

# The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 283

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## Editorial

### **"Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God." - Romans 11:22**

Dear Friends, Brothers and Sisters, Loving greetings in Jesus' Name.

The thoughts that come to mind when we think of God and who He is will depend on many things but perhaps for most of us we like to think of Him as our loving heavenly Father; after all when Jesus was asked by His disciples, "Teach us to pray," He started by saying, "Our Father which art in heaven . . ." and elsewhere in the Bible we are told that God is love, and this is true. He created this earth in which we live making it suitable for man's habitation and full of wonders and marvels; and when we read of the description of creation in Genesis we learn, in passing as it were, that "He made the stars also," as if it was but a small matter. Yet the vastness of endless space and the mighty power we see in the universe is far beyond our comprehension.

Amazingly then, God holds open to mankind the opportunity of sharing in a great future and we read of this in Isaiah 45:18 & 19, "For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens, who is God, who formed the earth and made it, who has established it, who did not create it in vain, but formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD, and there is no other. I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth; I did not say to the seed of Jacob, 'Seek Me in vain'; I, the LORD, speak righteousness, I declare things that are right."

This quotation taken from Isaiah deals with only two parties – God, the Creator, and man-kind, or more specifically here He mentions only Jacob whom He chose to become His special people - if they did what He declared to be right. And in Genesis 35:10 to 12, we read - "Your name is Jacob: your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name: . . . Also God said to him, I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come from your body. The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land." And here we have the reason why the land of Israel is called 'The Promised Land' even to this day.

But this promise was always conditional on the people of Israel doing what God declared to be right. The Old Testament in our Bibles gives a detailed account of their history. All went well in

Israel for a time, but then they forsook God's ways and went their own wrong ways, God punished them for their waywardness by bringing other nations against them in war and they soon turned to God again, sought His forgiveness and had peace once more. But over the years this pattern was repeated time and again and matters went from bad to worse until God forsook them as we read in Ezekiel 21:25 to 27, "Now to you, O profane, wicked prince of Israel, whose day has come, whose iniquity shall end, thus says the Lord GOD: Remove the turban, and take off the crown; nothing shall remain the same. Exalt the humble, and humble the exalted. Overthrown, overthrown, I will make it overthrown! It shall be no longer, until He comes whose right it is, and I will give it to Him." And the Bible makes it very clear that Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah, is the one whom He will make the next King of Israel.

When Jesus came the first time He said He would restore the Kingdom to Israel and this is what we are waiting for today; and again he said, "In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as *it is* in heaven." (Matthew 6:9 & 10.)

From all these things we can see the love, goodness and mercy of God, but there is the serious warning; remember we just read that God said, "I declare things that are right." And Jesus said, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? 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 7:21 to 23). Many professing Christians cast out by Christ - and for what? For working iniquity! And the apostle Paul further explains, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will, of the flesh reap corruption," and while the Apostle Paul gives this warning he nevertheless goes on to give hope to the faithful and says furthermore, "but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all" (Galatians 6:7 to 10).

The nations of the world have never been in such a terrible state as they are today; and I don't think I am over-stating the case when I say that it seems most if not all those who would rule over others are greedy of wealth for themselves and their colleagues and form Mafia type governments. Then once in power they care little for others. It is worth looking up of what God forewarned Israel when they first asked for a king "like the kings of the nations around them." This you can read of in 1 Samuel 8 verses 10 to 17.

But when will Jesus come again? There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." Luke 21:25 to 28,

With love to all, Russell.

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**Jesus said:**

"But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is Spirit: and they that worship God must worship Him in Spirit and in truth." John 4:23 & 24.

## **“I can’t understand...”**

As Bible readers, it is hardly necessary to remind you that believers are, in Paul’s words, Ambassadors for Christ, and it is therefore most important that we should know Him whom we serve and not be in danger of misrepresenting Him in even small things; so that there is no room for carelessness or avoidable ignorance on questions which concern our understanding of Him.

Let us then suppose a friend enquiring the reason for your hope and belief, and you are asked,

“For whom did Christ die?”

Would you answer, “He died for Himself”?

Or suppose you were asked, “Was Jesus holy, harmless and undefiled?”

Would you reply, “His character was undefiled but His nature was unclean and sinful”?

Or if you were asked, “Is it possible to keep the commandments?”

Would you answer, “No, because our sinful flesh makes it impossible”?

Yet, if you are loyal to the doctrines of the community to which you belong, these are the answers you ought to give; but whether they are your own considered conclusions or not, so long as you do nothing to correct the Christadelphian position, and acquiesce in the excommunication of those who, like the writer, renounce them, you are responsible for them to God. It may be said that the answers need qualification, but no amount of explanation or qualification can change the abhorrent and unscriptural nature of the ideas involved; ideas which are quite clearly expressed in most versions of the Statement of Faith, and even though some have been astonished and incredulous that such beliefs are really in Christadelphianism, they are emphatically taught and defended in works such as “The Slain Lamb.”

We remind you, in all earnestness and without wishing to insult your intelligence, that it is our own personal and individual understanding of the Gospel and our response thereto, which will fit us for Salvation, and if we have to confess that we cannot understand how and why the death of The Saviour was necessary for our redemption, how can we be said to believe? Surely wisdom would urge us to devote a little time and thought to the matter so that we can be fully assured in our own minds and independent of others. If the day comes, which God forbid, that we are amongst those who have prophesied in the Name of Christ and yet are rejected, it will be small comfort that the authors and editors and leading lights of the Christadelphian world are rejected at the same time. We pray, with no sense of superiority, knowing that “we have nothing which we have not received” that time and reason may prevail to convince them of the seriousness of their misconceptions regarding the Lord who died for them.

You may be one of those who say, “The simple truth is enough for me,” to which we answer, “Amen.” The truth is simple and the cry now being raised that these doctrines are too deep for any but those with long experience, is the same kind of eyewash that the Roman Catholic uses to prevent her followers discovering how and where they are being misled. The important question is whether you have the simple truth or a mixture of error originating in the traditional idea of the Fall of Man and elaborated in the brain of the late R.Roberts when he was faced by, and determined to destroy, the truth brought to light by Edward Turney in 1873.

Will you read the following outline of what appears to us to be the true Scriptural facts about Sin and Salvation, turning up the texts quoted and considering them in the light of your knowledge of the

Bible and as far as possible with an unbiased mind?

