

The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 206

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Editorial

Dear Brothers, Sisters and Friends, Loving Greetings

"Change and decay in all around I see..." These potent lines from the hymn "Abide With Me" have a greater resonance for us as we grow older. Change and decay is a fact in the natural world and as part of that natural world, we see a similar change and decay in ourselves as well as our surroundings.

Much of what decays in nature is replaced or renewed, as indeed we shall one day be renewed when we are raised. However to be aware of one's mortality or more properly corruptibility is a trait peculiar to human beings. Animals are unaware that their lives are finite; as are the trees and flowers...

This season's daffodil
She never hears
What change, what chance, what chill
Cut down last year's;
But with bold countenance
And knowledge small
Esteems her seven days continuance
To be perpetual.

The day of our own death is mercifully concealed from us, but unfortunately we sometimes have to bear the deaths of others, dear friends perhaps, and those most dearly beloved to us, and although death has been part of life since creation when it comes to our door it is still an earth shattering and monumental event, an event that takes strength of will to learn to live with as well as time and contemplation to absorb.

Before we experience death close to us we may have to sympathize with someone who has been bereaved, and perhaps we say, "I'm so sorry, I know how you must be feeling." But of course we don't know how they are feeling, for if we did know how it felt for each and every person who suffers a great loss, our lives would be insupportable. It seems to be a fact that however prepared you think you are for a death that you may see coming closer and closer, when it is a reality it is an unbelievably life changing and mind-numbing event when it finally strikes.

It is my belief that the world is divided into two halves: those who have been bereaved and lost someone very close and those who have not. Blessedly there is no true understanding of the enormity of

death until it happens near you. Whatever we believe, even as in the case of our own particular convictions, death still has a terrible finality about it. There is a certainty that this life. Our natural life, will never be the same again for us. As I heard someone say recently about the death of someone close “you never get over it, it just gets different.” Grammatically faulty but emotionally utterly sound.

These thoughts about death have been more prominent in my mind than usual because of the sudden and devastating loss of a much loved close friend of fifty years standing. As the Bible says “there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” This was true of my friend. She and I did not share the same religious convictions, but we are told that those who offer even a cup of cold water to those that belong to Christ will not lose their reward. My friend offered so much more than that to me when I needed it most that I cannot help but hope I might see her again. Only God can make that judgement of course and I am thankful to leave it to Him.

We are blessed to know that however and whenever death comes to the true believer it is not a punishment for anything, only the cessation of a natural existence just as God originally designed us. While we are alive, we have the chance to look into why we are here and what for. God will know those who get the opportunity to find Him and those who do not and will deal with the matter justly. Meanwhile we have to accept with as much grace and thankfulness as we can muster the limited nature of our lives here and the joys and sorrows that our natural life brings and with it the any and various relationships that we are allowed to enjoy, relationships which sometimes suddenly end in grief. But it will not always be like this. One day pain and parting will be no more, tears will be dried and those who are Jesus Christ’s will be reunited with those they have loved and lost and mourned with bitter tears.

So although there is indeed change and decay now in all around we see, we can also say with the hymn writer... “O thou who changest not, abide with me.” We can rest in the Lord and know that He does both those things: He never changes and He always abides with His children. And as Jesus our beloved Saviour said “Lo, I am with you always even to the end of the world.”

Love to all. Helen Brady.

We continue our reply to those correspondents who asked for

“An Outline of our Beliefs”

We here enlarge upon our understanding of Bible teaching with particular regard to the legal standing of the faithful before God.

In this issue, we will consider some matters concerning the changed relationship of Adam to his Creator. First, let us make it quite clear that sin is transgression of law (1 John 3:4) and is therefore a legal matter, and all sacrifices for sin were legal, that is according to law. Therefore, the sacrifice of Jesus was also a legal matter.

Any law which God gives to mankind is designed to build a character well pleasing to Him and so we would also point out that these are moral laws. In this Christian era all our morals are, or should be, based upon the moral standard exemplified by Jesus and outlined in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapters 5,6.& 7, and epitomised in the first two commandments (Matthew 22:38-40).

That these matters are essentially legal may be obvious to most people but we emphasise them because some have denied this fact when mistakenly trying to explain that the crucifixion of the Son of God was an exhibition of what flesh full of sin deserves.

In the beginning God gave Adam life and He gave him a law to obey. Disobedience meant loss of his life in the day he transgressed (Genesis 2:17). In the event however, the slain animal provided the covering

for Adam's sin and spared his life. There were moreover, changed conditions in which Adam was allowed to live; besides having to work harder for his daily bread, his legal standing before His Creator was changed. Adam had become a sinner, which meant he had obeyed "Sin" instead of obeying God. "Sin," as personified by Paul in Romans chapter 6 was now his Master. Physically, he was still the same "very good" nature (Genesis 1:31) in which God had created him and there is no evidence in all Scripture to show otherwise. The only change was in his relationship to God for he was no longer a son but one whose life was now in pledge to the law of sin and death. Adam was no longer son and heir but a servant of unrighteousness. (Romans 6:16).

Regarding our flesh, neither the Christadelphians nor the Nazarene Fellowship believes there was any difference between the flesh of Jesus and the flesh of all other men. Jesus came in the same flesh as His mother and brothers and sisters and the rest of mankind. This has ever been our belief and teaching and those Christadelphians who have said otherwise have been ignorant of this fact due to the false teaching of Robert Roberts in his book "The Slain Lamb" of 1873. Should any one wish to verify this for themselves we will supply them with copies of Edward Turney's, "The Sacrifice of Christ" and Robert Roberts reply. "The Slain Lamb." As always, we send literature free of charge. Many who ought, and were in a position, to know better, have ignored our protests over the past 130 years. This is very regrettable, but the lie persists in certain quarters and we sincerely hope this article will help a few more Christadelphians rectify their understanding of what we believe to be true.

There is however, a vital legal difference between Jesus and the rest of mankind and this is seen in the fact that Jesus' life came direct from God, as did Adam's, but whereas Adam sinned, Jesus did not, Adam became a servant of Sin. Jesus did not. Jesus remained heir of all things (Hebrews 1:2), during His life here on earth. Jesus, then, was in the same legal relationship to His Father as was Adam before the fall. The one being a son of God by creation and the other being a Son of God by begetting, hence Jesus is called the last Adam in 1 Corinthians 15:45.

The next question we may ask is why the Virgin Birth? Was it indispensable to give the extra strength to overcome all temptation and so remain sinless, or was it to provide a second Adam who was legally in a position to make an offering for sin? To support the first of these two views, Christadelphians are largely dependent on Psalm 80:17, "Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou hast made strong for thyself," and Psalm 89:19 & 21 - "I have laid help upon one that is mighty... mine arm also shall strengthen him."

These Psalms certainly appear to lend support to the idea of extra strength being given to Jesus in order that He should successfully overcome all temptations and remain sinless, but if this was the case then how are we to understand the fact that Jesus was "tempted in all points as we are yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). Surely, this is a contradiction for if Jesus had been given extra strength then He was not tempted as we are. Again, if He was so strengthened where is the merit in His achievement to overcome all temptation? And again, how is it that we are asked to be perfect as He was and if and when we fail through lack of strength then why are we considered sinners to suffer death as our wages when as our weakness is not our fault? Why should we be punished for not reaching the same high standard as our Exemplar, Jesus Christ? We are told "be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48), and again, "ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14).

However, Scripture does not contradict Scripture and God's ways are equal (Ezekiel 18:25).

The Virgin Birth of Jesus was place Him in the legally strong position free of the condemnation which came by Adam and under which all mankind is concluded - as Paul explains in Galatians 3:22

This brings us to another important point we must considered, for we ask, could any other man do what Jesus did had he been given extra strength and help to overcome? Could he have laid down his life for the life of the world? No, he could not. Now we begin to see the weakness in the Christadelphian argument. Why could he not? Because of his weak legal position his life was under pledge to the law of sin and death, i.e. he had been "concluded under sin," i.e. sold to sin as our master.

Therefore, it was not the extra strength to overcome that was required. It was the legal freedom, which Jesus alone had and which separated Him from the descendants of Adam.

Let us recap; in Romans 5:6, we read, “For when we were yet without strength...” What strength did we lack? We lacked the strength to save ourselves. In what way did we lack the strength to save ourselves? We were never in the right legal position in the sight of God to offer a sacrifice that would save us. Therefore, we read in verse 8, “Christ died for us.”

Yes, Jesus was given help and extra strength as we are told in the Psalms, but not to overcome temptation, but by being placed in the legally unique position as the free-born Son of God, free from the condemnation of the law of sin and death (Romans 7:6 & 8:2), which had passed upon all men descended from Adam. A strength which placed Jesus in the position of being able to give His own perfect life as the acceptable sacrifice to take away the Sin of the world, and through whom we can have forgiveness of sins. It was a perfect life which Adam lost to sin and a perfect life which Jesus gave in its place. Life for a life.

However, do I hear someone say what about Galatians 4:4 - “God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law”? Certainly this is so. Jesus was sent into the world under the law and in this He was without any advantage over the rest of mankind. Adam was under the law of sin and death when he was told “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” but while he remained free of this transgression he was not punishable by the law. Jesus was “Made under the law,” and this tells us He was not above the law; that He was subject to the law, but it does not say He had fallen foul of the law as did Adam. The law could not condemn Him; this is because He kept it perfectly. “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” (John 8:46).

I said Jesus was sent into the world without advantage over any one else - excepting that He was the only begotten Son of God, but that ‘advantage’ placed Him in the unenviable position of being able to go to the Cross in order to give His life. His life was His own possession which He gave for the life of the world. He gave all that He had to buy the treasure hid in the field (Matthew 13:44). No son of Adam could do this however strong and perfect in character and this was because no son of Adam had a life of his own. His life belonged to King Sin and he had nothing of his own with which to buy the treasure; he was too poor. Paul wrote to the Corinthians (Cor. 2:8:9), “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”

Jesus Christ did not have to die to demonstrate what flesh full of sin deserved, that’s blasphemy! But He was a Son who was one with His Father (John 10:30), who came to do His Father’s will, who was perfect in all His ways, full of grace and truth and who gave His life for His friends; who gave his life as the sacrifice for us, as the sin-offering; His life in the blood - for the joy set before Him. “Unto us a son is born, unto us a child is given” (Isaiah 9:6).

Yes, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever should believe on Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Then we read, “Without the shedding of blood” (His blood), “there is no remission of sins” (Hebrews 9:22). However, the shedding of Jesus’ blood is also described as a purchase. Peter observes the fact that we were redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus (1 Peter 1:19) as of a lamb without blemish or spot. Jesus’ life was not in bondage, so He died for us, to purchase us, as a slave is acquired out of the market place. He did not purchase Himself; He did not die to buy Himself out of the market place. Jesus was never in the market place for as the begotten Son of God He was legally free unlike Adam who had sold himself and all his descendants to Sin. Jesus died for us, to give us life. “I am come that they might have life and have it more abundantly.” He already had life in Himself even as the Father has life in Himself (John 5:26).

