

Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 173

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A Jehovah's Witness wishes to correct a misunderstanding

Mr Holly, whose letter was reported in our C.L.No.169, has written to say he would like to clarify one point made in our March/April C.L. On page 3 we reproduced an article published by D.Wilson of "End Time Ministries" in which he wrote "I know that if you are a Jehovah's Witness you are forbidden to read such as this and must only read what is provided by the Watchtower movement." However, Mr Holly says this is not true and Jehovah's Witnesses are prepared to discuss any religions of the world; also many of their children choose to take religious education at school.

Editorial

Dear Sisters and Brothers and Friends, Loving Greetings.

I do not know where you would have to have been in recent weeks to be unaware of the unsavoury activities of the President of the United States of America. I was glad that I had given up watching the news on television five years ago. I also avoid news reports on the radio and although I have a daily newspaper, I concentrate more on the arts pages, the letters and opinions expressed than I do on the headline news, which is invariably disagreeable. Also a long time ago I heard the playwright Arthur Miller, who after bitter experiences with the press, formed the opinion that they were little interested in fact or truth, and that consequently whenever he picked up a newspaper and read it, he always said to himself "I wonder what really happened today?"

I expect we have learned some of the truth about Clinton, but like the little girl who read a book about snails said "This book tells me more than I want to know about Snails." I dare say this is how most of us feel about the Clinton Story.

However, I read a letter in my newspaper from Bishop Barry Shuckman about Mr Clinton which impressed me greatly. The Bishop unlike so many of his colleagues actually believes in God and His

ultimate power over events; quite obviously he reads the Bible intelligently and I think the Bishop's comments are wise and extremely pertinent in the present circumstances. I was very surprised and pleased to see such a letter appear in the press and I wondered how many readers would appreciate its import. I know that the Editor of the Telegraph, in which the letter appeared, is a Christian. His name is Charles Moore and at the time when the book about Mary Bell by Gita Sereny appeared, he wrote a piece propounding the doctrine of original sin as a partial explanation of Mary Bell's behaviour when a child. I wrote a letter to him to put the truth of the matter to him. I hope he read it but he did not reply.

Back to Mr Clinton, and here is the Bishop's letter reproduced in full:-

“SIR, —People should not read the sordid Starr report without first reading Psalm 51 (“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness...”) and 2 Samuel chapter 12 (“Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house”).

The parallels are remarkable in many ways, though King David's sin was more far-reaching than Bill Clinton's: his adultery led to murder in the cover-up.

None of us should be self-righteous in this matter. The Psalm makes it plain that we are all sinners, not because we sin, but because we are born sinners (Psalm 51:5). It also gives God's verdict on the matter: “that He requires truth in the inward parts” of the human heart. How many pass that test?

Our Lord Jesus Christ made it abundantly clear that where there is genuine repentance “all manner of sins and blasphemies shall be forgiven man” (Mark 3:28). So the all-important question should be asked: “Is the President of the United States repentant? On the surface, it may seem so, but the reality is different. The President is fighting to stay in office and, through his legal advisers, testing the opinion polls for human judgement.”

King David, on the other hand, understood the real problem to be with Almighty God. “Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight: that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest” (Psalm 51:4).

By the sovereign mercy and forgiveness of God alone, David was allowed to remain in office. Similarly, Almighty God will determine the outcome for Mr Clinton, “that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the Kingdoms of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men (Daniel 4:17).”

BISHOP BARRY SHUCKMAN. Cosham, Hants.

In his understanding of Psalm 51:5 obviously the Bishop, in line with most believers, regards verse 5 as proof of the existence of original sin or sin-in-the-flesh as Christadelphians call it. The first clause of the Bishop's sentence, “we are all sinners, not because we sin...” is quite true except that we need to qualify the “all” in this context. For only the enlightened are sinners in the Biblical legal sense. The enlightened may be entirely sinless, in that they obey all the commandments, but enlightenment brings the individual to an awareness of their position as a legally constituted sinner. This is what we mean by “born sinners” the words that the Bishop uses to conclude his sentence explaining Psalm 51:5.

David too, was enlightened and aware of his situation as alienated from God because of Adam's sin. This was his mother's situation as well and surely this is why he wrote as he did in his Psalm. He was not blaming his “sinful flesh” or the “original sin” for his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband. He knew that the fault was his and his alone in allowing himself to succumb to a temptation that he could and should have resisted.

The final verse that the Bishop quotes from Daniel 4:17 has never been more apt than in these days, which we fervently hope are the last days. The basest of men do seem to be in charge of things the world over. Perhaps it has always been so, but until the age of the press and investigative journalism and all the

rest of the paraphernalia devoted to uncovering the covered, we did not hear about it so regularly and in such lurid detail.

As Henry James wrote:- “Evil is insolent and strong: beauty enchanting but rare: goodness very apt to be weak: folly very apt to be defiant: wickedness to carry the day; imbeciles to be in great places, people of sense in small and mankind generally unhappy.”

But it will not always be so for we read in 1 Samuel chapter 2, “He will keep the feet of his saints: and the wicked shall be silent in darkness: for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces: out of heaven shall He thunder upon them.”

Russell, Eileen and I send love to all our readers, Helen Brady

DANIEL

In this exhortation we shall not deal with Daniel’s prophecies. Much has been written and argued about them and probably not fully understood until the Lord’s return. But I think the time has come to consider Daniel as a person, and more, as a man of God.

Three times Daniel has been addressed as a man greatly beloved (Daniel 9:23; 10:11; 10:19) For this reason a little of our time should be well spent in considering what made him so beloved, and to see what we can learn.

The first thing that comes to mind is that he was a man of prayer and acknowledged God in all things. One of his tasks was the interpretation of three dreams to two different rulers. And on all occasions he made it abundantly clear that it was not he, by ‘his own power and wisdom, but God who gave the interpretation.

His first task was especially difficult. He had not only to interpret a dream, but tell the king what the dream was. The king’s astrologers and soothsayers must have had some elementary knowledge of God. They realized the existence of higher power as the only source of such wisdom (Daniel 2:11), But how did Daniel deal with the situation? He and his three companions first prayed to God. And after God revealed to him the dream with the interpretation he thanked God. And let us ask ourselves, do we always thank God after a 3 prayer is answered? Then when he went before the king he first of all acknowledged God as the Giver of all revelations (Daniel 2:27,28) “The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king; but there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days.”

Then follows the well known dream of the great image, and its interpretation. Later, he had another dream to interpret for Nebuchadnezzar, when he became high minded and failed to acknowledge God. His greatness went to his head and he lost his reason for a while.

And his last dream to Belshazzar to interpret the writing on the wall, a phrase which has since become part of our language. On all these occasion he never failed to reveal the source of all wisdom.

Another trait in his character was that the high office which he held under several successive rulers never went to his head, unlike in the case of Nebuchadnezzar who lost his reason over it. But Daniel never got too big for his boots, something which statesmen of our day could well take an example from. In this respect he resembled Samuel, another highly devoted prophet, who never sought gain or advantage for his own benefit. The office which Daniel held was probably equivalent to that of prime minister.

Daniel was a man of prayer, and of supreme trust in God. This he had to demonstrate when Darius, at the instigation of some jealous troublemakers, threw him in the den of lions. It goes to his credit that he kept on praying openly, regardless of the consequences. It put Darius into a nasty quandary. He knew that some

jealous trouble makers were the cause of it, Darius also showed some faith in God, for he said to Daniel (Daniel 6:16) “Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.” But His faith did not go quite far enough to stand up to the trouble makers; be firm and have the courage to say “No.” The fear of making a fool of himself and to be deposed from the throne was the cause of his weakness; a case similar to that of Pilate some five centuries later, who did not really want to crucify our Lord, but lacked courage to stand up to the Pharisees. And how glad Darius must have been when Daniel came out unharmed, and his trust in God vindicated. This event must have taught Darius a lesson which he remembered for the rest of his life.

Another example of Daniel as a man of prayer. We read in chapter 9, verse 20, that he had a personal sin to confess. We are not told what that sin was, but sometimes I wonder whether God, in His wisdom had a purpose in allowing the fact that Daniel had a sin to confess to be recorded. Was there perhaps the danger that successive generations might look on Daniel as a sort of semi-god? To this day many revere people who pretend to receive messages from the supernatural. More so in ancient times when people had great faith in astrologers, crystal gazers and such like. There were plenty of them at Daniel’s time, as we gather from references to them in the book under consideration. And from the point of view of his and subsequent generations, the record of Daniel having sinned might have brought him down to earth a little in man’s estimation.

And then the final divine message, the last verse in the Book of Daniel “For thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.” What an assurance, what a comfort for ageing Daniel, to know he met with God’s approval. And how simple to understand after the many complicated prophecies which Daniel himself sometimes had difficulty to understand. If ever anyone could fall asleep with a peace of mind, Daniel (and later Paul) was one of them-

And what of our position? We have the same assurance in the Scriptures if we do our part and hold fast to the end. But we all must admit that in our daily lives we have a long way to go before we come up to Daniel and other worthies of old. We need God’s mercy to forgive us our faults. But we have our High Priest in heaven through whom we can draw nigh to God with a humble spirit of repentance. Daniel lived before Christ’s ministry. He was unable to bring the animal sacrifices pointing forward to Christ, as the temple was destroyed and he was in captivity with his fellow countrymen. So he is one of those to whom faith was counted for righteousness

We who live in these last days are just about beginning to see prophecy fulfilled, and perhaps soon shall witness events prophesied by Daniel, but not fully understood by him. What a prospect for us to see such events unfold! So let us take Daniel’s life as an example and let us also take to heart what not to do from the experiences of Nebuchadnezzar who took too much credit to himself, and from Darius who did not have the will power to refuse to throw Daniel to the lions. And in these days of lack of interest in Divine matters, let us not be afraid to dare to be a Daniel when necessary and to stand alone.

Brother Leo Dreifuss.

Correspondence concerning the booklet, “Eight Bible Essays”:

Further to our booklet “Eight Bible Essays” which was sent out with our Circular Letter No. 171 it was questioned whether Essay No.4 was correct in stating that there are four births referred to in Scripture. I suggested that the Essay should be left as originally written but with a note saying that most of us see only two births, our natural birth and our spiritual birth.

Brother Phil Parry writes,

“I can appreciate that our late Brother Fred Lea was first associated with the Christadelphians and their aversion to being recipients of the Holy Spirit, and thus on page 12, fourth paragraph down, in repeating the words of Jesus “That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit,” he says, “None of us has been the subject of such a birth.” Then he continues, “Jesus Himself has been the subject of such a birth...”

I would emphasize here that this is not what Scripture describes as birth of the Spirit - the author is rather describing Jesus as the subject of "anastasis", or "a standing again" - in Jesus' case in incorruptible nature. (See 1 Corinthians 15:20,23,51 & 52). All must first qualify for this, as Jesus said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter the Kingdom of God." This qualifies incorruptible resurrection, or change. A pity the author had not differentiated between "born again" and "resurrection;" a fact he has already shown plainly on page 10 of Essay No. 3. As Peter declares 1 Peter 1:22,23, "Seeing that ye have purified yourselves in obeying the truth through the spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

Born of water and of spirit is a combination - it is an act of belief and faith by works. The water immersion is not a cleansing of the outward appearance but is the answer of a good conscience toward God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ - that by it we might walk in newness of life. That which is born of the flesh remains flesh literally and spiritually unless it is regenerated in mind by the Spirit Word of God which liveth and abideth forever. Water of itself profits nothing. John 1:11-14, "Born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Given of Jesus power to become the sons of God, speaks of now, not pro-resurrectional. See also 1 John 3:1,2.

