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Editorial

In my younger days as a Christadelphian I was puzzled by their insistence that Jesus did not die instead of us when there is so much Bible evidence which shows us He did.

It was the understanding of the Jews that their Messiah would die as a sacrifice for them and in support of this claim I turn to Dr Edersheim who was a Jew who converted to Christianity and wrote extensively on many Bible matters. In his book entitled "The Temple at The Time of Christ", in chapter 6 he wrote –

"On one point the authorities of the old synagogue, previous to their controversy with Christianity, are agreed; as the Old Testament and Jewish tradition taught that the object of a sacrifice was its substitution for the offender, so Scripture and the Jewish fathers also teach that the substitute to whom all these types pointed was none other than the Messiah."

When Jesus was here on earth the Jews did not recognise Him as their Messiah and did not believe He was the Son of God. In spite of the many miraculous proofs as to who He was, the Jewish authorities found Him to be a threat to their vested interests and were determined to destroy Him. But Jesus knew who He was and what He was about and allowed the authorities to put Him to death. He said, "No man taketh my life from me, I lay it down of myself" (John 10:18) "Therefore doth my father love me." (verse 17). It was the greatest self-sacrifice of all time and offered in love and compassion for His many disciples.

In Matthew 20:28, Jesus said of Himself, "the Son of man came . . . to give his life a ransom for many." So we learn that Jesus laid down His life, giving it as a ransom when He was crucified and His blood was shed. While in Acts 20:28 Paul uses another expression when he referred to "the church of God which Jesus purchased with His own blood. Likewise in 1 Corinthians 6:20 Paul writes, "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." Peter also confirms this concept of substitution when he wrote "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed

with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” 1 Peter 1:18,19. Yet again - in Revelation 5:9 we read “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;”

In all this we see Jesus choosing to lay down His life as a sacrifice; as a ransom; as a purchase price, to redeem us from bondage. And all these figures of speech have one thing in common – substitution. To clarify this point - when one makes a purchase that person substitutes his money for the purchase, which then becomes his possession. In Jesus case He paid the ultimate price and made the purchase with His own blood in which was the life. All the sacrifices for sin throughout the Bible involved the shedding of the blood of animals but the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin but provided a temporary covering for sin until the Son of God came and took away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. (Hebrews 9:26). “Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends, ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.” (John 15:13). We also read of the parable of “the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. (Matthew 13:45 & 47). That is to say, Jesus sold all that He had to buy mankind; He kept His entire life free from sin and then spent three and a half years preaching the Gospel message and finally lay down His life on the cross. All He had He gave for us so we should not perish but share eternity with Him.

The usual reason which Christadelphians give for rejecting this substitutionary atonement is they say that God would not punish the innocent to let the guilty go free as this would be unjust.

Our answer to this is that we agree of course. But that is not what happened and Jesus says it is not what happened; He said “I lay down my life for the sheep.” He had the choice to lay down His life if He so wished; it was His own life, and as Jesus said of Himself, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit - John 12:24 – so out of love for us He chose to bring forth much fruit. More than that, His Father allowed Him to do it because, as we read, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. - John 3:16 & 17.

But there is another objection which is sometimes raised in opposition to this view and the question that is asked is, ‘how can the death of one man substitute for a countless number of people? Surely a substitute, especially if it is a purchase, should be of equivalent value. The purchase price paid by Jesus was one life, so how can this be sufficient to purchase a multitude of lives?’

And our answer to this is that it didn’t, but this needs a little explanation.

Let’s consider Romans 5:18 & 19, “By the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”

Adam and Jesus were both Sons of God; one by creation, the other by begetting. What Jesus did on the cross was die in Adam’s place, i.

.e., instead of Adam. It was the life of one Son of God in place of the life of the other Son of God. It was Adam’s life that was redeemed and it is this Adamic life that has been passed down to all Adam’s progeny. Hence our present life is our redeemed life.

Jesus bought the whole human race though not all will reap the benefit of eternal life for the reward of eternal life is only for those who come to hear of these matters and choose to obey the commandments and worship God in Spirit and in truth. Jesus said “Many are called but few are chosen;” He did not say all are called and few are chosen, nevertheless Jesus did promise “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. John 7:17.

In Galatians 4:2 Paul wrote “Bear ye one another’s burdens”. This again is substitution and is exactly what Jesus did for us when He “restored that which he took not away” (Psalm 69:4). Due to Adam forfeiting his life, the life he passed down to us, we are all born with a life under condemnation and are helpless to get ourselves out of this situation. It is a burden we cannot bear without perishing. But Jesus saw that He could change that for us because He had a life from His Father which was not under condemnation and out of love for us He laid it down in place of Adam’s life and so bore the burden for us.

But Paul wrote a little more for after saying “Bear ye one another’s burdens” he added “and so fulfil the law of Christ” and in another place James wrote, “If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:” (James 2: 8). Jesus, the King of Righteousness, loved His neighbours as Himself; little wonder it is called “The Royal Law.”

“For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory,” Hebrews 2:10,

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12: 1,2.

With Love in Jesus to all our readers, Russell Gregory

Jesus Our Saviour

You know the old saying that “there is nothing new under the sun” and I think that this is true in the vein that it was meant. I don’t think there have been any exhortations on anything brand new for quite some time. It is just that there are new ways and new thoughts to approach the same truths that have existed for many hundreds of years. Exhortations are not for the purpose to bring new truths, but are to strengthen us and to comfort us by repeating the many wonderful aspects of God's word.

When a company advertises its product they don't just do it once, but many times over, so that it will be imprinted, on our minds so to speak. Exhortations should have the same effect in that its message or meaning should be imprinted on our minds; and repeated messages would further imbed their thoughts on us so that the Truth would become a solid bond in our make-up that could never be broken by outside influence.

I have often wondered what makes a man great? What qualities go into the mate-up of a character in which the end-result is greatness and which makes that person stand head and shoulders above the crowd? One such ingredient which is a must, but so few of us have, is Humility. It is humility that tempers the steel of a strong will, it is humility that turns arrogance into strength, impatience into tolerance and boastfulness into wise silence. It is also the fatal adversary of pride.

It is that fine, intangible attribute which is the base of all neatness. The world has produced a lot of important men, names which have gone down in history for their feats during their brief span on this earth. Napoleon was a great soldier, Churchill a real statesman and Edison was a great inventor. But there was only one great man on this earth and that man was Jesus. The greatest person who ever drew breath since the dawn of time.

And what made Him great? True, He was the son of God, but that didn't make Him great as far as character was concerned. He held the unique position in that He was the only person who could save the

world in that His life was free from forfeit. He had the attributes of His Father in that He was merciful, kind, loving and forgiving. But I think the humility that was in Him was His own. His own personal attribute, because I cannot ever see God in a humble position. The righteousness of God and His power was certainly in Jesus and coupled with the fact that He was a man and knowing earthly feelings, brought about this fine part of His character. This was evident in the fact that He used this power to the glory of His Father and not His own. Anyone else in the same position that Jesus was in would certainly be boastful about the power he had and would, on certain occasions, abuse it.