The Virgin Birth ensured that Jesus was free, free from the legal condemnation passed down from Adam, and He came to give us that same freedom, “If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:32,36). Free from the condemnation of the law of sin and death.

To finish the section we will quote from Edward Turney’s lecture, “The Sacrifice of Christ,” (It was in reply to this lecture that R.Roberts wrote “The Slain Lamb”) page 48:-

“The value of his blood lay in the fact of its spotlessness, that is, of its being undefiled by the sin of Adam; in other words, of its not being under sentence of death. Has not this sentence, brethren, made us all sinners? Has not this sentence defiled the whole human race, in the sense of putting them under the sentence of death? Has not the sting of death been thrust into the heart of every son of Adam?”

Whence then comes this mighty power to redeem, to ransom from the power of the grave? The answer is, Christ was not under penalty and could therefore, and did, “give his life a ransom for all.”

The blood itself was no better and no worse quality than your blood and mine, for God made of one blood all nations of men. Acts 17:2. It was, brethren, the precious “Life” wherein lay the exceeding, nay the countless price.”

Why is the death of God’s saints (Psalm 116:15) precious in His sight? Because they have been redeemed by the blood of His Son from the curse. The death of the wicked is as nothing to Him; whole nations are counted as only the drop of a bucket.

Sufficient has been said, I think, to make it clear in what way Jesus redeemed us; to show that life had been lost through sin, and Jesus “gave His life” for all. You have not forgotten, of course, that I pointed out that Jesus by perfect obedience earned immortality. Now having seen how Christ hath redeemed us, let us enquire whether Christ needed to be redeemed, and in what way.

I answer that Jesus did not need to be redeemed. The sense, however, is that of being released, or saved from death; of being brought up again from the pit. Here Jehovah appears as the Great Redeemer, the Great Saviour, besides whom, strictly speaking, there is none else.

The power of Jesus to fake His life again lay in “His right;” hut it was God alone, the fountain of all power, who could bring Jesus again from the dead. As God is just, it was impossible that the bars of death should hold His Son, who had kept all His Father’s commandments. It was not possible, says Peter, “that he should be holden of it.” Acts 2:24, “When about to enter the chamber of the King of terrors,” Jesus offered up prayers and supplication with strong crying and tears unto Him who was able to save him from death. Hebrews 5:7.

The sum, then, of what I have said is this; Christ redeemed us with the price of His own life. His Father redeemed or released Him without a price, because in Him was o sin. I John 3:5.

In the above, we have endeavoured to show how the sacrifice of Jesus saves us from the law of sin and death. In case anyone would suppose our view is too legalistic, let us say here that we also recognise the need for a very high moral standard of those who would attain to eternal life and we believe moral perfection is possible of achievement. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ based upon just and legal principles, shows the love, mercy and grace of God and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“For God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8).

In our next Circular Letter we will discuss the teaching of “sin in the flesh” and consider the Bible references used in support of this teaching; we will then explain why we challenge these views and show how the teaching arose in the fourth century A.D. in Church history, and finally give a better understanding of the Scriptures involved.

Russell

“Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus”

In relation to the death Jesus suffered on Calvary, is the word and subject of substitution to be accounted as anathema when in fact it is taught and accepted by the inspired writers of the Old and New Testaments? When Jesus, in His own words, confirms it as the purpose of His own mission, then the people who profess to understand Bible teaching and reject Matthew 20:28, 2 Corinthians 5:14,15, 1 Timothy 2:5,6, and Isaiah 53, to name a few passages of Holy Scripture, can be said to be rejecters of Jesus. (See John 12:44 to 48).

Having said this, it should be understood Jesus did not give His life to prevent people from dying the death related to their corruptible decaying nature. If this were the case, one could rightly ask why God created man in that nature and then produced a Son in that same nature to die an agonising death to arrest, in some way, what He had ordained and set in motion at the beginning. To believe this is tantamount to accusing our Creator of folly, and whether or not it is in ignorance it is so serious that it demands a deeper research into the teaching of at least Jesus and His Apostles, Jesus Himself being the important centre of all that is written on the subject of His mission and death.

I am less inclined to believe that the Jews at the time of Christ believed natural decay and death was the penalty for Adam's sin, and I feel sure that Jesus was fully aware of this and made a statement which would confirm the fact that He knew the difference between death by creation from the dust through decay, and death under Law by transgression.

The statement I refer to was made to the man willing to follow Jesus if he could first be allowed to bury his father, - “Let the dead bury their dead.” (Luke 9:6). We know this was physically impossible, so Jesus must have meant it in the legal sense and by revelation Paul held the same understanding as proven in his letter to the Roman believers, chapter 5 verses 15 and 17, where he contrasts death legally by sin and life legally and morally by Grace.

Paul's main doctrine is not concerned with the terrestrial system of God's creation where natural corruptibility decay and death is the appointed experience for at least human and the animal species in whose nostrils is the breath of life. He goes back to the time when Adam was placed under moral law for the development of character whereby his obedience would show respect and glory to the praise of his Creator, making him a true servant of God. Service is therefore the subject of Paul's teaching in his letter to the Romans, chapter 6, They were fully aware that servants under certain masters received wages of some kind for services rendered, and he shows the difference between the servants of bond masters and the servants of God for righteousness

In the past tense, he thanks God that they were once the servants of Master Sin but had obeyed that form of doctrine that had been delivered to them, adding the following sentence: “For the wages of Sin is death.” He did not say, “For the penalty for sin or transgression is death;” this would not constitute wages but a result of disobedience to God's Law. God is the Lawgiver whose penalty is death for committed sin, which would have been the case for Adam had not God spared him through Jesus Christ, and further to that, promised the gift of eternal life through Grace. Wages are omitted in this case as Paul teaches.

It is almost generally the case with Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Christadelphians who accept the teaching of Robert Roberts in Clause V of their Statement of Faith, that they accept natural decay and consequent death thereby to be the death that came by man, and they mistakenly believe St. Paul is teaching this; whereas if he were, they would have to accept that before Adam sinned he could have lived for ever in a corruptible body styled a “living soul.” However, Paul teaches two natures only for man in the physical sense, natural and spiritual, the natural being “very good” as God created it. Why then invent other alternative theories through ignorance of Paul's teaching?

It is obvious to me that some of the Clauses of the B.A.S.F. are ambiguous and therefore misleading. Clause IX being an example: “That it was this mission that necessitated the miraculous begetting of Christ of a

human mother, enabling him to bear our condemnation and at the same time to be a sinless bearer thereof and therefore one who could rise after suffering the death required by the Righteousness of God,”

There is more subtlety in this statement than the subtle reasoning of the serpent in Eden. What does Robert Roberts mean by Jesus being begotten “of a human mother, enabling him to bear our condemnation”? Moreover, if that condemnation applied to His flesh at birth then how could He be classed as sinless at birth when He did not at that time know God’s Law? Jesus was indeed a sinless bearer of the Sin of the world (Adam’s sin) which was laid on Him and taken away in the manner stated in Isaiah 53 and Leviticus 16:15 and 21. This was willingly done, for Adam’s sin, not his flesh; the death required of Adam by the righteousness of God, an inflicted death by the shedding of blood. Why not, then, accept that Jesus rose from the tomb after suffering for Adam the death he had incurred in Eden - inflicted death by the shedding of blood without which there is no remission of sin? Jesus did not die a natural death as Clause IX proves, but Christadelphians only understand death as death and nothing more, ignoring the legal aspect in St Paul’s teaching of Romans 5:12.

Another ignored point of Paul’s teaching - “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive, but every man in his own order, Christ the first fruits, afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.” What is meant by “in Adam” and “in Christ”? Surely, it is not by physical descent. No, introduction has taken place in each case, and that is by enlightenment to the position one is made aware legally. “In Adam” is to be a servant of ‘Sin,’ the Master unto whom Adam first sold himself and all in his loins, and needing to be made free.

Jesus said, “If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” This means no longer “in Adam,” but “in Christ.” Nevertheless, a dying has to take place and the dying is symbolic of death into that of Christ and a rising to newness of life in His service. Physical death has not taken place, so if the flesh is under condemnation one is still “in Adam,” even though one has been baptised assumably into Christ. However, when Paul says, “For as in Adam all die” he is not speaking of the natural death common to all, for it can be said that all in Christ up to the present time die a death due to their physical nature.

The “all,” who by enlightenment realise their legal position “in Adam,” die symbolically into the death of Christ to free themselves from the Law of sin and death. Therefore, of himself and other believers in Christ, Paul could say, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus... for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” (Romans ‘:1,2). Please note, no physical death has taken place. “In Adam” all have died to transfer into Christ, and remaining in Him will all be made alive at His coming. Divine Law governs man’s destiny and salvation, not physical descent.

Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Phil Parry

P.S. To those who have been drawn into the quagmire of the contradictory teaching of Christadelphian pioneers and subsequent leader writers, let them take heed to the truth and reliability of Paul’s words in Galatians 1:11,12, and Romans 15:20, For other foundation can no man lay other than that is laid which is Jesus Christ, and involves, not the physical condition, but the legal position into which man was placed by Adam’s sin.

We were pleased to receive the following extracts from a book that Brother John Stevenson is reading:

AUGUSTINE IN CHURCH HISTORY.

I am reading an interesting book “**Adam, Eve, and the Serpent**” by Elaine Pagels, (Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1988). It is useless for Christian Doctrine because the author relies heavily on modernist “Scholars”, but she has done meticulous research into the history of the early church, covering the first five

centuries, and discusses the changing concepts regarding the first three chapters of Genesis when Constantine was converted and the church was legalized, and especially when Augustine entered the controversy. I first quote part of her Introduction :-

(From page xviii): Following the first century, when the Christian movement appeared as a new and “deadly superstition” (in the words of the Roman historian Tacitus), through two centuries of persecution, during which its members were subject to arrest, torture, and execution, the movement continued to grow. Then in year 313 occurred an event of incalculable significance - the conversion to Christianity of the emperor Constantine; and from that time, with only a two-year interruption during the brief reign of the neopagan emperor Julian, called the Apostate, Christianity increasingly became the official religion of the empire.