And Sister Evelyn Linggood writes:-

"Enclosed is an article I did a long time ago on a subject that currently is occupying our minds brought about by Brother Lea's article "Ye Must Be Born Again" in which he states that there are four births and you say there are two. As you will see by my article we certainly believe there are three. What Brother Lea calls moral birth is really divine begettal and that is not a birth. This birth occurs when we are born of the Spirit when Christ comes."

It is not surprising we find diverse views as we see between Sister Evelyn, Brother Phil and our late brother Fred Lea, for the difficulty arises because the Greek word "gennao" is used for both "to beget" and "to bring forth." The sense in which it is meant is usually seen by the context as we see for instance in the genealogy of Matthew 1:1-16 where the word "gennao" is translated "begat" many times. But then in verse 16 "gennao" is translated "born" where we read, "Mary of whom was born Jesus" which again has to be the correct meaning. However, turning to 1 John 5:18 we see "gennao" translated by both "born" and "begotten" - "We know that whosoever is born (gennao) of God sinneth not but he that is begotten (gennao) of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." Exactly the same is found in verse 1 of this same chapter. We find the same confusion with the Greek "anagennao," for in 1 Peter 1:3 we read, "according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again (anagennao) unto a lively hope," while in verse 23 we read, "Being born again (anagennao) not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the word of God." So how are we to know which is the correct word to use every time?

It seems to me one way to resolve this is to consider, not the number of "births" involved but the number of "lives." If there are three "births" then it follows that there must be three "lives," and if we can only see two "lives" then there can only be two "births" involved. Perhaps others would like to add their thoughts on this subject. - Russell.

Sister Evelyn's article follows:-

BORN AGAIN

Many find difficulty in reconciling the plain statements of Scriptures pointing to the fact that believers have Eternal Life as a present possession, such as John 3:36, 6:47, 6:54, 17:3, 1 John 3:15, 5:11, 5:13, 5:20, and others which declare it to be a future attainment; this seeming inconsistency can best be comprehended by allowing the natural order of the birth process to enlighten us to that which is spiritual-

In John 3:5, Jesus tells Nicodemus that “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.” This is usually taken to mean a belief and baptism, but a close look at the following verse - “that which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the spirit is spirit” - suggests literally of the latter as of the former, we do know that Baptism, preceded by understanding and belief of the Gospel, as well as a change of nature are necessary before we can inherit the future Kingdom of God, seeing that flesh and blood cannot do so, it would seem then that in verse 5 Jesus is speaking of a beginning and ending of a birth process and in as much as in the natural order we have no power to bring about our own begetting so it is in the spiritual order.

James 1:18 reads “Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures.” Christ Himself became the First-fruit or First-born from the dead - Revelation 1:5, having first been “born of the flesh” of Mary, though literally begotten by the Holy Spirit, and so (the only begotten in that sense) of God, though God has many spiritually begotten sons-

1 Peter 1:3-5 and 23, the word here translated “born” (anagennao) in the Authorized Version is “begotten” in the original. See Emphatic Diaglott and Revised Version, as in other references, where conversion is alluded to. John 1:13 (born, gennao, of the will of God), 1 John 2:29 (born, gennao, of God), 3:9 (no one born, gennao, of God commits sin), 4:7 (He who loves is born, gennao, of God), 5:1 (everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born, gennao, of God), 5:4 (Whatever is born, gennao, of God), 5:18 (anyone born of God does not sin), whereas when actual birth is alluded to as in John 3:3-8 (born anew; born of the flesh; born of the spirit; born again - gennao in each case), the word is properly translated “born.” The A.V. of the Bible is misleading here as it is in some other places.

The period of gestation in the natural order which is a time of development of the new life as yet hidden in the womb, but bringing hope and expectation that in the fullness of time a normal human being will come forth, so we may see a counterpart of that which is spiritual, if the Seed-word regarding Christ be planted in “good ground” it will develop as we “grow in grace and knowledge as comprehended in such expressions as “Christ in us as a hope of glory,” “The hidden man of the heart,” “The inward man,” “we have the mind of Christ,” or a mind that understands Christ. “Christ dwells in our hearts by faith.” Our probation is a time of trial and testing, and chastisement for our own good, but if we have the true faith and keep it to the end our spirit birth is sure, just as the unborn foetus in the womb in the natural order is the child of its parents, so believers are now children of God by faith in Christ. The believer is now, during this probationary period working out his own salvation by keeping faith in Him whatever opposition and trial he may have to face, “looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith,” who for the joy set before him (of bringing many sons unto glory) endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God as High Priest and Mediator on behalf of the Saints in the forgiveness of sins repented of, to purify a people for Himself, zealous of good works, those of proving our faith as examples in Abraham’s offering up of Isaac (James 2:21-24), thus signifying his belief that God would provide Himself a Lamb, as Jesus said “Abraham rejoiced to see my day, he saw it and was glad;” also the good works of loving one’s neighbour as oneself as seen in James 2:1-20, the whole briefly comprehended in loving God first and neighbour as self; these works extending into the future as the Bride of Christ an help “meet” or “fit” for Him in His future government of the world.

It is evident that as John records in chapter 12 verses 23 and 24 that Jesus could have been glorified without dying (just as those saints will be who are alive at His coming), but He would have been alone, as Adam, the type would have been without an help. He therefore became that “grain of wheat” who willingly died in order to bring forth much fruit, the many sons to Life Eternal, God had declared regarding Adam that “it was not good for man to dwell alone.” The New Testament reveals him to be as type of Christ so the likeness between the “deep sleep” required for the creation of a bride for Adam which must have caused some loss of blood from his side, for we read that God “closed up the flesh instead thereof” indicating that there was a literal severing of the flesh for the extraction of the rib, so with the antitype Christ the “second Adam” whose side was literally pierced and His Life blood shed to make it possible for His spiritual bride, the church, to be formed.

But to return to John 3, in answer to Nicodemus’ question, “How can these things be?” (I.e. in what way can a man be born when he is old, etc. and “from above?”). Jesus predicted that it would be made possible through the Cross revealing the incident in Numbers 21:9, of Moses “lifting up” the brass image of a

serpent in the wilderness that the sinners of Israel may look thereon in faith and live as a type of Himself bearing the judgment due to Adam and his seed, He Himself being “seed of the woman,” holy from birth, harmless, undefiled and separate (by spiritual begettal) from sinners (in Adam) not being begotten by the will of the flesh but by the will of God. He was born free and unblemished in every way until “lifted up” on the Cross where the sin of the world was laid upon Him and He suffered the judicial death due to sinners.

He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, with His stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53). How sad therefore it is to see this great act of self-sacrificing love explained in such terms as a “renunciation of His body prone by nature to sin;” He had to submit to a “ceremonial condemnation of His nature, a cutting off of fleshly desires” etc. Human nature was never condemned, but sin, which is transgression of God’s law. Compare the Image of Numbers 21:9 with the likeness of Romans 8:3, “For what the law could not do in that it (the law) was weak through the flesh (being legally dead in Adamic bondage), God did by sending His own Son (flesh belonging to God) in the likeness of Sin’s flesh (or flesh belonging to Sin, the slave owner), and for (or by an offering for) sin, condemned sin (while He was) in the flesh.” Jesus came in flesh that He might taste death (judicial) for every man, thus rendering powerless the Devil or sin personified as a slave owner, by Himself suffering the death due to sinners. He set them free, Hebrews 2:14 -18, compare also with 2 Corinthians 5:21 for He (God) hath made Him (who knew no sin) to be a sin offering for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him and if we are truly in Christ by belief and obedience, His righteousness is imputed to us just as Adam’s sin was imputed to us when we learned by enlightenment of our own estranged position from God on account of being in Adam’s loins when he sinned. We must therefore in the symbol of baptism, die unto sin which Christ did literally for us, rising from the water to a newness, of life, a new creation of God. Those “born out of water” are pictured as newborn babes growing up into spiritual adulthood in this life but the Spirit Birth (incorruptibility) still awaits Christ’s coming for the faithful who will rise to meet Him “in the air,” those who sleep to wake in “His likeness” and the living “changed” in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.

Sister Evelyn Linggood

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Letter from Sister Rene and Brother Phil Parry

Our grateful thanks for the Circular Letter. Sister Helen’s introduction was greatly appreciated and in contrast with Ron Coleman’s linguistic theories our members would much rather receive words of exhortation and encouragement. I myself feel as Brother John in Australia that it has come to be a waste of time to write any more to Ron Coleman seeing that he continually avoids the important issue the Jews could not grasp in the case of Jesus, “Whence hath this man these things (Mark 6:2), “...having never learned? Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine but His that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.” (John 7:15-17).

“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.” (John 6:44,45).

The common fishermen disciples of Jesus were not linguistics but on the day of Pentecost they spoke more languages than Ron Coleman can ever achieve. God can reveal Himself and His doctrine to men who desire Truth in whatever circumstances they may be. My own history in search for unadulterated doctrine has proved it, as can no doubt be said for many. Apart from the doctrine he received from His Father, Jesus learned much from His observations of things around Him and made use of them in His parables, so much so that we can all marvel. Those who will not accept His sacrificial, substitutionary death for sin, do not understand Paul’s teaching on the subject of sin and death, yet in addressing the Corinthian converts he reminds them of the first thing he received by revelation from Jesus Himself, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. Here Paul recognizes that in the loins of Adam when he sinned that sin is used in the plural sense for all, Jew and Gentile, though as we know Isaiah 53 is used primarily in the context of the Jews but Matthew 20:28 applies to both Jews and Gentiles and as Paul says in Romans 3:9 “For we have before proved, both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin.” He repeats this in Galatians 3:22,

“The scripture hath concluded all under sin that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.”

Isaiah 53 concerns the personal sins of Jews under Moses. Paul will not allow any to get away from the fact that all in the loins of Adam when he sinned are constituted sinners but are not held responsible until they become enlightened though they owe their very existence to the sacrifice of Christ who paid voluntarily with His life, the debt to the law Adam transgressed.

Please note, Mr Coleman, Paul is expounding the authority of the spirit’s teaching in the Scriptures and we can trust Paul to present it in language we can all rely on and understand if we desire to. And you will not find him preaching anything but the substitutionary death of Christ; no other death could be a sacrifice for others.

To the Galatians Paul stated “But I certify you brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after men. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Was not this revelation found in Matthew 20:28 in the very words of Jesus? And as a result of the revelation and his symbolic inflicted death by baptism into Christ’s literal death, did not Paul exclaim with gratitude, “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God.” (Galatians 2:20,21). Why should any attempt such a task to their own destruction?

Yours in Jesus Christ and in Hope of .the Glory of God,

Phil and Rene Parry.

Brother Jelfs writes:-

Dear brother Russell, Many thanks for sending the C/Letters. I greatly appreciate the many booklets which are very stimulating. Not to detract from anyone’s contribution to these writings I liked A.L.Wilson’s way of putting things and grammatical comments.