1. Adam was created a natural man and placed under a law. Genesis 2:7; 1 Corinthians 15:47.
2. By disobedience he brought himself under sentence to a violent death. Genesis 2:17; Romans 5:12.
3. In God's mercy this penalty was only inflicted in type. Genesis 3:21; Romans 3:25.
4. The sentence comes upon all Adam's descendants when they are enlightened. Romans 5:12,13; John 3:19.
5. If they remain in Adam, thus neglecting salvation, they will suffer the penalty in the second death. Hebrews 2:3; Revelation 20:13,14,
6. Christ was born with the same nature as Adam and placed under a law. Romans 8:3; Hebrews 2:17.
7. By perfect obedience He merited life, and as God's Son He did not come under Adam's sentence. John 8:23,29,36,44;
8. His sacrifice was the voluntary suffering of the actual violent death which Adam incurred. 1 Peter 3:18; Isaiah 53.
9. The sentence is therefore remitted for all who belong to Christ; they pass in baptism from death to life. Romans 8:1; John 5:24.

These are our views, and we ask you to consider them without prejudice; for holding them we have been disfellowshipped by the Christadelphians. That fact alone gives us little concern, but we are most anxious and concerned that you should know what you are doing before shouldering your share of the responsibility. Obviously some objections will occur to you, as in some points the truth cuts right across what you have held hitherto, but you will find all your questions adequately answered in our literature which you may have already received or which we will supply to you freely.

To enable you to make a comparison we will now give an outline of Christadelphian doctrine on the same lines; we shall state it as fairly as possible, and most of the phrases are verbatim statements by leading writers, but we can give no references as we believe there are none. If you decide, which we can hardly conceive, that they are true, we would suggest that you try to supply the proofs or turn up the texts which are given in the Statement of Faith purporting to support the assertions made.

1. Adam was created in a "neutral" condition.
2. As a result of sin his nature was changed and he became a dying creature.
3. As a punishment he lived a life of toil and sweat, and when he died he suffered the full penalty.
4. The sentence, a defiled, dying nature comes upon every human being irrespective of age or responsibility.
5. Christ was born with this inherent defilement.

6. Being begotten of God He received strength to do what no other man could do; live a perfect life.
7. His death was a ritualistic exhibition of what was due to sinful human nature, and was therefore necessary for His own salvation.
8. Although said to be saved, redeemed and forgiven those in Christ still suffer the penalty of sin.

An additional penalty, the second death, is in store for the Wicked.

You do not need a training in theology or even a college education to be able to compare these two outlines and decide where the complications and difficulties come from. The differences are not subtle, they are striking. In the first you have a perfect parallel between Adam and Christ, the one failed, the other succeeded; it is a plan which exhibits the love and mercy of God while at the same time upholding strict justice - a life for a life - not exacted but voluntarily given. In the second you have a scheme which reduces Christ's triumph over temptation to a sham fight, and makes His death the inescapable penalty of His defiled nature.

So far as points 1,2,4,5,6 & 7 are concerned, we challenge anyone to produce a passage of Scripture which honestly interpreted supports any one of them. As regards points 3,8 & 9, these are based upon mistaken deduction from Genesis 3:19, and Romans 5:12, that natural death was the punishment for sin. We shall not go further into that question here as it has been dealt with elsewhere, and if you are interested in the matter, or even if like some, you are dumbfounded at the strangeness of the idea, we shall gladly supply you with the means of satisfying your mind. Remember, when you preach the Kingdom, you expect your friends to be open to conviction of the startling and incredible fact that they are not really going to heaven; is it too much to ask you to consider with similar reasonableness, the suggestion that natural death is not the Wages of Sin? We do assure you, with all the earnestness we can command, that if only you will have the courage to sort things out for yourself, you will be soon rewarded with a sense of mental freedom and confidence toward God which you have certainly not yet experienced, and which is impossible to those who adhere to their imperfect or perverted understanding of His purpose in Christ. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Despite the simplicity of the subject, however, you may still hesitate and feel yourself unfitted to take a decision on a doctrinal question of such importance in opposition to the majority. If so, it would almost suffice to remind you of the example of men like Abraham and Elijah, and women like Ruth and Rahab; if we are to be worthy of reward with those people we ought to be developing the same kind of independence and courage; they would not have exhibited the spirit of Laodicea when faced with an issue on a vital doctrine. If our reasoning could be answered why is it ignored so studiously? It may not have escaped your notice that the numerous Christadelphian magazines are singularly reluctant to deal with them.

But there is another line of approach which may help you to make up your mind. When the Apostle Paul spoke to the brethren at Ephesus, he called as witness to his authority, his manner of life (Acts 20), his zeal and steadfastness, while in another place, warning us against false prophets, Jesus said, "By their fruits ye shall know them." So that even the unlearned, who may feel obliged to depend to some extent upon their leaders for what they accept or reject, are supplied with an infallible test which only requires applying with the same common sense and judgment that we employ in a thousand ways in our daily life.

When you observe leading brethren so hopelessly incapable of directing their own lives as to be engaged in vital war industries and all kinds of municipal and state service, even to the extent of being concerned in the prosecution of those conscientious objectors who refuse such service; when

you see ecclesial rules juggled and vested interests and editorial dishonesty and suppression of facts to serve the interests of those in authority; when instead of meekness and humility you find arrogance, ambition and place-seeking and when you consider that there are at least six divisions of brethren all professing to believe essentially the same things and yet refusing to meet with one another; are these the “fruits” by which we should recognise those whom it is safe to follow?

These are rather the marks of those “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.” Indeed, a seeker for truth would be looking in the right direction if he asked what people or doctrines all these divergent and worldly minded elements were most unitedly and bitterly opposed to, and he would find both his answer and his goal in those variously termed Renunciationists, Clean Flesh Heretics and Turneyites. For ourselves, we are thankful for the deliverance and enlightenment we have received at the hands of these so wickedly miscalled, and our only pangs are for those whom we love and seek to help, but who so blindly resist the truth.

In conclusion, we address ourselves to those who have recognised that the Christadelphian position is indefensible both scripturally and logically, but who take no definite action to witness to the Truth of God and the Holiness of His Son.

