

# The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 216

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## Editorial

Dear Brothers, Sisters and Friends, Loving Greetings.

In the last but one issue of the Circular Letter Russell wrote a piece speculating about the centurion present at Jesus' crucifixion. Six centurions are mentioned in the New Testament, and they all stand out very creditably in the narrative. Of these, two are linked with the life of Jesus: the centurion at Capernaum in Matthew and Luke, and the centurion in charge of the crucifixion squad, unless as Russell wondered he is one and the same. One other centurion, Cornelius, was converted by Peter, and three others are linked with Paul.

The centurion was a non-commissioned officer in charge of a hundred soldiers and was the equivalent of a company sergeant-major. There were sixty centurions to each legion of 6,000 men. Julius Caesar mentions several centurions who earned his praise for their loyalty and initiative. Polybius the Greek historian of Rome, in his well-known description of the army, says of the 'centurions' that they are not expected to be so much 'venturesome seekers of danger, as men who can command, steady in action, and reliable: they ought not to be over-anxious to rush into the fight, but when hard-pressed, they must be ready to hold their ground and die at their posts.' These characteristics are certainly borne out by the events we see centurions involved in, in Biblical narrative.

The centurion at Capernaum is a particularly impressive individual. He sent a message to Jesus begging for his help. Luke says that the centurion had a servant – presumably the equivalent of a batman - who was desperately ill. Matthew adds that he was paralysed and in great pain. In Luke's account the centurion never appears, but the Jewish elders commend him and his request to Jesus. The centurion's friends then bring the message that he is not worthy to receive Jesus in his house - 'Lord do not trouble yourself... But say the word, and let my servant be healed,' runs the message. Jesus then says to the crowd following him, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." When the messengers get back to the house they find the servant in perfect health. Some scholars think that the story in John's Gospel (4:46) of the cure of the nobleman's son records the same incident. Certainly he shows that the act of healing took place over a distance of 20 miles from Cana to Capernaum.

This centurion was probably one of the Gentiles who attended worship at the Jewish synagogue - a 'God-fearer' as Paul called them. Today, at Capernaum, is to be seen a 3rd-century reconstruction into which are incorporated both Roman and Jewish designs. This synagogue has been partially restored. Originally the prayer hall was rectangular, nearly 80 feet long and 53 feet wide. To the east of the prayer hall was an open courtyard, entered by two doors on the south side. Both hall and courtyard were colonnaded, the columns in the hall supporting the gallery, those in the courtyard forming a cloister facing a doorway into the hall. Through this doorway the Gentile 'God-fearers' might listen to the synagogue service. What is really striking at Capernaum is the mixture of Jewish and Roman symbols. Among the former are the *menorah* (the seven-branched candle-stick) the *mangen* David (the shield of David), the Ark of the Covenant, the manna pot, and that old symbol of the land, the palm-tree. Among the Roman symbols is the regimental crest of the Tenth Legion, two eagles back to back and beak to beak, also the Roman army's equivalent of the Victoria Cross: it was awarded to a soldier who saved the life of an officer in battle. What is the explanation of this combination of symbols? Although this is a late 2nd-century or early 3rd-century building, a Professor Albright is certain that it stands on the site of an earlier synagogue. The synagogue may possibly have been that at which Jesus worshipped, taught and healed. It may well be that carvings of this synagogue were moved in to the later building, this could explain how the regimental crest of a Roman Legion came to adorn the very keystone of a Jewish synagogue. (Luke 7:1-10).

Love to all. Helen Brady.

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## Rightly Dividing The Word

The question was put to Jesus, "Lord, why speakest thou unto them in parables?" His answer was already stated in the Spirit's words through the prophet Isaiah which He quoted to His disciples and is found in Matthew's record in chapter 13, verses 14 to 16, (see also Isaiah 6:9,10 and Ezekiel 12:2).

Why is it that at the present day there are certain people who read the parables used by Jesus in His teachings, yet are so obstinate and spiritually blind that either they cannot or will not grasp the messages portrayed in them? Take then for example the inconsistencies of the Jewish nation unto whom were committed the lively oracles of God; they allowed themselves to be deluded by false prophets and teachers and the idolatrous practices of the surrounding nations. There was no unity of the Abrahamic faith, but a mixture of views and traditions by the precepts of men void of faith.

This was the position in the time of Jesus, the same position exists now, especially with those people who profess to have the Truth. Take for example the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the beggar, both of them died but a different status was accorded to Lazarus than to the rich man. Lazarus in Abraham's bosom - the equivalent of inheritance of the kingdom of God by faith and incorruptible resurrection (Hebrews 11:8-10), a resurrection of life and nature of angels by a good report of faith, a judgment of God before Jesus was even born though He is the resurrection and the life.

Jesus declared "Abraham rejoiced to see my day and he saw it and was glad." Also, "Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him." This account is in Luke 20:27 to 39 where Jesus speaks of those who are accounted worthy of inheritance in the world to come even before their resurrection; neither can they die any more for they are equal to the angels and are the children of God, being children of the resurrection. This is the resurrection Paul teaches in his various epistles when he classes them thus, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ... And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." Galatians 3:26,27,29.

The Sadducees did not believe in angels nor in the resurrection, but the Pharisees confessed both, but certain of the scribes answering said, "Master, thou hast well said." Luke 20:39.

Where can a judgment of worthiness for eternal life fit in with the parables of the rich man and Lazarus and the facts stated by Jesus to the Sadducees? There is no place for a 'post-resurrectional' judgment with

such a false concept. Yet a well educated Christadelphian, on account of whose answer I lost my respect, said that Jesus rose from the tomb corruptible and had to be judged whether He was worthy of eternal life. This I believed arose from the nonsensical interpretation made by Dr. Thomas of the words of Jesus "Touch me not for I have not yet ascended to my Father." (My Father's nature being substituted). The statement of Jesus had nothing to do with nature, he was already incorruptible; it was a matter not to hinder His intentions of seeing His disciples (Mark 16:7) in Galilee with certain instructions to them before His ascent to the Father – a certain time was allowed before this event, thus the words could be rendered "Hinder me not but go and tell my disciples and Peter." "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father and to my God and your God." John 20:17. Not the God of the dead but of the living.

Another example of pre-resurrectional judgment or acceptance is found in the parables of the Sower of the good seed in contrast with the enemy which sowed a different kind on the same good ground in the case of the tares, yet it was the good ground which was important. Matthew 13:23. This was so in the case of the sun scorching that which had sprung up among stony ground with no deepness of earth and withered away because they had no root. Here Paul takes up the lesson in writing to the Colossian believers upon whom the good seed of the Gospel had taken root. Colossians 2:6-8, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, and the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

Paul continues his theme of symbolic death with Christ by baptism – the putting off of the old man with his deeds and having put on the new man, renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him. – "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10.

In Paul's epistles the theme of predestination through the love and grace of God in His Son is quite clear to those believers who are in Christ through the calling of God and the true knowledge and understanding of the Atoning work of God in the Sacrificial Death of His beloved Son. They have passed from under the sentence of death by Adam's sin to "the sentence of life in Christ" without any change of nature; therefore Paul says to the Roman believers in Christ by baptism into His death, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:11). As I said, Paul is continually dealing with the exalted position of the subjects of Christ's atoning blood whereby they can reckon themselves by faith, alive unto God, free from under the Law of Sin and Death though still flesh and blood. This legal and moral position requires only the change to incorruptible nature to inherit the promise of everlasting life to enjoy the glories yet to be revealed.

So considering this exalted position and the resurrection of life at the second coming of Christ in glory, the exhortation of Paul to the Ephesians and all in Christ to make their calling and election sure, with their symbolic resurrection with Christ, to follow Christ's example of conduct on earth before His exaltation to the right-hand of God: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." Mortify those thoughts and deeds which are opposed to God seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."

I therefore put to you who believe in a resurrection and a judgment for worthiness of everlasting life, where does this apply to the new man whose life is hid with Christ in God and when Christ shall appear, will appear with Him in glory?

When considering the examples of the parables and the epistles of the Apostles of Jesus does it not prove a positive teaching of the dead in Christ raised incorruptible and the living 'in Christ' changed to incorruptibility? 1 Corinthians 15:51,52.

Why is this lack of rightly dividing the word of truth so prevalent among those people who have been continually using the term "In the Truth" yet by the precepts of men opposing even Paul's teaching of the

true resurrection of life? Which resurrection are they the children of if not 1 Corinthians 15 – raised incorruptible?

I will now conclude my discourse with some important advice from the inside cover of the 'Bible Reading Plan' printed by The Nazarene Comforter, a labour of love which I appreciate:

### **RIGHT DIVISION**

**“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be shamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15).**

Miles Coverdale explains this well when he wrote:-

“It shall greatly help ye to understand scripture if thou mark not only what is spoken, or written, but of whom, and to whom, with what words, at what time, where, to what intent, with what circumstance, considering what goeth before, and what followeth.”

I say “Amen” to that, for one can only be approved of God by studying what is His inspired word, comparing it, Scripture with Scripture by the few examples I have tried to demonstrate. Consider Paul’s words and the Lord give us also understanding in all things. – 2 Timothy 2:7.

With Kind thoughts and Regards to all who labour in God’s Vineyard.

Phil and Rene Parry.

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**We are grateful to the person who published this article on a Christadelphian Forum. It had been lost to the Nazarene Fellowship and so we are very pleased to have a copy. Sister Helen Brady believes it must have been one of her father’s earlier works as it mentions an opponent as though this may have been the concluding part of a debate.**

## **That The Penalty Incurred By Adam Was Violent Death**

Before proceeding to the positive evidence for my contention, I must state briefly why I have given up the conviction I once held in regard to these matters, and why I have rejected the view that when Adam transgressed he incurred natural death. I will readily agree that such an impression can be gained, the more so as many of us have been reared on it from childhood, but for all that, it is wrong, as hopelessly wrong as the immortality of the soul. Until it is discarded, a sound and correct understanding of the Atonement and a proper appreciation of what salvation means cannot be obtained.