(From page xix): From about 200 B.C. the story of creation became for certain Jews, and later for Christians, a primary means for revealing and defending basic attitudes and values. Our spiritual ancestors argued and speculated over how God had commanded the first man and woman to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth”, and how He instituted the first marriage; how Adam, after he found among the animals no “helper fit for him” met Eve, with well-known and disastrous consequences. Such interpretations of the first three chapters of Genesis engaged intensely practical concerns and articulated deeply felt attitudes. As I investigated these Jewish and Christian sources, I found myself fascinated with the story of Adam, Eve, and the serpent, written down by members of Hebrew tribes about three thousand years ago, and probably told for generations before that. I had always assumed that this archaic story wields an extraordinary influence upon Western culture, but as my work progressed, I was surprised to discover how complex and extensive its effect has been.

(From page xxi) What Christians see, or claim to see, in Genesis 1 to 3, changed as the church itself changed from a dissident Jewish sect to a popular movement persecuted by the Roman government, and changed further as the movement increasingly gained members throughout Roman society, until finally even the Roman emperor himself converted to the new faith and Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire.

(From page xxv): From these explorations I came to see that for nearly the first four hundred years of our era, Christians regarded freedom as the primary message of Genesis 1 to 3, - freedom in its many forms, including free will, freedom from demonic powers, freedom from social and sexual obligations, freedom from tyrannical government and from fate; and self-mastery as the source of such freedom. With Augustine this message changed. In the late fourth century, Augustine was living in an entirely different Christian world - one that Justin and his contemporaries could hardly have imagined - for Christianity was no longer a dissident sect. The Christian movement, having been oppressed and persecuted by Rome for some three hundred years, over several generations, with Constantine’s conversion in 313, came into imperial favour and, throughout the later fourth century, consolidated its new position as the official religion of the empire. Christian bishops, once targets for arrest, torture, and execution, now received tax exemptions, gifts from the imperial treasury, prestige, and even influence at court; their churches gained new wealth, power, and prominence.

Some Christians, who once defiantly proclaimed their freedom against their persecutors, now found that their old rhetoric - and even their traditional understanding of human nature and its relation to social and political order - no longer applied to this new circumstance, which made them allies of the emperor. In a world in which Christians were not only free to follow their faith but also were officially encouraged to do so, Augustine came to read the story of Adam and Eve very differently than had the majority of his Jewish and Christian predecessors. What they had read for centuries as a story of human freedom became, in his hands, a story of human bondage. Most Jews and Christians had agreed that God gave humankind in creation the gift of moral freedom, and that Adam’s misuse of it brought death upon his progeny. But Augustine went further: Adam’s sin not only caused our mortality but cost us our moral freedom, irreversibly corrupted our experience of sexuality (which Augustine tended to identify with original sin), and made us incapable of genuine political freedom. Furthermore, Augustine read back into Paul’s letters his own teaching of moral impotence of the human will, along with his sexualized interpretation of sin.

Augustine's theory of original sin not only proved politically expedient, since it persuaded many of his contemporaries that human beings universally need external government – which meant, in their case, both a Christian state and an imperially supported church - but also offered an analysis of human nature which became the heritage of all subsequent generations of western Christians and the major influence on their psychological and political thinking. Even today many people, Catholics and Protestants alike, regard the story of Adam and Eve as virtually synonymous with original sin. But during Augustine's own lifetime, various Christians objected to his radical theory, and others bitterly contested it; but within the next few generations, Christians who held to more traditional views of human freedom were themselves condemned as heretics.

(From page 97): For the fourth-century theologian Augustine, who was to become the greatest teacher of the future Christian church, the climax of his conversion was to give up a Christian marriage that would have ensured him wealth and social status, along with a brilliantly promising career, to embrace the ascetic life. Augustine would eventually transform traditional teaching on freedom, on sexuality, and on sin and redemption, for all future generations of Christians. Where earlier generations of Jews and Christians had once found in Genesis 1-3 the affirmation of human freedom to choose good or evil, Augustine, living after the age of Constantine, found in the same text a story of human bondage. Yet as Augustine grew older, he argued that even the most saintly ascetic was not, in himself, capable of self-mastery; that all humankind was fallen; and that the human will was incorrigibly corrupt. This cataclysmic transformation in Christian thought from an ideal of moral freedom to one of universal corruption coincided, as we shall presently see, with the evolution of the Christian movement from a persecuted sect to the religion of the emperor himself.

(From pages 99 & 100): Many Christian converts of the first three centuries - centuries in which civil authorities treated the church as a subversive sect - regarded the proclamation of "antexonsia" - the moral freedom to rule oneself - as virtually synonymous with "the gospel."

Yet with Augustine, in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, this message changed. The work of his later years, in which he radically broke with many of his predecessors, and even with his own earlier convictions, effectively transformed much of the teaching of the Christian faith. Instead of freedom of the will and humanity's royal dignity, Augustine emphasizes humanity's enslavement to sin. Humanity is sick, suffering, and helpless, irreparably damaged by the fall; for that "original sin," Augustine insists, involved nothing else than Adam's prideful attempt to establish his own autonomous self-government. Astonishingly, Augustine's radical views prevailed, eclipsing for future generations of western Christians the consensus of more than three centuries of Christian tradition... As he grasped for ways to understand his own tumultuous experience, Augustine concluded that the qualities of that original state of creation no longer applied - at least not directly - to human experience in the present. Humanity, once given the unflawed glory of creation and the freedom of will, actually enjoyed these only in those brief primordial moments in Paradise. Ever since the fall, they have been apprehended only in moments of inspired imagination and even then only partially. For all practical purposes, they are wholly lost.

Given the intense inner conflicts involving his passionate nature and the struggle to control sexual impulses that he reveals in his Confessions, Augustine's decision to abandon his predecessors' emphasis on free will need not surprise us. Much more surprising, in fact, is the result. Why did the majority of Latin Christians, instead of repudiating Augustine's idiosyncratic views as marginal - or rejecting them as heretical - eventually embrace them? Why did his teaching on "original sin" become the centre of the Western Christian tradition, displacing, or at least wholly recasting, all previous views of creation and free will?

The political and social situation of Christians in the early centuries had changed radically by Augustine's time. Traditional declarations of human freedom, forged by martyrs defying the emperor as anti-Christ incarnate, no longer fit the situation of Christians who now found themselves, under Constantine and his Christian successors, the emperor's "brothers and sisters in Christ". But Augustine's theory conformed to this new situation and interpreted the new arrangement of state, church, and believer, in ways that, many agreed, made religious sense of the new political realities.

Both Augustine and his Christian opponents recognized the political dimensions of the controversy, yet none of them discussed government in what we would consider strictly political terms. Instead, since everyone agreed that the story of Adam and Eve offered a basic paradigm for ordering human society,

argument over the role of government most often took the form of conflicting interpretations of that story. Let us consider, then, how Augustine and his predecessors - taking as their representative John Chrysostom - read, in opposite ways, the politics of paradise.

(From page 101): As John saw it, imperial rule epitomizes the social consequences of sin. Like his persecuted Christian predecessors, John ridiculed imperial propaganda that claimed that the state rests upon concord, justice, and liberty. On the contrary, he says, the state relies on force and compulsion, often using these to violate justice and suppress liberty. But because the majority of humankind followed Adam's example in sinning, government, however corrupt, has become indispensable and, for this reason, even divinely endorsed.

(From Page 106) No wonder, then, that the Manichaean theory of human origins, which had "explained" the sense of helplessness he experienced, had at first attracted Augustine. He identified too, with the way the Manichaeans interpreted the tendency to sin not simply as human weakness, but as an internal energy actively resisting God's will. When he abandoned Manichaean theology, Augustine admitted he was at a loss to understand the Christian teaching on free will. Later he would claim that in denying the power of the will, he was only repeating what Paul had said long before ("I do not what I will, but I do the very thing I hate. I can will what is right but I cannot do it"). Many Christians ever since, - including that famous Augustinian monk Martin Luther - would find Augustine's interpretation of Paul's words persuasive. Yet such recent scholarly studies as the work of Peter Gorday confirm an impression that Augustine effectively invented this interpretation of Paul's words, by daring to apply them to the baptized Christian. Augustine's Christian predecessors, including John Chrysostom and Origen, had assumed that Paul's statements about the will's incapacity applied only to those who lacked the grace of Christian baptism.

(From Page 109) The punishment (of Adam and Eve) itself, Augustine continues, "effected in their original nature a change for the worse." Augustine derived the nature of that change from an idiosyncratic interpretation of Romans 5:12.

The Greek text reads "Through one man (or "because of one man", - *di enos anthropou*) sin entered the world, and through sin, death; and thus death came upon all men, in that (*eph o*) all sinned. John Chrysostom, like most Christians, took this to mean that Adam's sin brought death into the world, and death came upon all because "all sinned". But Augustine read the passage in Latin, and so ignored or was unaware of the connotations of the Greek original; thus he misread the last phrase as referring to Adam. Augustine insisted that it meant that "death came upon all men, in whom all sinned" - that the death of that "one man" Adam brought upon humanity not only universal death, but also universal and inevitable sin....

How can one imagine that millions of individuals not yet born were "in Adam" or, in any sense, "were" Adam? Anticipating objections that would reduce his argument to absurdity, Augustine declares triumphantly that, although "we did not yet have individually created and apportioned forms in which to live as individuals," what did exist already was the "nature of the semen from which we were to be propagated". That semen itself, Augustine argues, already "shackled by the bond of death" transmits the damage incurred by sin. Hence, Augustine concludes, every human being ever conceived through semen already is born contaminated with sin. Through this astonishing argument, Augustine intends to prove that every human being is in bondage not only from birth but indeed from the moment of conception. And since he takes Adam as a corporate personality, Augustine applies his account of Adam's experience, disrupted by the first sin, to every one of his offspring (except, of course, to Christ, conceived, Augustine ingeniously argued, without semen).

When he describes the onset of original sin in Adam, Augustine chooses political language - and specifically the language of sexual politics. He describes his experience of passion in political metaphors - as "rebellion" against the mind's governance. For in the beginning, when there was only one man in the world, Adam discovered within himself the first government - the rule of the rational soul, the "better part of a human being," over the body, the "inferior part." Augustine, influenced no doubt, by his study of Platonic philosophy, characterizes their respective roles in political terms: the soul by divine right is to subjugate every member of its "lower servant," the body, to the ruling power of its will... But the primal couple soon experienced within themselves not only the first government on earth but also the first revolution. Adam's assertion of his own autonomy was, Augustine insists, tantamount to rebellion against God's rule. Augustine

appreciates the aptness with which the punishment for this uprising fits the crime; “The punishment for disobedience was nothing other than disobedience. For human misery consists in nothing other than man’s disobedience to himself.

A Few points of Interest to think about from Brother Phil Parry:

Revelation 2:6 - Doctrine and Deeds of The Nicolaitanes

“But this thou hast that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.”