On another matter, or rather aspect of the subject I was thinking recently, reflecting on the words of Romans 7:7, “What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not!” In a way, flesh is complementary to law, I think, equally necessary to the formation and testing of character, formed by God from the “clay” for that purpose. Equally then we could perhaps ask “What shall we say of our flesh or human nature? Is the flesh sin? Certainly not!” Or, as another version puts it “May it not be coming to that!” Commenting on Hebrews 2:14 Andrew Wilson says, “Were the children condemned because they were flesh? Contemptible logic, since this is exactly what God made them.” (“Jesus At The Bar” page 11).

Looking forward to future issues. Again thanks to you and all contributors.

With regards and love in the Lord. Stanley Jelfs.

WHAT THINK YE?

It is well known by a few of us that in the area of Gloucestershire there abides a man who considers himself a man of God who believes in and reckons himself to be consistent in the wisdom and understanding of the Word of God recorded in the Bible. This man makes a great issue of the importance of faith, to which we are in agreement.

Therefore, knowing his views, I am forced to ask the question, "From what part in the history of Genesis does he begin to explain the entry of faith into the world of humanity?"

For example; he is adamant that Adam showed no faith in God's commandment, either in his disobedience or afterwards, but in his view, was a partaker at 930 years of age of the sentence pronounced in Genesis 2:17.

We must therefore conclude that he regards Adam as having no hope. For in Hebrews 11:1 we are told, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (See also Romans 8:24,25).

Seeing then that Adam had no hope or evidence of a better future other than hard labour and return to dust, how did his two sons, Cain and Abel obtain their knowledge which caused them to bring offerings to the Lord, the one diverse from the other? And how and where in Genesis does it record the reason for this difference in the offerings? Can our man of God point to Genesis and show where it states the reason why "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh"? (Hebrews 11:4).

Can he point to any divine commandment in Genesis given specifically to Abel for obedience, as was given to Adam? I think not. Abel was outside the garden where there was no prohibited tree of the knowledge of good and evil, so that he could not sin by that means. We must therefore, in the absence of a recorded commandment, consider what made Abel righteous, and the answer is found to be "by grace."

We should all be ready and willing to accept logical reasoning from the Holy Scriptures. So, what do we learn from Cain's offering? God did not accept it. Why? Because Cain lacked faith, as stated in Hebrews 11:4; and as the Angel of God stated, "If thou doest well shalt not thou be accepted, and if not, sin lieth at the door."

Here then was a position that if Adam had not taught his sons that by his own disobedience they had been constituted sinners and must obtain a covering through God's institution of the typical and sacrificial lamb in recognition of the shedding of blood as was so in his own case, they would still be under the law of sin and death (a legal position), from which freedom was possible by faith, but that faith must be exhibited by personal association with what God provided for that purpose. This is known as Redemption at a price, the price being an unforfeited free life by bloodshedding.

We concede there must have been some code of moral conduct which also demanded understanding and faith in God, even from Adam to Abraham, but I am afraid our sincere man of God will look in vain for any commandments from God recorded up to the time of Noah apart from the latter being told to build an Ark for the saving of his household. God's commandments are just and good but without Redemption are useless for the obtaining of eternal life through His Gracious Gift, of which we will now consider.

Forget atheists, evolutionists and wishful thinking immortal-soulists, - the Genesis record of the creation of Adam is that God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth also created Adam from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils and lungs the breath of life and he became a living soul dependent for continuance of life on food and oxygen. He was capable of decay and death when God put him in the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it, so that death as we know it in the natural order of things is the result of our decaying nature.

In the preview of Genesis 1:26-28 it records God the Creator giving man the dominion over the fish of the sea, the fowl of the air, and every living thing that moveth upon the earth. We are told by the Apostle Paul that this state of things was figurative of that greater state to come inasmuch as Adam failed to be crowned with glory and honour and reign over all things put under him (Hebrews 2:5-10). Nevertheless, it would be wrong to say that Adam was not reigning in a provisional state of probation and that because his was a nature capable of decay and death, that therefore death was reigning. Such a theory would nullify Scripture and also the very teaching of Paul on the subject in Romans 5:12, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin..."

It is absolutely clear that the common death of Adam and all created species did not come about by one man but by the appointment of the Creator. To believe otherwise is to believe in evolution, how then can Darwin be criticized? How could the braking of a Divine Law to Adam cause a change in his nature which was already existent? Such biblical athletes think they can break the rules of Divine wisdom and logical reasoning, and spring from the legal to the physical just when it suits their purpose or their inability to read and understand what God has caused to be written for our enlightenment.

Sin was not in the world at Creation but death was. But this was not therefore the "Death by sin" Paul speaks of in Romans 5:12 for he says, "And so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: for until the law (Moses) sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come."

Now if Paul was speaking of the common natural death, why did he stop at Moses? It is obvious he was speaking in the legal sense of a sentence of death or termination of life as a penalty for sin which is transgression of God's law. Paul is actually saying that the Sin of Adam (The Sin of the world), and the penalty due, was passed upon all men though they had not sinned personally, - so what Sin is he speaking of that was in the world and the death associated with it? The answer is in Romans 5:19, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

If many were made sinners by Adam, how could Paul say that there were some who had not sinned from Adam to Moses? And if, as some believe, this making of sinners means that an element and a bias toward disobedience was injected into man's flesh, then alternatively this would be the same treatment in being made righteous, the latter being impossible in the physical sense. For it is an abstract state of "Grace."

It is plain to the enlightened sons and daughters of God that Paul is teaching that God concluded all under Adam's sin - the Sin of the world, and the Death by Sin (shedding of blood), a legal penalty removable by faith, typically and anti-typically; all were constituted sinners and all can be constituted righteous without any physical change in both cases.

Now perhaps it is plain why Paul stated about death reigning from Adam to Moses even over them who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression. Though had they not sinned personally they were concluded under the Law of Sin and Death, but there must have been a way out of this position for God is just and does not condemn the children for Adam's sin. We must therefore conclude that they were shown the way and must accept it by faith. Enoch walked with God but Genesis does not tell us in what way, yet Hebrews 11; 5 speaks of him pleasing God by his faith, and the Apostle Jude confirms him as a prophet speaking of the Lord's coming to execute judgement, yet we have no record of Enoch in the King James Bible but Jude had access to this information so why not more information about Adam than what is accessible to us?

Coming now to Moses; Israel is delivered from bondage by the shedding of blood but the first-born of Egypt die (Exodus 11 and 12). From that time on Israel were under the blood of the covenant which God had enjoined unto them, through the law given to Moses, a law under which they could choose continuance of life or inflicted death according to personal conduct. Nevertheless there remained the Edenic Law of sin and death which the blood of bulls and goats could not take away under the Mosaic Law, for Paul informs the Romans in chapter 5 verse 20 concerning the offence of Adam that the law entered that the offence might abound. In other words the law of itself could not give eternal life by works insomuch as the Lamb of God (Jesus Christ) had not yet appeared to take away the offence of Adam (The Sin, singular, of the world) for under the law there was a remembrance again made of sins every year (Hebrews 10:1-3).

Paul therefore in his appraisal of what the Mosaic Law could not do on account of all, Jew and Gentile being concluded in God's wisdom under sin (the sin of the world), God did through His beloved Son. Hence the proclamation of John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." Paul therefore in the light of this continues his letter, "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 5:20-21).

At this point I must put the very important question, not only to our sincere professing man of God, but to all who hold the view that natural decay and resulting death is the penalty passed upon Adam and all his posterity. If, as Paul teaches, sin has reigned unto death and righteousness is reigning in their places, to what death but that of Jesus can he be making reference? And does not Romans chapter 6 answer this for you? But if you insist that Paul is referring to sin reigning unto natural death, then it is clear that when you die sin is still reigning over you, you are therefore not in Christ, - not under Grace, - you are not freed from Sin but still under its dominion. What a prospect!

In conclusion and in respect of all sincere seekers of The Truth as Jesus and His Apostles taught it for salvation and eternal life, my feelings are like those expressed by Paul in Romans 10:1-4, - My hearts desire and prayer to God is that they might be saved for I feel they have a zeal for God but in some of the things I have written they lack the wisdom and understanding I have at times been exhorted to get and which God has seen fit to give me though I feel unworthy.

Therefore if anyone derives spiritual benefit from what I have written, I seek no justification or glory for myself but Praise and Thanks to Him who created all things and gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish but have eternal life.

“Straight is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto Life and few there be that find it.”
“Seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.” Wise words from the Lord Jesus. Amen.

Brother Phil Parry

BE YE HOLY

“And Moses said unto Aaron, This is that which the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified.” (Leviticus 10:3).

Evidently this was demanded of a covenanted people, and the Apostle Peter takes up the same theme when addressing the New Covenant believers where the same process of holiness and sanctification applied when he writes, “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:13-16).

There is a warning and serious advice in Hebrews 12:14-29 in respect of holiness and retaining it in body, soul and spirit, which covers every attribute of conduct pleasing to God as stated in verse 14, “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”

This is a striking statement when it is well known that a certain religious community asserts that the faithful and unfaithful of their numbers will stand before Christ the Lord at His Judgment Seat, therefore those who are void of holiness would have to see Him. We know there is a scriptural answer to this and would welcome any suggestions apart from our own which we will omit at present.

Though as true believers in the fact Christ’s death was a substitute for the inflicted death Adam merited through breach of Divine Law and as a legal sentence passed upon all men, but remittable through enlightenment and faith in Christ’s death, - we must not view holiness as an option. Although holiness is a gift on the basis of God’s sanctifying work, it is also a matter of growth and it is a goal. We must pursue holiness (Hebrews 12:14). Holiness is indeed a requirement. Jesus uttered the same advice in similar language and meaning to His disciple. “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” (Matthew 5:48). It was not impossible, as Jesus proved and He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. But first, “Ye must be born of water and spirit,” a combination of the One Baptism as Paul explains it to the Corinthians in Christ, “For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether

we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.” (1 Corinthians 12:13, 14). This is the foundation upon which our holiness can commence and grow. If any man be in Christ he is a new creature, says Paul, so we must strive to grow in grace and holiness unto the fullness and the stature of the man Christ Jesus.

To remind ourselves of His attributes, God declared unto Moses in The Mount “The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth... Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty,” (Exodus 34:6,7)).

It would be well at this juncture to read and consider the words of Joshua to Israel in chapter 24, verses 19 to 27 (also Daniel 9:9-14); “They kept not God’s covenant which was dedicated with blood”. (Hebrews 9:16-20). We also who profess to be under the New Covenant in Christ must acknowledge that it is only by His shed blood, which speaks better things than the blood of bulls and goats (though many deny it), though it is clear that His flesh saw no corruption but came from the tomb energized by Spirit. So if His flesh was condemned we are to assume that His blood was faulty and the life in it.

But we are considering the subject of Holiness not that of defilement of the flesh which Jesus Himself refuted in His doctrine - Not that which goeth, or entereth, into a man defiles him but that which proceeds from the heart, or mind in opposition to the will of God. That man is either cultivating holiness to the Lord or he is not. People quote indiscriminately Jeremiah 17:9 and ignore vs. 5 & 10, also Matthew 12:34,35, and vs. 36 & 37 are ignored, “By thy words condemned;” not for possession of a body of flesh capable of dying.

Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit - it entered their bodies but it did not harm or alter their flesh, but it defiled their conscience causing words to be uttered, neither could the fruit affect their corruptible nature as living souls dependent on food, water and oxygen, As Jesus said, the latter “does not defile the man.” Was it not the breaking of the Creator’s Law which defiled their conscience? Is it not then unthinkable that a Holy God who created them capable of keeping His Law should condemn their flesh? His own work, “Fearfully and wonderfully made,” by passing on them a sentence of defilement of His own workmanship - condemnation and inclination to sin transmissible to posterity; when it is stated in Scripture, “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shall surely die”?

Where in the Holy Word is such false teaching found? And how could baptism remove such a fixation-in-the-flesh when that implied condemned-nature remains physically the same?

But we Brethren and Sisters have not so learned of Christ. We have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: and not by the precepts of men. We have put off the former conversation (citizenship), the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts (mind of the flesh), and renewed in the Spirit of our mind; we have put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Having died symbolically into Christ’s death and risen to newness of life in Him, our literal bodies having been bought with His blood, we take heed to Paul’s words of exhortation to the Roman believers in like position, “I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1).

When Israel were about to be delivered from the bondage of Egypt, and the blood- sprinkled lintel and door-posts of their houses ensured their safety from death, did Moses tell them that a male lamb of the first year with a blemished body would be acceptable for obtaining the blood required? They knew what, was required for such to be holy and acceptable to God. If they had regarded God’s sanctification and Holiness so lightly, the Angel of Death would have known it and destroyed accordingly.

The Apostle declares, these things were written for our admonition and learning upon whom is come the end of the Age. How serious then are God’s words, “By ye holy, for I am holy.”!

Can any who have been truly sanctified, count the blood wherewith they have been sanctified an unholy thing? If they did it would not alter the redeeming and sanctifying blood of Jesus, but it would rescind the

relationship to the Son of God and the blood of the covenant, thus despising the Spirit of Grace (Hebrews chapter 10).

We would recommend continuing of the reading of Romans chapter 12 as being also an exhortation to ourselves, not to be content that we have the Truth and are in covenant relationship with God and our Lord Jesus, but to cause what light we have to shine according as our minds have been illuminated by the Spirit Word and the gifts of the Spirit which is Holy.

When the apostle appeals to the believers at Rome to yield their bodies to God as a “reasonable service,” he specifies that the sacrifice is to be “living... holy, (and) acceptable” (Romans 12:1) So many professing Christians imagine that they can dedicate to God lives that are defiled and defeated, but the teaching of this verse makes it quite clear that such a sacrifice is unacceptable. We are to yield or present our members as servants of righteousness commensurate with a life of holiness.

The second attestation of holiness is “Fruitfulness unto God.” But now having been made free from sin, and having become slaves of God - you have your fruit to holiness.

Obedience to God must precede our offering to God. We have examples in Cain and Able. Cain knew what was required but he abode not in the Truth. Abel abode in the Truth, and its defence cost him his continued natural existence which he acknowledged was through the typical lamb slain for his parents, which lamb indeed foreshadowed Christ Jesus, the greater example of holiness who also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. When did He do this? The answer is, when He was alive in the garden of Gethsemane, “when in the days of his flesh when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that He feared; for though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered” (Hebrews 5:7,8). An angel strengthened Him, yet He continued to pray. God strengthens no one under penalty for sin; or mortality.

Any who read the account in Luke 22 verses 41 to 44 would understand that Jesus was praying to be saved from the death of Calvary if there was possibly another way other than by the shedding of His blood. “If it be possible Father let this cup pass from me,” We are told “All things are possible with God.” Yes, Jesus could have asked of His Father twelve legions of angels to prevent His death, but what then of all from the beginning of the world if Christ had not willingly died and been raised from the dead? They would be yet in their sins, as Paul declares of those who had obtained a good report through faith in the covenants God had based on the Sacrifice of His only Begotten Son. (John 3:16,17).

As true believers in Christ we should cultivate fruitfulness in our worship to the Father. Writing to the Hebrews the Apostle says, “Let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His Name.” (Hebrews 13:15). Jesus revealed that they that worship His Father must do so in spirit and in truth and that the Father is seeking such to worship Him. We said earlier that now being made free from sin and become servants to God; we have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. “Fruit unto holiness” (Romans 6:22) is a reference to the Old Testament idea of bringing the first-fruits of the land as an act of worship and thanksgiving to God. That which was required physically then is what God desires spiritually now. We must see to it however, that our sacrifice of praise is the fruit of obedience and holiness.

Jesus said “I am the true vine and my Father is the husbandman. Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.” (John 15:1-8). Such fruitfulness in Christian character glorifies God because it is the exhibition of the very life of Christ. Paul speaks of it as “the fruit of the Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” (Galatians 5:22- 23).

There is no greater argument for the reality of Christian experience than a Christ-like character.

It is a true fact that physical holiness of Jesus preceded the holiness of His conduct and resulting character. Speaking for the former, the Angel declared to the Virgin Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing (babe of flesh and blood) which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Here indeed was holiness to the Lord without developed character as indeed was also the case with all the male first-born of husband and wife of Israel, but in the case of Jesus there was a difference, Jesus was not by a human father though His physical nature was the same. There could therefore be nothing wrong with the physical nature of first-born of husband and wife nor of the first-born of God through Mary; both were equivalent to Adam's nature when he was placed in the Garden of Eden. But in respect of the law of redemption under the law given to Moses (Exodus 13:13) (Numbers 3:46) there were conditions which did not apply to Jesus, for to belong to God He needed no redemption neither do we read of it taking place after His birth.

And what did Mary's cousin Elizabeth utter with a loud voice by the Holy Ghost? I repeat, "A loud voice." Have you yet heard that loud voice, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb"? Is that fruit not holy to the Lord? And was not this holy child the firstfruit unto God of Mary's womb? And did He not retain His holiness to the end and lay down His holy unforfeited life willingly and by His resurrection of incorruptibility become the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20).

If in any way He fitted not this description, our faith is vain and we are yet in our Adamic imputed federal Sin and also our own personal sins. So as Paul says, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

Addressing His disciples Jesus said, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:16). Writing to the Romans Paul expressed his longing that he might have some fruit among them also, "just as among the other Gentiles." (Romans 1:13). We might ask ourselves, "Is our life one of fruitfulness in service? Is there evidence around us that we have been chosen and ordained to bring forth lasting fruit?" If our answer is in the negative, then we know nothing of practical holiness in our life. What the world needs is a Spiritual Temple made up of men and women of One Faith who manifest in their daily living a quality of life which characterized our Lord Jesus Christ.

In this corrupt age such holiness and righteousness is most unpopular even among those who profess to be Christians, but Jesus gives hope to those who are prepared to go forth unto Him without the camp bearing His reproach. "Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for behold your reward is great: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets."

Many have witnessed to this persecution in the cause of the Truth of God and His Son and have not lived to see the fruits of their labours. We can name a few in our own day, nevertheless they being dead their written testimony speaks to those who have ears to hear.

So we have seen what we mean by the definition, impartation, and attestation of holiness. May we be determined to be holy, even as God is holy, for without such holiness "no one will see the Lord." (Hebrews 12:14). "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." (Hebrews 13:15,16).

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, make you perfect through the blood of the everlasting covenant in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Love to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in Sincerity,

Brethren Geoff Hampton and Phil Parry.

We now finalize the Correspondence between Brother Ron Coleman and Brother John Stevenson, commencing with extracts from Ron Coleman's letter dated 6th July 1998:-

Dear Brother John, Thank you for your letter of 5th June which however I find some difficulty in replying to. It is rather like having to write to someone who firmly believes that there are no such things as electrons. This might seem to be a far-fetched comparison but there is a connection. The work in laboratories on X-rays round the turn of the 19th century which led to the discovery of the electron took place at the time when Ferdinand de Saussure was working on the nature of language, work which led to modern linguistics.

Just as the discovery of the electron showed that the centuries-old idea that atoms were the smallest particles in the universe was wrong, and thus opened the door to the immense world of atomic physics, so de Saussure's work led to the complete re-appraisal of language and how it works. In short it said that dictionaries were descriptive, not prescriptive, and thus rejected your view that words generally "have a proper, standard, generally accepted meaning." I cannot understand how you can quote the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary in support of your belief that the function of a dictionary is "to define the precise standard meaning (singular) of a word in general use." Take for example the noun "house." The SOED gives 19 different primary meanings, all in current use, and then goes on to list many other special meanings (mostly in combinations with other words). Dates for the origin of particular meanings are given, but that does not imply that the words are obsolete today. It is in fact a dictionary of current usage. It shows how words are actually used at present...

...An interesting commentary on the change that has taken place in linguistics in my lifetime is given by "Fowler's Modern English Usage" (1926). I chose a copy of the original edition in 1930 as a school prize when I was fifteen. In course of time the Gowers revision appeared in the early fifties and I bought a copy because, apart from general interest, Sir David Gowers had been given the job of bringing Civil Service English up to date which he did in his book "Plain Words." (I was in the Customs and Excise Department).

Two years ago a second revision appeared (still titled Fowler's' Modern English Usage} edited by Robert Burchfield, which takes full account of the progress in linguistics. Burchfield was born, interestingly enough, in Wanganui, New Zealand, the home of a Christadelphian near-namesake of yours, John Stevenson, with whom I have had extensive correspondence over the years. Burchfield, one of the most distinguished lexicographers of today (he was Chief Editor of the Oxford Dictionaries for 13 years), rejects completely the idea that language is "prescriptive." He wonders why "the original edition of this schoolmasterly quixotic, idiosyncratic and somewhat vulnerable book, retained its hold on the imagination of all but professional linguistic scholars for so long." He hopes however that it will remain in print another 70 years because "it shows what it was like to be linguistically aware before a new race of synchronic linguistic giants appeared." The wide range of modern linguistics is indicated by there being examples of usage in more than a thousand languages in David Crystal's "Encyclopaedia of Language."

To come now to your next point, the difference in meaning between "sin" and "crime." The two words reflect the different areas to which they relate. Crime is primarily "an act or omission prohibited and punished by law." Sin relates primarily to "offences against religious or moral principles." Many sins therefore may not be crimes and to a lesser degree some crimes are not sins. To use an illustration of your own, legally it is a crime to exceed the speed limit on the roads. If it was genuinely unintentional; or inadvertent or dictated by an emergency, it would probably not be a sin. Actually "crime" is too strong a word for many unlawful deeds; "offence" would be better, say, for travelling on a train without a ticket or exceeding a parking time limit. As I was writing this I saw on television the case of a daughter who gave her mother an overdose of drugs and suffocated her because she was suffering greatly and wanted to die. This was a crime but I think most of us would not regard it as a sin. She was prosecuted but discharged without penalty by the judge because he was convinced by the evidence that she had done it out of love for her mother.

We can see this principle at work in the story in John 8 of the woman taken in adultery. This was a crime in Jewish law, as well as a sin. But Jesus forces her accusers to drop the criminal charge, while he retains it as a sin.

So “stealing” would not be a “crime” unless circumstances brought it within the jurisdiction of the proper authority. I was the Treasurer of our ecclesia (now closed) and I would have regarded it as a sin of stealing for me to take some of the funds for my own private use. It would not however have been a crime unless the ecclesia reported it to the authorities which of course they would not have done.