You can take an evil man and God could instil His attributes in him and that man would certainly be a changed man and would alter his path in life. But he would be nothing more than a robot because his changed life was because of God and not because of any thing that the man did himself. Jesus was vastly different in that it was His own character which made Him resist all temptation and evil and was not hiding behind the armour of God like that evil man.

I have often wondered what would happen if the president of a large corporation, while walking down the aisle of his shop one day, stopped and brushed the dirt off the shirt of one of his employees. I don't think I'll ever know the answer to that one because I doubt very much that it would ever happen.

But we see Jesus, who had the power of God at His fingertips, washing the feet of His disciples. How many of us would do such a thing? Not many, I'm afraid. It is examples like this that made Jesus great in His own right. A man who could call upon His Father to perform miracles, to make His life easier, and many more things but still stood on His own two feet and overcame the world because He had the strength and courage and the implicit faith to do so.

Another ingredient that makes a man great is Courage. Not so much the courage to face physical danger and overcome it, but the courage to walk away in the face of ridicule, to turn your back on someone who has unjustly struck you or accused you of something you did not do. It would be so much easier to strike back or to retaliate hotly to an unjust accusation. To me, this takes courage to walk away, because the most natural assumption that your adversary would have is that you are a coward because you did walk away. So you see courage comes in different forms, it is not always evident to the eye, but it is always evident to God and He is the person that you want to please. He knows what is in your heart when you turn away.

And we see Jesus who went through all the same and ridicule that any man could stand and still He raised not His hand against it. That, to me, is courage in its finest form and performed by the finest man. What a lesson we could take from Jesus in this respect.

Tolerance, allied with patience, is another fine ingredient for any character, and, to me, is the by-product of humility's inroads against impatience and is one of the hardest characteristics to acquire.

How often have we boiled over inside or even made evident our anger when we are held up at a traffic light because the motorist ahead of us has failed to see the light turn green or when we are in a hurry and someone ahead of us is walking slowly and with all the time in the world and of course is blocking our way? How often have we stifled, our rising temperatures when someone we are talking to fails to see our point after numerous attempts to enlighten him? Many times, no doubt.

But just stop and count to ten and think that we are the sons and daughters of God, one of His children, dedicated to show the attributes of our Father and His son. We have been chosen to eternal life simply because we have responded to the call. Having all this should certainly humble us, knowing and realizing what we are, and it is a pity, sometimes, that we can't funnel some of this humility into our impatience and turn it into tolerance. I, Myself, am one of the greatest offenders of this but I am slowly learning because I realize more each day the position I was in and the position I now hold; that all of us were snatched from the headlong fall into Nothingness and by the grace of God diverted toward a goal of endless life, merely because we believed. Bearing all this in mind as much as we can should certainly tone down our desire to erupt at the slightest provocation.

Wisdom is still another great addition to any make-up. To me, it is that uncanny knowledge that enables us to decide what is best when a choice comes up. It will tangle up men in their own concept of wisdom. The Pharisees in their own so-called wiseness tried to trap Jesus by asking Him questions they figured would be hard to answer. Yet Jesus answered them in simple terms. There is great wisdom in this because the minute a simple truth is added, confusion sets in and the wiseness of a simple answer is lost. The best way to beguile a so-called wise man is with simplicity and in this is wisdom. A child can see the simple truth in a situation that can be lost to a man trapped by his own concept of superiority.

Love, of course, is the acquisition we can add to our make-up. But what is love? To me, it is all the ingredients such as humility, tolerance and courage all rolled up into one and we find, so that love comes out bearing a portion of each. You can't have love without tolerance or humility, so then love is the end-result of all the great qualities that go into the making up of a great man.

And Jesus abounded in love, not only for His flock, but for the whole world. If God thought the world was worth saving it was only because He loved it. It is the foundation of salvation, the greatest driving force in the world and without it all would be lost. It is the most undefinable of all the attributes because it is a combination of them all.

Jesus was the possessor of all these fine qualities and they remained fine because He lived by them all His life. It is one thing to preach humility but a vastly different thing to practice it. He preached the gospel of His Father wherever He went, in the face of adversity, ridicule and even to the extent that His life was in danger. What He preached, He practised, a quality that all of us lack at times. He was the only man worthy of eternal life and yet died for us, the unworthy. He raised not His hand against the world and yet died for that very world which raised its hand against Him. He gave everything He had and asked nothing in return. This is our saviour. Is it any wonder He is easy to love. A man who is now interceding for us because He knows us, knows our weaknesses, knows that we are the members of His Father's family and always will be since no one can pluck us out of His Father's hand. We can walk out of His hand if we so choose but never can we be taken away against our will because God would see to it that His own will always remain His own.

We know that in this world, whether they be brethren or not, are people who are superior to us both in intelligence and knowledge and when we stand in their shadow any length of time we could feel a sense of inadequacy or inferiority .

Jesus was vastly superior to all in both knowledge and intelligence but when we stand in His shadow, all we feel is thankfulness because we have such a man as our mediator. We know the length of a shadow is indicative of stature so we know how tall Jesus is when His shadow stretches across the world.

We are thankful to God for giving us such an earthly anchor for our hope and this hope we have blossoms out to reality if we endure to the end. So when we die, if need be, we will sleep a short sleep and arise to hear those words uttered by the only man who has the God-given right to say "Come ye blessed of my Father".

Jesus is not only with us now but will be for evermore. He is that solid steel bridge that closes the gap between us and God so that we may talk to our Father. Jesus knows that some of us are strong and some of us are weak and probably always will be, but that doesn't make any difference because we are God's own family. Whether strong or weak we are His because we believed on His son. The strong are thankful yes, but I think the weak are more thankful because they realize more the unending love that is God and His son.

Brother Douglas James.

Letter from Brother & Sister Milton

Loving greetings to all in the name of Jesus, who, by His birth and obedience to His Father's will, made it possible for us to be called brethren and sisters in Him. Our grateful thanks, brother, for the Circular Letters, of such great value when understood in harmony with the Scriptures, proving all things, that we may hold fast to that which is good, sound doctrine that cannot be condemned. For it is only through the inspired word that we may find our knowledge of the creation and the meaning and purpose at life, that He may be glorified Who has made all things, not out of nothing, but of His own energy and power.

We often think how wonderful all things must have been in the beginning when the Creation was finished and everything in harmony with its Creator, as we read in Job, "When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy," and in Genesis, "God looked upon all He had made, and behold it was very good." With such knowledge granted us we rejoice in the glorious hope of seeing Eden bloom again, and God's purpose vindicated in a perfect son of righteousness, Jesus our Saviour. The tree of knowledge of good and evil was in the Garden, so was also the tree of life, which was not debarred from our first parents; immortal angels know good and evil but cannot sin, being of Divine nature, but it is not for mortal man to know good and evil without the knowledge of the meaning of life, which is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever in perfect fellowship.