In the beginning we are told (Genesis 2:17) that Adam was placed under the simple law to which was attached the plain threat that “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

Put aside for a moment, if you can, the ideas of your former teachers and think what these words mean. They mean that on the very day Adam sinned, he would suffer an immediate death. The plain and obvious import of those words is that a violent death was incurred.

The way to get a correct meaning is to compare passage with passage and see what there is in other parts of the Bible. There are ten other instances of the use of the term “*Muth temuth*” - “Dying thou shalt die,” and in every case, as is obvious from the context, it implies a violent death or execution.

In Genesis 20:7 these words were to Abimelech: “Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live; and if thou shalt restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou and all that are thine.”

Is there any suggestion of a slow process of dying there?

Then I turn to the 1<sup>st</sup>. Book of Kings 2:37. These words are addressed to Shimei. He was forbidden to leave Jerusalem - "For it shall be, that on the day thou goest out, and passest over the brook Kidron, thou shalt know for certain that thou shalt surely die; thy blood shall be upon thine own head."

Can anyone imagine this was a natural death, a slow process intended here?

You can consult the other eight instances and in every one a violent death is obviously intended.

So that on sound and accepted principles of scriptural exposition, we are justified in coming to the conclusion that Adam incurred a violent death, and subsequent Scriptures confirm that view. It is laid down that the wages of sin is death and lest we should imagine that natural corruptibility was there intended, it is laid down in the law that "without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins." What is the significance of bloodshed if not to point to violent death? There is no natural death that involves the shedding of blood. The Law of Moses implies the same truth. The penalty of presumptuous sins and for heinous crimes like murder for which there was to be no ransom accepted, was death without remedy by smiting with the sword or stoning.

And even with the lesser breaches of the law where provision was made for forgiveness following repentance, the same principle is emphasized in another way. The sinner's life was spared, but only on condition that the appropriate sacrifice was brought to the door of the tabernacle, and the sin was transferred to the head of the animal, which was slain in the sinners stead. This particular law emphasizes that the penalty for sin is death.

There were constant warnings to the Israelites. There are a number of specific instances where disobedience was visited by the actual penalty. Nadab and Abihu and Korah will occur to you. They actually prove what the penalty is. They were smitten by God. Those instances are written for our learning that the penalty was violent death.

But there is another piece of evidence. We learn from Eve's words that they were not even to touch the tree "lest they die." In Numbers 4 we are told that the Kohathites were to bear the Ark and Sanctuary, but were not to touch any of the holy things "lest they die." Now if God intended something less than violent death when He spoke to Adam, did He mean the same slow process when He uttered the warning to the Kohathites, the bearers of the Ark? You can discover what meaning was attached to it by reference to the case of Uzziah who merely put forth his hand to steady the Ark. God smote him for his error. Thus, at the cost of a man's life for a very trifling offence, God demonstrated what, apart from His saving mercy, is the penalty for sin. It shows what we are expected to learn in regard to Adam and sin, that it was a violent death that was incurred.

I affirm then that we are required to come to the conclusion that Adam incurred an immediate death. But though he merits it, he did not suffer it, for had he been put to death that would have been the end of him, for as a sinner justly convicted and punished, there was no hope.

But what is more important, if the sentence had been executed there would have been no human race. You and I would never have existed.

Thus, after the transgression, Adam was in a truly desperate situation, liable to instant death and helpless and hopeless apart from the mercy of God. What could God do? His word had gone forth and if law and justice were to be honoured, the sentence must be carried out. An arbitrary act of forgiveness would impugn God's own attributes. Indeed, righteousness was to be established as supreme; it was impossible simply to remit the penalty, but in His infinite wisdom, God revealed a way out of the dead-lock - something no other than God could have conceived, a wonderful scheme whereby the law would be honoured, justice upheld, and at the same time man and the whole race be delivered from his hopeless position.

Adam died, but he only died according to law, his life was forfeit and he was in bondage of Sin. The killing was carried out on the animals with the skins of which they were covered, as a type of redemption.

But unless it is recognized that what Adam incurred was a violent death; that what he incurred by sin was the kind of penalty carried out for sin under the law, and that by his action the whole of the human race was imperilled, it is impossible to appreciate from what we have been delivered, or to understand why the violent death of our Saviour upon the Cross was necessary for our salvation.

When we come to Jesus we find in His obedient life and awful death, the keystone of the area which stretches from Eden to the Kingdom. The Apostle John saw the redeemed around the throne singing a new song "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." They will all now, as a few here know, that we owe our very existence to the fact that the Lamb of God suffered Himself to be slain instead of Adam.

If Adam had borne his own penalty he would have perished because he was a sinner. Jesus was able to bear the penalty and not perish because the grave cannot hold the righteous man.

The single fact of the crucifixion is proof that what Adam incurred was violent death. If a natural death was sufficient why should not our Lord live a faithful life and obedient life and die a natural death in old age? Dr. Thomas recognized redemption was paid by a price. If we had not passed into bondage of Sin, then we could not have had salvation and we should have perished because the law of God would have been carried out.

It has only been possible to touch on the main features of the argument, but I think you must see there is good reason for carefully thinking over your position. Obviously a good case can be made out for Christadelphianism or it could not have held out for so many years, but the serious flaws are gradually coming to light and today we can justly say it is tottering.

The main part of the structure is good and true and on many points we are agreed but those bad stones in the foundation - the misconception of the wages of sin - sin-in-the-flesh, another failure to understand the Atonement, will bring it to ruin unless there become manifest a change of heart in the leaders and a willingness to learn.

It is pride which prevents the admission that mistakes have been made and none can appreciate better than I, how hard it is to think we can have ever been wrong. There was no greater admirer of Dr. Thomas and Robert Roberts than I. Never one studied and loved the works of these men more zealously. But against my will, also certainly against my inclination, I was driven to research by the discovery that there were direct contradictions in their writings.

I was no scholar-monger and wished and worked for union and fellowship, but I was awakened to the fact that the reason for all the discord and division was that no section of Christadelphians had the truth. I was shown that by brethren whom you of the Temperance Hall had cast out as heretics, men to whom I am indebted and eternally grateful for my understanding of God's purpose.

You have heard both sides of this part of the case and you have witnessed the inability of my opponent to meet the arguments I have addressed and his dilemma is obvious. If natural death is the penalty, then not only is God monstrously unjust in inflicting it upon innocent creatures who had nothing to do with Adam or his sin, but He also expects us to see mercy and justice in the fact that not only do we suffer it ourselves, but also Christ had to suffer it and die violently in order that we may be delivered. And even then we still suffer it ourselves; and sinners will suffer a further punishment still in the second death. So God, in effect, punishes the same offence three times. It is no wonder you cannot explain what the death of Christ accomplished. But once recognized that Adam incurred a violent death and the whole scheme is an open book.

We see the mercy of God in delivering him; we see a perfect explanation of why a violent death upon the Cross was necessary. We can see the real meaning of baptism - it is the symbolic suffering of the death to which we were subjected by the law of sin and death but which Jesus suffered in actual fact. We only suffer it in symbol and after we rise to the new life as a resurrection, we pass out of the condemnation into a state which Adam had lost by sin - communion with God (we are still corruptible as Adam was corruptible

when he was created. God said, "Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return." We do not know what would have happened if he had been obedient).

We are still corruptible and may still die in the absence of our Saviour, but not the death for sin. Natural death is not the death for sin. We passed that (death for sin) in symbol of the waters - Baptism, and when He returns we shall be changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye.

I ask what the Apostle means by, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit"? If natural death be the penalty, you have to dispose of that verse.

The idea that natural death is the penalty is incredible in the light of the true view of God's purpose. And when we think of the worthies of old it becomes almost ludicrous. Why did Balaam cry, "Let me die the death of the righteous; let my last end be like his"? Why did God tell Daniel, "Go thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest and stand in thy lot at the end of the days"?

Death terminates our period of probation. All the righteous will be rewarded together. What a marvellous purpose that is!

Christadelphians teach that God inflicts this death as the penalty of sin on the innocent. What about animals; why do they die? Are they under the law of sin? Did they become corrupt because of sin? Think of the martyr Stephen. Was he put to death by God? Did Paul receive the wages of sin? Precious in the sight of God is the death of His saints, because He will let them sleep, like He did Moses until the time comes.

Only a hopeless, wrong conception could lead us to regard this blessed sleep which He giveth to His beloved, as a punishment, as the wages of sin. Think of the words of Simeon, "Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace... for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

We should not regard death as a penalty. Cultivate that view and we may begin to count all things but loss for the excellency of His name. These things are worth thinking about. They were not decided centuries ago. If we cannot make progress we cannot get anywhere.

Jesus was outside the necessity of His atonement. That this is a fact expressly stated in Scripture, not in veiled prophetic language, or even by an apostle in symbolism but by the angel Gabriel in precise and unmistakable terms: "After three score and two years shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself."

If that statement is authentic there is an end of the argument. I am prepared to accept either the authorized or the marginal rendering, and I have assured myself as you can - of the substantial accuracy of that passage. But so we shall not spend time debating a technical matter I make you a present of it.

I base my case, not upon that or any other single text, but upon a wide foundation of scriptural testimony and evidential reasoning.