Next, the book whose authors “define” (“describe” would be a better word) certain celestial bodies as “worlds.” They are doing something which you say doesn’t happen – they are using a word in a new sense! Moving on, there is no possibility of anyone with a knowledge of Greek translating “kosmos” as “planet earth” because Greek used a different word to describe the physical world - *ge* (as in “geography”) which occurs about 190 times in the NT (see Vine - Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words). “Planet earth” would only have confused them because planets to them were wandering stars which didn’t keep fixed positions in the sky - the word means “wanderer” - and bore no relation to the earth.

How you imagine John 1:9,10 has anything to do with planets defeats me, for “kosmos” never had any such connection. You may be unaware that the United Bible Societies have a series of “Helps for Translators” which deal, verse by verse, with translations into Common Language versions (such as English “Good News Bible”), The volume on John (which runs to 680 pages) devotes 2 pages of small type to these two verses. It says that “kosmos” is used in John in three different senses: (1) the created order (11:9, 5:24, 21:35). (2) “the world of mankind” and (3) those people who are aligned with the power of evil in opposition to God. Its translation of verse 10 is: “The Word was in the world, and though God made the world through him, yet the world did not recognize him” which is less Trinitarian than the RSV or the NIV.

Your idea that Trinitarians would seize on any argument, no matter how far-fetched, to support their belief is mistaken. As A.N.Wilson said: “The majority of New Testament scholars in this century have doubted that the claim that Jesus was God is to be found in the New Testament.” (Letter in *The Spectator* 7th March 1987). As long as thirteen years ago I wrote a series of articles in *Endeavour* in which I pointed out that two chapters in *The Present-day Christological debate* (Klaas Runia. IVP 1984) were headed respectively “Chalcedon abandoned: Roman Catholic theologians” and “Chalcedon abandoned: Protestant theologians.” (“Chalcedon” was the Church Council of 451 which finally formulated the doctrine of the Trinity).

Coming now to my articles on the Atonement, I fear that you have misunderstood my main point. It is true that Christadelphians say that they reject all substitutionary beliefs, but I argued that their alternative explanation was just another substitutionary one. Essentially it says that Jesus had to die in order to show how God regarded sinful nature and, like Ernest Brady, I used A.D.Norris’s “The Devil hung there dead” (which excited much vituperation from Brady) as my target. The Nazarene explanation is yet another substitutionary one, openly avowed to be so. For example:

“Thus God provided in His Son, the one all-sufficient sacrifice for sin and purchased back to Himself all those who, alienated from Him by sin put on the name of Christ by faith. Jesus, the Heir to all creation and the perfect example of man made in the Divine image, in carrying out His Father’s plan of salvation by laying down His life as our substitute, upheld supreme law by meeting its claim and at the same time revealed the love and mercy which initiated it.” (“Ernest Brady to A.H.Nicholls”).

This goes back to Edward Turney’s “The Two Sons of God.” On page 6 he argues that the coats of skins came from sacrificed animals which were a type of Christ. Actually of course the animals could not have been sacrificed in the literal sense because a sacrifice can only be offered by the offender as a token of his repentance. A real sacrifice would have had to be made by Adam and Eve; God killing animals was in no way a sacrifice. Leaving this on one side, on page 57 Edward Turney makes the necessary development for his view by arguing that under the law the sins of the people were transferred to the sacrificial victim by the High Priest. “So also of Christ, the great sacrifice, the sinless victim, for the time being, is regarded as the sin, because the sins have been laid on Him, the iniquities of us all... and by His death they are taken

away.” Turney regarded this as a legal fiction; “The sins and iniquities having been transferred to Him, they became His, not ours... But the transfer of sins to Christ did not constitute Him really a sinner.”

This strikes me as being just as artificial an explanation as the orthodox Christadelphian one. You attempt to differentiate between the two by claiming that Christadelphians “mistakenly believe that all substitutionary explanations declare that an angry vengeful God is punishing the innocent Saviour in order to let guilty sinners go free.” Where is your evidence for this statement? I have differences enough with “orthodox Christadelphians” but here I must come to their defence. They do not think of God as angry or “punishing” Jesus but that God’s righteousness required Him to show how He regards sinful human nature, even though that nature dwelt in a man who had resisted all its temptations. Clause 6 of the B.A.S.F. says nothing about God being angry: “That God, in His kindness, conceived the plan of restoration which, without setting aside His Just and necessary law of sin and death, should ultimately rescue the race from destruction and people the earth with sinless immortals.” There are enough objections to the idea that God had to show what He felt about sin by allowing His Son to be crucified merely because He was possessed of a sinful human nature, without inventing artificial ones. I do not defend that belief and in my article said at length why I rejected it. The Nazarene view is a case of the pot calling the kettle black. The article showed how the belief sprang from a misinterpretation of Romans 8:3 and that a proper understanding of that verse led to a rejection of both the Roberts and the Turney views.

On the question of whether man is a fallen being I find your picture unconvincing. It is that of a society which, even if it is not truly Christian, has been informed by the Christian ethic and, in addition, by such good influences as those of previous civilizations as the Greek and Roman. To see what man is really like when left to himself you have to look at places like the Sudan where the Moslem racial majority in the north have persecuted the south and waged war against them for at least 30 years with the result we have seen on television recently. Or in Rwanda the fighting between the Tutsis and the Hutus. Or the Chinese invasion of Tibet. Or the Serbs and minorities in their country, currently the Albanians in Kosovo.

But even in Christian countries there is a majority who for one reason or another do not measure up to your standards, whose whole lives are governed by selfishness and a desire for wealth, amusement and ease. And even the religious are often motivated by hatred and bigotry, as witness the burning of eight Roman Catholic churches by the Presbyterians in Northern Ireland last week. Only too frequently many give way to the temptations of lust, greed and anger. As regards greed, in spite of the maxim “to give is happier than to get” the passion to possess is one of the strongest in man, and society is built on an acquisitive basis. I think we have to be realists as regards human nature.

Sincerely your brother, Ron Coleman.

Reply by John Stevenson - dated 24th July 1998.

Dear Brother Ron, Your expertise and scholarship in the English language leaves me standing. But I am a born sceptic, and will try to make a good answer to your letter of 6th July. I might be able to score a few points in the realms of science. In your first paragraph you made a slight mistake when you said the work in laboratories on X-rays led to the discovery of the electron. In fact it was cathode rays, which were studied by various scientists from the mid eighteen-fifties, but with improved apparatus and better vacuums in the nineties, led a German to discover X-rays in 1895, and an Englishman to discover the electron in 1897. I could not comprehend any rational person not believing in the electron, but there are more modern “scientific” concepts that I do decline to believe in. First in the so-called “black holes” which are a logical and scientific impossibility, although they are superb material for science fiction. Some astronomers are still searching for black holes, although most admit it would be impossible to identify one, even if it actually existed.

Secondly, “Quarks,” despite the theoretical concepts that seem to support their existence. Many experts seem to forget that sub-atomic particles bear no comparison with our ordinary every-day concept of particles, e.g. dust. Thirdly, although the missing energy of beta-rays needs explanation, I cannot accept without reservation the standard description of the neutrino, despite the alleged evidence of its existence. Of course it is possible that I could be wrong on these topics, but I promise you that I could discuss them rationally

with anyone disposed to think carefully about them, which is more than you could expect from someone who does not believe in electrons.

During the latter half of the last century, three false sciences, or preferably false religions were established. Evolution was set forth by Charles Darwin; Communism by Karl Marx; and Psycho-analysis for repressed memories by Sigmund Freud, I prefer to regard them as religions because they lack support of scientific evidence, and are widely accepted on faith, often very blind faith. Also around the turn of the century a tremendous change took place in the world of art. Concert music became un-musical; oil paintings became unreal and inartistic, then poetry became muddled and ugly, and literature delighted in ghastly abominations. So not all progress and development over those decades has been enlightenment and profit. I do not doubt that modern linguistics is a genuine science, but I'm not sure why I feel that it is not vital to plain speech. To me, a house is a house, pure and simple, and the numerous metaphorical or semi-metaphorical variations listed are easily understood from the context by the wit of the human mind, without reference to dictionaries. Likewise a "chip" is a fragment separated from a larger mass, whether it be a chip of wood or potato or an integrated circuit board; these are not "separate meanings" of the word "chip."

I accept all your points about the finer meanings of words such as crime and offence. I realize that the term "planet earth" would have been incomprehensible to the ancient Greeks, because they understood planets to be simply wandering stars, but the point I was making is that many evangelical Trinitarians these days insist that the planets and everything in the Universe were created by God-the-Father through the pre-existent God-the-Son, presumably using the power of God-the-Holy-Ghost. I personally have never imagined that the Greek "cosmos" referred to planets, but Trinitarians with an axe to grind interpret "through whom the worlds were made" as "through whom the planets were created." If you doubt this, you should look through popular books on sale in Christian Bookshops. It may well be true, as you say, that New Testament Scholars of this century have discarded the claim that Jesus is God (but haven't they also discarded the resurrection and virgin birth?), but their cogitations have not yet reached the mainline evangelical Christians, nor are they likely to.

Hopefully I have not misunderstood your main point about the Atonement. I thoroughly agree with your statement that Christadelphians say that they reject all substitutionary beliefs, yet their alternative explanation was just another substitutionary one, and that the Nazarene explanation is yet another substitutionary one, openly avowed to be so. If the sinless Jesus suffered the wages of Sin in order that we might be rescued from the wages of Sin so that we could receive the free gift of God, that is substitution undeniably, pure and straightforward. In my last letter I explained carefully the vital difference between the Nazarene concept of Jesus' substitutionary sacrifice and the popular concept of substitution. It is not a case of God punishing Jesus for our sins; on the contrary, it is a case of God sending His beloved Son to be a sacrifice to Diabolos, or King Sin, to buy us back from bondage to King Sin. The servants of Diabolos literally executed the sacrifice; not God. And this was with the willing participation and concurrence of Jesus, in order to please His Father, and in order to save us whom He loved while we were yet sinners.

This explanation of the Atonement has been frequently criticized as being too "commercial", like a deal with a pawnbroker, but I personally see it as perfectly appropriate that God should ordain such a sensitive and profound treaty in a systematic, methodical, and decorous procedure, with all the i's dotted and all the t's crossed, consistent with the perfection of the divine Majesty. At the same time I acknowledge that there is far more to the Atonement than a hypothetical negotiation with a figurative devil. We need to understand, not just intellectually, but through the depths of our heart and mind and soul and strength, that the horrific murder of the sinless Son of God by us humans when we were in bondage to Sin, is the consequence and repercussion of Sin as a way of life. And to understand likewise that God sanctioned that ghastly crime in order to convict us of sin, to call us to repentance, and to redeem us from bondage to sin, because He loved us. The endless love and compassion of Jesus toward us was to demonstrate the same characteristic in God, and His appeals for repentance demonstrated that He and His Father dearly desired us to be saved. The whole postulate is fruitless unless our emotional; and ethical evaluations are convincingly implicated. Then we will become dedicated to righteousness. I do not see this as an artificial explanation, for the very cogent reason that it is consistent with Scripture. And I mean the whole of Scripture, from beginning to end of the Bible.

In your third last paragraph, I think you misunderstood me when I said that Christadelphians mistakenly believe that all substitutionary explanations declare that an angry vengeful God is punishing the innocent Saviour, in order to let guilty sinners go free. I did not say or imply that Christadelphians believe that God is vengeful. Therefore the Nazarene view is not a case of the pot calling the kettle black, Nazarene Fellowship literature has dealt with Romans 8:3 exhaustively, and I believe that a careful consideration of our arguments would show that it is we who have the “proper understanding.”