It is a common belief that there was something in the tree of knowledge causing men to die, but a flesh and blood body cannot live for ever unless it undergoes a change, as we read in Job, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come. Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thy hands." If we study the matter closely we can see that it was the act of disobedience - even if they touched the tree they would die. Genesis 3:3. The answer lies in the words, "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife," so we find the help God gave Adam became by transgression his downfall; the act of disobedience caused the breach between man and his Creator. The sentence is quite clear; no pre-eminence above a beast (Ecclesiastes 3:19); surely that is sufficient to show that it was more than natural death. He was without hope and without God in the world, (Ephesians 2:12) driven out of the Garden where was harmony and peace, to till the ground by the sweat of his face with all the other evils that come to the sons of men, briars and thorns, vicious animals etc., until he return to the ground from whence he was taken, broken off from the fountain of life. (Psalm 36:9).

It is the general thought of mankind, even pagans, that they have something within them that cannot die; they have hewn out cisterns that cannot hold water, for Jesus says, "Ye have no life in you." John 6:53. Like Israel, they fail to see that they have only the breath of life, but not the knowledge of life which is the knowledge of the purpose of God revealed to man through the commandments by which men should live and so obtain abundance of life, which is immortality.

The important thing is that we should not be carried away by the things around us in this benighted age. No man can serve two masters as Jesus says, and it is only by an earnest methodical daily reading of the scriptures that we can develop a character and disposition well pleasing to God, for only so can we come into true fellowship with our Creator. Furthermore, it is only by comparing scripture with scripture that we can give a reason for the hope within us. All that we have we receive through God's word, we have nothing of ourselves and apart from that we should have no hope of life at all.

The night is far spent; the day is at hand, for our Salvation is nearer than when we first believed, (Romans 13:11). We have only to lift up our eyes to the political heavens to see the signs of his coming. "Blessed is he that keepeth his garments," that we might not be engulfed in Babylon the Great, the symbol power, which may well represent the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar's image. As far back as 1634 a Frenchman published a book entitled "The Grand Design" with proposals for a federation of European States, and more recently Sir Winston Churchill said at The Hague Conference, "After the long passage of years we are all servants of the Grand Design." We are certainly living in the time of Babylon the Great, with Nebuchadnezzar's image re-standing world-wide with its head of gold centred in Europe and all the

various metals represented in the trading system, but we know it will come to naught; it has feet of clay - iron and clay will not mix, they cannot agree.

Compared with the early Christians, we have not suffered as they did (Hebrews 11) but we may in the future. We quote from the report of an address given a few ago at Geneva by an employee of the United Nations; "Plans are worked out to dissolve the U.N., to make way for a world Tribunal. Every man, woman and child will receive a number." At the end of this address a Christian rose and asked the speaker, "What happens to the minorities who will not accept this plan?" He was answered, "Their numbers will be cancelled with a black line and they will be deprived of the right to buy or Sell." (Revelation 13:17),

Well, this is man's grand design; while God's grand design goes unheeded by the majority in these last days, a glorious Design when the whole earth will be filled with God's glory, peace flowing as a river, every man sitting under his own vine, none daring to make him afraid. May we, as brethren and sisters in Christ, be found worthy to live in that age, as kings and priests in (Revelation 5:10).

With love in the Faith, Bro. and Sis. J. & M. Milton

The Parable of The Rich Man and Lazarus. (Luke 16:19-31)

In spite of the many plain statements of Scripture regarding the utter unconsciousness of the dead, such as "The dead know not anything" (Ecclesiastes 9:5); "The dead praise not the Lord, neither they that go down into silence" (Psalm 115:17); "When man's breath goeth forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish" (Psalm 144:4), this parable is constantly brought forward as demonstrative evidence to the contrary.

Surely this, to say the least, is making a different use of the parable from what our Lord intended. Besides, it is a fair rule to apply to the teaching of Scripture that those parts which are parabolic, metaphorical, or obscure, must be understood by the light of those parts which are plain, direct, and explicit. We must not understand parables literally, if, by so doing, we require to make plain, direct, or explicit statements figurative.

Dr. Kitto wisely remarks;

"The rule seems to be, that in parabolical discourses, provided doctrines inculcated are strictly true, the terms in which they are inculcated may be adapted to the prevailing ideas of those to whom they are addressed. If any question arises about the particular circumstances, in such a discourse, the clue for our guidance to the correct interpretation must be sought in those parts of Scripture which speak to us plainly, and not in parables."

Thus, in the parable before us, two dead men are represented as conversing with each other - suffering, desiring, and reasoning; while, in the Scriptures already quoted, we are distinctly told that "the dead know not anything", that in the same day that man "returns to the earth, his thoughts perish." These direct statements regarding the condition of the dead are not to be understood by the representation given in the parable, but as containing in themselves an expression of absolute truth; while the representation in the parable must be understood in a sense harmonious with these direct statements regarding the condition of the dead.

This we submit is fair dealing.

No one supposes that the story told by Jotham (Judges 9:8-15) of the trees electing and anointing a king to reign over them is a description of facts; and we read of the blood of Abel crying unto God from

the ground (Genesis 4:10), and that “the blood of sprinkling speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.” (Hebrews 12:24). We never imagine that a real voice was heard.

If shed blood is represented as speaking, as well as other inanimate objects, such as mountains breaking forth into singing, and trees of the field clapping their hands (Isaiah 55:12), is it at all wonderful that dead men, who know not anything, should be (for a purpose) represented acting as they were, alive? Surely not.

This is not the only instance in which the dead are represented as speaking. In Isaiah 14:10, the inhabitants of Sheol are represented as lifting up to meet the King of Babylon, and exclaiming with astonishment, Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee; yet no one would affirm that those thus covered with worms in the grave were at the same time in a state of conscious being; and it requires no great endowment of ideality to perceive the beauty and of the figure.

Let the parable in question be viewed in a similar way and its teaching shall be found, in no degree contradicting the direct testimony of Scripture regarding the unconscious state of the dead. To understand the parable to be a real description of the condition of the righteous, and the wicked, before resurrection and judgment, is to ignore not only the plain and direct teaching of the Bible regarding the condition of the dead, but also its positive testimony that we “must all appear at the judgment seat of Christ, to receive the things in body, according to what we have done, whether it be good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10).

The Lord Himself taught plainly that it is “At the resurrection of the just” that recompense shall be given to those who are worthy (Luke 14:14), and this truth is strikingly illustrated in His memorable words; “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” (Matthew 7:22,23).

The Day here referred to is evidently the day of judgment, and the parties introduced are represented as being surprised at the fate awarded to them. But why should they be surprised at their rejection if they had been suffering in Hades ever since the day of their death till they came forth to judgment at “the resurrection of damnation”? (John 5:28,29). The idea that the wicked dead are punished by the Judge before resurrection and judgement is thus utterly at variance with the teaching of the Lord, as it is opposed to the principles of reason and justice.

Whatever, therefore, be the import of the parable, we cannot believe our Lord used it to teach a doctrine so utterly opposed to His own testimony on other occasions, and at variance with the uniform testimony of Holy Scripture. Here the matter might be left to rest: but in confirmation of what has been advanced, we submit a few animadversions on the common method of understanding the parable as setting forth a conscious state of disembodied existence between death and resurrection.

The representation in the parable gives no countenance whatever to a disembodied state of conscious existence. By what process of reasoning could we infer the consciousness of a disembodied spirit from the declaration that in Hades the rich man lifted up his eyes, and felt his tongue tormented in a flame, requesting that Lazarus might dip his finger in water to cool his burning tongue?