Now I must explain that I reject the theory which is common to Christadelphianism and many other sects:- that the result of the first sin was the fixation of an evil principle in the flesh. There is no scriptural evidence for such a change of nature and any theory which seeks to involve Christ in the need for redemption because of His sinful flesh is doomed before it is begun, because I deny the existence of such sinful flesh or sin in the flesh. Sin is transgression of law. It cannot exist in flesh. A man is sinful if he does wrong; if he changes his ways and does good, he is righteous, but his flesh remains the same in both conditions.

There are literally scores of texts which tell us why the death of the Lord Jesus Christ was necessary, which state explicitly why and for whom the atonement was made; "Christ died for the ungodly," "to save sinners," "the Just for the unjust," "for the sins of the people," "He suffered for us in the flesh." There is not a single one which says that He suffered for Himself, that He died on His own account, for His own nature, for His own sins, that He needed redemption or reconciliation. If there were one such I would resign the fight. But there is none and since to argue that His death was in any sense on His own account is to rob Him

of all glory and honour. I am an enemy to all such teaching. I have no personal ill-feeling because I have regard for all Christadelphians, people to whom I am indebted for the ground-work of the things I believe. All the same I think such teaching is wrong.

I want you first to consider one of the principle elements in the law of sacrifice. It is that every offering made for sin had to be the property of the offerer, a clean animal (as opposed to those which were specified as legally unclean), without fault and perfect of its kind. In 22nd Leviticus verse 20, "But whatsoever hath a blemish that shall ye not offer" and in Malachi 1:14, "Cursed be he which hath in his flock a male and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing."

A very important principle underlies that provision. The sacrifice had to be legally clean and physically perfect to begin with, because the sins were to be symbolically transferred to it before it was slain. If the offering were pledged to another, imperfect or legally unclean, it could not be acceptable. If Israel had made such an offering, not only would it have been ineffective and their sins remained, they would have been accursed for their neglect of a vital principle.

There is no one here who would question the fact. Nor is there one who would deny that Jesus is the antitype of all these Sacrifices.

How then is it possible to reverse all the facts and assent that Jesus needed redemption, was under condemnation, or legally unclean, or defiled in any sense of the term?

Let us consider what it is that involves the need for atonement and see how Jesus stands. Is it because we are human nature? I say; certainly not. God made us human nature and it is the simple medium through which life is manifested, the natural out of which the spiritual will be developed. Is it because we are corruptible? No, because the corruptibility is simply the natural law which controls our natural existence. It is no more a cause than it is a bar to eternal life. It is primarily alienation from God which puts us in need of redemption and this can result either from actual sins or transgression of a known law as in Adam's case, or from inclusion in a state of bondage under a federal head as for the purpose of Salvation, as are all Adam's descendants.

Now if Jesus stood in need of redemption He must have been alienated from His Father under one or other of these conditions - there is no other. But we are told expressly that He was under neither. He was personally without sin, holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners and could not therefore need redemption on that account.

Was He then in Adam, in the federal bondage, the condemnation that passes upon all men who were in the loins of Adam when he sinned as explained by Paul in Romans 5? Never! It was for that purpose and for that purpose alone that He was begotten of God that He should be free from condemnation. He was no son of Adam; He was the Second Adam, the Son of God, the Lord from heaven, deriving His life from the same source as Adam, not through human channels. He was not born of the will of the flesh. He received His life from above. It was because of that He was in a position to pay what Adam had forfeited. Christ had what Adam had lost - he forfeited everything.

It is a perfect parallel because Adam who sinned lost his life and Christ who did not sin had His life and gave it for Adam.

How perfect that arrangement is and how it fulfils the types and all the necessities of the case.

But there is another side to the picture. If in any sense His death was for Himself, He was a false witness and a deceiver. When He said "I am the Good Shepherd, I lay down my life for the sheep" was He subtly concealing the important fact that His death was necessary for Himself, that apart from obedience unto death He would have perished?

How could He be at the same time the Shepherd and one of the sheep for whom He gave His life? He claims our love and honour because He says it was for us, His friends. Shall we reply by saying, "Yea Lord, but it was also for yourself"? That is to rob Him of all honour and to make God unjust, for we had then been

redeemed by fraud. If His own eternal life and salvation depended on His death, would He not have been foolish to have refused? And if His very existence was contingent upon His obedience unto death, have we any means of knowing it was, in any sense for us?

Think of His agony in Gethsemane. "My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me." If Jesus was inevitably subject to the law of death by reason of His nature, that cry of anguish was foolishness. His death was His inescapable fate. What an awful thought - it is the outcome of the theory that His death was for Himself, or that Jesus stood in need of redemption.

Christ said of His life "No man taketh it from me, I lay it down of myself." If He was under condemnation His life was not His own. If He laid it down of Himself not even God took it from Him. He submitted voluntarily to the violent death which Adam incurred in Eden, to buy back the race from the bondage of sin, to rectify the action of God in passing over the sins done aforetime, and thus deliver the race from eternal destruction, and that there may be this opportunity for salvation.

This is the command He received from His Father; it was His Father's purpose centred in Him, but there was no penalty attached to it, and had He been unwilling or His courage unequal to the task, He would not have merited any punishment but would have entered into life alone.

I say then, it is certainly difficult to imagine Jesus refusing to take His destined place in the plan of God, but unless we can conceive the possibility of His having avoided the Cross without incurring any penalty, we can never appreciate the altruism of His sacrifice.

He gave Himself for us, the Just for the unjust. Why should we be afraid to recognize that marvellous fact? I will tell you why you are afraid - because the necessity of your beliefs involve Him in dying for Himself.

He gave Himself for us, the Just for the unjust. It is this inability to see in Christ One who is in no way liable or subject to death, yet who willingly took upon His own shoulders the burden of the race, that is the reason for the coldness and weaknesses of the religion of Christadelphianism. They are unable to manifest that love which would bind them together as the most powerful force in the world.

So I deny the existence of any such thing as sinful flesh. We can be servants of sin by obeying sin, or servants of righteousness by obeying righteousness. We still have the same flesh as we received, Jesus received the same flesh, but He was never under the dominion of sin and He was in a position to pay what Adam had forfeited.

There is plenty of literature available on sin-in-the-flesh and the origin of it. Where did sin-in-the-flesh originate? It is unscriptural and never heard of till it originated with Augustine at the same time as the immortality of the soul. It became an accepted part of Christianity and the Church and it is the last remnant of the Apostasy which Dr. Thomas had not abandoned. You will find it in the 9th of the 38 Articles of the Church of England exactly as you believe it.

Instead of going back to the beginning and the loss of life, finding out what it was that Adam lost. In the Statement of Faith they confused themselves with the effect of the sin on the flesh and its relation to Jesus. Sin cannot alter flesh; it can only alter character and standing in the sight of God. All who are sinners are alienated from God. Jesus was not alienated. Did He ever forfeit His right to Sonship? He did always the things that pleased His Father and when the time came that God determined for the completion of the purpose He began in Adam, Christ fitted Himself obediently into that purpose and suffered the death which was to ratify all that had gone before.

The Lord Jesus Christ was the same flesh as Adam. Despite that, He lived a righteous life and then bore the penalty due to sinners.

What love that shows towards us!

This is the key - that it was life that was forfeit. If that is overlooked all other errors flow. If flesh is

sinful, then God made it so. If Christ was sinful flesh, how then could He live a righteous life, and even if His flesh had been sinful, how could His death have improved matters?

If He had been sinful flesh then He would have been in the same boat as the rest of the human race, because He would have been under the same ruling which says “no man can by any means redeem his brother.” He could not even redeem Himself, much less others. And is it just in any sense to put a man to death because he was born under condemnation? Christ was never in bondage to sin; He was born the Son of God and purchased life for us with His own life.

After a certain parable Jesus said, “If they hear not Moses and the prophets neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.” You need no persuasion that He rose from the dead, you believe it, but dare you hear what Moses and the prophets have written concerning the death incurred by Adam and the penalty Jesus paid to deliver the race?

As plainly as words and laws and types can do, they tell us Adam incurred immediate inflicted death, that it was life that was lost in the Garden of Eden, that Adam incurred a death involving bloodshed and if God were merely just, that would be the penalty of all sinners.

Ernest Brady

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## First Day of the Week

**In our last Circular Letter we published an article by Brother H.C.Gates asking if the disciples met on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week to Break Bread? We have two replies; the first from Brother Paul Pells and the second from Brother Allon Maxwell. We thank them both for their thoughtful and interesting comments.**

### **Brother Paul Pells writes:**

Dear Brother Russell, - **Brother H C Gate’s Article.**

I read with interest our brother’s well researched study on “should we break bread?”

The ‘Hebrew’ character of this subject has long been overlooked and if we should still be doing this memorial. Even if we should, it wouldn’t convert to a first day of the week but a yearly memorial, as he points that Jesus’ death was on the 14<sup>th</sup> Nisan, so the memorial would be the night before. Personally, I believe Jesus was only speaking to his disciples if the gospel reports are correct. Even if Paul passed on what he ‘heard’ to the Corinthians, he did not tell the Colossians, Ephesians, etc. Do you suppose these other ecclesias were doing it also as their letters from Paul had no instructions to do so? So why would we arrogate these instructions to ourselves just because we believe Jesus is our saviour, understanding they were not written to us and our situations? Perhaps ‘Constantine’ placed these “words of Jesus” on the apostle Paul’s lips?

Your fellow student and brother, Paul Pells.

### **Brother Allon Maxwell writes:**

Hello Russell,

I read with interest, H.C.Gates’ article on “The First Day of the Week” in the Sept/Oct Circular Letter, in which he suggests that the Greek phrase **δε μια των σαββατων (de mia twn sabbatwn)** should actually be translated “one of the sabbaths”.

I think it most likely that H.C.Gates’ literal word for word translation is completely wrong. It flies in the

face of the overwhelming evidence of the lexicons and concordances, which clearly support the translators of our English Bibles, who have rendered it: “the first day of the week”.