In your penultimate paragraph, I feel that you misunderstood my contention that very many humans have a lot of good in them. I did not intend to imply that therefore society is good. It is obviously not, as witnessed by human behaviour in the various war zones around the world that you referred to. Very many people, who could be superficially be described as good, can be easily swayed and misled by evil leaders. My argument was that there is the capacity for good in most people, if only they would commit their hearts and minds to consistent righteousness, as God has always instructed, and as Jesus made crystal clear in His ministry. It is easy to be good when we are secure and satisfied, but God requires that we aim at perfect righteousness. I wished to make the point that it is not beyond human capability to aim at perfect righteousness. We are all sold under sin through Adam and through our own sins, but God has opened a way of redemption.

There are too many differences in our philosophies and outlooks for us to ever see eye to eye. Your letters have been very informative and interesting, but I fear that our controversy might be at a stalemate. Fellowship in the Kingdom should be engrossing, because we all have individual convictions, no thinkers have identical ideologies.

Very best wishes to you and all yours, sincerely in the service of the Master, John Stevenson.

A copy of the last Circular Letter was sent to Brother Ron Coleman with an invitation to reply to our scriptural understanding. He responded as follows:-

23 August 1998
Dear Brother Russell

I think the most revealing remark in your criticisms of me in CL 172 is your epigram “Amateurs built the Ark, professionals built the Titanic. We all know which we would have chosen to sail in”. No doubt we do, now that we are aware of what happened! I would point out however that the ark was not designed by amateurs but by God, as you can verify from Genesis chapter 6. If it was designed by God it is only reasonable to suppose that He guided the construction. On the other hand what caused the “Titanic” to sink wasn’t faulty construction or design; it was reckless navigation. So much for the contention that it is the amateurs who get it right if you can’t get a simple thing like this right what are your chances as regards more complex matters?

Your second point is as easily refuted. “Jesus did not choose his twelve disciples from the educated circles of the Scribes and Pharisees but of more humble men.” You thus class the scholars of today with the Scribes and Pharisees. But the latter were Jews whose whole tradition and outlook was foreign to the ideas of Jesus. To-day’s scholars are Christians who believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, who are trying to understand and interpret his teaching, and are thus completely different from the educated Jews of Jesus day.

On the other hand the “uneducated” disciples were taught directly by Christ and were chosen for their willingness to follow him and learn from his teaching. Three of them (Matthew, Peter and John) left writings of great merit. By no stretch of the imagination can they be described as uneducated. And Paul, the Pharisee, was a towering genius. You of course claim to be inspired (“amateurs dependent on prayer and taught of God”)” and say in effect, “I know I’m right. God has told me so”. One despairs in the face of such self-congratulation.

There are however a number of more serious points that I must take up. You take exception to my query “Were sins before the time of Christ only forgiven provisionally” but make no attempt to give an

answer. Instead you accuse me intemperately of “making the word of God of non-effect.” It is you who are guilty of this. There are numerous examples of unconditional and complete forgiveness in the Old Testament. The Psalmist says “As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.” (103:12). Isaiah speaks of God casting the prophet’s sins behind his back (38:17). In Jeremiah 31:34 God says “I will remember their sins no more”. Micah speaks of God casting sins into the depths of the sea (7:19). The Psalmist says again “Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sins.” Such vivid language emphasises the completeness of God’s forgiveness. The only alternative to accepting the truth of these, and many other similar passages, is to say that forgiveness is withheld until the life and death of Christ. Like the “wastebasket” on my computer into which I can put texts to be deleted from the memory which are held there until the “Empty Wastebasket” command is pressed? That was the point of my question which you haven’t attempted to answer.

When we come to the New Testament we get further proof from the Lord’s Prayer that you are wrong. “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us.” Obviously the two acts are contemporaneous since Jesus continued “for if ye forgive men their trespasses your Heavenly Father will also forgive you.”

When Jesus healed the paralytic who was let down through the roof, and the scribes questioned his authority to forgive sins, he replied “that you may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins” and healed the man immediately (Mark 2:3-11). Similarly in the case of the woman in Simon the Pharisee’s house (Luke 7), “Her sins which are many are forgiven; for she loved much.”

All this springs from transactional or objective theories of the atonement. On the other hand moral or subjective theories say that the revelation of the love of God through the death of Jesus is something that moves sinners to genuine repentance. And it is this which allows God to forgive, not the removal of some external restraint, which in any event would be contrary to our whole conception of God. The idea that sins can only be forgiven after the shedding of blood is your own invention and contrary to Scripture.

Death by crucifixion was not caused by loss of blood, but from the shock of pain, exhaustion dehydration and the difficulty of breathing. The sword-thrust took place after death. It is of course true that the writer to the Hebrews said “and almost all things are by the law purged with blood and without shedding of blood there is no remission” but he is here speaking of the law, and even so with some qualification. There are other means of receiving forgiveness prescribed elsewhere in the Old Testament, such as prayer (Daniel 9:19), fasting (Joel 2:12) and penitence (Psalms 51:17). The prophets demanded penitence and promised forgiveness, but they did not regard blood sacrifice as the only, or even as a desirable means of receiving divine absolution. The Psalmist goes so far as to say “You have not desired sacrifice or offering, you have not demanded whole-offerings or purifying offerings, you have given me receptive ears, (40:6, REB). There is no explanation of sacrifice in the Old Testament; its efficacy is simply assumed and the writer to the Hebrews was content with this.

As regards Edward Turney’s beliefs, Sister Helen accused me of falsehood when I said that he believed that the divine parentage of Jesus on his Father’s side enabled him to reject the temptation to sin. The words I quoted (page 20 of *The Two Sons of God*) were these: “But though created, [Adam] was not a begotten son.” However, of Christ: “One of the peculiarities [of John’s Gospel] is the frequency with which we are told that Jesus did not His own will but the will of Him that sent Him. What we mean by God’s will is the law which God gave to Jesus for His guidance”. What else can this mean but that Jesus was begotten and therefore had God’s will for guidance: Adam was created and did not?

Similarly Ernest Brady said of Jesus that his was “a new life direct from Heaven and not a continuation of the Adam-life.” The significance is that he was “a man born outside the state of captivity explained in Paragraph III”. (Para VII of “The Gospel that is Never Preached” 1979.) It could perhaps be argued that my words were a misconception (although I do not agree that they were) but they were certainly not falsehood. I have however received no apology although Sister Helen did manage to write to me on a trivial point about Andrew Wilson and Fred Pearce. The reason for my mistake over these was that I had mentioned Andrew Wilson, the author of a comprehensive account of the “Renunciationist” division who is still living, in a letter to John Stevenson who in his reply mentioned your Andrew Wilson of yesteryear without identifying him.

Which brings me to your lack of courtesy in publishing my letters to John Stevenson without seeking my permission. You do not seem to be aware that it is a breach of good manners to publish correspondence with a third party without consent. But then on top of this you suppressed my latest reply to John, which on any rules about disputes should have been printed since he had initiated the correspondence. You say (in your letter) that my reply “Hardly covers the points he raised and leaves a lot to be desired”. This is your point of view but on any standards of fairness should have been left to readers to decide. Your behaviour would be deplored “in the world”. You publish this correspondence without authority and then refuse to include my answer to the questions put to me!

I did of course agree (under threat!) to the publication of the correspondence with Sister Helen, but here again there was lack of courtesy. You neither told me that it had been published nor did you send me a copy of any comments you made, or say whether or not there had been a reply to my second letter to her. Another lack of courtesy is your alteration (on three occasions) of “Pelagius” to “Pelagious”, which is quite wrong, and makes me seem ignorant. On the question of whether “condemned sin in the flesh” is a metaphor I quoted the opinion of three scholars that this was so, and a fourth in a letter to John Stevenson. None of these have any interest in our present controversy and therefore their opinion is unprejudiced. There is the further fact that forensic imagery is very frequent in Scripture, particularly in the gospel of John, and this could well be just another example. The attraction of this interpretation is that it removes the notorious difficulty of understanding the verse without introducing any further difficulties. You produce no contrary argument: all you do is contradict it on your own (prejudiced) authority. Your alternative interpretation is that Jesus condemned sin in the flesh by not sinning. The hollowness of this is shown, for example, by saying that a person condemns lying by speaking the truth, or condemns blasphemy by speaking reverently about God.

Another indication of your living in a world of your own is your deprecatory comment about metaphor. A metaphor is an implicit comparison, contrasted with an explicit comparison (a simile) and the Bible is full of metaphors and similes and their cousins such as parables. “The Lord is my shepherd” is a metaphor and the reason why metaphor is used is because it has a more powerful effect than “The Lord is like a shepherd to me.” When the comparison is overt we realise instinctively that comparison does not imply identity. But the same is true for metaphor in spite of the “is”, as in “The Lord is my shepherd”. A proper realisation of this saves us from having to find significance in a shepherd shearing his sheep or slaughtering them, and so we can concentrate on the idea of God’s care for David. Exactly the same is true of the metaphor of the sacrifice of Christ.

You do not appreciate that you are setting your authority above that of Jesus himself when you deplore metaphor. “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like?” asked Jesus. “What parable shall we use to explain it? Jesus preached his message to the people, using many such parables as these” (Mark 4:30-33) Parables are comparisons, sometimes the meaning is overt, sometimes it is only implied. So in its simplest form metaphor is the transfer of a name from its original referent to another. This is usually accompanied by a corresponding transference of feeling or attitude and it is this which makes it such an effective way to convey moral ideas. Deep in the heart of mankind there is an instinctive aversion to dirt, disease and death and in most languages the words which convey this abhorrence are used metaphorically to express a similar loathing for sin. A multitude of similar examples of metaphor can be found in Scripture. The hearts of Joshua’s troops turned to water (Joshua 7:5). Belshazzar was weighed and found to be substandard (Daniel 5:27). Jeremiah described his heartache in metaphor:” Why do I keep on suffering? Why are my wounds incurable? Why won’t they heal?” (Jeremiah 15:18) The Psalmist’s trouble was like drowning in a cataract “Here in exile my heart is breaking ... He has sent waves of sorrow over my soul [metaphor]; chaos roars at me like a flood [simile]. (Psalm 42:17,18). Manna tasted like honeycake (Exodus 16:31), but the decrees of God are sweeter than a honeycomb, as too are the kisses of a bride (Psalm 19:10; Song 4:11)

You seem to think that this doesn’t apply to sacrifice and therefore it is belittling to describe Christ’s death as not a literal sacrifice. But if it is not a metaphor the brutal fact is that God literally sacrificed His own Son! The death of Christ was not a literal sacrifice, but a criminal execution, regarded by the Scribes and Pharisees as a political necessity and by his followers as a miscarriage of justice. It was not offered by a priest. No repentance accompanied it - Jesus had not sinned. Therefore a sacrifice could not be on his own account. But because he chose to regard it as being like a sacrifice, and by his words at the Last Supper taught his disciples to do so, he transformed its tragedy into something he could offer to God which would

help Him in carrying out His purpose. Do you believe that the bread was (and is) literally Christ's body and the wine literally his blood, as the Roman Catholics do?