Besides, the scene of the representation is in Hades - the grave, or state of the dead, where there is neither “knowledge, wisdom, nor remembrance,” and where the blessed Redeemer Himself lay for three days (Acts 2:25-30).

The rich man died and was buried, and in the grave he lifted up his eyes being in torments.

Does it not meet all the requirements of the case to understand our Lord as making use of a parable to convey reproof or instruction to His prejudiced auditors, the Pharisees?

According to Whitby, this same parable was contained in the “Gemara Babylonicum,” and was probably familiar to the Jews at the time our Lord repeated it in their hearing. His object seems to have been to reprove the Pharisees for their covetousness (see verses 14, et seq.).

While this parable by no fair means can be held to militate against the positive declarations of Scriptures regarding the condition of the dead, it contains strong presumptive evidence against the theory that men exist consciously, as spirits, between death and resurrection.

Observe that the rich man is represented as pleading that Lazarus should be “sent from the dead” to warn his brethren. From the answer given it is assumed that in order to do this Lazarus would require to “rise from the dead” (verses 27-36). This certainly does not favour the notion that at death the soul, or men proper, only bursts the cerements of his chrysalis covering and soars forth unfettered to the exercises of nobler and transcendent powers, capable of performing far more arduous duties than that of carrying a message of warning to men in the flesh.

Having never ceased to live such a person had no need to rise from the dead to perform that service.

The spirit mediums manage such affairs otherwise, though unfortunately for them and the philosophy which sustains them, the words of the living God proclaim them “deceiving and being deceived.”

Brother William Laing.

ASLEEP in JESUS.

Asleep in Jesus, blessed sleep,
From which none ever wakes to weep.
A calm and undisturbed repose,
A safe retreat from all our foes.
Asleep in Jesus, peaceful rest,
Whose waking is supremely blest,
No fear, no woe, shall dim that hour,
Which manifests the Saviour’s power.
Asleep in Jesus, time nor space
Affects this precious hiding-place,
On Indian plains and Lapland snows,
Believers find the same repose.
Asleep in Jesus, O for me,
May such a blissful refuge be,
Securely shall my ashes lie,
Waiting the summons from on high. Anon

Wrested Scripture Straightened Out and Re-set

**“What is man that he should be clean, and he which is born of woman,
that he should be righteous?” - Job 15:14.**

We will first show to what end this passage had been wrested. In “Elpis Israel,” page 127 it is written:-

“Hence, the flesh is invariably regarded as unclean. It is therefore written, ‘How can he be clean who is born of a woman?’ ‘Who can bring a clean thing out of unclean? Not one.’ ‘What is man that he should be clean? And he which is born of woman that he should be righteous?’ ...This view of sin in the flesh is enlightening in the things concerning Jesus. ...Sin could not have been condemned in the body of Jesus if it had not existed there.”

Now, we will examine the Book of Job and see if “sin-in-the-flesh” is there to be found, or what exactly Job and his friends meant when they used the words ‘clean’ and ‘unclean.’

It should be obvious at the outset that the saying of Eliphaz in Job 15:14 is a pair of parallels - that the second phrase expresses the same as the first - according to the practice of the Old Testament poetical writers: as that “man” means the same as “he which is born of a woman,” and, “should be clean” means the same as “should be righteous.”

By following ideas which run through the book of Job we shall find that in understanding the word ‘clean’ as meaning ‘righteous’ we shall not err; but if, on the other hand, we understand by the word ‘clean’ a freedom from that “sin-in-the-flesh” (which according to Christadelphian literature exists in the physical flesh, and therefore existed in the flesh of Christ), we shall be putting into the mouths of the speakers an altogether foreign idea merely in order that we might take it out again.

Such a method of “understanding” Scripture is capable of inventing the wildest notices, and is altogether without excuse.

Please produce your Bible at this stage, and after a reading through of the Book of Job, or an examination of it afresh, according to the need and discretion of the reader, let us notice here the “thread” of the discourse, as it bears upon the words ‘clean’ and ‘unclean.’

First then, the commencement of the story is in Job 1:1, “Job... was perfect and upright;” God witnesses to this fact in 1:8; and after the first tribulation God again declares of Job that he still “holdeth fast his integrity.” (2:3). After the second tribulation had come upon him, God again testifies that “in all this did not Job sin with his lips.”

Job is perplexed, and asks “Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery.” (3:20).

Eliphaz, the first speaker, answers him; “Who ever perished, being innocent or where were the righteous cut off?” (4:7,8), and he then proceeds to tell of a “spirit” that passed before his face in the visions of the night, and which said, “Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall man be more pure than his Maker?” (4:17). But still Job asserts his integrity: “Cause me to understand wherein I have erred” (6:24); and again, “my righteousness is in this matter.” (6:29, margin.)

Then Bildad speaks and says: “Doth God pervert judgment? ...if thou wert pure and upright... He would awake for thee... God will not cast away a perfect man.” (8:5,6,20.) And Job returns answer: “I know... but how should man be just with God?!” (9:2,) and, “thou knowest that I am not wicked.” (10:7).

When Zophar refers to Job to that statement of his (“thou knowest that I am not wicked”) and puts it in these words “Thou hast said... I am clean in thine eyes” (11:4). (Here we meet with the word ‘clean,’ and we can easily understand what Zophar means by it, because of the prior statement of Job to which he refers.

Next comes the answer of Job to Zophar in which he says: “Who can bring a clean thing out of unclean?” (14:4). Eliphaz replies with the words quoted at the head (15:14).

Bildad supplies another parallel in 25:4 – “How then man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?” (Here it will be seen that just as “man” is equivalent to “he that is born of a woman,” so according to the speaker himself, “clean” is equivalent to “justified with God.”

Job answers this by “till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me; my righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go.” (27:5,6.) Here let us pause to notice again that it is still “righteousness” that is meant by “Cleanness” in this Book of Job, the perfect and upright man.

Finally, the “three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes” (32 :1); he “justified himself rather than God.” (32:2.)

Then Elihu speaks, and he again uses that word ‘clean.’ “Thou hast spoken... saying, I am clean, without transgression, I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me” (33:9). This is the same as saying, “Job hath said, I am righteous” - also by the same speaker. “I am clean” is again paralleled for us by “I am righteous.” (34:5).

And here I conclude, for if anyone by this time fails to understand that by the use of the word “clean” God, Job, Elihu, Satan, Zophar, Bildad, and Eliphaz all understood, “righteous” and if he cannot see that nowhere throughout the Book is the “sin-in-the-flesh” doctrine once imagined, then I am sure that no words of mine will help him to understand the Scriptures.

Brother A.H.Broughton

A Homily

The Bible history is a veiled commentary on biblical doctrine. As gems set in fine gold, so are the truths of revelations contained in the narratives. Doubtless those portions of history have been selected by the spirit which best illustrate God’s truth and throw light upon His perfect law. This is true of every part of the historical Scriptures. We propose to turn our attention to the twenty-fourth chapter of the first book of Samuel.

A great change had come over God’s anointed – Saul. Ever since the women of Israel had sung in the rejoicing streets –

“Saul hath slain his thousands,
But David his ten thousands.”