Comment by Dr Adam Clarke:

“These were as is commonly supposed, a sect of the Gnostics who taught the most impure doctrines and followed the most impure practises. They are also supposed to have derived their origin from Nicholas, one of the seven deacons mentioned in Acts 6:5. The Nicolaitanes taught the community of wives, that adultery and fornication were things indifferent; that eating meats offered to idols was quite lawful; and mixed several pagan rites with Christian ceremonies.

Augustine, Trenaus, Clemens, Alexandrians and Tertullian have spoken largely concerning them.”

“What the World thinks of God.”

Thursday evening, 26.02.2004 on B.B.C. TV Channel 2. I watched the beginning of a programme “What the World thinks of God.” I was so disgusted by the half dozen people’s answers to questions put to them as representatives of different religious faiths so called, seeing that God the Creator is not shown to be the One that has revealed Himself as having in times past spoken by the prophets and in last days of their message in the Hebrew Scriptures, by His only begotten Son, those half dozen people confirmed my opinion of their own views of the world and their own “Let us make God in our own image and likeness.”

Not one of them acknowledged that God the Creator of Heaven and earth had revealed Himself in the Hebrew Scriptures, which were the recorded message of His chosen holy men who had spoken as they were moved by His power of inspiration. The Bishop of Liverpool was one of the various people questioned and no one could have been edified by his pathetic reply. The words of the Prophet Isaiah came to my mind in regard to them all as I switched off the TV in disgust.

“Seek not to them that have familiar spirits” (their own theories). “To the Law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”

This applies to all who read the Bible but do not use discrimination and consequently do not rightly divide the Word of Truth. One of the worst examples of this is of people who think the penalty for Adam’s sin is natural death and are forced to the false theory of a day to be a thousand years and that Adam died within that period, whereas the teaching in the Old Testament and that of Jesus and His Apostles is quite simple and clear. It is that Divine law makes it a legal situation - not a physical situation with no way of release.

Celebration of William Tyndale in 1994

I came across my dilapidated Bible which I had put away and had replaced with another of larger print, but of the King James A.V. as the former; when I opened it I found a cutting from a newspaper which I had evidently placed in it as a matter of interest. The heading read in large print, "THEATRE CELEBRATES 500 YEARS OF ENGLISH BIBLE." It was a local newspaper about 1994 which was called "The Dean Forest Guardian," now called "The Forester" and published weekly. The Theatre was "The Roses" in the town of Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire where a celebration of the work of William Tyndale took place as a much earlier translation of the New Testament from the Greek and confirming that he later made a translation to English from the Hebrew.

William Tyndale stood fast by his principles and suffered death for it as did many who studied his books. It seems that the Bishop of London fulfilled the words of Jesus to His followers, that they who put them to death would believe they were doing God a service.

The King James translators had no opposition and could have derived much from Tyndale's work and taken credit for what was not due.

Phil Parry

THE TRINITY EXAMINED

"It may be said at once that there is no trace in John of the doctrine of a Trinity" - E.F.Scott, D.D. (St. Andrews), Professor of New Testament Literature, Queens University, Kingston, Canada. ("The Fourth Gospel," page 341).

"To ask whether in the New Testament the spirit is a person in the modern sense of the word would be like asking whether the spirit of Elijah is a person? But the Holy Spirit is not a person existing independently of God. The New Testament and indeed patristic thought generally, nowhere represents the Spirit any more than the power or wisdom of God, as having independent personality." - Alan Richardson, D.D. (Oxon), Hon. D.D. (Glasgow), Professor of Christian Theology in the University of Nottingham. ("Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament," page 120).

"I cannot think that it is of very great importance to settle the vexed question whether St. Paul thought of the Holy Spirit as a divine being personally distinct from Christ." Oliver C. Quick (Oxon) Hon. D.D. (St. Andrews), Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Oxford. ("Doctrines of The Creed," page 280).

"The ancient church, including the Nicene Fathers, did not attribute to the Spirit a personality separate from the personal life of God." - H.B.Swete. ("The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church," page 376).

"The notion of the Holy Spirit as a third Divine personality... is one of the most disastrous importations into the Holy Scriptures." - Beyschlag. ("New Testament Theology," Vol. 2, page 279).

The quotations presented above appear in standard works on New Testament theology and reflect the thoughts of men who gave a lifetime of study to the documents of the New Testament. They must serve to illustrate to any fair minded enquirer that the traditional dogma of the Trinity, as denoting three co-equal persons in the one God-head, may not be as well-founded upon New Testament teaching as we have been led to believe.

It is our intention to show that the New Testament offers no evidence of the doctrine of the Trinity as it is popularly (and often so tenaciously) believed. Not only can this proposition be established by a careful reading of the New Testament but it is implicit in the statements of such New Testament scholars as those quoted above. Their writings are only samples of many whose message is the same.

To the average layman the doctrine of the Trinity is a baffling mystery best left to the deliberations of learned theologians. The New Testament however, nowhere grapples with a mystifying, indeed inexplicable doctrine of a Triune God. New Testament mysteries are secrets now made manifest to the Church; of a mystery of "three persons in one God" there is not a hint on any page of the New Testament Scriptures.

We must first dispose of a popular objection. Does not the New Testament somewhere speak of “The Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost... and these three are One”? The emphatic answer is that it does not, but that in the Authorised Version a Trinitarian statement was added to the text. The spurious verse appears in the text of no Greek manuscript before the sixteenth century! Modern translations omit it as a flagrant insertion; it forms no part of the original manuscripts. The point is not in dispute, and can be confirmed in any commentary. The verse in question reads as follows, the section shown in brackets being the added words which do not belong to John’s Epistle:

“There are three that bear record [*in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are One. And there are three that bear witness in the earth*], the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one” (1 John 5:7,8).

The comment of E.W.Bullinger on these verses is appropriate; “The words are not found in any Greek manuscripts before the 16th century. They were first seen in the margin of some Latin copies. Thence they have crept into the text.” (Companion Bible, ad. loc. cit.).

The reader should note that in contrast to the inserted Trinitarian statement, John places the Spirit in a trio of which the other two elements are definitely not persons (blood and water). Yet John is popularly thought of as having taught a doctrine of the Spirit as a person distinct from the Father and the Son and co-equal with them. Had John believed in a Trinity of “3 in 1” this would have been an ideal place to have recorded that belief; but he did not, despite the efforts of some unknown interpolator to convince us to the contrary! This insertion should serve to illustrate the determination and ingenuity displayed by some in their efforts to give scriptural backing to cherished tradition.

If we consult the witness of all the Apostolic letters - of Paul, Peter, James, John and Jude, we find that they invariably begin with a blessing from the Godhead. It is here, if anywhere, that we must expect to find the Apostolic definition of the Godhead, since each writer enumerates the divine persons in a precise statement. The evidence is impressive and is quoted in full;

“Paul... to all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints; grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 1 ;7).

“Paul... to the Church which is at Corinth... Grace be to you and peace, from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:2,3; 2 Corinthians 1:2).

“Paul... to the Churches of Galatia, Grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 1:3).

“Paul... to the saints who are at Ephesus, Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Ephesians 1:1,2).

“Paul and Timothy to all the saints who are at Philippi. Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:1,2).

“Paul to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse; Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Colossians 1; 1.2).

“Paul... to the Church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 1:1,2; 2 Thessalonians 1:1,2).

“Paul to Timothy... Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:1,2).

“Paul to Titus... Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour” (Titus 1:1.4),

“Paul to our beloved Aphia and Archippus our fellow soldier,.. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philemon 1:3).

“God hath in these last days spoken to us by His Son” (Hebrews 1:1,2). “James, a servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ...” (James 1:1).

“Simon Peter, a servant of Jesus Christ to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord” (2 Peter 1:1,2).

“...and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3).

“The elder to the elect Lady and her children... Grace be with you, mercy and peace from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of me Father” (2 John 1:1-3).

“Jude to those who are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ... mercy to you and peace and love be multiplied” (Jude 1:1,2).

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to him, bear record of the Word of God, and the Testimony of Jesus Christ. John to the seven Churches which are in Asia. Grace be unto you and peace from Him which is and which was and which is to come, and from the seven spirits which are before the Throne and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness” (Revelation 1:1-5).

These most important passages demonstrate beyond all argument that none of the Apostles used a Trinitarian formula when defining the Godhead. None of them links the Holy Spirit to the names of the two Divine Persons, as a third divine person co-equal with the Father and Son.*(see note 1). Each Apostle draws a careful distinction between the two divine Persons “God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The fact that there is complete silence about a third divine Person must be taken as highly significant, for if indeed there are three persons in the Godhead, all equally God, why is the third consistently omitted from the Apostolic statements at the head of all their writings? The question demands an answer.

Let us first however consider the apostolic view of the relationship of the two Divine Persons from whom grace, mercy and peace proceed. It will very quickly become clear that Christ is everywhere described as subordinate to the Father. The two Divine Persons are never equal in “rank.” Divinity is indeed ascribed to both, though the evidence shown so far points to the fact that the term God in the absolute and unrestricted sense is reserved for the Father alone. This is not to deny that elsewhere in the New Testament Christ is identified with the Lord of the Old Testament (1 Corinthians 10:4 & 9). He is also said to be divine and pre-existent (John 1:1,2; Philipians 2:6,7;Colossians 1:16,17), and is twice addressed as God (John 20:28; Hebrews 1:8).

The popular notion that the Father and Son are indistinguishable as to “rank” is not supported by the New Testament and commentators admit this; “The very word Son implies derivation, subordination and dependence, and yet it also implies identity of substance and therefore co-equal divinity.” (Alan Richardson, “Introduction to New Testament Theology” page 123). Thus the New Testament states that “Christ is God’s” (1 Corinthians 3:23). It would, of course be quite impossible to say that “God is Christ’s,” Paul also states that “the head of Christ is God Just as the head of the woman is the husband, and the head of every man is Christ.” (1 Corinthians 11:3,4). These passages demonstrate beyond all question that the Father and Son are never in the New Testament equally “ranked” within the Godhead as sometimes in popular Trinitarian thinking. Indeed, as H.L.Goudge says: “Above and beyond all there is God the Father. When in Corinthians Paul uses the word “God” it is the Father who is always intended... Our Lord is subordinate to the Father in His eternal being for the Father is the ‘fount of Godhead’ and the divinity of the Lord is eternally communicated by the Father and dependent on Him. Christ belongs to the Father and serves Him.” (“Commentary on 1 Corinthians” pp. XXIX, 28). In the same connection, we may add the remark of the distinguished commentator Dean Henry Alford, “mat there is a sense in which the Father is greater than even the glorified Son, is beyond doubt (see especially 1 Corinthians 15:27f.)” (“Greek Testament on John 14:28”).