The second metaphor that I dwelt on in my article was that of the law court. You seem unaware of the amount of legal metaphor there is in the Bible. Often God is the judge who condemns the wicked and upholds the cause of the weak and helpless. (1 Sam. 24:15; Ps.9:4; 43:1; 140:12; Lam. 3:58; Mic. 7:9) The sentences passed in a human court may be reversed in God's court of appeal (Prov. 22:22-23). But sometimes instead God appears in court as advocate, the guardian of orphans (Prov. 23:11); or as defending counsel pleading Israel's cause against her aggressors (Ps. 119:154; Isa. 50:8-9; 51:22; Jer. 50:34; 51:36). On other occasions God himself is the litigant, pressing his case against injustice (Ps. 103:9), against the gods of Babylon (Isa. 41:21; 43:2:9), against all nations (Jer. 25:9), and against rebellious Israel (Ps. 103:9; Isa. 3:13; Heb. 2:9; Hos.4:1-4).

Job constantly returns to the idea that his troubles are a lawsuit between himself and God: he demands that God should state the grounds of his complaint (10:2), rebukes his friends for thinking that God's case needs the support of their dishonest arguments (13:6-8), laments that he cannot meet God face to face and settle with him out of court (23:3-6), takes a solemn oath of innocence (31:5-40). And he finally insists that his accuser ought to have put the indictment in writing. In the ancient courts the aim of the litigant was not to convince a judge or a jury, but to convince his adversary to acknowledge his defeat, and this Job does when God's voice has questioned him out of the whirlwind (40:4).

There are literally scores of similar systems of metaphor in the Bible but you and Sister Helen speak scathingly of metaphor as though it were something inferior and to be disregarded in spite of Jesus habitual use of parables. This however is not the only instance of your sitting in judgment on Scripture. You say "it is quite wrong to suppose that alienation has made our natures error-prone and distorted". So Jesus was mistaken when he said "But those things which precede out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man. For out of the heart precede evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man." (Mat.15:18-20). And in Romans itself we have Paul declaring "They are all gone out of the way, they have together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, not one (3:12). And again "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." (7:23).

Yet you say that Paul does not talk of condemnation of our flesh - "Once we can see this fact then the idea of sin being an element in the flesh is seen to be foolishness. It is adding to Scripture a doctrine foreign to the gospel. Indeed the notion that sin can dwell in our literal flesh is as stupid as to imagine there microbe sized men dwelling in our flesh and swimming about in every drop of blood in our beings." - You say this despite Paul's declaration "It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." (7:18)

I have never encountered a non-swimmer so disposed to dive into deep water as you. To begin with 1 Peter 4:6, on which you based your preposterous argument, is regarded as one of the most difficult in the Epistle to understand. Kelly, in his commentary says "this is a very obscure statement which has perplexed commentators." Barclay in his "Daily Study Bible" says "This very difficult passage ends with a very difficult verse, ... No fully satisfactory meaning has ever been found for this verse." Translators generally regard "flesh" as non literal.

If you turn to standard reference books (such as Vine's New Testament Words) you will see that Paul uses "flesh" (sarx) in at least ten different ways. In only two is he referring to literal flesh; all the others are metaphors such as: (1) mankind; (2) Jesus in his earthly life; (3) the weaker element in human nature: (4) the lower and temporary element in the Christian; (5) the externals of life; (6) the natural attainments of men. (These are all accompanied by Scriptural references.) So, the great majority of Paul's references to flesh are metaphors meaning the weaker element in human nature, the natural attainments of men, and the outward and seeming as contrasted with the spirit, and so on.

William Barclay in his *The Mind of St Paul* describes the difference that Christ makes when he is accepted as Saviour. This is not some miraculous event, brought about by the literal blood of Christ, but by a recognition of his teaching and his love as a result of contemplating his life and death. All the instincts, the

passions, the emotions, the desires which were the raw material of sin when they were controlled by our own human power, become the raw material of goodness when controlled by Christ.

What Paul has in mind when he speaks of the flesh is that the body with all its instincts, mental, emotional and physical, is the bridgehead where sin can launch its attack with the greatest prospect of success. That is why Paul can speak of the body of sin (Romans 6:6); the body of this death (Romans 7:24). That is why the body is dead because of sin (Romans 8:10), and why it is the body of our humiliation (Philippians 3:21)

When Paul spoke of the flesh he was thinking simply in terms of universal human experience. The body is capable of, and meant for, the highest and the greatest and the purest things; yet empirically and in actual practice the body is the seat of the passions and emotions which lead to sin, and which give sin its opportunity.

It is here that we gain our clue to the whole matter. We began by quoting 2 Corinthians 10:3 “We walk in the flesh (en sarki) but we do not war after the flesh (katasarka).” En sarki, in the flesh, we must be; kafasarka, after the flesh we need not be. (p 153)

You resort to sarcasm when faced with the established fact that criminal tendencies can be genetically inherited. In addition to “microbe sized men” you say “It may come as a surprise to Ron Coleman but one cannot know that one is on the point of proving anything”. This was a remark (about inherited tendencies to alcoholism) made by me in passing when I wrote the article five years ago. It and much else has in fact been confirmed, as shown for example in the 1996 report “Genetics of criminal and anti-social behaviour” (New York), noticed in the “Times” of 24th January 1996.

The difficulty in such research is that it is difficult to distinguish between heredity and up-bringing as factors pre-disposing to criminal behaviour. But I did cover this point adequately in my article. “So even if it be granted for the sake of argument that Adam did not bequeath a genetic taint to posterity, he did bequeath something else — the beginnings of a society which is corrupt and alienated from God. Whether it be due to nature or nurture, or both together, we are the victims of “original sin”. But we are not entirely in chains, we are still free beings within limits.” (p 11 of CL 172). Helen Brady dismissed Hans Eysenck as “a crackpot”. She is obviously unaware that this (Jewish) distinguished Professor Emeritus of Psychology in London University, is also the author of “Decline and Fall of the Freudian Empire” (1985) and so could hardly, by this token, be thought to be a crackpot.

Leaving on one side the question of genetic inheritance (and who can fail to have observed that some people from childhood have a pleasant personality and others a quarrelsome one) it cannot be gainsaid that to some extent we are moulded by our surrounding circumstances. There was a charming little incident that illustrates this in a letter to the “Times” a couple of days ago. It read as follows: “Sir, More years ago than I care to remember my second son, having observed his one-armed father dealing daily with his neckwear, proceeded to tie his school tie (letter July 31) with one hand and his teeth. He seemed surprised when I told him he could use both hands.”

Sincerely your brother, Ron Coleman.

* * *

Reply to Brother Ron Coleman:

Dear Brother Ron, First of all I must apologize to you for not using a little discretion when publishing the correspondence between yourself and Brother John Stevenson; your reference to personalities was no concern of our readers and I ought to have left it out. I am sorry, Ron. The rest of the correspondence was of concern and interest to us and was published for the benefit of our readers. Of interest because we see a Christadelphian rejecting portions of the B.A.S.F. which we also object to, and of concern because you put something else in its place which we see is perhaps no better. We feel it is right that we should endeavour to show why.

Regarding the suppression of your latest reply to John which you say I refused to publish is somewhat inaccurate as I was unaware of your letter until John sent it to me for publication some time after the last Circular Letter was sent out. You will find extracts from it and John's reply to you printed elsewhere in this Circular Letter.

Sorry too about the miss-spelling of Pelagius. It was my careless mistake.

You follow the view of Robert Roberts and so many other Christadelphians in supposing one needs a prolonged spiritual education in order to understand the Atonement; this is a claim which, by the grace of God, we have found to be false and misleading. The explanation of the Atonement is simple; indeed, so simple it seems to us that few can accept it for that very reason and would rather look for something more complex. That is the problem we face - having to undo so many and varied complex arguments and show where they are at fault. It is a never ending task but one we undertake willingly for the love of our Creator and our Lord Jesus Christ, and so in this reply I shall endeavour to show why the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the condemnation of sin in the flesh and many of the legal aspects of the reconciliation of man to God are not metaphors but so many are literal facts.

Having considered just about every aspect and argument concerning events in Eden and preferring to believe Adam and Eve were literal people and not metaphors, we see that they were spared when the animal(s) were slain to provide a covering for their sin, that is, their transgression of divine law. They did not on that occasion kill the animal themselves; nevertheless they realized that through the death of the animal(s) their own lives had been spared. Blood had been shed but it was not theirs, with the result that they were again on probation for eternal life. The reason for the sacrifice was explained to them through demonstration. It was a covering provided by God; it was also a type of Christ as indicated to the Serpent.

With Cain and Abel we see that an offering had to be killed by man. Faith was called for in order for the offering to bring them into (or keep them in) a covenant relationship with their Creator, again so that they could continue in natural life with hope of eternal life. Here too, in the slaying of the animal, we see a type of Christ who was to take away the sin of the world and thereby bring the faithful into a covenant relationship with His Father.

The Passover Lamb was slain by direction of God to spare the first-born from death, thus marking out a people for His Name. This required an act of faith. No blood was sprinkled on the door-posts and lintels in Egypt and the first-born died. The explanation of this sacrifice was again through demonstration. Where there was no faith in God the first-born perished. Where there was faith, there was salvation - they were the people of God "through the blood of the covenant." Once more we see a type of Christ in this sacrifice - God's First-born who gave Himself to mark out a people for God by bringing them into a covenant relationship.

Under the Law of Moses animal sacrifices were ordained in order to show that sin ends in death. These sacrifices were slain by the priests or the high-priest in order that sin should be forgiven. Jesus Christ was the anti-type of these sacrifices - the sins of the people resulted in His death. Upon resurrection He became the High Priest for those in covenant relationship with His Father to forgive the sins of all who ask of Him.

The many times God forgave the people of Israel without mention of the shedding of blood does not mean it was not required for it was always necessary for them to return to the Law of Moses which required the sacrifices for sin by the shedding of blood; while in the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us" is conditional upon the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ. This forgiveness restores full relationship to Him and leads to eternal life for those in Christ.

The explanation of sacrifice in the Old Testament is seen by demonstration. This is the way God explains many things to us in Scripture, and closely allied to demonstration we have illustration, hence the parables of Jesus (which were also used to conceal meaning).

God did not require any shedding of blood in sacrifice when He forgave the people of Ninevah at the preaching of Jonah, but neither did He offer them anything beyond their present life. The principle we see is

that while forgiveness of sins is necessary for our eternal Salvation it does not follow that forgiveness is eternal Salvation. We need also to be in covenant relationship with our Creator and this is only possible through the death of Jesus Christ. Therefore forgiveness which is needed to keep the faithful in covenant relationship with God has been dependant upon the sacrifice of the Son of God from the time of Adam and Eve.

You say I made no attempt to give an answer to your question, "Were sins before the time of Christ only forgiven provisionally?" I answered this by saying that Salvation came by Jesus Christ. It is a simple answer but effective, as you will see from the above. Would any of the faithful men of old such as those we read of in Hebrews 11 have a place in the coming Kingdom if Jesus Christ had not died on Calvary? But all this theorizing is academic because God, knowing the end from the beginning knew His Son would complete the task asked of Him, and could forgive people before the time of Christ with all certainty, though it is often expressed in the Old Testament by saying that their sins were covered over, not taken away. With this Circular Letter I am redistributing a small booklet based on an article I wrote when disfellowshipped from Erdington ecclesia about ten years ago. This booklet, "Why Jesus Christ Chose To Die," further illustrates the covering-over of sins until Jesus Christ took them away.