The king had been filled with an insane jealousy of his young courtier. Twice he had sought to pierce him with his javelin, as David tried to charm away the king’s distemper with music of the harp. Once he sent him on a hazardous expedition against the Philistines, hoping that his very bravery might become his snare. He even tried to entangle Jonathan in a conspiracy against his life.. Though his own son-in-law, Saul thirsted after his blood

At last David, though no coward, took refuge in flight; but Saul, chagrined that his designs should fail, that David should have slipped through his fingers, took an escort of three thousand men and followed the latter to the wilderness of En-gedi, hoping to take him in an ambush. But a wicked craftiness frequently outwits itself. The wicked falls into his own snare.

Night coming on, and needing rest, the king with his personal attendants retired to a cave and sought sleep. By a singular coincidence it was in the same cave to which David and his followers had previously retired, and in the gloomy vastness of which it was easy for them to remain unobserved. The limestone rocks in the neighbourhood of En-gedi are, to this day, full of caves where such a hiding-place and shelter might be found.

We need not particularise every incident, our purpose is homiletical. Saul was in David’s power; he spared the king’s life, though that king was then pursuing him to the death; and in his magnanimity of mercy, the brave young son of Jesse proved himself every inch a monarch among men.

The first lesson lies plainly on the surface: the duty of returning good for evil - impressed upon us by the fineness, the divineness of the picture which it makes; and commended to us by the way it causes the heart to swell with humble pride, that God's spirit can make human nature into something as noble as and kindly as this.

It is not a purple robe, not a gemmed crown that makes a king. As Carlyle has well explained, he is the king or *kan-ning* or *able-man* who is capable of the greatest and most heroic deeds; whose reason towers above the rest; whose magnanimity of mind proves the majesty that is there. And what greater feat is there than to curb passion and let pity loose instead; to conquer self, with all clamouring voices to listen to the still small voice of God; to take intended evil and bury it in the abysses of our love, and bring in return, out of the pure pity of our heart, blessing for cursing.! O God-like action ! O matchless virtue! O man after God's own heart, whoever thou were or art that doeth this!

We next learn a lesson of carefulness, not to mistake a mere coincidence of event for the finger of providence, and so get a false indication of the will of God on any particular occasion. The narrative will explain our meaning. When they looked upon the sleeping Saul, the servants of David, jumping to a rash conclusion, said to their master, "Behold, the day which the Lord said unto thee, Behold I will deliver thine enemy into thy hand, that thou mayest do to him as it seemeth good unto thee." They foolishly judged that David had a clearly divine warrant for taking the king's life. But David himself knew otherwise. He reflected that Saul was the Lord's anointed: he would be careful how he treated the Lord's anointed. Then he had no divine command or authority to slay the king: the mere circumstance of finding him defenceless and in his power was not such an authority; besides, the king was asleep, and what is it to kill a man in his sleep? Ah, that is murder! And even though a cultivated conscience had not forbidden the deed, a martial courage would have revolted from it. David was not misled by the specious reasoning of his men. They merely nursed revenge, and made their ideas of what was providential conform to that; with infinite subtlety making God wait on the devil that was in them; but David had fed his moral instincts with the truth, and an evil suggestion had no chance within him.

Let us make no ignorant mistakes about providence, nor try to juggle with the will of God. Providence is never in the service of craftiness or baseness, nor lends its help to that which is dishonourable and wrong, God's will never traverses itself, nor in him are there any self-contradictions. It betrays the lowest form of moral blindness when we seek to make the evil that we do or try to do an "ordering of the divine providence." Villainy, cupidity, and stupidity will make use of every coincidence of things to mask itself and make believe that it is doing God's will. From the institution of slavery down to the imposition of a corn-law, hypocrites and rogues have appealed to "the orderings of divine providence," and paraded "the will of God." With a sarcasm as keen as the "cold steel" of his Sheffield warehouse, Ebenezer Elliott, the Corn-Law Rhymer, wrote: -

"Child, is thy father dead?

"Father is gone."

"Why did they tax his bread?"

"God's will be done."

How many lies have been spoken in the name of God - who can tell? How many iniquities have taken refuge behind his will? We have had a recent instance in a man professing to be enlightened in God's truth apologising for that black tigris, Jael.⁽¹⁾ Do we not need to learn this lesson under consideration well, reflective reader, when any among us can think of that hecate of bible history as an angel of light ? With a vehemence of moral feeling that cannot be controlled or bound, we thunder against all such blasphemous imposture. It is all of a piece with the burning shame when, "The devil quoted Scripture, just like a learned clerk," and "cursed be Canaan" was the divine warrant for enslaving the black children of Ham.

In the sly hearts of such, anything and everything is a "providence" which seems to favour their scheme or sanction their act. In these recent controversial times we have had some sickening instances of

the way this cant about providence can be employed. A year or two ago, on the occasion of the return of a wanderer to the fold (there were one or two other "divisions" healed about the same time, which constituted a coincidence that could be surely turned to account), one of these same sentences of imposture got written: "Surely these healings of division among brethren signify that providence is making ready for the advent of our Lord, for, when he comes, surely he will come to an united household. Now recall what has, in the same way of imposture, been more recently written concerning the divisions among us: "Surely the going out of some from among us betokens that providence is bringing near the advent of our Lord, for, when he comes, surely it will be to a purged household!!" According to the representations of these saintly gentlemen (our only authorities as to what is "circumcised" and "apostolic"), this "providence," about which they are so glib, is infinitely obliging. If it cements us together or divides us asunder, it equally proves the same thing.

Aesop, in his "Fables," represents the Satyr as swallowing the man who could blow hot and cold with the same mouth; but we hardly think a Satyr could stomach such imposture as this, which declares that, hot or cold, it is all the same, a providence being indicated by either.

We further learn from this chapter a lesson of delicacy in the doing of any good thing that we may be about. The narrative says - "Then David arose and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily: and it came to pass afterwards that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off' Saul's skirt." And the question we now ask is, why? It certainly was not for the trivial reason that he had damaged a garment! We think it was not because David felt that it was an indignity to the king. He who was too morally great to take, under any inducement, advantage of Saul's helplessness, was also too "well-bred" to so forget himself as the suggestion implies. No: David's heart smote him when he remembered the use he would afterwards have to make of that severed piece of skirt. In holding it up before Saul when the day dawned and the king arose, and calling his attention to it, David felt that it would be like exhibiting his superior virtue to the king, and saying, " Behold, what magnanimity is this !" When he thought of this, his "heart smote him."

We must make no parade of our virtue. A refined heart is always modest and retiring. The flesh is always proud, chiefly because it hasn't any reason to be; it thanks God that it is not like other men, or even as this publican. It prays at the corners of streets, and makes a trumpet-flourish a preliminary to giving of alms. It protests its own humility by saying, "I actually sat down on an equality with the other brethren;" and boasts (humbly, of course) of its sacrifices for the truth. When the judge shall say unto it, "I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; thirsty, and ye gave me drink;" it will say, with a pleasant nod, "Yes, Lord; it remembers very well." A huge self-consciousness is the besetting sin of the flesh; but poor David's cheek grew hot at the bare thought of what he must do. Happy is the man whose heart really smites him when he has got a good thing publicly to do. He will not seek publicity, or wait till somebody gets a chance of seeing it done. The father, who seeth in secret, will be audience enough. Do your duty modestly, and make no noise about it. If obliged to cut off your neighbour's skirt, do not be constantly flaunting it before his face. When you next meet him, do not let even your eye wander to the part where the "cut" was made.