Entirely consistent with Paul's statement that God is "the head of Christ is John's quotation of Christ that "the Father is greater than I." Though He is at one in purpose and will with the Father ("I and my Father are one" - John 10:30), He remains in subordination to His Father, who is greater than He (John 14:28). The statement that "I and my Father are one" certainly cannot mean that Father and Son are really only one individual; this would be a meaningless statement for any Hebrew writer, as also presumably for anyone else! Christ prayed that the Church should be "one" with the Father and Himself, meaning of course that they should all three be united in purpose (John 17:21).

Such are the simple propositions of the New Testament which is delightfully free from the complex wrangling that marred the later history of the Church.

Having established that the New Testament draws a careful and consistent distinction between God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, His Son, we must now consider the nature of the Holy Spirit and the all-important question of the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son. Above all we must account for the conspicuous absence of a Trinitarian formula in the Apostolic definition of the Godhead appearing at the head of all the epistles.

We will begin with a definitive statement about the meaning of the term Holy Spirit, part of which has already been quoted at the beginning of this paper. It comes from Alan Richardson, D.D. and appears in his "Introduction to New Testament Theology," pages 104, 105 & 120:

"The Spirit of God has no existence apart from God, any more than the spirit of Elijah can exist apart from Elijah. God's Spirit is God acting. The spirit of a man is his '*dunamis*' (power), his person in action, and the same is true of God's Spirit. It is His '*dunamis*,' i.e., it is God acting." "To ask whether in the New Testament the spirit is a person in the modern sense of the word would be like asking whether the spirit of Elijah is a person. The Spirit of God is of course personal, it is God's power in action. But the Holy Spirit is not a person existing independently of God... The New Testament (and indeed patristic thought generally) nowhere represents the Spirit, any more than the power or the wisdom of God, as having independent personality."

Such statements as these appear to the present writer to strike at the very roots of traditional Trinitarianism, and are taken as such, when read out to those holding to the traditional teaching. Yet the words of Alan Richardson reflect the Old and New Testament facts, as will become evident.

The crux of this whole discussion is that the Spirit of God (the Holy Spirit) is no more a separate person from God than the spirit of man is a separate person from the man himself. The Holy Spirit of the Bible is not a third divine personality. Yet the doctrine of the trinity as popularly understood at least, insists on the Spirit of God being a person distinct from the Father and Son, in the same sense that the Father is a person distinct from the Son. But this would mean that the spirit of Elijah is a different person from Elijah! Or that when Elizabeth said that her spirit had rejoiced (Luke 1:47) a person other than herself was rejoicing! Clearly the truth is simply that "my spirit" means "myself," "my mind." Consequently God's Spirit is simply God Himself in action. All this is of course merely to give to language its natural and normal sense.

It is fundamental to biblical thinking that "Holy Spirit" (the term frequently occurs without the article, though this is not shown in translation) *(See note 2) has as its primary meaning the power of God in action. There is no argument that this is universally true of the Old Testament use of the words "Spirit of God." Naturally enough the writers of the New Testament take over this concept from the Old Testament, so that it is common to find passages in the New Testament which equate "spirit" with "divine power." Referring to the Gospels first, we find Jesus casting out demons "by the spirit of God" (Matthew 12:28), which means "nothing more by than divine power" (Richardson, page 107). In Luke's Gospel we find the expression "by the Spirit of God" replaced by the words "by the finger of God" (Luke 11:20), showing that he understands the Spirit of God as simply the energy of God- Again in Luke 1:35 we read that "Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you." Here Holy Spirit is parallel to, and equated with power. In verse 17 of the same chapter we read that John "shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah." In Luke 24:49 there is another striking equation of "Holy Spirit" with "power" - the Holy Spirit to be poured out at Pentecost is defined as "power from on high." This use of the word spirit to mean power is, as expected entirely in harmony with the whole Old Testament use of the term spirit. Indeed the Hebrew

word “ruach” (spirit) and its Greek equivalent “*pneuma*” mean “breath” or “wind,” and are therefore the ideal metaphors for the invisible energy or power of God.

This primary meaning of spirit as power is thus naturally and properly adopted by the writers of the New Testament. Yet we can trace an important new development in their understanding of “Holy Spirit,” for after the resurrection the Spirit is invested with a more personal meaning, since it becomes directly associated with the work of the risen Christ. The Spirit now represents the personal power of Christ, directly affecting the Church and filling its members with supernatural energy.

The following statement of Alan Richardson is of crucial importance in this connection:

“After the resurrection the distinction between Christ and the Holy Spirit becomes blurred, and the New Testament writers do not attempt to distinguish between the operation of the risen Christ and the operation of the Holy Spirit.” “Christ Himself comes in the coming of the Spirit. John can write, “He, the *Paraclete* will come to you” and “I will come to you,” as if both sentences mean the same thing.” (John 16:7, with 14:18,28 - “Introduction to New Testament Theology” page 121).

Thus in John 16:7 we find Christ saying, “It is profitable for you that I should go away; for if I go not away, the *Paraclete* will not come to you.” So also in John 14:18,28; “I will not leave you orphans, I am coming to you... I am going away, I am coming to you.”

There is only one possible conclusion to be drawn from these statements, and it is simply stated by Richardson: “The spirit who interprets the Scriptures is none other than the Risen Lord Himself (Page 121).

The Spirit is the Risen Lord, no longer present physically with the disciples but present nevertheless in spirit!

That this is the right way to understand the four occurrences of the word “*Paraclete*” in John’s Gospel, we may confirm by turning to the only other occurrence of the word - in John’s first Epistle where he provides his own definition and identification of “*paraclete*.” “we have a *Paraclete* with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” (3 John 2: 1). ^{*(See note 3)}

Popular Trinitarian teaching proposes that the *Paraclete*, the “other Comforter” (“other, but of the same kind.” as the Greek implies), is a hitherto unknown person, distinct from Christ, mysteriously introduced by John, and apparently unknown also to the other Apostles, none of whom use the term *Paraclete*. Thus the doctrine of the Trinity has been very largely built upon those four occurrences of “*Paraclete*” in John’s Gospel, to invest the Holy Spirit with separate personality. However, this is to abandon the fundamental and primary sense of the word Spirit, which is God’s invisible power, to overlook the fact that in the Gospels “Holy Spirit” is invariably equated with “Divine Power,” and to fail to notice that the distinction between the Risen Christ and the Holy Spirit is blurred, indicating that the Holy Spirit is none other than the Risen Christ now absent, but present with His Church in spirit.

John is not alone in equating the Risen Christ with the Spirit, for Paul makes exactly the same identification, in a passage that surely poses serious difficulties for Trinitarianism:

“Now the Lord (Christ) is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. But we all with unveiled face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord, the Spirit” (“the Lord Who is the Spirit” - R.V.). (2 Corinthians 3:17,18).

This passage puts beyond all doubt the identity of the Lord and the Spirit, The Spirit is no third person, as popularly believed; it is the Lord Himself in spirit presence. It is significant that in Green’s Handbook of New Testament Greek we read concerning these words of Paul (“The Lord is the Spirit”), “When the article is found with the predicate, an essential identity with the subject is asserted” (page 179), Nothing could be clearer than that the Lord, everywhere in the New Testament the title of Christ is the Spirit. The Spirit is not therefore a third person!

Returning to the Gospel of John and bearing in mind the identification of the Lord with the Spirit in 2 Corinthians 3:17,18, we will quote in full an important passage from a work by E.F.Scott, D.D., to which preachers of the traditional Trinitarian teaching would do well to give heed:

“It may be said at once that there is no trace in John of a doctrine of a Trinity. The prologue, where the presuppositions of the Gospel are most succinctly stated knows only of the Eternal God and the Eternal Word. We are not to infer that John regarded the Spirit as a personality in the sense of the later Church doctrine. The discourses of John dwell on the relation of the Father to the Son, without any thought of a third person co-ordinated with them in one Godhead.” (“The Fourth Gospel,” page 341).

Statements like these ought to be disturbing to any who claim to be teaching biblical doctrine. The absence of a third person co-ordinated with the Father and Son applies equally to the Apostolic definition of the Godhead quoted in full earlier. It is “the later Church doctrine” which knows of a distinct third person, not the Scriptures. Yet we are responsible for teaching the truth of Apostolic doctrine, and it is useless to seek refuge in later creedal statements, especially in such fundamental issues as those under discussion. It ought not to be overlooked that the earliest Apostolic proclamation of the Gospel announced that God “has blessed you in turning every one of you from his wickedness” (Acts 3:26). The latest Apostolic warning was that even before the New Testament was complete, they would be “turning away their ears from the truth and turning to myths” (2 Timothy 4:4). There is a powerful irony to be found in a comparison of the word “turning” in these passages.

We may confirm the truth of E.F.Scott’s statement quoted above by pointing out that late in the Gospel of John, representing mature Christian thinking, the Spirit is still for John not a person, but the divine breath; “He breathed on them and said. “Receive Holy Spirit” (the original has no article) (John 20:22). This episode is of course the New Testament parallel to the divine in-breathing which made Adam a living soul (Genesis 2:7).

It is significant that throughout the Bible the Spirit is likened to things that would be most inappropriate, if Spirit were supposed primarily to denote a person. The spirit is like wine (Ephesians 5:18); like living water (John 7:37,38); like divine breath (John 20:22). It is “poured out” (Acts 2:17), can be quenched (1 Thessalonians 5:19), given in different portions and measures (John 3:34). It is always a portion of the whole which is conferred upon the believer (“I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh”).

Now this is surely an inappropriate way of speaking if that ‘whole’ is to imply a person! Indeed the question has been asked by sceptics whether the Holy Spirit or the Father is the real Father of Christ, if in fact the Spirit is a distinct person! (“She was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit” - Matthew 7:18). Or again, was one member of the Godhead descending upon another when the Holy Spirit descended upon Christ (Matthew 3:16)? Such questions are immediately clarified when it is seen that the Spirit is nothing but the power of the Deity in action.

In the writings of Paul, we may further confirm the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as being essentially the power of God, and more specifically the Presence and Power of Christ in Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 2-11, Paul discusses an important analogy between “the spirit of man that is within him” and “the Spirit of God.” Now it is clear that the spirit of man is in no sense a different person from the man; nor then is the Spirit of God a different Person from God. Yet this appears to be how Trinitarian teaching is popularly understood; for the Trinity is a doctrine committed to three distinct divine “personalities,” and when this notion is read back into the New Testament the simplicity of the scriptural record is obscured. Far from being a third person, “the Spirit which God communicates to men through Christ is at the same time the principle of His divine self-consciousness, and it therefore carries with it a revelation of the inmost nature of God. For Paul, the Spirit resides in God, as the conscious mind resides in man, and proceeds from Him as His divine activity... the Spirit becomes active in the life of the disciples... it is like another and higher will sustaining theirs... it is a spontaneous, self-authenticating impulse towards the higher life... Practically then, the Spirit is the power of Jesus acting on believers as it acted on the first disciples. Paul is able to declare in so many words; “The Lord is the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:17). (“The Fourth Gospel,” pages 327-329).

