credit for what truth Thomas and Roberts taught, but whether you like it or not we have proved, and it is still being proved, that what 'Light' (which was already in the world) they had in a small measure revived, they subsequently turned into the doctrine of confusion. All due to discarding what they believed in 1869 for a belief in the false doctrine of "condemned nature and natural decay and death" as the penalty for Adam's sin, which is not the teaching of Genesis 2:17 nor of Paul in Romans 5:12.

When Turney used the term "free life" in reference to Jesus he meant that as Adam at creation was free from transgression and therefore not under penalty of death by law (though physically subject to death), even so Jesus, a new man of a new creation yet at birth of the same flesh and blood nature as Adam, was born free of the condemnation and dominion of sin which God legally, not physically, passed upon all men. By sin Adam forfeited his "free life" and right to the title "Son of God." By contrast Jesus was "Son of God" by Divine power, if this were not the case how could the term "New Man" apply? Nevertheless the status "New Man" must be maintained to prove the possibility of sinless conduct, and in addition, lay down his life in the blood free and unforfeited to sin and death, the equivalent life Adam forfeited by transgression of the law, in other words "A free life," which you, Mr Hone, say is a "myth" in your support of Robert Roberts.

You say in paragraph 6 of the emphasis which the Scriptures place upon Christ's descent from Adam, Where do you find this in Scripture? Can you find his descent in the male side of his pedigree or genealogy? You cannot, for God was his Father not Adam or Joseph though his nature was of Mary, the seed of David according to flesh.

You appear to be as confused as those people Jesus questioned "What think ye of Christ, whose son is he? They answered, The Son of David." Jesus confounded them with his reply, "If David by the Spirit calleth him Lord, how then is he his son?"

There is only one male side of Jesus recorded in Scripture and this is in Luke 1:35, where the angel speaks of the power of the Highest overshadowing Mary to produce the Son of God. Of course 'Male' may not be a fitting term for the "Power of the Highest" but I am using it in that sense of explanation.

If you have ever used the Christadelphian Hymn Book of October 1932 preface authorized by C.C. Walker, the hymn 87 commences "The sons of God did rejoice at creation." It goes on to speak of the dominion given to Adam and then the contrast between Adam who lost the dominion and status of Son of God by his transgression, and of Jesus the second man (1 Corinthians 15:45,47) as the words of the hymn express "A New Man comes, angel hosts now adore him; The Son of God, and David's Son; Salvation's horn, he excels all before him; Divine, and with the Father One. The Lord a new thing upon earth createth; The Virgin-born, Emmanuel, The Heir of all things, to men God revealing, The Light of Life, behold him come:- O Witness True, First of God's new creation, Thy power take, which peace accords, and Judge the earth as Messiah and Saviour, The King of Kings and Lord of Lords."

This is not a quotation of all the verses but even the few lines I have quoted lend no support to a Christ as a New Man needing redemption. Your continual reference to flesh and blood in an adverse sense blinds you to the real understanding of the Atoning work of Christ and in fact invalidates your baptism as a means of salvation, for do you not possess the same flesh and blood you had prior to baptism and are therefore in the same state or position of condemnation, or as you term it "Condemned, sin-stricken nature"? This latter is not even a description of being in Adam, for the term "In Adam" is a legal not a physical term, used by Paul and "In Christ" is a term used by Paul of those baptized believers who were free of condemnation, though they were still flesh and blood.

I think paragraph 9 is a subject on which you are very much astray. You violate the teaching of Jesus and of Paul in your statement that Adam did not become corruptible until he disobeyed. Jesus compares

those people of his day as the same nature as Adam before he sinned. See Matthew 19:4-6; also 1 Corinthians 15:45,46.

And what a pity the Creator did not know Adam could not suffer pain nor weakness as you state, when he took the rib from Adam after putting him in a deep sleep! This would have been unnecessary according to your theory; neither would Adam have needed food from the trees for energy to withstand weakness, God having provided them for that purpose.

I think my last article on the teaching of Robert Roberts in his book "The Visible Hand of God," shows the weakness of his dogmatic assumptions and similarly your own.

I am now aware that Brother Russell Gregory has made some comments on your article, so I will not proceed any further with my own, but there is much more I could say or write if you really have the love and respect for the Scriptures more than that handed down by teachers of error and misrepresentation. I have been very outspoken but there is great need of an Elijah, John the Baptist, Jeremiah or one of the old prophets in these days. I hope it is not too late.

Yours in Hope of Life Eternal in The Kingdom, P.Parry.

P.S. Please note, the death Jesus prayed to be delivered from was the crucifixion. He was heard but he was not saved from it. He tasted death for every man, by the Grace of God.