We cannot forget how Jesus made himself of no reputation, and deprecated all allusions to his goodness; and how he sets before us the little child, that is utterly free from self-consciousness, as the typical character of the kingdom of God. When a child shows you its favours, it only thinks how you will be pleased with them, all its delight is derived from your pleasure; but when a man shews you favour, his thought is largely entertained with its own self-consciousness. And what men have to do is to become children.

Lastly, we learn from this chapter how utterly weak and crestfallen evil is in presence of the good, wherever there is a fair field and no favour. Now it was Saul's turn to feel a smiting heart. David's noble conduct fairly broke him down; and with bowed head the king humbly confesses - "Thou art more righteous than I, for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil." Better than by the music of the harp, Saul's mad jealousy was charmed away by the irresistible power of love. His faithful servant's kindness killed him; and with a confession on his lips he died.

It must ever be so when good and evil meet on equal terms and level ground. Evil, to be successful, must be disguised, and carry the mask of virtue. Its natural element is darkness; its habit, concealment, and discovery is its ruin. Hatred is helpless in the presence of love, and all creatures of night shrink away from its light and heat. Love is not only the effectual but the specific cure for evil. Evil begets evil, and never neutralises it. Homoeopathy is not true in morals: like does not cure like. But when the time comes that wickedness can wear no longer a disguise, then virtue shall go forth on one ceaseless march of triumph, bright as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners.

Brother Joseph Chamberlain.

(1). Judges 5:24

Romans Seven

MOST days I read various Facebook forums and in January there was a post on the Christadelphian Open Debate forum which caught my attention. It quoted part of Romans chapter 7.

I think this particular chapter is one of the most difficult and puzzling chapters in the whole of the Bible unless we look a little deeper into some of the things Paul is saying. For example, in verse 14 we read, "... but I am fleshly, sold under sin" - but this is just not true! it can never be said of Paul that at the time of writing he was sold under sin. We are all born under sin and this is the position from which Jesus saves us; we leave this position when we are baptised into the death of Jesus, for by His sacrifice He bought us back from being sold under sin. I believe this is the key verse to understanding this chapter and the answer is straightforward once we know something of the grammar Paul was using.

Paul wrote this in the aorist tense, a tense which has no time scale, and is not used in the English language. The translators had to decide which they thought was the best English tense to use and in this case they made an unfortunate choice by putting it into the present tense and, by doing this they made it contradict other Bible teaching. The best choice would be to put it into the past tense. When we go on a few verses we can see this is so for Paul goes on to ask the question, "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" The fact is he had already been delivered from it when he was baptised and for this he thanked God and goes on to say, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." - Russell.

But here I wish to add a little more from another writer though sadly I do not know who for there is no name given. Nevertheless he gave it the title: -

The Answer To Romans Chapter Seven

The 7th chapter of Romans is a favourite resort of believers in unclean flesh as the cause of sin; and it is readily admitted that this chapter is among the writings of Paul which are hard to be understood. If however it is made to supply the proof of a theory which is against the weight of Scripture, and also of his own teaching in other contexts, we shall be wresting his words to our own destruction.

In seeking to understand his reasoning it is a good thing to keep in mind the teaching of Jesus Himself, in Matthew 12:35, "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." Nothing in Paul's teaching would be a direct contradiction of our Lord's teaching, so that, when he says, "What I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that do I," it cannot possibly be right to imagine he intends us to understand that either he or we are cursed with a kind of physical and moral depravity which drives us to sin. Nor can it possibly be right to imagine that he was describing his own life in Christ when he says: "What I hate, that I do," for we know full well that his life after his conversion was a pattern of self-abnegation and obedience only surpassed by

Jesus Himself. Whatever Paul meant, it was certainly not that as an Apostle he served the law of sin with his flesh and the law of Christ only with his mind.

Dr. Thomas recognized this and even though generally he appears to have believed implicitly in sinful flesh, he did not make the mistake which so many of his followers make, of supposing that the Apostle was describing his own experience as a man in Christ. In *Elpis Israel*, page 82, he wrote:

“In the animal man there dwelleth no good thing. The Apostle affirms this of himself, considered as an unenlightened son of the flesh.”

There is a simple explanation, which enables Paul’s words to be understood in harmony with Jesus’ teaching, that goodness or badness is a matter of character, not of nature.

This explanation is to be found, first, in the fact that in Romans 7 Paul is speaking from the standpoint of a Jew under the Law; reasoning, as he was well able, having been in the position himself, from the point of view of one who trusted in his descent from Abraham and his observance of the letter of the Law.

It is in this connection that he says: “In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.” This is not the same as saying that in his literal flesh in fact every evil thing did dwell; it means that true goodness, by enlightenment, had perforce to come from outside himself.

Secondly, it must be recognized that when Paul speaks of “the flesh” he is not usually referring to the physical body but to that state of mind or behaviour which is seen in a person whose sole or main object in life is in the gratification of the natural desires. That this is so in the passage in question can be seen from his words: “But ye are not in the flesh but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.” He did not mean they were not flesh and blood bodies, which would be nonsense; he meant they were not allowing themselves to be ruled by their lusts.

Again, when he says: “The good that I would I do not; but the evil that I would not, that I do,” he is not to be understood as saying that there was in his physical make-up something which compelled him to do evil or conversely prevented him from doing good; this would be a direct contradiction of his own claim: “I can do all things through Christ;” and it would contradict the example of his own life, for he says: “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.” This would be the very worst advice, if the Paul we are to follow is the one who makes the despairing cry: “O wretched man that I am.”

What Paul is showing is how the Mosaic Law laid down a code of right behaviour, and thus enabled a Jew to distinguish between the good which they realized they should do and the evil which equally clearly they realized they should not do; but at the same time it only served to emphasize the fact that because they were disobedient they were sinners. They were not sinners because they could not keep the Law, but because they did not.

The whole purpose of his argument in 7th Romans is to reinforce what he had already laid down in the 5th chapter, namely, the justice of God in having concluded all, both Jew and Gentile alike, under the sin of Adam on the Federal principle. The importance of this principle is that by it God regards all men as involved in the first transgression (Romans 5:19) and as having lost their right to life with Adam. His object in so regarding them is a wholly merciful one, that the one sacrifice which atoned for Adam’s sin could cover all his descendants. The imputation of sin does not make our flesh physically sinful; it alienates us from God legally. Therefore Jesus’ one act of obedience, when applied to the individual by faith in the symbol of baptism, can restore us to grace and favour.

That is why Paul can commence the 8th chapter with the words: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” This again is no mere figure of speech but for the true believer, a present reality to be prized above all else.