You state that Christ's death was not due to the shedding of His blood because the sword thrust was after He had died. You cannot be certain of this. Although pronounced dead it may still have been possible to revive Him if taken down from the Cross and His wounds tended. I suggest that this was known to the soldiers and therefore, before He was taken down they pierced His side and thus shed His blood to make resuscitation impossible.

You write that "moral or subjective theories (of the Atonement) say that the revelation of the love of God through the death of Jesus is something which moves sinners to genuine repentance." We certainly agree with this and add that it is as much the love of Jesus Christ also, for He showed such willingness to die for us well knowing the dreadful cruelty and pain He was to endure. But it is a mistake to rule out the "transactional or objective theories of the Atonement;" they are not contrary to the whole conception of God. Both are legal matters. God's laws for us are essentially a moral code of conduct which makes the legal and moral aspects of man's relationship with God inseparable.

The writer to the Hebrews tells us that "without the shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22) and in this respect he is writing of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who having "entered in once into the Holy Place" (verse 12) through shedding His own blood "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (verse 26). All this is legal transaction. "Sin is transgression of law" (1 John 3:4) and therefore a legal matter. Forgiveness of sin is therefore also a legal matter and for Jesus Christ "To put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" must also be a legal matter. One cannot help but see forgiveness through the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ as a legal transaction giving us the opportunity of eternal life through faith and obedience. In seeing the unity of the legal and moral aspects we do not and must not lessen our appreciation of the Love of God and of Jesus Christ for us.

Turning now to your accusation regarding Edward Turney's teaching that "Therefore Jesus'... divine parentage on His Father side enabled Him, the second Adam, to reject consistently and completely the temptation to sin" and this we insisted was a falsehood for it was not Edward Turney's teaching but that of Robert Roberts. Now you still claim to be right and quote from Edward Turney's book "The Two Sons of God" page 20, saying, "What else can this mean but that Jesus Christ was begotten and therefore had God's will for guidance: Adam was created and did not?"

For the benefit of our readers I quote from "The Two Sons of God, page 20, so that they can see for themselves where you contradict the words of Edward Turney and for which Sister Helen Brady and I have taken you to task for misrepresentation:-

"We are viewing Adam and Jesus, for the present, simply in the relation of type and antitype, as sons of God; and thus far it appears the resemblance is very close. Both receive their life and law direct from the Deity; there is neither difference in character, nor difference in nature. Adam, in the period during which we are now considering him, displayed the glory of his heavenly Father; he obeyed His will; he was endowed with His wisdom; he was a living, tangible reflex of God.

But though a created, he was not a begotten son; the reason for this dissimilarity wilt appear as we proceed.

The Gospel of John is remarkable for its wide variation in style from that of the other three; and one of its peculiarities is the frequency with which we are told that Jesus did not His own will but the will of Him that sent Him. There is one observation upon this which every thoughtful reader will, probably, make for himself. The statement seems to imply very clearly that Jesus had a will of His own, and that that will would, if followed out, have been contrary to the will of God. What we mean by God's will is the law which God gave to Jesus for His guidance. It is written that "He heard and learned of the Father." By the will of Jesus we mean His natural inclinations as a man. It is recorded that He was tempted in all things like His brethren; and that He suffered, being tempted,

The will of the flesh unrestrained is at variance with the will of God. When checked and guided by the Divine mind, man reflects his Maker..."

In further support of your contention you quote from the writings of Ernest Brady, paragraph VII of "The Gospel That Is Never Preached":- "a new life direct from Heaven and not a continuation of the Adam-life. The significance is that he was a man born outside the state of captivity explained in Paragraph III." Certainly your quote is accurate but not your deduction, so I quote this paragraph in full:-

"Born of a woman He came into the world as a child like the rest of us, but He was a new creation of life, the same corruptible flesh and blood but begotten by the Holy Spirit, a new life direct from Heaven and not a continuation of the Adam-life. The significance of this is that He was a man born outside the state of captivity explained above in Paragraph III and therefore His life was His own to start with, and during His trials and temptations He was sinless so that He was never under the dominion of sin. This point about Jesus having His life in His own possession seems difficult for some people to grasp but it is really very simple and it is the only possible explanation of why Jesus was God's Son and why He alone could save us. He said that He came to give His life a ransom for many. The original Greek word, LUTRON (Matthew 20:28) means a price paid, and this price was His life; therefore it had to be His own to give. The apostle Paul says that God sent forth His Son to redeem them that were under the law (Galatians 4:5) and this word EXAGORAZO means to acquire out of the forum for a price; so again, this is how God redeemed us, by sending His own Son into the world to buy us back to Himself. It is of course a figurative transaction, because a life cannot be paid TO anybody, but it is a very real purchase because it was completed by the literal pouring out of His life in the blood which was shed upon the Cross, a life which He did not get back because He was raised in the Spirit. The difference between the life that Jesus had as the Son of God and the life that we have as descendants of Adam is a legal one, not a difference in quality but of origin and possession. This is the distinction Jesus was making when He said "I proceeded forth and came from God... ye are of your father, the devil." (John 8:42,44).

It is clear enough from these extracts that the reason Jesus was the only begotten of the Father was in order to give Him a life free from the condemnation of those in Adam, a life He possessed as His own so that He was free to give it in sacrifice. Nowhere is it suggested that having God as His Father gave Jesus any advantage in overcoming temptation, making it easier for Him than for us. Clause IX of the B.A.S.F. states that "...the miraculous begettal of Christ... enabling Him to bear our condemnation, and, at the same time to be a sinless bearer thereof..." but Scripture states that Jesus "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). These two statements are irreconcilable and it can be seen that Edward Turney chose Scripture in quoting Hebrews 4:15 and Ernest Brady pointed out that Jesus Christ was not a bearer of our condemnation - His was "a new life direct from Heaven, and not a continuation of the Adam-life." These statements are plain enough and it is difficult to see how they can be misconceived.

You wrote, "Your alternative interpretation is that Jesus condemned sin in the flesh by not sinning." I wish to correct you. I said Jesus condemned sin. Sin is not in the flesh but stems from the mind. (Jesus never condemned flesh). To condemn sin it was necessary that Jesus should not sin. This was a first step as

it were and was followed by His voluntary bearing of the consequence of sin. That is to say, His sinless life led to the legally acceptable sacrifice.

Again you wrote, “Another indication of your living in a world of your own is your deprecatory comment about metaphor,” and “You do not appreciate that you are setting your authority above that of Jesus Himself when you deplore metaphor,” and again, “You and Helen speak scathingly of metaphor.”

When you say that I set my authority above that of Jesus Himself, I can only feel sorry for you, but as Helen and I do not deprecate, deplore, nor speak scathingly of metaphor what you say is utter rubbish and simply does not apply; but I will not call a fact a metaphor if it detracts from the work of God in Christ Jesus. I do not deplore metaphor but I do deplore the fact that you say the condemnation of sin-in-the-flesh, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the legal aspects of the Atonement referred to in the Old Testament are metaphors. Of course the death of Christ was a criminal execution, a political necessity and a miscarriage of justice; but He made Himself available - “...when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go up to Jerusalem.” (Luke 9:51).

Regarding the sacrifice of Christ you say “If it is not a metaphor the brutal fact is that God literally sacrificed His own Son!” Clause 12 of the B.A.S.F. states exactly that and I showed quite adequately in the last C.L. page 28 that this view is horribly wrong. If the sacrifice is not a metaphor and therefore means that God killed His own Son, then it should follow that making the sacrifice metaphorical means that God did not kill His own Son - yet you still claim that the death of Jesus Christ was needed by God in order to help Him carry out His (God’s) purpose. Making out that the sacrifice of Christ was a metaphor does not solve your problem. The truth is God did not need the sacrifice of Christ - the world did and so God provided it; as Jesus said, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” and it was for that very purpose and Jesus Christ responded with love beyond compare - “Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends...”

Coming now to Paul’s letter to the Romans. You agree that “Paul uses “flesh” in at least ten different ways and in only two is he referring to literal flesh, all the others are metaphors. So the great majority of Paul’s references to flesh are metaphors,” yet you take me to task for daring to say that Paul uses the term “flesh” metaphorically when he says “in my flesh dwelleth no good thing” and “sin dwelleth in me.”!

I take issue with William Barclay in his “The Mind of St. Paul” where you quote him as writing:-

“What Paul has in mind when he speaks of the flesh is that the body with all its instincts, mental, emotional and physical, is the bridgehead where sin can launch its attack with the greatest prospect of success. That is why Paul can speak of “the body of sin” (Romans 6:6); “the body of this death” (Romans 7:24). That is why “the body is dead because of sin” (Romans 8:10), and why it is the body of our humiliation (Philippians 3:21).

The first sentence, confusing the mental and emotional with the physical and claiming it to be the “flesh” which Paul has in mind is absurd. And then to say the physical body is “the bridgehead where sin can launch its attack” is beyond comprehension. The instincts, mental and emotional, are seated in the mind as distinct from the body. The body is but the vehicle for the mind, in which the mind operates and through which character is expressed. The mind is responsible for what the body does - not the other way round, Jesus Christ didn’t confuse the body and the mind in Mark 7:14 to 23 in which He said, “There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him... That which cometh out of a man that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts.”

In these quotations from Romans Paul is taking into account that we are all under the condemnation of sin, that we are “in Adam” before we are “in Christ.” Romans 6:1-7 proves the point. Paul concludes that “he that is dead (baptized into Christ) is freed from sin” (verse 7). In Romans 7:24 Paul thanks God that Jesus Christ has delivered him “from the body of this death.” In Romans 8:10, “the body is dead because of sin,” that is to say that because they are “in Christ” they are no longer “in Adam” for their Adam-life ended in baptism. The previous verse tells us “ye are not in the flesh but in the spirit.” These all show the legal change of coming out of Adam and accepting the new covenant of being in Christ.

While in Philippians 3:21, which reads, “Who shall change our vile body...” and which William Barclay calls, oddly, “the body of our humiliation” - this is the only place where tapeinosis is translated “vile” and the use of this word shows the measure of the prejudice of the translators towards Original Sin or changed flesh. It is the word Mary used twice in her supplication (Luke 1:48) “For he hath regarded the low estate (tapeinos) of his handmaiden:... He hath... exalted them of low degree (tapemou).” It is also used in various other ways such as in Luke 3:5, “Every valley shall be filled and every mountain shall be brought low (tapemod);” Romans 12:16, “Mind not high things but condescend to men of low estate (tapemou);” James 4:6, “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble (tapeinos)-” 1 Peter 5:5, “Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility (tapemophros).” It will be seen from these few references that God does not consider our flesh “vile” neither did Paul consider we had physical bodies of humiliation in the sense William Barclay uses it.

To sum up: making Christ’s sacrifice metaphorical does not solve your problem, sin-in-the-flesh is unscriptural, therefore making its condemnation metaphorical is unhelpful, while making legal aspects of man’s reconciliation to God metaphorical denies covenant relationships with God. There is nothing left of the Gospel message!

I will close with Revelation 5:8-10 :- “And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and with golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints; and they sang a new song, saying, Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation; and hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

Yours sincerely in seeking understanding, Russell.