First, I think he has failed to take due note that, according to the lexicons, the Hebrew word “Shabbath” has more than one meaning. These include “seventh day Sabbath”, or “week”, or “sabbath year”, or even one of the Jewish annual feasts. The choice depends on context. When the equivalent Greek word is used by Jewish writers in the Gospels, it is important to distinguish between these possible meanings, again depending on context. We have this same problem in our English mother tongue don’t we? There are many words in English which have more than one meaning!

Further, I think H.C.Gates has completely missed the Hebrew idiom behind the phrase. **δε μια των σαββατων (de mia twn sabbatwn)’**

Of course it is true that, translated word for word, it could be read literally as: “the one of the sabbaths” However this is one of those cases where a literal word for word translation does not do justice to Hebrew idiomatic use. There is a Hebrew idiom in this phrase where “one” is used idiomatically for “first day” and “sabbath” is used idiomatically for “week”.

The Jews did not have names for the days of the week. They used numbers. When a Jew wanted to say “Sunday” or the “first day of the week”, he actually said something like “The one of the seven” or “the first of the seven”, or “the one after the Sabbath”.

Thus in Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1, Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2, it seems clear that “first day of the week” is a valid translation of the idiom.

One of the compelling reasons for accepting Sunday as the day Jesus rose from the dead is in the fulfilled prophecy behind the Jewish Feast Of The First Fruits. Paul seems to use it that way in 1 Corinthians 15:20,23.

The timing of this feast is found in Leviticus 23:11. It is to be “on the day after the Sabbath.” However, Sadducees and Pharisees differed on the interpretation of which Sabbath was meant.

Sadducees interpreted it as the day after the seventh day Sabbath which occurred during the week of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Thus from year to year, the Sadducean Firstfruits was always on a first day of the week (but not on the same day of the month). And of course it follows that by this reckoning, Pentecost was also always on a Sunday.

On the other hand, Pharisees understood the “sabbath” to mean the actual Passover Feast Day - The First Day of Unleavened Bread, which is the 15th Nisan. Thus for the Pharisees, Firstfruits was always on 16th Nisan. This interpretation is found in Josephus Ant. III, 10, 5. From brief research, it seems to be the prevailing practice of modern Judaism.

The truly amazing thing about this is that God had arranged things so that in the year Jesus died, the “Firstfruits” date set by both the Sadducees and Pharisees was the same - it coincided on a Sunday! In most other years it would have fallen on different dates, and different days of the week - but this year, both Pharisees and Sadducees were offering their Firstfruits on the day Jesus rose from the dead! Neither party could have had valid grounds for rejecting Him on this count!

It is also interesting to note that in all four Gospels, the Greek uses the plural form of “Sabbath”. (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1). There is a good reason for this. The first day of the week on which Jesus rose, was also the first day of the seven weeks leading up to Pentecost. It is not simply the first day of a single week, it is the first day of several weeks. Hence the plural form “sabbaths”. The Gospel writers are reminding us that this particular “first day” is also the “feast of the firstfruits”!

A similar comment applies to Acts 20:7, where the Greek says that disciples broke bread on the first day of the “weeks”. The plural form emphasises that it was something they did every week. The same comment

is applicable to 1 Corinthians 16:2, which also has the plural form “weeks.” The collection for the poor wasn’t just a “one off” event for one week only. It was done every “first day of the weeks”.

Hope this is useful. Allon

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## **We have received the following letter from Richard Lister:**

Dear Editor, My comments on articles in C.L. No.215 (Sept/Oct. 2005):

1. p.9 “ransom” means purchase price. Christ’s purchase price was obedience unto death, putting to death the flesh, by nailing it to the cross with all its lusts and affections (Philippians 2:8,9; Colossians 1:14: 20-22).

2. “Concluded all under sin” contradicts the statement on p.14 “By this means He proved that we too could be sinless.” This is the heresy of perfect obedience nowhere taught in scripture and constitutes a fundamental heresy (Romans 3.10,19,20,23). Otherwise there would be no need for a Redeemer.

3. “Natural decay” - an unscriptural phrase, based on the assumption of no physical change at the fall, but instead a “legal condemnation” of Adam because of transgression. Violates fundamental doctrine as below:

4. Romans 5:12, 19 many “as by one man (Adam) sin entered the world, and death by sin” = the origin of mortality, as understood by Paul and agreeing with Genesis “in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,” i.e. death stricken nature commenced with eating of the fruit of the tree. “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made (constituted) sinners.” I.e. we inherit a sinful constitution.

5. Romans 7:18 “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.” Paul’s conviction implying a profound change at the fall (from the very good state).

6. Romans 7:23 “I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind” Paul’s personal experience of the conflict between the flesh and the spirit.

7. Hebrews 2:14 Christ of identical sins flesh nature which Paul calls the *diabolos*. I.e. human nature is the devil.

8. Romans 8:3 Your arguments to explain away this verse are totally unconvincing, (p. 15)

9. Job 14:1,4; 15:14-16 man that in born of woman is unclean

10. See the laws of uncleanness in Leviticus, including childbirth (Leviticus 12-16). Mary required purification (33 days), and had to make a sin offering before the priest (God’s representative). She had been defiled by childbirth. Christ was necessitated to be circumcised the 8th day. Why? The flesh profiteth nothing. The flesh has to be cut off. This was the lesson of circumcision. He is a Jew who has circumcised the heart (inward cleansing). Christ’s nature was as unclean as the bodies he died for. This is the clear teaching of scripture. He put this unclean nature to death with all its lusts and affections.

11. p. 16 Substitution. You allege that Paul taught substitution. By saying that Christ died for all (believers) this is not implying substitution but simply stating the facts of the scheme of redemption God had set in place, namely our redemption/salvation was dependent on Christ’s perfect sacrifice, i.e. the sacrifice of a sinless man made in our nature. The priesthood of God is based on the principle of representative things, all things under the law were representative. The animal sacrifice submitted by the offerer was representative (of himself). It was not efficacious unless he saw this. Otherwise it was a meaningless ritual. If he thought it was simply a substitute and he was now Scott free or acquitted, then he was deluded. So it is with Christ. If we think that Christ’s sacrifice was a substitute for ours, then we have completely missed the

point. What Christ's sacrifice is telling us is that we (his followers) have to crucify the lusts and affections of the flesh, otherwise there is no atonement.

Page 6 :-

1. This contention "on one of the Sabbaths" instead of "on the first day" as the A.V. has it, is not supported by the Diaglot, Bullinger or Companion Bible.

2. "3 days and 3 nights" is never idiom, but literal as in the case of Jonah (the sign of the prophet Jonah). "The third day" may be idiom.

3. Wavesheaf. Sabbath is referred to as Sabbath, high day (15th Abib) is referred to as holy convocation. To try and make out the first day is the literal Sabbath (seventh day) is forcing scripture against the testimony.

4. The eighth day has peculiar importance. The day of circumcision. A holy day in the feast of Tabernacles. The day kept as the Sabbath in the Kingdom (Ezekiel 43:27). The beyond period (following the Millennium) (when all flesh is cut off and God is all in all. It is perfectly fitting therefore that this day (the eighth day) be kept as a memorial of Christ's death and resurrection, following apostolic custom.

5. To try to argue that the apostles never kept the memorial in the face of Luke 22; I Corinthians 10; I Corinthians 11 is bizarre and serves to illustrate that strong delusion leads a person deeper and deeper into the mire of apostasy. Go astray on one thing (like the atonement) and it is not long before the carnal mind is seeing all sorts of other crotchets in its self-delusion.

Yours truly, Richard Lister

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### **In response to the above, Brother Phil Parry writes:-**

With regard to the comments on C.L. 215 by Mr Lister his position is similar to the one Paul relates to the people under Moses in 2 Corinthians 3, when Moses in addressing them found it necessary to put a veil over his face by reason of the glory displayed and yet was to be done away in Christ. They could not see beyond that letter of the law behind the veil no more than could Robert Roberts in his comments on a Jew who might have kept the Law of Moses that could not of itself give Life (St Paul) and have to die to be worthy of a resurrection not to everlasting life but a decision by the Judge, Jesus, in whose position he had become?

It appears evident to me that Mr Lister when he reads the Bible and also our writings, the veil of much Christadelphian error is upon his eyes and heart and he cannot look beyond it.

I remember him writing to me a little time ago to the point that if we did not accept all which Dr. Thomas states in Eureka we have not The Truth, yet he seems not to have noticed what Dr Thomas said about the blood of Jesus being more precious than the blood of those who have been begotten by the will of the flesh. Dr. Thomas is saying that the nature of Christ was different from the nature of ourselves which Mr Lister describes as "death stricken" yet Edward Turney believed Christ's nature to be the same as ours but instead of accusing Dr. Thomas of saying Christ did not come in the same nature as ourselves through different blood, Edward Turney is accused falsely of stating it.

The error of Christadelphianism originates mainly from Robert Roberts departing from the truth he and Dr. Thomas shared in 1869, i.e. the fact that no change took place in Adam's physical nature when he sinned. Dr Thomas retained this view and erred only in his view that allowing Adam to die by natural decay of his present created nature was the penalty for sin

According to Christadelphian teaching together with Mr Lister's view, Mary, being a woman, was unclean physically but Scripture does not prove this nor state it to be so; unless it becomes so in the legal

sense, a woman is of the same nature in which God created both Adam and Eve - clean by physical nature but unclean by breach of law, not by a change of nature.

Was Mary's nature changed when she became clean through the offering under the law necessitated by Christ's birth? This confusing of the physical with the legal will not stand the test of Scripture. Jesus said to His disciples, "Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken to you." But they were still flesh and blood before and after he said it.