Author unknown

- Prophecy:** Isaiah 53:12; Psalm 109:4. **Fulfilment:** Luke 23:34.
14. The people were to shake their heads.
Prophecy: Psalms 109:25; 22:7. **Fulfilment:** Matthew 27:39.
15. The people were to ridicule Him.
Prophecy: Psalm 22:8. **Fulfilment:** Matthew 27:41, 43.
16. The people were to be astonished.
Prophecy: Psalm 22:17; Isaiah 52:14. **Fulfilment:** Luke 23:35.
17. His garments were to be parted and lots cast for His vesture.
Prophecy: Psalm 22:18. **Fulfilment:** John 19:23, 24.
18. He was to cry: "My God, My God, Why has Thou forsaken Me?"
Prophecy: Psalm 22:1. **Fulfilment:** Matthew 27:46.
19. He was to thirst.
Prophecy: Psalms 69:3, 21; 22:15. **Fulfilment:** John 19:28.
20. They were to give Him gall and vinegar.
Prophecy: Psalm 69:21. **Fulfilment:** Matthew 27:34; John 19:28, 29.
21. He was to commit Himself to God.
Prophecy: Psalm 31:5. **Fulfilment:** Luke 23:46.
22. His friends were to stand afar off.
Prophecy: Psalm 38:11. **Fulfilment:** Luke 23:49.
23. His bones were not to be broken, yet were to be "out of joint" (crucifixion pangs). "I may tell all my bones." (Psalm 22:14, 17).
Prophecy: Psalm 34:20; Exodus 12:46. **Fulfilment:** John 19:31-36.
24. His side was to be pierced.
Prophecy: Zechariah 12:10. **Fulfilment:** John 19:34-37.
25. His heart was to be broken.
Prophecy: Psalm 22:14. **Fulfilment:** John 19:34.
26. Darkness was to cover the land.
Prophecy: Amos 8:9. **Fulfilment:** Matthew 27:45.
27. He was to be buried in a rich man's tomb.
Prophecy: Isaiah 53:9. **Fulfilment:** Matthew 27:57-60.
28. His death was to be voluntary.
Prophecy: Isaiah 53:12; Psalm 40:6-8. **Fulfilment:** John 10:11, 17, 18; Galatians 2:20.
29. His death was to be substitutionary.
Prophecy: Isaiah 53:4-6, 12; Daniel 9:26. **Fulfilment:** Matthew 20:28; 1 Corinthians 15:3;
1 Peter' 2:24; Revelation 1:5-6.

These events were all fulfilled in detail in 24 hours in the experience of Jesus of Nazareth. According to the law of compound probabilities, the chance that they all happened together by accident is - 1 in 537,000,000.

The conclusion is inevitable that the Bible is what it claims to be, the Word of the Living God, and that Jesus Christ is the true Messiah.

Since these prophecies of His sufferings have been so literally fulfilled, we are justified in expecting as literal a fulfilment of the many other prophecies of Messiah's glorious reign.

"These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus Is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through His name." - John 20:31.

"Those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer. He hath so fulfilled." - Acts of the Apostles 3:18.

A few lines from an elderly Sister,

Dear Brethren and Sisters, Loving greetings in Jesus' Name.

As we are mostly scattered, these Circular Letters means so much, especially to the elderly and the very lonely ones, and gives a real sense of belonging.

Jesus was considerate concerning the physical and material side of mankind (Galatians 6:2). "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." (1 John 3:18)

"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. " (Hebrews 13:16).

"But to do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." (Matthew 14:16).

After preaching the glad tidings, Jesus did not turn the people away, but told them to sit down, and fed them.

How quickly Jesus appreciated and gave joy to the little man Zacchaeus who climbed the tree in order to see Him. Jesus said "Make haste down, Zacchaeus, I must abide at thy house today." (Luke 19:5).

There is no end to Jesus love and compassion – He died that we might live

We, too, can open the Alabaster Box and spread its fragrance around – now, and thereby show our love for Him who first loved us.

With love and best wishes,

Your Sister in Jesus Christ, Wyn Shambrook

“BEHOLD, I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW” Revelation 21:5,

“For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: but be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create; for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.” Isaiah, chap 65.

This is what we are looking for, a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

A theocratic government upon the earth; when the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.

Meanwhile, as we wait in confidence and assurance for this to happen, we enter another year. Some people make New Year Resolutions and no doubt this is a good thing if the resolutions are a good ones and leads to something better. Some people may resolve to make a fresh start in improving their way of life and habits, but unless it is in a spiritual direction it will profit nothing in the end. Jesus said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God."

How can a man be born again? asked Nicodemus. "Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Truly I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again, or from above." (John, ch. 3).

Was Jesus ever in the position of Nicodemus, i.e. in need of rebirth? Of course not; He was born from above, He was born of the spirit, the power of the Highest which overshadowed Mary. He was God's son; He was always in relationship to His Father and maintained that relationship even to the Cross. He was always in the unique position whereby He could point the finger of authority and say, "Ye must be born again."

This was the reason God sent His son into the world. Not to condemn it; but that the world through Him might be saved. Too often we are apt to overlook the love of God in this direction. Something had been lost and God in His love for what He had created, sent His son into the world to recover that which was lost through the disobedience of Adam. Because he was under law Adam was able to sin. He could not have sinned apart from law; therefore by Adam's disobedience sin entered into the world, and the death by sin; and so death passed upon all men in whom (Adam) all sinned.

Let us not read into Paul's words ideas which are not there. Paul says sin entered the world, not that sin entered the flesh. Sin is transgression of law and is therefore abstract. Paul also says that death, as a sentence for sin, passed upon Adam and all in him, i.e. on the federal principle. He does not say that a process of corruption was set in motion in order to carry out the sentence of death. In fact he says in effect that Adam was as good as dead as soon as he actually sinned. Read Paul's words in Romans 5:15: -

"But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead much more the grace of God, and the gift by Grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many... Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

As far as their Statement of Faith is concerned, the Christadelphian view makes God unjust, and absolutely the opposite of His declared attributes to Moses in the Mount Sinai, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty..." Exodus 34:6-7.

For they, the Christadelphians state that the sentence passed upon Adam was one that defiled him and became a physical law of his being and was transmitted to all his posterity. A mere examination of the statement by Jesus will show that this is an erroneous view for He said in Mark 7:15: -

"There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him; but the things that come out of him, those are they that defile the man... For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these things come from within, and defile the man."

Let us not leave it there. These things come about because there is a law which says, "Thou shalt not..." the same law says, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and thy neighbour as thyself. This means doing that which is right and pleasing to the Lord which is quite possible if a man's heart is attuned to it by exercise of the incorruptible word of God. Therefore Adam's defilement was a legal one not a physical; he rebelled against God's edict which said "Thou shalt not eat of it." The eating of the fruit did not change him physically or defile his body. It was the unlawful action which affected him legally and morally and brought him under the condemnation; he was as good as dead the moment he transgressed; it needed only the infliction of death. How was this to be carried out? The following chapters show us plainly how it would have been carried out were it not for the love, compassion and mercy of the creator in finding a substitute life, for the life which Adam had forfeited by sin - The Lamb of God.

Did not God say that He would destroy the people which He brought out of Egypt under Moses? Yet Moses prayed on their behalf even to having his name blotted out of the Book of Life. And without this condition God pardoned the people. Exodus ch. 32. If the sin which entered into the world by Adam was a tangible physical change in the flesh culminating finally in death as a penalty, how could Cain be accused of the murder of Abel?