Now this is exactly how Luke uses the word Spirit in those passages in Acts that describe the direct guidance given by Christ to the Church. It is said that the Spirit “spoke,” “forbad,” “permitted.” “Having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia, having come down to Mysia, they attempted to

go to Bithynia. But the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them” (Acts 16:6-8). It is clear that the Holy Spirit is none other than the Spirit of the Lord directing His Church. Thus “the Spirit said” is synonymous with “Christ or the Lord said.” In the absence of Christ, a direct communication could be imparted by His Spirit residing in, and united with the mind of the disciples. The point is clearly made in the “New Testament Theological Wordbook,” art. “Spirit” page 238: “After the resurrection, the Spirit is known henceforward as God’s gracious power and equally as the presence of Christ Himself.”

It is in this sense that Luke’s expression “The Holy Spirit spoke” and his reference to lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3) are to be understood. The latter phrase is equated in the next verse with “lying to God” (Acts 5:5), Clearly no difference in meaning is intended. Since the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost the divine self-consciousness comes to man in a new way. Christ is now “in you” as the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). “The Holy Spirit speaks” is therefore precisely equivalent to “Christ speaks.” It should not be forgotten that Luke can also say, “the wisdom of God spoke” (Luke 11:49), without intending to introduce a new person!

The equation of the Holy Spirit with Christ is found in the Gospels also; “When they deliver you up, be not anxious beforehand what you shall speak, but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak you, for it is not you that speak but the Holy Spirit” (Mark 13:11). Now Luke’s version reads: “Settle it therefore in your hearts not to meditate beforehand how to answer, for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay” (Luke 21:15). Richardson’s comment is interesting:

“Clearly St. Luke, who in Acts dramatically describes the fulfilment of this prophecy through the coming of the Spirit, does not distinguish between the activity of the Spirit and the operation of the Risen Christ; ‘I will give you a mouth and wisdom’ compared with ‘They were not able to withstand the wisdom and Spirit by which Stephen spoke’” (page 109).

All this, when carefully considered, is very different from the Trinitarian doctrine of the Spirit, as generally understood. The fact that in the New Testament the Risen Christ and the Holy Spirit are not differentiated as far as their operations are concerned; that Paul identifies the Risen Christ, the Lord, with the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:17,18), and that John states that the *Paraclete* is Jesus Christ (1 John 2:1), should be sufficient to show that Christ and the Spirit are one and the same person (certainly not two persons merged as one individual, which would be a quite unbiblical idea!).

In order to add further weight to the conclusions we have reached, we will complete our study by referring to the article on the Holy Spirit in the well known “Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels,” edited by Hastings. (It should be pointed out that the writer’s view was reached quite independently of the opinions expressed in the Hastings’ article). Writers on the biblical doctrine of the Spirit are faced with the impossible task of reconciling the biblical facts with the later Church dogma. In the case of the article to be quoted, a short paragraph on the Trinity is appended without biblical reference to support it. The discerning reader however will note that the biblical evidence examined by no means bridges the gap between the apostolic belief about the Godhead and the later Trinitarian doctrine.

It is highly significant that the writer of this article, James Denny, D.D., Professor of New Testament Language, Literature and Theology in the United Free Church. Glasgow, omits all reference to the Holy Spirit as a third person, often writes ‘holy spirit’ without the article and without capital letters, and consistently refers to the Spirit as ‘it.’ We will quote in condensed form the main conclusions of the article, and show that it is in line with the point of view advanced by our study.

Professor Denny begins with the significant statement that

“To the men who wrote the New Testament, and to those for whom they wrote, the Spirit was not a doctrine but an experience; they did not speak of believing in the Holy Spirit, but of receiving the Holy Spirit when they believed (Acts 19:2). The work of Christ was summed up in the words “He shall baptise with holy spirit” (Mark 1:8). When we come to the Old Testament the one idea which is dominant in connection with the Spirit is the idea of power as opposed to impotence.”

Professor Denny quotes A.B.Davidson (“Theology of the Old Testament” page 126):-

“The Spirit of God is God active... God in efficient operation.” “The most elementary notion of the Spirit may be that of Divine Power, but where we see it at work in Jesus, it is Divine Power which is at the same time holy; it is at war, in principle, with everything that is unworthy of God... In the Gospels it is variously named “The Spirit,” “God’s Spirit,” “the holy spirit,” or “holy spirit.” It is the divine power with which Jesus was endowed at His baptism and which committed Him to an irreconcilable conflict with evil. If then we try to sum up the oldest evangelic representation, we can hardly say more than that the Holy Spirit is the Divine Power which from His baptism onward wrought in Jesus... If we turn from Mark to the other Evangelic sources common to Matthew and Luke, we find little to add to this. The last light Luke throws on the Holy Spirit is in Luke 24:49, where the Risen Saviour describes it as “the promise of my Father” and as “power from on high,” The last word therefore brings us back to the first. The fundamental idea to be associated with the Spirit is that of Divine Power. We can think only of Divine energy or intensity of life... The two expressions “holy spirit” and “power of the highest” are precisely equivalent (Luke 1:35). To be “in the Spirit” is to be under divine impulse. It is the Divine Power that is behind this incalculable elevation (the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost). This is the New Testament point of view throughout.”

Having established that the primary and essential meaning of Spirit is divine power. Professor Denny passes to the matter of the Spirit as being the personal Spirit of Jesus Himself:

“The Spirit which Christians have and of which they speak is never anything else than the Spirit of Jesus; it is always referred specifically to Jesus, and is fundamentally a token that He is there. It is the work of God through the Spirit - the Spirit of the Risen Saviour.”

“In St. Paul’s epistles the Holy Spirit is mentioned nearly 120 times, and may be said to have a prominence and importance which it has nowhere else in the New Testament... St. Paul’s whole ministry has been accomplished in the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13f). He calls it specifically the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9). He goes even so far as to say that the Lord is the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:17), and “He who is Joined to the Lord is one spirit.” (1 Corinthians 6:17). The presence of the Spirit is, it may be said, the spiritual presence of the Lord. It is not an indefinite power of God, but the last Adam who has become life-giving Spirit (1 Corinthians 15:45).”

“In the Book of Revelation, when the Spirit speaks, it is the Risen Christ who speaks; “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches” (Revelation 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22). In St. Paul’s phrase, here too the Lord is the Spirit. It is no other than Christ who speaks through the inspired prophet.”

In John’s Gospel, “what strikes us is the assumption that every reader will know what is meant by “the Spirit” or “holy spirit.” The Spirit comes to us with life-giving power. Later John’s language becomes more precise; “I will ask the Father and He will give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth which the world cannot receive because it does not see or know it (Greek “auto” - neuter). You know it, for it dwells with you and shall be in you. I will not leave you desolate. I will come to you.” (The translation is Professor Denny’s).

“What strikes us first here is the new name given to the Spirit” “another Comforter.” It is indeed only the name which is new. In idea it answers closely to the only promise of the Spirit which we find in the Synoptic Gospels. The expression “another Comforter” implies that the disciples have already had experience of one, namely of Jesus Himself. As long as He was with them their strength was reinforced from Him and when He goes. His place is taken by the Spirit. There is another power with them now which does for them what Jesus did before. Yet is it really another? In 1 John 2:1 it is Jesus who is the *Paraclete*, even after Pentecost; and even here (John 14:18), He says “I come to you.” The presence of the Spirit is Jesus’ own presence in Spirit.”

Professor Denny’s closing statement is of vital importance as summarizing the predominant New Testament teaching about the Spirit:

“It cannot be truly thought of as impersonal, and yet it is far more frequently spoken of in a way which is satisfied by the conception of a Divine impulsion to or stimulation of human thought, feeling, or action, than as a distinct personality. This is so even in writers who, like St. Paul (1 Corinthians 12:11) and St. John (16:14) distinctly have the latter mode of representing the Spirit. Certainly the Spirit is not so unmistakably thought of as a person as is the Father or the Son. We never for example, find the Spirit in the salutations of

the Epistles; “Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” is never supplemented by “and from the Spirit.” Neither do we ever find the Spirit united with the Father and in prayer, as, e.g., in 1 Thessalonians 3:11; “Now our God and Father Himself and our Lord Jesus Christ direct our way to you.” Even in the Apostolic benediction (2 Corinthians 13:14) it may fairly be questioned whether the Spirit is conceived as personally as the Lord Jesus Christ and God.”

To this last sentence we may add that the same is true of Christ’s command to baptize into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19) which can hardly alone be appealed to as evidence for investing the Spirit with a separate personality, when the whole biblical doctrine of the Spirit is against it. Regrettably the traditional doctrine of three equal persons has been “read back” into the New Testament records, thus fully justifying the remark of Professor Beyschlag, quoted earlier, that “the notion of the Holy Spirit as a third Divine personality... is one of the most disastrous importations into the Holy Scriptures.”

In conclusion, we will point to the genuine biblical “Trinity” of three personalities perfectly united in purpose, will and love. This is a “trinity” of Father, Son and Church, and is derived from the teaching of Christ Himself as recorded by John. In John 14:10 we read that Christ is “in the Father,” and the Father “in Christ.” The force of the preposition “in” here is clearly that the two divine persons are perfectly united with each other - the Father and Son are One (John 10:30). But in John 17 Jesus prays that this unity be extended to include the Church also, so that “they may be one, as thou, Father art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us... I in them. Thou in me, that they may be perfect in one.” (John 17:21,23,26). This union of “three-in-one” is found in several passages in John’s Gospel -

“As the Living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.” (John 6:57).

“And I know those that are mine, and am known by those that are mine; as the Father knows me, I also know the Father.” (John 10:14,15).

“He that receives whoever I shall send receives me, and he who receives me, receives Him who sent me.” (John 13:20).

“In that day you will know that I am in the Father, and you in me, and I in you... If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him.” (John 14:20 & 23).

“For all things which I heard of my Father I made known to you.” (John 15:15).

And in John’s first epistle; “...you also shall continue in the Son and in the Father.” (1 John 2:24).

The same oneness of Father, Son and believers is expressed by Paul, who says that “He who is joined to the Lord is one Spirit,” and is thus one in spirit with the Father and the Son (1 Corinthians 6:17). It is the Spirit, the divine mind, which joins the three, and creates the fellowship between them; and this gives us the clue to the real meaning of the Apostolic benediction conferring “The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit” (2 Corinthians 13:14), the latter being not a third person, but the divine spiritual presence of Father and Son. ^{*(See note 4).} It is “into” (Greek ‘eis’ this fellowship of the Father, Son and their common Spirit that Christians are to be baptised. (Matthew 28:19).