Paul was not speaking of his physical flesh but impersonating himself as an unregenerated Jew under the Law when he said "In me, that is in my flesh dwelleth no good thing." And in that state he could not perform that which was of any value unto salvation, but turning to the believers converted to Christ he said, "But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit..." Yet they were still flesh and blood, proving that the term "flesh" which Paul used related to a state of non-conversion and non-regeneration of the mind through the operation of the Spirit word. Please note Paul's words, "I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Was Christ "no good thing" dwelling in Paul? Even Adam Clarke a D.D. of the Anglican Church condemns this idea of Christadelphians and others, believing that Paul was speaking of himself in the present tense when his conversion in Christ would make it impossible to speak of himself in such a way. Anyone professing to know the truth should be qualified to be able to discriminate and rightly divide the word of Truth.

The first line of Mr Lister's letter sites a Ransom, that it means purchase price; that Christ's purchase price was obedience unto death, putting the flesh to death by nailing it to the cross with all its lusts and affections. Philippians 2:8,9, Colossians 1:14,20-22. But what Jesus is said to have done on the cross He had already done - "Tempted in all points as we are and yet without sin." Not a man with condemned flesh but as a Lamb without spot and without blemish. He gave a life, not a carcass of lifeless flesh; His flesh saw no corruption and came back from the tomb flesh and bones energised by Spirit.

Mr Lister implies that Jesus sacrificed His sinless character and that His death was compulsory which was not so. (On Ransom, see Eureka, Vol. 1. Page 20).

Perfect obedience not taught in Scripture? Mr Lister, I have just quoted it of Jesus - "Without sin."

Your No. 4 statement is pathetic: you make Paul's "death by sin" to be "death by fruit poisoning" and its ability to change the nature to a process of decay which the author of Eureka says was already operative.

All things under the law "representative"? Think again. Redeemed with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without spot or blemish. When lambs were offered under the law by the sinner how could they be representative when they were typical of Christ? Surely the one who offered for sin was under sentence of death by the law, but God appointed the clean animal to be slain in the place of the one who offered it. How can a sinless animal represent a sinner?

A representative must be of the same character and sentiments of the person he represents. On the matter of those believers in Christ alive at His coming, Robert Roberts (see Visible Hand of God) had to accept that Jesus was their substitute seeing they had not experienced death. If Mr Lister and other Christadelphians prefer to be stubborn and of 'sinful, condemned flesh' I direct him again to Revelation 22:10-12.

P.Parry

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## **2<sup>nd</sup> response:- Copy of letter sent to Richard Lister:**

In your first paragraph, Richard, you say "Ransom means purchase price," and of course Scripture agrees, for we read in Matthew 20:28 that Jesus said He came "to give his life a ransom for many." So if ransom means purchase price then Jesus came to give His life as the purchase price for many. As we would expect, Paul also agrees where in Acts 20:28 he says that Jesus purchased the church of God with His own blood, and again, in his letter to the Ephesians (1:13,14), Paul writes of the future time of inheritance in the

Kingdom, “in whom ye trusted, after ye had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the deliverance of the purchase possession, unto the praise of his glory.”

So the purchase price was the precious blood of Jesus, in which was His life. Jesus Himself tells us that He gave His life as the ransom price. To argue that the purchase price was ‘His obedience unto death, the putting to death of the flesh’ I feel is distorting His words to make them fit in with the Doctrine of Original Sin. From the standpoint of the Roman Catholic the Doctrine of Original Sin requires the Doctrine of the Immaculate Conception in order to give Jesus flesh that doesn’t need destroying, but for the Christadelphian there is no such need – for them, Jesus’ flesh had to be destroyed.

I do not see that either teaching can be correct for there is nothing wrong with our flesh; it is as God created Adam in the beginning. Your reference to Colossians 1:20-22 gives us an indication of where the problem lies for Paul writes “And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.” “Alienated... in your mind” - not in your flesh. How could our flesh be alienated when it is the flesh that God created for us?

Your second point that “concluded under sin” contradicts, “we too can be sinless” is likewise answered when we see that being “concluded under sin” refers to our alienated position in Adam, and again has nothing to do with our flesh as such. Sin, being transgression of law is a legal matter. Being concluded under the one sin of Adam is therefore a legal matter; this is our alienation from God - being placed in Adam, but we see this as a blessing for the purpose of salvation in Christ, so that all who will can accept Jesus in faith and receive everlasting life through Him who gave His life in place of Adam’s forfeited life.

Points 3 and 4 depend on defining your terms. You say “death by sin = the origin of mortality,” and by the manner in which you write I think you may be surprised that I entirely agree with you. However, before you think I accept your argument, let me say that the death that came by sin is a legal death – a putting to death for sin – execution - a condemnation to death, and this is mortality, a legal term showing that Adam was mortalized (Oxford Dictionary – “to make mortal”). But this doesn’t assume that he would not have died a natural death from old age, accident or illness while in his first relationship with God as His created son, before he became alienated through transgression (though I have little doubt that God would have protected him while in the Garden from premature death, such as by accident).

You quote that “in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” then say it means Adam’s death stricken nature commenced with the eating of the fruit of the tree, but Richard, it doesn’t say this does it? And you quote “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made (constituted) sinners” and say it means we inherit a sinful constitution. But again, Richard it doesn’t say this either. The only reason I can think of for reading these meanings into Scripture is an attempt to support the doctrine of sinful flesh introduced into the early church by St. Augustine. The translators of the Bible appointed by King James were biased in favour of this teaching and this can be seen to have influenced their translation in several places.

It is interesting to note that you are using the term ‘constituted’ and ‘constitution’ in two different ways thus giving rise to confusion. You use ‘constitution’ in the sense of physical make up when you claim that “we inherit a sinful constitution,” but you also quote Romans 5:19 “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners,” where ‘made’ means ‘designate’ or ‘constitute’ in a legal sense, and does not here refer to one’s physical make up.

In No 5 you refer to Romans 7 and say that there must have been a change in Adam’s flesh at the fall – a change from a very good state. Supporting this with, “For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.” But if we take this in context we find that Paul is referring to our legal position. The chapter starts by comparing our legal relationship to the law of sin and death with the law of marriage, giving the example of a wife “that if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband” and is free to marry again. Then he goes on to show that “Wherefore my brethren, ye also become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead... for when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.”

Question: When were we in the flesh?  
Answer: Before we became dead to the law.

Question: Now we are dead to the law, are we still in bodies of flesh and blood?  
Answer: Yes.

Question: In what sense then are we not in the flesh?  
Answer: When we are counted as being in Christ.

In this we see that Paul is not talking about our physical flesh but referring to flesh in a legal sense. Flesh that is “dead to the law” – “ye are not in the flesh.” These can only be understood in the legal sense.

So when we come to verse 18 which you quote - “For I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing” why do you leave the legal aspect which Paul is dealing with and assume that Paul has in some way jumped from the legal aspect to the physical aspect which supposes a fall from a previous good state? There is nothing in this chapter which justifies such a leap especially as Paul goes on to thank God for his deliverance from legal condemnation – “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.”

From verse 14 to verse 24 Paul talks in the present tense about his past life. It is necessary to know why this should be so we ask the questions:

Question: Was Paul in Christ when he wrote his letter to the Romans?  
Answer: Yes he was.

Question: Did Paul do the will of God during his life as a disciple?  
Answer: Yes, always. He said “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

Question: Did he ever fail in doing right during his life as a disciple?  
Answer: There is not a single incident recorded in which he failed.

Question: How then are we to understand Paul’s use of the present tense in Romans 7:14 to 24?  
Answer: There is no need for these verses to be read in the present tense; this was the choice of the translators and they could have translated this portion in the past tense as the Greek language allows.

Next you refer to Hebrews 2:14 and say that Paul calls sinflesh nature the diabolos. This could perhaps be so if one is willing to accept that our physical flesh is at fault. But even here it is difficult to see how the diabolos can flee from us if we resist him. However, we see that in all these things that Scripture is considering the legal aspect of sin and sinfulness, and then we find no difficulties in ruling out the Doctrine of Original Sin introduced by St Augustine.

Romans 8:3. Of this you say we are trying to explain away its teaching of sinful flesh, but really, Richard, if you want to accept this verse at face value then do so. But I have never found flesh to be called sinful anywhere in the Bible and neither did Paul say it was sinful in this verse. It truly is a mistranslation. Neither is there anywhere in Scripture which says that flesh is condemned, but there are numerous places where sin is condemned. The way in which Jesus condemned sin was by showing us that we do not have to sin; there is no commandment which we cannot keep. He kept the commandments and we could, if we are as determined as He was.

Points 9 and 10. You refer to Job 14:1,4 - “man that is born of a woman is unclean... who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.” But this quotation doesn’t help you. The Hebrew word for ‘clean’ refers to those ceremonial and temporary conditions by issues or contact with unclean animals or food, etc. Again we see this confusion between the physical and legal.

Point 11. Not only did Paul teach ‘substitution’ but the sacrifices for sin throughout the Old Testament are based on this same understanding and teaching. The animal died so that the sinner did not. The sins of

the people were placed on the sacrificial animals so that the people did not suffer for them. Every Jew knew and understood this, so why do Christadelphians deny the obvious?

The article by Brother H.C.Gates is commented on elsewhere in this Circular Letter.

Yours truly, Russell.

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## **Sound Words and Advice by Paul the Apostle to Timothy and All who Respect and Study God's Word.**

*"Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."* 2 Timothy 1:13.

*"Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things. Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel."* 2 Timothy 2:7. (See also 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4; Psalm 2:7; Isaiah 53:5; Daniel 9:26).

Paul's gospel of the resurrection means raised incorruptible. Christ being the first firstfruits from the dead among many brethren.

We who study the word of God must rightly divide it or we shall not be approved of God, as Paul exhorted Timothy.