Christadelphians state that it was not wrong for Jesus to die, because He had sinful flesh. If this were true, then it was not wrong for Abel to die either. Who are we to believe? Christadelphians, or the God of Heaven?

If by one man sin entered into the world, then Paul means what he says - it entered the world out of one man or by one man, and so the sin of Adam became the sin of the world; hence the statement of John the Baptist concerning Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." If Jesus took away the; sin of the world by His sacrifice upon the cross then it could not be sin-in-the-flesh because we are still of the same flesh now as man has always been from creation.

God has concluded all under sin of Adam that He might have mercy upon all. This is what is meant by "the sin of the world." "The Lord laid on him (not infused in him), the iniquity of us all."

Men do not die as a penalty for Adam's sin. They, in fact, owe their very existence to the sacrifice of Christ, and if in addition to this they do not avail themselves of the opportunity of eternal life through the only way to the Tree of Life (Jesus), then time and chance happeneth to them all; they die under the sin constitution in ignorance; Paul's letter to the Romans explains this so beautifully and plainly that I simply marvel that I did not see it as a former Christadelphian. But it is understandable when one realises how the writings of uninspired men with biased minds can blind the eyes to such truths. Paul shows in Romans that we are all the children of sin or sin's servants when we are born. We discover this by enlightenment. And in order to escape this position we die a symbolic death in Christ and rise to newness of life in Him. God has purchased or redeemed us and we are no longer sin's servants but God's.

"Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

Paul also says, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature or creation, old things have passed away, all things have become new." This, undoubtedly, is the best way, the only way, to commence a life in service to God. We must become His servants before any service can count.

No man can serve two masters and this fact is what redemption is all about. We are either sin's flesh or we are God's flesh, or to put it another way; flesh belonging to sin or flesh belonging to God, servants of sin (personified as a master) or servants of God. Sin pays wages for services rendered. The wages of sin, says Paul, is death. God freely gives to His servants eternal life. They do not earn it. For they have been freely justified by His grace through faith in the sacrifice of Christ and baptism into His death. God's servants are legally justified in this manner but will not be morally justified unless they maintain their integrity to the end of their probation. They cannot give to God anything as it were, only the fruit of their lips in honour and praise to His glory.

A reading of Paul's letter to the Romans, chapters 5 and 6, would be of great benefit on this subject, especially if preconceived ideas are cast aside.

It is a lack of understanding of Paul's letter to the Romans, especially chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8, which has caused Christadelphians (of the Temperance Hall Section mainly), to reject the scriptural view of the Nazarene Fellowship that Jesus had a 'free life' and by this we mean that He was born free of the condemnation which passed upon Adam and all in him on the federal principle, that is, we were in Adam's loins when he sinned and so we were constituted sinners in him although not actually personal sinners, not having been born. Jesus was never in Adam's loins, He was a direct product of God. His life came direct from the source so that He might be free of the Adamic condemnation and able to give His life (not belonging to sin) as a ransom for the many who were constituted sinners. Rom, ch 5.

Although born of the Virgin Mary, this did not make Him any the worse; because the flesh of Mary was never under condemnation, neither was Adam's for that matter. It was Adam's actions that were condemned because of the fact that he had a nature controlled by a brain, capable of complying with God's requirements of him. If there had been no law in Eden there would have been no transgression, for sin is transgression of Law.

If a car manufacturer produces a car and states that it is only capable of a top speed of 80 mph, would anyone condemn the mechanism if it failed to go faster than this? Of course not. Naturally one would complain to the maker, for any faults that may be found.

Adam's case was similar. God produced him capable of doing His will or opposing it. This is what we style free will as opposed to a mere automaton. Adam failed to do God's will but God could not condemn the nature; He had already pronounced it very good at creation; He condemned the free thinker, the unlawful action of the responsible person. Adam's flesh or nature was the same after sinning as it was before; it was still very good; I defy anyone to say it was otherwise. Jesus came upon the scene in the same position as Adam before transgression, to show that it was possible to do God's will and so establish the righteousness of God in condemning Adam.

Adam's character and position, after transgression were very different; he was a sinner under the penalty of death - alienated from God, become a servant of sin - sin's flesh instead of God's flesh. The difference now was his relationship; there was no difference in his flesh or nature, it was just a matter of who was its owner. In Adam's case he had sold himself to that which was the opposite at God's will, the adversary, and which was now personified as a master, sin. God did not need to defile Adam's flesh and make it worse than it already was. The condemnation was passed upon Adam as a human character, a logical thinking person, amenable to law, and God made it operative as the law of sin and death upon all in Adam's loins on the federal principle, so that the one sacrifice of Christ could also be operative upon all in the same way, but on the principle of faith, see Romans 5:6-21,

Please note. None of us were actual sinners when Christ died, we were not even in existence at that time. So why not accept what Paul explains so clearly and emphatically - that we were 'constituted sinners' but not actual sinners. Sold by Adam to an alien master personified as sin; but that by the obedience of faith in the sacrifice of Christ we can become free from sin (present tense). This was the position of those to whom Paul addressed the words in his letter to the Romans 6:17-18, "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."

This is proof in itself that men do not have to die literally to be made free from sin. That sin is not in the flesh, otherwise we could not be made free and still exist as natural persons.

Why do people refuse to realise that Paul was speaking of himself as an unregenerated Jew under the law and still in bondage to sin; the unregenerated state of bringing forth fruit unto death? See verse 14 of ch 7. "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not."

A proper and skilful reading of Paul's letters will show us that he was explaining the difference between an unregenerate person sold under sin and minding only the things of the flesh and a person who has been re-born and is subject to the law of God. The one in the fleshly state bias serving the law of sin and the other in the reborn state was serving the law of God. Paul could not have referred to himself at the time of writing, as being carnal, or sold under sin, for he had already stated in Romans 8:6, "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God"

Does Paul mean the literal flesh? Of course not. He is referring to the mind of the flesh which is subject to the law of sin and death. He clarifies this by saying to the regenerated Romans, "But ye are not in the flesh." But we know that they were still flesh and blood persons. We should, as Bible students, have enough logic and common sense to realise that Paul, after his conversion, was never carnally minded, was never brought into captivity to the law of sin. No. He fought a good fight, finished the course and kept the faith. He ran with patience the race set before him, but those who are in Adam sold under sin, are not even entered in the race.

We could draw many examples from Paul's letter to the Romans where the superficial reader has taken his meaning out of the context and to some extent used the misconception as an excuse for failure to comply with God's requirements. I have heard one example misquoted in prayer at a Christadelphian meeting, "In the flesh there dwelleth no good thing." Paul did not use these words. The proper rendering of Paul's words should be, "For I know that in me (that is in my unregenerated state, prior to baptism into Christ) dwelleth no good thing, for I am not in a position to serve God with the mind of the flesh." So, far from making this an excuse for failure, whoever uses Paul's words in this way is admitting that he is still in the flesh and has not been barn again and is not God's servants

Superficial reading of Paul's epistle to the Romans therefore is most dangerous to a correct knowledge and understanding of Adam's sin and the redemption and salvation in Christ Jesus.

Brother Phil Parry

To be continued...