There is One Faith, One Hope, and One Baptism, and to be a valid ceremony our baptism must be the seal set upon a true hope and sound faith. We recognise and agree that in the majority of cases, when we are baptised we have no more than an elementary understanding of the Plan of God and need to grow in knowledge as a new born child grows in strength. Nevertheless, as is indicated by the fact that Christadelphians require a Baptist, who may have been immersed according to that Faith, to be re-baptised, it is obvious that there is a certain essential minimum of knowledge. We ourselves might put that minimum actually lower than Christadelphians; but we see a wide and serious difference between lack of knowledge and positive error. The former can be remedied; a simple soul can grow in grace and knowledge, but if one has wrong beliefs they must be forsaken before one can even commence to grow in the Truth. Furthermore, if those wrong beliefs are such as to involve the integrity of the Almighty Himself, can a mere change of mind meet the situation? Is it not rather a case for a public confession of our faith? As a sect who hold that the Son of God was born under condemnation and had to die to atone for His own sinful nature, the Christadelphians are separated from the Truth by a wider gulf than they are from the Baptists. That is why we regard it as questionable whether one who has been immersed by Christadelphians, and has afterwards come to a knowledge of the Truth as it is in Jesus, has been scripturally baptised. To say the very least, there is a doubt, and for ourselves, where Eternal Life is involved, we want to avoid doubt.

“Whosoever shall confess me before men,  
him shall the Son of man confess  
before the angels of God.”  
Luke 12:8

Ernest Brady.

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## **ELIJAH AND THE PRIESTS OF BAAL.**

Of the three great scriptural scourges, war, pestilence, and famine, the last is palpably the most fitted to enforce on a people the necessity of a moral change.

War is a whirlwind of all the fiercer passions, a tumult of fear and flight, of hot revenge and mad exultation, a fever and a frenzy of the land.

Pestilence sweeps the soil with such tremendous rapidity, that it leaves no room for thought, or no thought but of terror; or even generates in the survivors a reckless licentiousness from mere despair; "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

But famine, slow, searching, and terrible, while it wrings every sense, gives the heart time to feel.

When the land had been thus smitten for three years, Elijah appeared the second time before king Ahab, publicly arraigned his guilt as the source of the national calamity, and challenged the whole idolatrous priesthood, the "four hundred prophets of the groves and the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal," to meet him alone, and decide, in the presence of the nation, whether Jehovah or Baal was the true God of earth and heaven.

The scene of this great trial was palpably chosen to give the most complete openness to the whole solemn transaction. It was neither in temple nor in palace, in forest nor in field, but on the bold promontory of Carmel, where all must be visible to the multitude below; that multitude, gathered from all Israel, serious and subdued by long privation, and anxious for the decision on which might depend the national existence. The vastness of the assemblage, the royal pomp, the wild and mystic pageantry on the mountain's brow: even the natural magnificence of the scene, the noble mountain range the boundless sea, the sky un-shadowed with a cloud, or only tintured with the colouring of a Syrian sunset, were well calculated to prepare the heart for the still mightier impressions of miracle.

At length, at the hour of evening sacrifice, that sacrifice so long intermitted by apostate Israel, the solitary man of God advances; he builds his altar, the fire from heaven descends, the sacrifice is consumed in the sight of all; the idolatrous priesthood, in astonishment and terror, see their doom; and the air is rent with the thunder of the thousands and tens of thousands shouting, "The LORD, He is the God, the LORD, He is the God," 1 Kings. 18:39.

Croly. GLEANER.

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## **THE BURIED CITY.**

Far away from the highways of modern commerce, and the tracks of ordinary travel, lay a city buried in the sandy earth of a half-desert Turkish province, with no certain trace of its place of sepulture. Vague tradition said that it was hidden somewhere near the river Tigris; but for a long series of ages its existence in the world was a mere name – a word. That name suggested the idea of an ancient capital of fabulous splendour and magnitude; a congregation of palaces and temples, encompassed by vast walls and ramparts, - of "the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly; that said in her heart, I am, and there is none beside me;" and which was to become "a desolation and dry like a Wilderness." (Zephaniah ii. 15, 13).

More than two thousand years had it lain in its unknown grave, when a French savant and a wandering English scholar sought the seat of the once powerful empire, and searching till they found the dead city, threw off its shroud of sand and ruin, and revealed once more to an astonished and curious world the temples, the palaces, and the idols; the representations of war and the chase, of the cruelties and luxuries of the ancient Assyrians. The Nineveh of Scripture, the Nineveh of the oldest historians, the Nineveh - twin sister of Babylon - glorying in pomp and power, all traces of which were believed to be gone; the Nineveh in which the captive tribes of Israel laboured and wept, and against which the words of prophecy had gone forth, was, after a sleep of twenty centuries, again brought to light. The proofs of ancient splendour were again beheld by living eyes, and by the skill of draughtsmen and the pen of antiquarian travellers, made known and preserved to the world.

The immense mounds of bricks and rubbish which marked the presumed sites of Babylon and Nineveh had been used as quarries by the inhabitants of the surrounding country from time immemorial, without disclosing to other eyes than those of the wild occupiers of the soil the monuments they must have served to support or cover.

A great many erroneous opinions (according to Botta) have been disseminated with regard to the actual conditions of the ruins of Nineveh: they have been represented as a mine in constant requisition for supplying bricks and stones for the creation of the houses of Mosul, and thus assimilated to the ruins of Babylon, which have for ages furnished the necessary building materials for the surrounding towns. "Such however," says Botta, can scarcely have been the case at Nineveh at any period, and very certainly it is not so in the present day. The reason is plain. All that exists of the ruins of the ancient city boundary walls, and mounds, is formed of bricks which were merely baked in the sun; these bricks have been reduced by age into an earthy state, and consequently cannot be used again. There can be no doubt but that in the construction of these ancient buildings more solid materials, such stones and kiln-burnt bricks, were sometimes employed, and this accounts for their being accidentally discovered; but, they were merely employed as accessories - the mass of the walls was composed of unburnt bricks. Thus, in this particular, there is not the least similarity between Nineveh and Babylon; the ruins of the latter only offer an immense quantity of excellent bricks; they have, consequently, been capable of being used as quarries. But the masses of earth which are the only remains of Nineveh, could not be employed for a like purpose. . .