There are many examples of doing this, from Genesis to Revelation, but mention of a few could shock some people steeped in tradition.

We can survey the wonders of the universe – the sun, moon and stars together with the earth and all its wonderful scenery and seasons where nothing is left to chance but speaks of an infinite mind incomprehensible unless revealed in some way. So we are informed, if we choose to accept the old and new testament Scriptures and apostolic epistles Spirit inspired, that without faith it is impossible to please a certain one who is invisible to the naked eye, for he that cometh to Him by invitation must believe that He exists and is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. Hebrews 11:6. The same Hebrew Christian who wrote this also wrote "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things by whom (on account of whom) he made the worlds.

No support here for the theory of a big bang leaving everything to operate by chance; a fact proved continually. The answer to the 'Big Bang' theory is in Genesis chapter 1 "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." As to when that was we know not but can only conclude that in a period of time, a change had taken place giving utterance to a statement to the effect the earth was without form and void, with darkness upon the face of the deep.

The record says that God caused light and life to exist on earth and in the waters, but our interest should centre upon our own species, and the first man Adam whose continuance of natural life was conditional upon his obedience to his Creator. Genesis 2:15-17.

Eve transgressed so did Adam, but the record says nothing of a pronounced sentence of death upon them. The sentence was automatic according to Genesis 2:17 and they both knew it by what they had done. They were immediately in need of Redemption from the 'Death by Sin' and this was foreseen by the Creator who had made provision for such a position so that what was said to them meant that they would continue their natural existence in accordance with their corruptible created nature until they ceased to breathe the breath of life. God did not condemn their flesh; He condemned their sin, their conscience was defiled by sin,

not their flesh. Their flesh was as God made it, no change took place and as the apostle John wrote, “hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every Spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.” And I myself declare that every spirit that says or believes that Adam and Eve’s nature was changed to a defiled and condemned substance is not of the Spirit of God and must be antichrist, for indeed Scripture is void of such false teaching.

John the Baptist described Adam and Eve’s sin as the “sin of the world,” not the sins of the world of his own day but the world of God’s creation “very good” but defiled by Adam’s sin thus making necessary the birth and sacrifice of God’s Son to take it away. John’s statement confirms there is a lamb involved. This is shown in Genesis where a lamb of God’s choice was slain to secure a provisional covering for ‘The Sin’ until the antitype of the substituted animal was produced upon the scene as stated by St Paul “When the fullness of the time was come (Genesis 49:10) God sent forth His Son made of a woman under the Law to redeem them which were under the Law that we might receive the adoption of sons.. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts crying Abba Father.” Galatians 4:4-6.

Made of a woman says Paul who understood what he was saying and not in degradation of the woman or of her flesh but simply to bring to the birth a human being in the nature of the first created man, Adam the son of God. Paul is talking of relationship not human nature – the difference between Jesus in relation to His Father, free born, and those who needed to be brought into the same relationship – adopted sons, through Him.

God is just and the justifier of him that believeth in His Son Jesus but not of them that say He was unclean and condemned because of being born of a woman. The difference between Jesus and other males was that He was not gendered through the operation of a man concluded under the Law of Sin and Death, but by the operation of the Spirit power of God upon the seed of the woman which is of no value at certain times and in a sense independent of the woman, yet in the Genesis record it is personified as fulfilling a prophecy and purpose of God – Genesis 3:14,15; Genesis 12:7; Galatians 3:16, 29.

The purpose of God through the seed of the woman commenced through a sacrifice and continued with sacrifices and offerings; Cain, Abel, Noah, Abraham and all under Moses. Job also was said to be a perfect and righteous man who shunned evil, yet this righteousness was not of himself or he would not have associated with sacrifices and offerings due to his knowledge of things from the beginning, especially justification in God’s sight.

Job knew ‘clean’ in application to animals meant they were acceptable in the sight of God. Noah also knew the ‘clean’ from the ‘unclean’ when he took into the Ark certain animals and fowls of the air with flesh of their own kind but Noah must have been instructed as to which were clean and unclean, therefore this must apply in a legal sense and continued so under the Mosaic Law, and Abraham before that. Why in any case should the sin of Adam cause a change in the various species as recorded for Noah in Genesis 6:19-22 and 7:2,3? God’s created species were under physical law but not moral law as was the case with the human, so that clean species made righteous and justified, and ‘unclean’ alienated from God constituted a sinner and unjustified.

Who can be a human being other than being born of a woman? So the expression used “born of a woman” means the position of being born under, or concluded under Adamic Sin which is legally unclean. Job was already in the legally and morally justified position through his association and faith in the animal sacrifices foreshadowing Christ and his acknowledgement of the One who would produce Him as the Lamb of God; hence his declaration and faith, “I know that my Redeemer liveth.”

In his offering of the Ransom, the natural unforfeited life of Jesus, God was the Redeemer. (Romans 8:32). “God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved.” Saved from what? A legal situation whereby a moral action of belief and faith without any physical change of nature can alter it. Romans 8:1,2) Peter was informed by Jesus that he and his eleven fellow disciples were clean, so Judas Iscariot was the unclean one referred to. (John 13:11). Was not Judas of the same physical nature as the other eleven? Of course he was. Therefore the position as with Paul was a legal one. After the birth of Jesus, Mary offered for her uncleanness according to the law and she became clean,

but was she not the same flesh and blood nature as before? The answer is her flesh could never have been unclean as falsely stated by many.

It is Divine Law that governs the case from Eden to Gethsemane. I say Gethsemane because at that time when Jesus prayed to His Father He was not from birth under the law of Sin and Death as others born of the male line of Adam. Jesus was under no compulsion to die on Calvary and never in man's history has God declared of any man to die for his fellow men. The Scriptures reveal that it was God's will that His only begotten Son would do so but Jesus Himself declared He was under no compulsion but that if He desired, God would give Him twelve legions of angels to save Him from inflicted death and He would consequently have remained alone. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone, but if it die it beareth much fruit." "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given unto the Son to have life in himself." "I am the Bread of Life, he that eateth me even he shall live by me." "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and I in him."

The Word of God which is Spirit and Life received of the Father, see John 3:29-32; note also John 3:13; Romans 9:5. John the Baptist said, "A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven," hence his words concerning Jesus in John 3:32 – "And what he hath seen and heard that he testifieth."

Twice in Acts 4 the disciples spoke of God's Son, "thy holy child Jesus" (vv 25 & 27). Under the Mosaic Law the firstborn human male though born of the will of the flesh was to be regarded holy (Exodus 13), how much more Him that was born of the will of God! It was the Christadelphian rejection of the angels message to the virgin Mary – "That Holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" – and other errors of their doctrine which led to the resignation of myself and my wife from the Central Fellowship as then founded on "Condemned flesh" – Dying for Himself to destroy the devil in it," yet failing to do so in that He saw no corruption. They could not see or accept it was the power of the law of Sin and Death, over us that He destroyed by His sacrifice.

Can you then explain the following Christadelphian puzzle? Animals could only be legally clean or unclean as the Creator decided, for sacrifice or for eating. I have shown earlier that the woman was no more unclean in flesh than was the man, and in Scripture the term 'clean' means 'undefiled in conscience,' – justification by faith and righteous by grace – the flesh unaltered. Paul used the word 'clean' when addressing those who opposed his teaching of Christ – Acts 18:6, "I am clean."

The sheet let down at the four corners with all manner of beasts and creeping things that Peter beheld – the voice said "Arise, Peter, kill and eat." Nothing revealed that they could lawfully be eaten, but Peter recognized them as 'unclean under the Law' by their species and refused to eat. Yet they were in fact clean, not common or unclean, and looked no different as a result of God's statement "What God hath cleansed..."

The general Christadelphian teaching is that Mary was of unclean flesh prior to the birth of Christ and when He was born her flesh became unclean as a result, and then being born of a woman Jesus consequently was unclean and remained so as condemned flesh or made Sinful Flesh and in order to cleanse it He must die for Himself, yet Mary offered for her cleansing according to the law and after a number of days she became clean without destroying by death her 'clean flesh by law.'

Are you still confused by your own doctrine? Help has been offered since 1873 and has been rejected and despised. To those responsible, I say as Paul did, "Your blood be upon your own heads, I am clean:" Acts 18:6, justified by Him who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Brother Phil Parry.

**The following article was posted on to a Christadelphian Forum:**

## **The Nazarene Fellowship**

In Brother Alan Eyres book “Brethren in Christ” he writes of a Polish Brother, Andrzej Wiszowaty who lived from 1608 to 1678. This Andrzej Wiszowaty pointed to three options for all who would believe in God. It went something like this but I have added a few of my own comments also:-

**1.** Should we accept the authority of the Church and allow ourselves to be told what we must believe? Are we to accept the authority of the Pope for example?

Yet this is what happens once any group or denomination draws up a Statement of Faith or Creed stating what is to be believed. I make the claim that there has never been a statement of faith or creed which agrees with Scripture in all its points. I was amazed when one of the arranging Brethren, on seeing I would be disfellowshipped if I stuck to my principles, said to me - “Greater minds than mine have worked it out and I accept what they say. Can’t you do the same?”

**2.** Should we expect the Holy Spirit to be our guide as do evangelicals and others?

Holy Men of old wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit but since the time of the Apostles, all those claiming Holy Spirit guidance such a evangelicals and Charismatics, have caused only confusion, contradiction and absurdity.

**3.** Should we use our reasoning powers? This is really the only course left to us.

We must use our God-given powers of logic and common sense and come to God and reason with Him as He asks us to do in Isaiah 1:18. Only by this means can any one determine the true teachings of the Bible.