The New Testament view is thus radically different from the later Church teaching for it invites believers to join the Father and Son to form the third member of a “trinity” comprising Father, Son and Church. The later, post-biblical teaching introduces a subtle and significant ‘twist’ by which that third position with Father and Son is already occupied - by a mysterious intruder! It will not be inappropriate to ask whether “an enemy hath done this.”

Finally we append a quotation to serve as a reminder that significant voices have been raised in protest against a cherished traditional teaching which cannot be found in the writings of Apostolic Christianity.

“Milton’s arguments against the Trinity are ultimately logical and commonsensical: why create mystifications which are not to be found in the Bible? John Locke and Isaac Newton, with Milton the three

greatest names of the period (c. 1650) could not find Trinitarianism in the Bible.” (Christopher Hill, “Milton and the English Revolution.” Pages 286,295).

Anthony F. Buzzard. (1980)

Note 1. It is true that 1 Peter 1:1,2 contains a reference to the sanctification of the Spirit in connection with the sprinkling of the blood of Christ. Nevertheless the phrase “God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” represents his statement about the Godhead, in harmony with that of the other Apostles.

Note 2. The writer is aware that the absence of the definite article in Greek need not necessarily be represented in translation into English, but notes that commentators do sometimes omit the article and render “*pneuma hagion*” as “Holy Spirit.”

Note 3. The Authorised Version obscures the identification by rendering the Greek “Paracletos” in this verse as “Advocate.

Note 4. There is not a single verse in the whole of scripture enjoining prayer to or worship of the Holy Spirit- Biblical worship is directed to the two divine persons, the Father and the Son;- “To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, Blessing and honour and glory and might for ever.” (Revelation 5; 13).

We continue with our extracts from

THE DEVIL AND HELL OF THE BIBLE

By The Megiddo Mission Church

CHAPTER TWO

THE DEVIL OF THE BIBLE

The words Satan and the devil as used in the language in which God spoke to men, have no such ideas as are attached to them by theology.

“The Interpreter’s Dictionary” defines Satan as “the arch-fiend; chief of the devils; instigator of all evil; the rival of God; the Anti-Christ,” and comments: “The Hebrew root from which the name Satan derives, means primarily ‘Obstruct, oppose.’ It is used in the Old Testament of obstructing a man’s path (Numbers 22:22,23), opposing in war (1 Samuel 29:4), preferring charges in a court of law (Psalm 109:6), and playing the part of an adversary in general (Psalm 38:20).... Nowhere in the Old Testament does Satan appear as a distinctive demonic figure, opposed to God and responsible for all evil... It is simply an appellative, not a proper name - i.e. it merely defines the role which the being in question happens to play in a particular situation.”

The word Satan is from the Hebrew root *stn* meaning “to block, to attack.” The Old Testament term ‘devil’ has its origin in Hebrew judicial terminology as the ‘adversary/ especially in the sense of the accuser at court (Zechariah 3:1).

Much religious thinking and false teaching has attached to the word ideas, which it was never meant to convey. The Bible itself does not teach the existence of a literal devil that tempts men to do wrong. False teaching has mystified the meaning of the original word and given countenance to pagan demonic theories which the Bible does not support.

In the Bible the term ‘Satan’ is applied to ‘an adversary, an opposer.’ Wicked men and women opposing God and His plans are called Satan. In Bible terminology the person performing evil is a Satan, a devil. In Matthew 16:23, Jesus showed clearly how a man becomes a devil: by opposing His word, by being His adversary. Peter said to Jesus “Lord, this shall not be unto Thee; and Jesus said unto him; Get thee

behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me.” Peter became a Satan, an adversary of Jesus, by opposing His words.

The Greek word diabolos is the equivalent of the Hebrew *stn* and means ‘an accuser, calumniator,’ one who defames or reviles. It was this word diabolos that Jesus employed in John 6:70 when He said of Judas, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?” - note again that Jesus did not say one of them is possessed of a devil but one of them is a devil.

A devil is a wicked man, not a spirit of evil that may possess a man or a monster whose all- pervading powers and influence may overcome him. Peter became a Satan by opposing Jesus;

Judah became a devil by betraying his Master, by allowing his covetousness to dominate him. And we ourselves become Satan in the sight of God when we oppose the words of Jesus.

BIBLE DEVILS

Paul had a long felt desire to visit his brethren at Thessalonica, and he wrote to them in the following manner: “Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us” (1 Thessalonians 2:18). Who obstructed Paul’s travels? Perhaps it was a government official. Or perhaps it may have been a sect of the Jews; on several occasions they watched the gates of the city to take his life. Once they stoned him and left him for dead; at another time, forty men vowed they would neither eat nor drink until they had taken his life. Any such Satan could have prevented his travel in this case.

But whoever this Satan may have been, of one thing we may be certain: it was not the devil of popular theology-

These same devils hindered Paul and Silas in their travels, when they cast them into the “inner prison,” and made their feet fast in the stocks (Acts 16).

This same devil or agent of evil is spoken of in Revelation 2:10, “Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried.” No monster from the infernal regions would have come forth to cast the followers of Jesus into prison. Nor would a disembodied evil spirit have such a power. The devil in this instance is someone with authority, someone opposing the religion of Jesus, having power to open and close prison doors, as did Herod when he imprisoned John the Baptist.

GOD AND THE DEVIL

If we accept belief in a literal devil or power of evil, we are recognising a second deity with a second dominion. In the Divine record, the Bible, all power and all dominion are clearly and unmistakably ascribed to Jehovah and to Him alone. God is the First Cause and has no rivals. Through His prophet Isaiah He says, “I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me” (Isaiah 46:9). Also through His servant Moses, “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord.” (Deuteronomy 6:4). He is the One, Supreme God; He has no equal.

If we recognize a devil as a being of authority, he must have obtained that authority and power from the Great Creator - for “there is no power but of God” (Romans 13:1). Why would a good wise Creator give power to a being that would continually thwart His purpose and designs and perpetrate all manner of evil?

But no. God is the one and only God. He will not share His dominion with any other. “My glory will I not give to another.” (Isaiah 42:8). If the theory of a powerful devil were true, then God would share His power with another - in fact, if that be the case. He much more than shares His glory with another, for the devil of popular belief gets ten adherents to the Almighty’s one.

SIN PERSONIFIED

The literary device known as personification is repeatedly employed in the Bible. For example, riches are personified in the following manner: “Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” (Matthew 6:24). Wisdom is

personified and termed “she”: “Happy is the man that findeth wisdom... She is more precious than rubies... Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand are riches and honour.” (Proverbs 3:13 - 17). Again, she is represented as a “Tree of Life to them that lay hold upon her. (verse 18). “Wisdom is justified of all her children.” (Luke 7:35). A clear case of personification.

Sin is also personified and termed a master. In Romans 6 this device is employed a number of times: “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof... For sin shall have no more dominion over you... Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servant ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that (though) ye were the servants of sin... ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you... For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.” (Romans 6.12,14,16,17,,20). Again, “Whosoever commiteth sin is the servant of sin.” (John 8:34. See also 1 John 3:8). By means of personification sin is also termed devil or Satan. When Jesus said to the Jews of His time “Ye are of your father the devil and the lusts of your father ye will do” (John 8:44), He also was employing this type of personification. He said in effect, “Ye are of your fathers, a generation of evil men.” Shortly before, John the Baptist had styled them a “generation of vipers.” But no one would suppose he meant a generation of literal snakes’

At the time that Ananias and his wife Sapphira sold a possession, keeping back part of the price, Peter questioned Ananias, “Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?” (Acts 5). Then three hours later Sapphira, not knowing other husband’s Judicial death, came with the same story about the sale of the property. To her Peter said, “How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?” The “Satan” that had filled their hearts was their own evil devices. They had agreed together to lie to the Lord. If a powerful being called “Satan” was the instigator of the lie, then the Lord showed criminal unfairness: He let the deceiver himself escape unharmed, while punishing the deceived.

Paul describes this same Satan, or devil, sin personified, in Acts 26:16-18. Repeating the words he had heard from Jesus at the time of his miraculous conversion, he says, “Rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose... delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sin, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.”

The author of the book of Hebrews also reveals who is the devil of the Bible. In Hebrews 2:14, speaking of Christ, he says, “that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil.” Now if we can find any statement as to what has the power of death, by it we can identify the devil, for that is one of his special features. “The sting of death is sin” (1 Corinthians 15:56). “The sting of death is sin”- here we have the same answer as we obtained from Hebrews 2:14. Sin and the devil are synonymous terms. The devil has the power of sin, and sin has the sting of death; hence, sin and all sinners compose the devil.

CHAPTER THREE

SATAN AND GENESIS

According to the majority of Protestant and Catholic faiths, the devil began his work at what is called the Fall. God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden, a perfect world, free from sin, where they might have lived on forever had they not disobeyed the divine injunction: “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou mayest not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” But also in the garden was a serpent, a wily subtle serpent who deceived Eve with the enticing words: “Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil,” (Genesis 3:4,5). The forbidden fruit did look tempting; and yielding to the serpent’s enticement. Eve partook. And she “gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.”

What was the result of this transgression according to theology? We quote from a typical Protestant constitution: “Our first parents, being seduced by the subtlety and temptation of Satan, sinned in eating the

forbidden fruit. This, their sin, God was pleased, according to His wise and holy counsel, to permit, having purposed to order it to his own glory.

By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body- They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation.” (The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. - 1805-1952).

However, this is not the teaching of the Bible. His receiving the disapproval of God did not change Adam’s physical nature and furthermore, the guilt of sin is not inherited. God does not condemn us for the sin of our father, or grandfather, or our greatest, greatest, greatest grandfather Adam. Every individual is responsible for his own sin. The divine principle is plain; “The fathers shall not die for the children, neither shall the children die for their fathers, but every man shall die for his own sin.” “Every one shall die for his own iniquity; every man that eateth the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.” “Every man shall be put to death for his own sin.” (2 Chronicles 25:4, Jeremiah 31:30, 2 Kings 14:6, Deuteronomy 24:16). Every man shall die for his own sin - not Adam’s- “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:20). It shall die, and no other.

THE SERPENT IN EDEN

According to the Genesis narrative, the serpent was responsible for this disastrous “Fall of man.” But was this serpent the devil? Who or what tempted Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit?

To understand this we must recognise that the first three chapters of Genesis are allegorical in part. We see Adam and Eve called to work in the garden of the Lord (Isaiah 5:7) for the reward of life eternal- This Adam and Eve are typical of those men and women down the ages whom God calls to serve Him. They are children of God (1 John 3:1) in the process of development. They are told to obey the commands of the Lord, but how often they yield to temptation and transgress!