Among the remarkable discoveries made by Layard at Nimroud, was a vaulted chamber, built in the centre of a wall, nearly 50 feet in thickness, and about 15 feet beneath the surface of the ground. The dimensions of this vault were 10 feet in height by 10 feet in width, and the arch over it was formed of kiln-burnt bricks; but there was no apparent entrance, nor could Layard divine to what use it had been applied. The discovery, however, of so large an arch turned in baked bricks and built into the solid mass of the mound, is a convincing proof that the ancient Assyrians, like the ancient Egyptians, were acquainted with the principle of the arch, although they both evidently refrained from using it in their larger structures, or where the abutments were not secure, from a knowledge, as we are assured by this discreet use of it, of the inherent self-destroying principle of the arch. We could have wished that the discoverer had informed us whether the bricks were of the usual form, whether they were wedge-shaped, or whether, as in some Egyptian brick arches, pieces of tile were inserted to keep the bricks apart at the top.

Another curious discovery was, that tubular drain tiles were used for removing the rain water that fell through the openings in the roofs on to the pavements of the several apartments, and that there was under the pavement of the mound a main drain, the invert formed of kiln-burnt bricks, and the upper part covered with slabs and tiles.

He noticed, also, that a thin layer of bitumen passed under all the floors and slabs, to preserve them, doubtless, from the damp which would otherwise have arisen from the earth underneath.

The Tigris is navigated by means of rafts constructed of pieces of wood, which are supported by inflated skins. These rafts (which are called by the natives, kellek) are well adapted for descending the stream, which in summer is very shallow; but they are of no use for going up. When the rafts have arrived at Baghdad they are broken up, the wood sold, often at a profit, and the skins brought back to Mosul, to serve again for the same purpose. Such were the means that Botta successfully employed for transporting the sculptures down the river towards the sea - the rafts of the required solidity being secured by the use of timber of a large size cut in the mountains, and the number of skins proportioned to the dimensions of the raft.

At Havre, at the close of the year 1846, was landed the first collection of Assyrian antiquities that had ever been brought to Europe. They now form one of the greatest attractions in the noble museum of the Louvre.

“Nineveh and its Palaces”, by Joseph Bonomi, F.R.S.L., passim. - GLEANER.

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## **“THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM.”**

### **PART ONE**

The commonly received view of the gospel of the kingdom is simply that which is to be believed in order to obtain the kingdom, and not the kingdom itself. And this is understood to be the glad tidings that God has, in the death of His Son, provided a sacrifice for the sins of man; as, for instance, where Paul tells the Corinthians: “I declare unto you the gospel . . . how that Christ died for our sins,” etc., and that Jesus is the Christ, that is, the Anointed Prophet, Priest, and King of His church. But it is forgotten by those who hold such views, that Jesus not only preached the gospel of the kingdom, but He preached the very kingdom itself. His own words are: “I must preach the kingdom of God; for therefore am I sent,” Luke iv. 43. And He commissioned His disciples to do the same. “He sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick - - - And they went through the towns preaching the gospel and healing everywhere,” Luke ix, 2, 6. And so important did He consider this making known “the kingdom,” that, when one asked Him to be allowed to go and bury his father, He told him, “Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and PREACH THE KINGDOM of God.” And more than this, the Apostles at that time knew no other gospel, for when Jesus told them He should be killed and rise again, they understood not His words, as we find several times mentioned in the gospel narratives. See Luke xviii. 34. Besides, Jesus is never once called the King of His church. As the Christ, which means Anointed, He is the “King of Israel,” under which title He was confessed by Nathanael, with the express approval of his Master. From this it is plain that the gospel, as summarily expressed in the formula, “Christ died for our sins,” etc., must be understood with this official sense of the title “the Christ.” The Apostles could not preach Christ as a sacrifice for sin at the time when they were unaware that He should die.

But not only did the Apostles preach the Kingdom of God before the death of Jesus, while they knew not that He should die, but they continued to do so after Jesus had risen from the dead and had ascended to the right hand of His Father in the heavens. We have a remarkable proof of this in the Acts of the Apostles, where their preaching is recorded. We are told for example that “When the Samaritans believed Philip preaching the things concerning THE KINGDOM OF GOD, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women” (viii. 12). Besides this, there are repeated accounts of Paul preaching the Kingdom to both Jews and Gentiles. And should it be questioned that Philip preached “the things of the Kingdom” as an element of the gospel, it may be mentioned that the term rendered “preaching” is literally evangelizing, that is, making known as evangel or gospel. The word evangelizing is just the original Greek word in an English dress. Hence fully rendered, the verse should read - “When they believed Philip making known as glad tidings the things concerning the Kingdom of God,” etc.

One other instance of preaching the Kingdom, after the ascension of Christ, may be given from the preaching of the Apostle Paul. In recounting his labours to the elders of the Ephesian Church, he says: “None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone PREACHING THE KINGDOM OF GOD, shall see my face no more.” Here it is plain that

“testifying the gospel of the grace of God,” and “preaching the kingdom of God,” are viewed by the Apostle as identical, expressing the same thing in different words; the former, general; the latter, specific. Verse 31 shows that this preaching the Kingdom of God among the Ephesians continued for “the space of three years;” and chapter xix. verse 8, shows the first three months of this preaching to have been in the Jewish Synagogue, the subject being there again expressly described, “disputing and persuading the things concerning THE KINGDOM of God.”

That this was Paul’s invariable usage may be further seen from the account of his two years’ residence in Rome, contained in the last chapter of the Acts, where “the Kingdom of God” is twice mentioned as the subject of his preaching. See verses 23 and 31.

Now, whatever sense the so-called orthodox may choose to impose upon the language “Kingdom of God,” they must accept the responsibility of correctly ascertaining the Scriptural sense, or confess their inability to make known to their hearers the gospel preached by Christ and His Apostles. And, if they do not proclaim something bearing the name by which the gospel was exclusively designated during the personal ministry of the Lord, that of itself is sufficient to convict them of ignorance of the very first principles of the gospel of Christ. Now, the fact is that they do not profess to preach anything as the gospel of salvation to sinners which can by any means be termed “THE KINGDOM OF GOD;” their preaching of the gospel being confined to the sacrifice for sin, offered to God in the death of Jesus.