When we look to such people as Dr Thomas who kept his promise to search out the truth of the Scriptures we find that it wasn’t shown to him all at once, for over the years of searching he changed his mind at times and seemed unsettled on some points until close to the end of his life. However, I believe God answered his prayer and revealed all to him before he died. With this in mind it is interesting to see what John Thomas was saying during his final years. One of the most striking things is that he was getting away from the idea of sinful flesh. In The Ambassador magazine for March 1869 he wrote:-

“Our friend imagines there was a change in the nature of Adam when he transgressed. There is no evidence of this whatever, and the presumption and evidence are entirely contrary. There was a change in Adam’s relation to his Maker, but not in the nature of his organisation.”

While in March 1871 John Thomas was in the middle of writing an article entitled “What is Flesh?” when he died on the 15th day of that month. He opened by saying:-

“I would suggest that discussion of the very knotty and intricate subject of the *quo modo* of the manifestation of Deity in flesh be suspended among you till each member of the ecclesia be furnished with a copy of my forthcoming *Pictorial Illustration* and explanatory *Key*. In the meantime it may not be amiss for our metaphysical friends to see if they can agree among themselves with regard to the more simple, proximate and primary question, What is flesh? before they undertake to speculate dogmatically concerning the manifestation of Deity in flesh, who is Spirit.”

To me it seems a tragedy that Robert Roberts did a somersault regarding these views of Dr. Thomas and then went on to formulate a creed which in effect posthumously disfellowshipped him, but worse than that, Robert Roberts was the direct cause of many disruptions so that large numbers of Christadelphians went away to form others Churches, especially in America.

History has shown that Edward Turney followed on where Dr Thomas left off and further rationalised the Dr's views. It may seem strange to some but the Nazarene Fellowship have a better claim to the name Christadelphian than do the Christadelphians! Be that as it may, the important matter is not the name but where does the truth of Scripture lie? The Nazarene Fellowship and the Christadelphians are poles apart in their understanding of the Atonement.

Jesus promised that if any man would do God's will he would know the doctrine (John 7:17) and I take it that Jesus meant that they would not only know but also understand His teaching. Thus we are assured that faithful followers of Jesus will not be left unknowing or not understanding if they will diligently seek, ask and knock. A full understanding may not come all at once; it didn't to Dr Thomas, and the full force and importance of all that Jesus taught may not come until the very last, but it will come to those who seek and remain faithful. Jesus has promised it. We are all at different stages of learning; we are all coming from different starting points; we are all travelling our path through different experiences, therefore a Statement of Faith is inappropriate, irrelevant and divisive. It is not our starting point and it is not our journey's end; it is a hindrance along the way and under the circumstances it is best ignored and avoided.

I hope all this doesn't sound like blowing our own trumpet, or in any sense, self-glorification; all we wish for is that God may be honoured and glorified in the way He asks of His servants.

For those who wish to know a little more about the Nazarene Fellowship there is the website they can go to at [www.thenazarenefellowship.co.uk](http://www.thenazarenefellowship.co.uk) This is very new and quite simple. One day, by the grace of God, it will be more comprehensive.

With Love to all in Jesus. Russell.

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**A few days after sending out our last Circular Letter I was sent the following Christadelphian booklet anonymously which is produced and distributed on behalf of the Appeal to All Ecclesias Committee.**

**Any comments on this article will be most welcome and we hope to published them in our next Circular Letter.**

## **SIN IN THE FLESH - ITS CAUSE AND CURE**

*“For such an high priest became us ... Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.” Hebrews 7:27-8*

In dealing with this vital subject as a doctrinal issue, it may appear to some as being cold and rigid. Therefore we ask the reader to remember that underlining all the thoughts expressed is the love, mercy, grace and kindness of our heavenly Father manifest in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **FOREWORD**

Due to disturbing reports of wrong doctrine being taught in the brotherhood concerning the atonement, The Appeal Committee published a booklet on that subject in 1998, containing the following paragraph:

“Sin is used in the Bible in two senses. In the first sense it describes the commission of acts which are contrary to God's laws and commandments or the omission of things which should be done, but it is also used for the physical defect in the nature of all who have descended from Adam which is a propensity to commit sin. This secondary use is styled 'sin in the flesh'. - Romans 8:3.”

Regrettably in the years since that booklet was issued, the wrong teaching on this subject has intensified and grown extensively in its influence, sowing discord within the brotherhood. For example there

has recently been correspondence in The Endeavour magazine illustrating a failure to understand the scriptural principles involved.

There is little dispute that forgiveness of sins committed, i.e. transgressions, is through the work of atonement wrought by the sacrifice of Christ, although the Endeavour contributors tend to avoid the word 'atonement'. The wrong doctrine currently being promulgated is mainly a denial of the need of atonement for what is described above as the secondary use of sin in the Bible. That is the covering, and consequent cleansing, of man's sinful nature, described by the Apostle Paul as "the motions of sins" (Rom. 7:5), "the law of sin" (Rom. 7:23, 25), "sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3) and "the devil (*diabolos*)" (Heb. 2:14). On the other hand it is taught that atonement is only for forgiveness of sins committed. Consequently it is said that as Jesus never sinned he did not need atonement for himself - whereas the scriptures (Heb. 5:3; 7:27), and the BASF, are clear that Jesus did offer for himself and was cleansed in this respect through his sacrifice.

The principal cause of this wrong understanding of the subject, we believe, is a failure to properly comprehend the origin of sin in the flesh. We are all very familiar with the record of the early chapters of Genesis, but very often the full significance of that record is misunderstood. In this booklet therefore, we will begin by looking at the record of the fall of man and its consequences in a little detail. We will then proceed to examine the means which God in His mercy has provided for man's redemption from his fallen state, so that the main purpose of creation may be achieved, which is the manifestation of the glory of God.

The Appeal to All Ecclesias Committee is therefore issuing this current booklet as a supplement to the one entitled The Atonement in order to strengthen the brotherhood; that we all may be united in a true understanding of this vital subject when we stand before the judgement seat at the return of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ which must surely be very near.

## **SIN IN THE FLESH - ITS CAUSE AND CURE**

### **In The Beginning**

Let us try for a few moments to put ourselves in the place of a person who had never heard of the Bible and had no knowledge whatsoever of its contents. Then one day he happens to come across a book with the words "Holy Bible" on its cover, and out of curiosity he opens it. He reads the title page and, as it happens to be what we know as the Authorised Version, "The Epistle Dedicatory". He thus learns that what he has before him is by no means a recent publication but a very ancient one written originally in what is styled the "Original Sacred Tongues", and translated into English by order of King James 1 of England.

He then does what we would do with any other book and starts reading at the beginning. What then would be his impressions after reading the first three chapters of Genesis?

He would have read that God created the heavens and the earth in six days. On the sixth day he made man in His own image and likeness, and gave to man certain instructions. At the end of the sixth day He saw that everything that He had made was very good, and then He rested on the seventh day. From this our reader would conclude that as yet evil, including the propensity within man to do that which is wrong, did not exist. He would then read what was clearly an expanded account of the sixth day because it contained a detailed account of the forming of man, whom God named Adam, and of the woman from his side. God also commanded the man not to eat of a tree called "The tree of knowledge of good and evil", under penalty of death. He may have wondered why chapter 2 should conclude with the words "And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (v25).

Then in Genesis 3 he reads that a serpent suggested to the woman that God did not mean what He had said, and puts suggestions into the mind of the woman, which results in first her, then Adam, disobeying God's commandment. They did not immediately fall down dead, but their very first reaction was "And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked," (3:7) so obviously they were now ashamed at their nakedness and their first priority was to cover it. But why? After all husbands and wives are not normally, even in these days, embarrassed at seeing one another's nakedness, and there was no one else to see them. Moreover later when God spake to Adam he said, "I was afraid, because I was naked" (3:10). So disobedience of God's command brought shame and fear. Obviously the "very good" (Gen. 1:31)

state at the end of the sixth day no longer applied to the bodies of the man and the woman- Those propensities to disobedience which the serpent had introduced to them were now a part of their physical being. Their bodies, alone amongst all that God had created, were present in a 'not good' state. This was their first knowledge of evil.

## **Fundamental Principles**

But the clothing which they provided for themselves was rather scanty, being described as "aprons" (Gen 3:7). It did not cover the parts of their bodies that had sinned, that is their ears, eyes and hands and mouths. If our new reader of the Bible consulted the marginal note he would read "things to gird around". With our access to concordances we discover that the Hebrew word means "a girdle to cover the loins". In other words what they covered was their shame and fear. They had already been told to be fruitful and multiply, so they would have realised that the evil state of their bodies would be transmitted to their children.

Our reader then proceeds to learn of the further consequences of their disobedience. The woman would suffer in childbirth, the whole of creation was cursed, and the man and woman were sentenced to death. They would not die immediately, but their life would be one of toil and labour. Yet there was a hint of hope. A seed of the woman was promised who would eventually .destroy the seed of the serpent which was the cause of their unclean bodies (Job 14:4). Also God provided them more adequate clothing which would cover their whole bodies. God Himself made them coats of skins and He clothed them. But this clothing obviously required the death of an animal.

Our reader would then understand the following principles:

1. God created a world which was very good.
2. That very good state was marred by the first human pair disobeying God's commandment, with the following consequences:
  - i) Man now possessed in his physical body, the propensity to act in a way contrary to God's will, which would be inherited by all his descendants.
  - ii) Man became mortal.
  - iii) The whole of creation was cursed.
  - iv) God provided a covering for man's body by a coat of skin which required the death of an animal.

We can now leave our new reader, and apply these fundamental principles to the knowledge we possess of scripture as a whole concerning sin and redemption. But it is interesting to observe that nowhere in this chapter do we read of forgiveness of sins, although we do not doubt that providing Adam and Eve thereafter manifested faith they would receive forgiveness. We have to wait until the giving of the law to Moses before we read of God extending forgiveness.