What tempts them to do wrong? A literal serpent? No, they are tempted in the same manner as you and I - “Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.” (James 1:14). Every man - Adam and Eve and all of their posterity - is tempted “when he is drawn away if his own lust, and enticed.”

Man is a generic term including both men and women, and James says that men are tempted by their own lust. Eve was tempted in like manner. Her own desires, not a crawling serpent, tempted her. The subtle serpent, which was “more subtle than any beast of the field” was her own human heart which, says Jeremiah 17:9, is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” When Eve saw the forbidden fruit of the tree, she allowed her desires to lead her, rather than obeying the divine command. And then, “When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death (James 1:15).

The apostle Paul tells us just how Eve was tempted. We may know how the serpent tempted Eve if we know how easily our own minds are corrupted by the promptings of our hearts. “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”

The minds of the people of the church at Corinth were corrupted from the simplicity of the doctrine of Christ by their own tendency to cling to their former beliefs and notions - our minds are corrupted in the same manner today. And this is the very way Eve was beguiled by the talk of the serpent. She listened to the promptings of her own mind. There was no more a literal serpent in the Garden of Eden than there is in our hearts now. Adam and Eve simply wanted their own way and were led astray from single-hearted devotion to God by their own fleshly minds.

ENMITY BETWEEN THE TWO SEEDS

In the Genesis account we read further of enmity which existed between the woman and the serpent. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

"Between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed" - what are the two seeds? Would the Lord be talking about enmity between the children of the literal woman and the offspring of the literal serpent? What foolishness!

But enmity has always existed between the children of light and the children of darkness, the children of evil. We read "Wisdom is justified of all her children" (Luke 7:35), and "Ye are all the children of light... we are not of the night, nor of darkness" (1 Thessalonians 5:5). Enmity exists between those who walk as children of light, or the seed of the woman, and those who walk after the flesh, governed by the serpent nature.

Let us look at the first case of enmity related in the Divine Record, the enmity which existed between Cain and Abel. The apostle John tells us the cause of this enmity: "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." Here was enmity between two seeds, and enmity which led to the death of one. The enmity was between a child of wisdom and a child of the flesh.

The enmity has been the same through the ages: between Jeremiah and his persecutors;

Daniel and his adversaries; Stephen and those who stoned him; Jesus and those who betrayed Him.

(Editor's Note: It is disappointing to find the writer fails to see more in Genesis 3:15. In general terms he is correct but the "seed" plural, is narrowed down to one "seed" in the promises made to Abraham after offering up Isaac, his son. - Genesis 22:18, compare Galatians 3:16, "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." 1 John 3:8)

CHAPTER FOUR

DEVILS THAT TEMPT

Having identified the devil of the Bible as evil men and women, workers of iniquity, let us now study one of 'his' best-known activities - temptation.

Workers of evil have by their strong and ever-present influence repeatedly led nobler souls astray. The children of God were well acquainted with such devils as far back as the time of Job.

SATAN AND JOB

The presence of Satan in Job 1 is not definite proof that the Scriptures uphold the idea of a powerful being with powers of evil capable of subduing God's power for good. Indeed, such a position, if it could be proved, would seriously discredit the Almighty's claim to absolute fairness, to "justice and judgment," as attributed by the Psalmist (Psalm 89:14).

Authorities on Scripture agree that Satan, as used in Job 1 should be a proper name, as "the Satan," hence "The Satan, the slanderer of man," 'diabolos' (The Vulgate). In the margin of the Authorised Version of the Bible the word is rendered "the Adversary." Satan in biblical usage denotes anyone in opposition; it is a Hebrew word "signifying an adversary, an enemy, an accuser."

We learn from the Interpreter's Dictionary that - "In the prose prologue to the book of Job (Chapters 1 & 2), the member of the divine entourage who impugns the integrity of the pious man of Uz and receives permission from Yahweh to put it to the test is described as 'the satan.' Here the name means no more than 'the one who acts as accuser, or prosecuting attorney', on a given occasion. It is not implied that this is he constant name or role, not even that he is inherently evil."

In Job 1 the Satan tries to withdraw God's approval from Job by attributing low motives to him. The terms employed are those commonly used in a court of law, Satan playing the role of "accuser" or "prosecuting counsel."

Knowing that in Bible phraseology the terms "satan" and "devil" are applied to men and women who oppose God and disobey His law, we can the more easily understand the Satan referred to in Job 1:6. "There was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them." This Satan was a man, not a demon or a man possessed with a demon.

Just as Judas was among the apostles who gathered with Jesus at the last Supper before His crucifixion, so Satan was among these sons of God, or servants of God (1 John 3:2) who gathered in Job's day. Here is symbolised an ever-present truth: wherever God has servants. He has enemies. The Bible speaks of Cain and Abel. Ten of the spies Moses sent to spy out the land of Canaan proved satans, adversaries to God's will, and they brought back an evil report, while only two brought back a favourable report. There were Elijah and Ahab, Samuel and Saul; King David and his erstwhile companion who at one time had been his guide and close acquaintance, but who became his arch enemy. Of whom David said, "We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company." (Psalm 5:12-14). Demas was even in the yoke with Paul, and then proved his traitor.

Wheat and tares grow together; sheep and goats share the same pastures; righteous and wicked attend the same meetings. It was true in Job's day, also in Jesus' day, and it is still true in our day. Wherever there are servants or sons of God, Satan, the adversary, is present.

WHO HARDENED PHARAOH'S HEART?

The devil? A spirit of evil? Or what?

Seven times we are told that the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, three times that he hardened his own heart. Once we are told that it was God's leniency that prompted him to harden his heart. Exodus 8:15 lists this once mentioned instance: "But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart and harkened not unto them, as the Lord had said." There is one text that specifically states that Pharaoh hardened his own heart; it is the word of the Philistine lords:

"Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? when he wrought wonderfully among them?" (1 Samuel 6:6).

Pharaoh was a tool in performing the Lord's purpose, but his action was entirely of his own volition. Every man is a free agent, free to choose his own course of action. God has power to know what that action will be, and therefore He is able to fit that action into His overall divine plan.

WHO PROVOKED DAVID TO NUMBER ISRAEL?

The Jehovah's witnesses and others hold to the belief that the devil is a super being capable of provoking men to evil. However, such a theory cannot be the truth of the matter, for it flatly contradicts other plain biblical statements

If a super being called Satan stood up against Israel and provoked King David to number the people in defiance of God's orders, then Jesus told an untruth when He said that nothing from without entering into a man can defile him. (Mark 7:20-23). And Jesus also was mistaken when He said that "every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" if a literal super being devil can tempt men to do wrong.

To be sure, something provoked David to sin. Was it he himself or some other individual? The King's order was abominable to Joab, the chief captain of his army; hence, he could not have influenced David to take the census. And there is no record of any other person influencing the King. We will let David speak

for himself: "Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed." (1 Chronicles 21:17).

It was David's own ungoverned pride that was the Satan in the case; his own desire to know how great the nation under him had become, prompted him to number the people. "Even I it is that have sinned." The "Satan" who enticed David was virtually a personification of his own ego, his frailty and weakness.

WHO TEMPTED JESUS?

The temptation of Jesus is frequently used to prove the certainty of the existence of a literal, personal devil. A moment's reflection, however, dissipates this impression. If Judas could be a devil, and yet be a man, why could not the tempter of Jesus be a man? Even Himself? We should observe that the temptation was real. The offer of a high position in this world would be a temptation to almost any man, and Jesus was "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15). To Jesus, with His superior powers, the offer of high position was a temptation, but He did not yield. In each instance He had the ready answer: "It is written..." He yielded to His Father's will, not His own.

WHO WAS THE DEVIL THAT SOWED TARES?

Jesus in His parable of the Tares (Matthew 13) describes another of the devil's mischievous designs. An enemy sowed tares among the wheat in a wheat field. After Jesus had sent the multitudes away. He explained the parable to His disciples-

And "he... said unto them. He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one." (The word "one" is added, it does not appear in the original Greek manuscript. Two of the modern versions read: "The weeds are the wicked;" & "The tares are the sons of evil"), "The enemy that sowed them is the devil." (verses 37,38).

Like begets like, hence if the tares are the sons of evil, the devil that sowed them must be the fathers of evil. The answer is obvious; the devil represents evil men.

WHAT DEVIL CONTENDED WITH MICHAEL?

According to the record of Jude (verse 9), a certain devil caused a contention with Michael the archangel in the days of Moses. Who was this devil?

We cannot believe the inspired word pictures any altercation between a literal devil and an angel over the physical body of Moses at the time he died on Mount Nebo, for he was buried by the angels, no man knowing the place of his burial to this day. How dare we put an interpretation upon this occurrence and say that a corporate devil or Satan contended with an archangel over his body at the time of his burial?

In view of Bible teaching regarding devils, what could be the meaning of Jude 9? Why should we suppose that the contention was over the physical body of Moses at the time of his pre-arranged demise on Mount Nebo? There is not a single suggestion of such an experience in the short account in Deuteronomy 34.

A more realistic approach to the meaning of Jude 9 and one which does not conflict with the general teaching of the Bible, would be on this wise: Moses, as the archangel, "contended," that is, "argued" or "debated" (these last two terms are used in the newer versions) with the devil Pharaoh over the freeing of the children of Israel, said to be Moses' body - his group of followers.

Now let us see how this approach fits into the picture. First, what does the name Michael mean? The name means "one like God." Can we ascertain that Moses was in God's place or like Him when the children of Israel were saved from the thralldom of Egypt? Yes, we can: "And the Lord said unto Moses, See I have made thee a god unto Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet. Thou shalt speak all that I command thee; and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land." (Exodus 7:1). We learn from this testimony that Moses was made a god to Pharaoh, or was to act in a place of authority. Again in Exodus 4:16, the Lord speaking of Aaron, says to Moses: "And he shall be thy

spokesman unto the people: and he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God.” Moses was acting in God’s place; he was the god, or Michael, or chief one, to Pharaoh.

“Now having shown who was the Michael, who was the adversary or devil? Certainly the great adversary to Moses in this transaction was Pharaoh. The entire contention was caused by this strong opposer to God. Moses’ constant cry to Pharaoh was: “Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go, that they may serve me.” Michael, or Moses, the one acting in God’s place, went to Pharaoh to demand that he let the people go; clearly, Pharaoh was the “devil” in the case.

Who was the body of Moses over whom he, or Michael, (one in God’s place) and Pharaoh, the great adversary, contended? The answer is clear. It was the children of Israel. The troops under a military commander are commonly termed his body. Furthermore, in biblical phraseology the church is called Christ’s body (1 Corinthians 12:27, Ephesians 1:23) on the same principle, Israel would have been Moses’ body.

To be continued...