But leaving the preachers of the popular theology to settle this question as best they may, let us now inquire as to what Christ and His Apostles preached, when they made known the things concerning THE KINGDOM OF GOD. The common idea is, that the Church is the kingdom. I have already stated that Christ is commonly understood to be the King of His church. The Confession of Faith, agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, with the assistance of Commissioners from the Church of Scotland (1643), makes formal declaration of the popular doctrine, as follows:-

“It pleased God in His eternal purpose to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man; the Prophet, Priest, and King; the Head and Saviour of His Church; the Heir of all things; and Judge of the world.” - CHAP. viii. SEC. i.

This Protestant Assembly, in this paragraph, simply expressed the doctrine concerning the Kingdom of God, which had been handed down to them by the Roman Catholic Church. This may be seen in the notes contained in the Roman Catholic English version of the Bible. For example, Dan, ii. 44, “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed,” etc., the Roman Catholic version has this note - “A kingdom, viz., the Kingdom of Christ in the Catholic Church, which cannot be destroyed.”

This Popish idea of the Kingdom of God was thus inherited by our Protestant ancestors, pure and simple, as it had been held for a thousand years prior to the Reformation of the sixteenth century. The following extract from the “Dictionary of the Bible,” by John Eadie, D.D., LL.D., Professor of Biblical Literature in the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, will show that, in our own day, this is still held as a prominent sense of the Kingdom of God:-

“Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom,” Luke xii. 32. Kingdom - the precise import of this term can usually be determined by its connection. In the New Testament it generally denotes either the spiritual reign of Christ over the hearts of individuals, or over the church collectively. “Kingdom of God,” 1 Cor. xv. 50. “Kingdom of Heaven,” Matt. iii. 2. These expressive terms sometimes denote the state of glory beyond the grave, 2 Pet. i. 11. More generally, they denote the gospel dispensation, under the Messiah, in distinction from the typical kingdom of the Jews, Matt. iii. 2; xxi. 43; xxv. 1; Luke x. 9, 11. And sometimes they signify the gospel exerting a reigning power over the hearts and minds of men, Luke xvii. 21; John iii. 3, 5; Rom. xiv. 17.

Dr. Southwell, in his Universal Family Bible, on Luke i. 32, 33, says: - "The Jews believed that the Kingdom of the Messiah was never to have an end, and this notion they formed in consequence of not distinguishing between the letter and the spirit of the prophecies - - - That kingdom is of a spiritual nature, and no way connected with the affairs of this world."

It will be observed that Dr. Eadie speaks of the kingdom denoting the state of glory beyond the grave."

This seems, also, to be the idea of the Westminster Assembly, as contained in their compilation, entitled the Shorter Catechism, a work well known in Scotland, whatever may be its popularity in England. In answer to question 102, "What do we pray for in the second petition?" that is, of the Lord's Prayer, the Assembly replies: "In the second petition (which is, Thy Kingdom come) we pray, that Satan's kingdom may be destroyed (1), and that the kingdom of grace may be advanced (2), ourselves and others brought into it, and kept in it (3), and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened" (4).

The Scripture proofs given by the Assembly are these, placed according to the clauses marked in the answer:-

(1) Psalm Ixviii. 1, "Let God arise; let His enemies be scattered; let them, also, that hate Him, flee before Him."

(2) Psalm li. 18, "Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem."

(3) 2 Thess. iii. 1, "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, even as it is with you." Also, Rom. x. 1, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved."

(4) Rev. xxii. 20, "He which testified these things saith, Surely I come quickly, Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus."

The distinction between the kingdom of grace and the kingdom of glory, here maintained, is embalmed in the Scotch Paraphrase-hymn on the Lord's prayer -

For ever hallow'd be Thy name,  
By all beneath the skies;  
And may Thy kingdom still advance,  
Till grace to glory rise."

I conclude the extracts by one from an anonymous Baptist preacher, who presented the Scriptural argument for the popular doctrine in the following terms: -

"Is the Church of Christ ever called a Kingdom?" Rev. i. 9. "I, John, your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ," Col. i. 13. "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." There are numerous other passages to prove the affirmative; but these two are sufficient to settle the question. - - - The Kingdom of Christ may be divided into two departments: its state of grace, in the present dispensation; and its future state, in the dispensation of glory."

Now, we have, in these extracts, a formidable array of authority for a present phase of the Kingdom of God in actual existence; extending from the Bishop of Rome, since the time of Constantine, in the fourth century, down to a humble Baptist minister, in the nineteenth. How true the saying that "extremes meet!"

Leaving out of view in the meantime the Kingdom of Glory which is, on all hands, assigned its place in the future, or at least “beyond the grave,” the only other view really maintained is what is called a spiritual Kingdom, - the influence of “the gospel exerting a reining power over the hearts and minds of men.”

Now, it is perfectly true that the truth exercises a powerful influence over the minds of men. But it is just as true that this is never once in the Scriptures termed the Kingdom of God. Why then contend for this as the Kingdom?

Again, Jesus came, proclaiming the approach of the Kingdom, saying, “Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand.” The Kingdom Jesus preached was thus not in active existence at the time of His preaching. In precise accordance with this, He taught His disciples to pray, “Thy Kingdom come.” But, down to the close of His ministry, it did not come; for we find Him then telling His disciples of certain signs by which it should be known that “the Kingdom of God is nigh at hand,” Luke xxi. 31. These signs are placed subsequent to the times of the Gentiles, and although the duration of those times might not be known to those He addressed, they are now known to be still running; and the kingdom still future. I am not aware that any advocate of a present kingdom has contended that the signs are fulfilled.

But, if Jesus preached a future kingdom, it follows inevitably that it could not be the so-called spiritual reign of truth in the hearts of the faithful, for this was in active existence at the time of the preaching. The fact is, that the reign of truth had never been suspended from the days of Abel to the present, and was in active exercise in the persons of many at the time Jesus was announcing the approach of the kingdom. The aged Simeon, Anna the prophetess, Zacharias and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist, Joseph of Arimathea, who is spoken of as “WAITING FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD,” are examples of the power of intelligent faith in the divine promises, and true subjects of that influence which so many choose to designate the Kingdom of God.