## **Forgiveness**

In Exodus 32, following the worship of the golden calf Moses says to the people "I will go up to the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin". He then pleads with the LORD to "forgive their sin". God does not however promise to do so but says, "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book" (vv30-33). The first time that we read of God providing forgiveness is when He proclaims His name to Moses "Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" (Ex. 34:7).

The means which Moses proposed in order to obtain forgiveness was "to make atonement which is a translation of the Hebrew word, *kaphar*. The way in which the word "atonement" is commonly used in English, does not however adequately represent the word *kaphar* which basically means "to cover" (Strong's concordance 5375), As we have already seen, the clothing provided by God in the garden of Eden was to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve, although the word *kaphar* is not used there. The first occurrence of the word is in Genesis 6:14, where it is rendered "pitch". Noah was commanded to pitch the ark "within and without" with pitch. The practical purpose of this was to render the ark waterproof, but Peter (1 Pet. 3:20-

21-) says concerning the flood, “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also save us... by the resurrection of Jesus Christ”. As Noah and his family entered into the ark, so we have entered into Christ, covered by his sacrifice.

The first time we read the English word “atonement” is in Exodus 29:33 in connection with the consecration of Aaron and his sons to be priests. It is the third occurrence of *kaphar*. Aaron and his sons were to “eat those things wherewith the atonement was made”, that is the animals referred to earlier in the chapter as offerings. There was no mention of this being for the forgiveness of sins. It was part of the process whereby they were hallowed or separated from the rest of Israel in order that they may minister unto the LORD. The atonement was a special covering of their sinful flesh so that they could approach near to the LORD which their ministration required. In verse 36 we are told that they had to, “offer every day a bullock for a sin offering for atonement: and thou shalt cleanse the altar, when thou hast made an atonement for it, and thou shalt anoint it, to sanctify it”. Obviously the altar did not need forgiveness for sins it had committed! It needed atonement because it had been constructed by a man of sinful flesh.

Much of the work of the priests was to make atonement for the children of Israel. Leviticus chapter 4 describes how this was done in order that sins which the people had committed may be forgiven. But later we read how atonement was made for the cleansing of various defilements of the flesh, such as leprosy or issues of various kinds. While it is true that leprosy was sometimes inflicted as a direct punishment for sin, this was by no means normally the case. Moreover in Leviticus 12 we read that a woman became unclean as a result of her and her husband acting in obedience to the commandment given to the first pair to be fruitful and multiply! A woman became unclean as a result of childbirth and the priest had to make atonement for her. This was because sinful flesh had been extended to a further generation.

### **‘Atonement’ Usage Analysed**

If we analyse all the occurrences of *kaphar* and its related words in the Old Testament, we find that in approximately one case out of every four it relates to the cleansing of defilements of the flesh. When we apply the numerous types contained in the offerings under the law to the work of Christ taught in the New Testament, we see the same principle. It perhaps then comes as a surprise at first to discover that there is no equivalent Greek word in the New Testament, and that the one occurrence of the English word “atonement” would be better rendered “reconciliation” (Rom, 5:11). The law provided forgiveness for certain sins, but the man whose sin had been forgiven sinned again and the whole process had to be repeated. The law provided cleansing from defilements of the flesh, but the person could become unclean again. Animal sacrifices under the Law of Moses could not achieve this, but they pointed forward to the one that could, that is the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The last occurrence of *kaphar* provides the link between the two. This is in Daniel chapter 9 in the context of the Seventy Weeks prophecy where it is rendered “reconciliation” in verse 24: “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation (*kaphar*) for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy”. At the end of the seventy weeks, or four hundred and ninety years, Jesus would be crucified as the ultimate sin offering and the complete atonement (covering). This would result in the righteousness of the millennial age and the anointing of the Holy One or Messiah.

### **The Sin Principle Atoned For**

When Jesus came to be baptized, John the Baptist said of him, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

Here was a clear reference to the animal slain in Eden to provide a covering for the nakedness of man. We notice he did not say the sins (plural) of the world, as if all sins ever committed by mankind would be forgiven. We know that is not the case. It is the sin principle of the world which he would take away. All who enter into the covering of his sacrifice and remain faithful to him will ultimately have their nature of sin taken away and be changed to divine nature. They will then help Jesus to destroy the wicked and remove all evil from the world until he delivers up the kingdom to the Father.

Luke records in chapter 2:21-24, that following Jesus' birth, Mary fulfilled the law contained in Leviticus 12 concerning cleansing following childbirth, because although Jesus was the son of God he also was the seed of the woman and thus inherited sinful flesh. But unlike all other children of Adam he never once committed sin, thus overcoming his sinful flesh. As the "seed of the woman" he bruised the seed of the serpent in the head, while suffering a non fatal wound in the process.

The means whereby Jesus obtained atonement and thus achieved redemption is fully expounded by the apostle Paul in his epistles. We will quote a small sample of many. In Romans chapter 3, after explaining that, "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in [God's] sight" (v20), he then refers to Jesus, "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood" (v25). "Propitiation" is from the Greek *hilasterion* and is the nearest New Testament equivalent to the Hebrew *kaphar* (i.e. covering). The Septuagint uses it for the Hebrew word rendered "mercy seat" in the Old Testament, where the high priest sprinkled the blood on the Day of Atonement. Jesus is himself the priest, the offering and the mercy seat. He offered himself as the sin offering, his blood was sprinkled, and he is the place where atonement is made. The fact that it was sprinkled with blood teaches that Jesus had to offer for himself.

Once every year on the day of atonement the high priest made several offerings, and went beyond the veil to sprinkle the blood upon the mercy seat more than once. First he made atonement for himself, then for the holy place and the tabernacle, and finally for the people. But Jesus only offered himself once, which was sufficient to provide atonement for all including himself (Heb. 7:27).

## Reconciliation

In Romans chapter 5 Paul wrote, "For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (v10). The subject of reconciliation is now introduced for the first time. The A.V. mentions "reconciliation" several times in the Old Testament, but it is nearly always a translation of *kaphar* and would be better rendered "atonement" as in Daniel 9:24. The Old Testament does not teach that atonement under the Law of Moses leads to reconciliation, for it could not do so.

The word here rendered "reconciled" is from the Greek *katallasso* which literally means "to change." In the context before us it means to change from a position of enmity to one of friendship. Mankind has been at enmity with God, but in His mercy He has provided a means whereby man can change that position based upon the death of His son. This is open to all who place their faith and trust upon the sacrifice of Jesus whereby he became a propitiation through his blood which was shed.

The death of Jesus has changed us from being at enmity with God, but more was required to save us from death. If Jesus had remained dead, so would we. There would have been no hope of eternal life. So Paul continues in Romans 5:10, "... much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Greek '*en*' Lit. in his life). Because Jesus never committed any sins, God raised him from the dead and so those who have been reconciled to God through his death, have hope of salvation. In Romans 5:11 Paul says that because of this we have, "joy in God" "because, "we have now received the atonement." This is the occasion where "atonement" would be better rendered "reconciliation," being the noun derived from *katallasso*.

In Romans 7 Paul refers to the defect in our nature as "the motions of sins" (v5), "sin that dwelleth in me" (v17 & v20) and the, "law of sin" (vv 23, 25). So powerful was it that he said, "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" (v19). But in Romans 8 he finds the answer to his problem: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:2,3). (The same word is used in Philippians 2:5, he "was made in the likeness of men").

In Hebrews Paul wrote concerning him, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Heb. 4:15), and, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14).

The word “devil” is from the Greek *diabolos* meaning a false accuser or slanderer. The serpent in Eden was the first *diabolos* being the first to slander God, accusing Him of lying. As a result of the first sin, the *diabolos* entered into the human race in the form of “sin in the flesh.” Jesus overcame this in his life (I John 3:8), finally destroying it in his sacrificial death (Heb. 2:14).

In Hebrews 7:27 Paul shows that the sacrifice of Jesus was better than those under the law, where separate offerings had to be made for every individual sin and case of uncleanness. Jesus had to be offered only once. His one sacrifice provided atonement for the sinful flesh of all who put their faith in him together with every sin they commit for which they pray for forgiveness.

### **Representative Redeemer**

That Jesus himself was redeemed by his own offering is made clear in Hebrews 9:12: “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he [Jesus] entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption.” The verb here is in the middle voice which means that it was something done in the first place for himself. Moreover the words for us at the end of the verse in the A.V. are in italics and not in the original. As Jesus never committed any sins for which he required forgiveness, it follows that it was from his sinful flesh that he obtained redemption.

Jesus then was a representative of the whole human race. As part of that race, he shared the same sinful nature as all who are descended from Adam. As Son of God however he was, “the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself” (Psalm 80:17), thus able to overcome that nature, which no other son of Adam has been able to do. So he became the perfect sin offering - the only one acceptable as being able to take away sin in both senses. In his death he represented the justice of his Heavenly Father in the condemnation of sin, but because he had never committed sin, the grave could not hold him. In his resurrection therefore he represented all those whose sinful flesh is covered in him, and who have hope of life eternal, with him in the great day when he shall sit upon the throne of God’s kingdom, manifesting the glory of the LORD.

Appeal to All Ecclesias Committee

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There is nothing - no circumstance, no trouble, no testing - that can touch me until it has first gone past God and past Christ right through to me. If it has come that far, it has come with great purpose, which I may not understand at the moment. But as I refuse to become panicky: as I lift up my eyes to Him and accept it as coming from the throne of God for some great purpose to my own heart, no sorrow will ever disturb me, no trial will ever disarm me, no circumstance will cause me to fret: for I shall rest in the joy of what my Lord is.

- Brother John Stevenson