Besides these first century examples of the power of faith, the eleventh chapter of Hebrews presents us with a roll of worthies, whose biographies extend over a period of four thousand years, during which the so-called spiritual kingdom continued in existence. Can we believe, with these facts before our eyes, that Jesus merely preached a continuance of this spiritual kingdom? The question naturally arises here, Was there no other kingdom in the circumstances in which Jesus came preaching the kingdom of God? Observe, then, here, that the people to whom He preached were chiefly that portion of God’s ancient people, Israel, who belonged to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, with a portion of the priestly tribe of Levi. There had been a kingdom established among this people by God Himself, and He was their king. The throne upon which David and Solomon sat was the throne of Jehovah (I Chron. xxix. 23). In verse 11 we have the words of David - “Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all.” Thus the throne and kingdom were the Lord’s, and this is the only kingdom of God which ever existed on the earth.

The popular theology entirely ignores the possibility of the kingdom of God in the nation of Israel having any relation to the preaching of Jesus and His apostles. Let us, therefore, inquire whether there is any evidence to establish such a relationship? first, note the fact that Jesus preached the kingdom of God among the people of Israel, without giving any express definition of its nature. Had He intended to convey to their minds an idea of the kingdom different from what they already possessed, we cannot conceive that He would thus have left them in the dark.

Second, the people among whom Jesus preached derived any knowledge they then had of the kingdom of God from the literal understanding of their own prophets, as recorded in the Old Testament.

Third, they expected the restoration of their own kingdom under the Messiah. This is admitted by all. Fourth, Jesus knew all this, and the only conclusion which can be legitimately drawn from this is that the restored kingdom of Israel is the Kingdom of God, preached by Jesus and His Apostles.

But, here it might be objected that the kingdom of Israel could not be the subject of restoration, as preached by Jesus, seeing that it had never ceased to exist. It might be said - Did not Herod occupy the throne of the kingdom of Israel? And were not the chief priests and rulers engaged in administering the Divine law, as given through Moses? Did not they sit in Moses' seat, as Christ Himself acknowledged and to whom he enjoined obedience on the part of the people? But what saith the Scriptures? The kingdom of Israel, after having subsisted for several hundred years under the rule of the House of David, was brought to an end on account to the iniquity of both rulers and people, in the reign of Zedekiah. The divine judgment concerning this is in these terms: - "Thou profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end. Thus saith the Lord God, Remove the diadem, and take off the crown; this shall not be the same; exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, and it shall be no more until He come whose right it is, and I will give it Him" (Ezek. xxi. 25-27).

This overturn of the kingdom of Israel has continued since; for, although there was a partial restoration of the people to the land, no son of David ever occupied the throne. Herod, who was king of Judea when Jesus was born, was both a foreigner and a usurper, reigning only by favour of the Roman emperors, who had reduced the country to a Roman province, and only tolerated, with certain limitations, the law of Moses, according to their usual practice with the conquered.

Besides, the Jews themselves did not consider their kingdom to have an independent existence, as may be seen from the question put by the Apostles to our Lord - "Wilt thou at this time RESTORE AGAIN the kingdom to Israel? And the wise men who, UNDER DIVINE GUIDANCE, came to Jerusalem, enquiring "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" afford another proof that the kingdom of Israel, in the active sense, had no existence. "He whose right it is" had "come to His own," but "His own received him not;" and this rejection of Him led to delay in His receiving the kingdom as predicted by Ezekiel; hence now the necessity of His second appearing. His claim to be the Christ - the Anointed for the throne of David, resulted in His death. But God raised Him from the dead, and exalted Him to His own right hand, from henceforth expecting till His enemies are made His footstool. He now awaits the times of restitution of all things spoken by the prophets, when God shall send Jesus Christ whom the heaven must receive until the arrival of those times. (Acts iii. 20, 21.) There cannot be a doubt that this restitution includes the restoration of the kingdom again to Israel.

It is evident from these considerations that it cannot be held that Herod occupied the throne of David, or that the Divine law of the kingdom could be enforced by the sanctions and penalties attached to it, seeing that God had suffered a foreign power to usurp the supremacy originally claimed by Himself; although it was still the duty of the people to obey it as far as practicable. How, then, could the Kingdom of God have a real existence? And where is the difficulty in understanding the coming kingdom preached by Jesus to be this veritable kingdom of Israel restored?

Brother J. Cameron.

To be continued.....

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### **Extract from "An outline of our views" by Ernest Brady**

Anyone who takes the view that only our personal transgressions stand in the way of our salvation must explain what the Apostle Paul means by the statement "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." The Christadelphian explanation is that it means that they were made sinners by inheriting sinful flesh and therefore they inevitably committed sins themselves and were thus made sinners. Many can see how this reflects upon the wisdom, the justice and the love of God,

for how can anyone who is born full of sin blame anyone else but God for the fact that he commits sin? But they have to swallow their revulsion and silence their doubts because that is what the B.A.S.F. teaches and their leaders will cast them out if they question it. Others very rightly reject the whole absurd and God-dishonouring doctrine of changed flesh, but do not appear to have an answer to the problem of what the Apostle Paul teaches in Romans, chapter 5 where again he says, “by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation.”

This is something quite different from and beyond the question of personal transgressions. Either there is the injustice of condemning all men for a sin which they did not commit, or there must be an explanation which is consistent with the character of a wise and just Father whose declared principle is that the children shall not be punished for the sins of their fathers but every man shall be responsible for his own actions.

So what does it mean, “By one man’s disobedience many were made sinners”? It means, that on the Federal Principle all Adam’s offspring are constituted sinners; made sinners not by their nature but by their legal status, just as children born to parents of a certain nationality have that nationality by law. The reason for this is in order that the one sacrifice of the free unforfeited life of Christ could substitute the one life lost by Adam but incorporated in it the multitude of those whose lives derive from him. What a wonderful thing. It is not our invention but the hidden wisdom of God - the mystery which angels desired to look into and understand - that in order that a great multitude of sinners might be saved from perishing by the merciful intervention of God Himself - He ordained that (Romans 5:18) “by the offence of one judgment came on all to condemnation (not to make them personally sinful or even to ensure that they should be properly punished for their own sins - No) but so that by the righteousness of one the free gift of justification unto life.”

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## **EVERLASTING BURNINGS.**

THESE words occur in Isaiah, xxxiii. 14. We will quote the passage, “The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; he shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure” (v. 14.-16.)

Before this passage can be understood it is necessary to explain, in harmony with other portions of scripture which are undoubtedly easy to comprehend, the signification of the phrase “everlasting burnings.” If we retain one of the original expressions, that rendered “everlasting,” and enquire into the import of that Hebrew word, it will help us very much to elucidate our text. The word we refer to is *Olahm*, and the “burnings” are the burnings of *Olahm*.” But what is this *Olahm*? It is of frequent occurrence in the Hebrew Bible, and is used for a short or a long period of time, and also for eternity. It sometimes stands for a term of no more than twenty or twenty-five years, as in the case of the Levitical priests, who held office from twenty-five or thirty until fifty years old. The meaning, therefore, of *Olahm* is an age of various duration, or, as we said before, eternity. In the next place what are the “burnings” of which the prophet speaks? It will be noticed that “sinners” and “hypocrites” are afraid of them; they cannot endure them, and when they burst forth it will be to their “surprise” and dismay. On the other hand it is declared of the righteous that “that they shall dwell with the burnings of *Olahm*.” The fact is, as may be seen from other passages, that the righteous - the immortalized believers of the Gospel - will be the actors in “the burnings of *Olahm*,” or as we read in Psalm cxlix., “the saints” shall “execute the judgment written.” When Christ comes to judge the world it will be the *Olahm*, or age pre-appointed for that great and dreadful work; it will be a season of fiery trial, in which the wicked will be “burnt up,” neither, “root nor branch” remaining.

This burning wrath of Christ and the Saints against a wicked world is compared by Daniel to “a fiery stream” issuing from before the throne of the “Ancient of days.” The prophet observes also that “thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.” David, in like manner, describes the coming of the Lord as a tempest accompanied with lightning and thunder. “Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.” The Apostles, too, picture Christ as being “revealed” in “flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel.” These and other similar passages show us what is to be understood by “burnings of Olahm.” They explain them to mean the judgments of God executed by His Son and those who shall be with Him. The work is indeed fearful and terrible, yet it is also honourable, for David says, “this honour have all his saints;” to bind wicked “kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron.”

But this conclusion is very different from that to which we are led by popular ideas of hell. According to those assumptions it is the wicked who are to “dwell with everlasting burnings,” not the righteous. This erroneous opinion arises from ignorance of what is really intended by “everlasting burnings.” If everlasting burning are the same as the hell fire of general belief then it would appear that the righteous get into the wrong place; into the very place in fact allotted to the wicked! Such is the confusion and mischief resulting from wrong views upon this subject.

- Edward Turney  
Editor of The Christian Lamp..

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**“For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the  
glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”  
Habakkuk 2:14.**

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**EXTRACT FROM THE WRITINGS OF CALVIN**

FOR this is life everlasting to know our only true God and Him whom He hath sent, Jesus Christ, in whom He hath appointed the beginning, midst, and end of our salvation. This is Isaac, the well-beloved son of the father which was offered in sacrifice and yet gave not place unto death; this is the vigilant shepherd Jacob, which had so great care over the sheep which he had in keeping; this is the good and merciful brother Joseph, who, in his glory, was not ashamed to acknowledge his brethren, were they never so base and abject; this is the great high priest and bishop Melchisedec, who made an everlasting sacrifice once for all; this is the excellent law-maker Moses, who writeth his law in the table of our hearts by his spirit; this is the faithful captain and guide Joshua, to conduct us into the land of promise; this is the noble and victorious king David - smiting down with his hand all rebellious power; this is the magnificent and triumphant king Solomon, governing his kingdom in peace and prosperity; this is the strong and valiant Samson, who, by his death, overthrew all his enemies; and, last of all, every good thing which heart can think or desire, is found in this only Jesus Christ. He humbled himself to exalt us, He became servant to make us free, He was impoverished to enrich us, He was sold to ransom us, He was imprisoned to bail us, He was made the curse for our blessing, an offering / or sin for our righteousness, He was disfigured to fashion us, He died for our life. Insomuch that by Him roughness is smoothed, anger appeased, darkness lightened, unrighteousness justified,

weakness strengthened, discomfort comforted, sin bridled, despite contemned, fear boldened, debt paid, labour eased, sadness made glad, mishap goodhap, hardness easiness, disorder ordered, disunion united, ignominy made noble, rebellion subdued, menacing menaced, ambush discovered, assault assailed, battle beaten, war faughten, vengeance punished, torment tormented, damnation damned, depth drowned, hell chained, death dead, mortality immortal, and, to be short, mercy hath swallowed up all misery, and bounty hath overcome all evil.

John Calvin – 10<sup>th</sup> July 1509 to 27<sup>th</sup> May 1564

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## **THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCRIPTURES**

The characteristic of the Scriptures is, that they give a rational definiteness and vividness to the deepest feelings with which the universal heart has ever throbbled, and the aspirations which it has in vain attempted to utter. The Scriptures have translated into forms of sound words the blind and inarticulated thinking of mankind, and put their hopes and dreams into shape - such shape that the heart is smitten into faith by the ineffable wonder.

It is impossible but that an universal sentiment and aspiration should have, somewhere in the time-worlds, an object and end answering unto it, and fulfilling it. Let candour admit this fact, though caution carefully guard against drawing a wrong conclusion from it. Like the sound of the sea in a shell, so is the voice of eternity in the heart of man.

Very faint and obscure; very inarticulate or broken may be the hints of what mankind have ever been looking and longing for, but beneath the tossing of all its waves, there is the invisible tide most surely running - wherever we find the sea, we find this tide - and surely it tells us that somewhere above us there is a world of things, which, like the moon upon the ocean, acts upon humanity with a gravitating power.

For instance (and let those deny it who choose), there is and has ever been in the heart of humanity, even "savage" humanity, a feeling after God. Whether crude or cultured, foolish and vain, or rational and spiritual, man has felt after God, if haply it might find him. "O that I knew where I might find him; then would I flee away and be at rest!" has been the plaintive cry of many hearts. And though many have not been able to think so clearly or to express themselves so well; and though, perhaps, the capacity of feeling, in the case of many more, has perished altogether, still the general tide of emotion is running and is visible to calm attention; or, to change the figure, we shall come at last to this water, if we dig down deep enough through the rock.

Now, the Scriptures put into definite shape the shadowy thoughts and hopes of human beings, which flit and hover about the unknown fact of God, Clothed with sweet reasonableness the doctrine of God, in whom all things live and move and have their being, is presented unto faith. That it is, or rather, that it contains a most reasonable proposition, is proved by this, that it has ever received the assent of the most rational of minds, and has been adopted by the WESTERN world of intellect from its EASTERN Neighbour - that hemisphere and home of fervent ideas.

The hard Atheism of the days gone by has softened and ebbd somewhat to the Agnosticism (or suspended judgment) of the present day. "We do not know; let us make the best of what we do know," is the barely half-cheerful confession of the present-day non-believer. But in this there is a decided gain to them who contend that the doctrine of One God is not irrational but the reverse. We have certainly gained a point when we have not to contend with men of curled lip and protruded tongue. It is easier to deal with confessed ignorance than with boastful negation. What dost thou

"not know"? we would ask of a candid agnostic. Dost thou not know that causes must be equal (at least) to their consequences, and that the higher phenomena of being (including design in the universe and the moral capacity of man) demand that the Cause or Author of all things should be both wise and personal? Dost thou "not know" that "the power that makes for righteousness" must possess the perfections of personality? Dost thou not know that the more complete the culture of the human heart, the more impossible it becomes to stifle that which, under right conditions, becomes true religious feeling? Dost thou "not know" that Jesus of Nazareth is no fiction, or myth, or anything but what he himself assumed? And so we might go on putting questions to our candid doubter, until we had explored and called attention to a thousand things in the arcanum of spiritual science, all of which amount to a moral demonstration that what humanity has been so long talking of in tones of awe, and towards which it has ever felt a gravitation, has a real existence.

It is perfectly true that God cannot be known by any physical experiment, nor proven by any similar demonstration. But, are there no such things as moral facts, we ask, and is there no such thing as moral demonstration? Is the sense of dependence or the feeling of responsibility to be forgotten? Is duty to be left out of the account, and are the phenomena of conscience to be ignored? The reason why men cannot "know" God, is because they leave out of their investigation the principal half of the facts of the world. They are trying to read the record of nature, leaving out its vowels. They do "not know" simply because they are not looking. "A wise man's heart is at his right hand; but a fool's heart at his left" (Ecclesiastes 10:2).

Brother J.H.Chamberlin

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### **“Arise and take up thy bed and walk”**

Brother Pearce sent me a letter he had received from a Christadelphian who is studying our teaching concerning the Sacrifice of Christ, and he raised a question which bears on the subject and which will interest you.

He quotes Jesus' question to the scribes: "Whether is easier to say to the sick of the palsy, 'thy sins he forgiven thee' or to say, 'Arise and take up thy bed and walk'." And he comments: "I have always previously thought that this passage meant that sickness and disease was the direct result of sin at the beginning. What do you think?"

I don't know what Brother Pearce answered, but when I wrote I said I thought these words of Jesus were intended, like many others of His questions, both to reveal and conceal, to make things plain to those who were willing to see, and to make them difficult for those who were wilfully blind. The power of healing which Jesus used was not an end in itself, otherwise he would have made it his main purpose to find and heal the sick wherever they were. It was a sign, evidence of his authority and origin, and he used it for that purpose. His power to heal was proof of his authority to forgive sins. Thus, when he was faced by hostile scribes it was immaterial whether he said, "Thy sins be forgiven," or "Arise and Walk." The words and the result of the one were no more difficult than of the other - but the effect of the healing was evident, whereas no one can see when a man's sins are forgiven. On another occasion they asked Jesus, "Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" They also thought that sin was always the cause of disease. Jesus replied, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

I think that the chapter from which this passage comes (John 9) contains some of the very few instances in Scripture where there is an element of humour - the encounter between the man whose sight had been restored and the Pharisees. They knew that Jesus had healed the man, but they dare not face the meaning of it. They tried to find a loophole by questioning his parents, but they were wary - "He is of age - ask him." Then they tried to overawe the man himself, "Give God the praise;

we know that this man is a sinner.” (Does this attitude of the Pharisees remind you of anyone?). But the little man had a stout heart, and was not to be terrified by their pomposity, and used his common-sense. “Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not; one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.” After some further questioning and illogical reasoning they got sick of the whole thing and concluded, “As for this fellow we know not whence he is.” But the little man had not yet finished - another dash of cold common sense. “Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes.” Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings... With these and a few other biting cracks, which make as entertaining a bit of reading as there can be anywhere in literature, he showed that his mental eyes were as wide open as his literal eyes, and utterly exposed the foolish self-importance and arrogance of the Pharisees. Their last word put the finishing touch to their own defeat. “Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?” And they cast him out.

Their descendants are with us today. In spite of what Jesus says they still tell us that we are altogether born in sins. And when they cannot stand up to logical reasoning and the evidence of common-sense, they follow the example of the Pharisees - and cast us out. Here is one of the gems of that chapter which is worth recalling again; “now we know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.” This is good enough proof for the poor blind, man that Jesus was not a sinner, and I vote Brothers and Sisters, that is good enough for us.

With Sincere and Affectionate Greetings, Your Brother, Ernest Brady.

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## WHEAT.

Gothold one day looked on while a farmer’s wheat was being thrashed, and observed that the men not only stoutly beat it, but trod upon it with their feet; and finally by various expedients, separated the good grain from the chaff, dust, and other impurities. How comes it, he asked himself, that whatever is of a useful nature, and intended to be profitable to the world, must suffer much, and be subjected to every kind of ill-treatment; but that man who himself does with other things as he lists, is unwilling to suffer, or permit God to deal as He lists with him?

Wheat, which is the noblest product of the earth, is here thrashed, trod upon, swept about, tossed into the air, sifted, shaken, and shovelled, and afterwards ground, remitted, and baked, and so arrives at last upon the tables of princes and kings. What, then, do I mean in being displeased with God, because He does not strew my path with rose leaves, or translate me to bliss in an easy-chair? By what other process could the wheat be cleaned? And how could I be sanctified or saved were I to remain a stranger to the cross and to affliction?

Deal with me, therefore, O my God, as thou wilt, and grant that what is Thy will may also be mine. Thrash, toss, and sift me, that at last I may appear as white and pure bread upon Thy table. I will suffer all the more willingly, knowing as I do the words of Thy servant: “Bread-corn is bruised, and yet not destroyed by thrashing. This also is done by the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.” (Isa. xxviii. 28, 29 Luther’s version.)