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Editorial

Dear Friends, Brethren and Sisters, Greetings in Jesus' Name,

From time to time I receive letters from very sincere people who see some Bible teachings very differently to views that have been expressed in these Circular Letters and I have chosen one such letter, or rather a small portion of it, to discuss this persons view to see what we can gain by way of a good understanding of God's dealings with mankind as I feel it contains much useful information and may help others to understand why Jesus Christ chose to die for us.

So first of all here are my correspondent's thoughts regarding the crucifixion of Jesus; he writes,

"I really do have a problem with the idea that Jesus died as a substitute; that He died to pay a debt. To be honest it makes no sense to me. It goes against the way I read and understand the scriptures. The very thought of God requiring a perfectly innocent person to take the punishment due to another or others, defies justice to my way of thinking. Ezekiel chapter 18 explains the law of sin and death and this tells us that a person shall not be put to death for what another has done but shall die for his own sin. The substitution teaching cuts right across this principle and tells me that Jesus could not have died as payment for Adam's failure."

First let me say I agree with this friend for he says "The very thought of God requiring a perfectly innocent person to take the punishment due to another or others, defies justice to my way of thinking..." Yet there are several scriptures which appear to tell the same story - Isaiah 53:4 to 7, is one, and here we read of Jesus, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all,

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter.”

From such prophesies it may look most unfair - surely these are not the demands of a loving father! So what is the answer? I believe we can find this by considering what Jesus Christ taught in regard to the dreadful death He faced with the most extraordinary courage.

Let us start then by first going to the gospel of John chapter 10 and verses 17 and 18 and we read that Jesus said “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.” It’s worth noting here that the Greek word for ‘power’ is elsewhere translated by other words such as ‘right’, ‘liberty’ or ‘freedom’. So here we learn that Jesus lay down his life of His own free-will. We also learn that Jesus had the right, liberty or freedom to lay His life down and to take it back again. Jesus was not forced to lay it down; He was not under duress from His Father who loved Him but it was His free choice to do so.

In Matthew 20:28 we read, “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” Jesus laid down His natural life as the ransom price to redeem mankind and then He rose with eternal life. All mankind was redeemed but redemption is not salvation; not all mankind will be saved by being redeemed.

John 15:13 to 17, “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. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” These friends of Jesus are those who, having been redeemed have turned to Jesus for salvation.

So far we have seen that Jesus Christ came to lay down His life for which His Father loved Him, and He taught about the Kingdom of God, and that the laying down His life was the ransom price for the redemption of mankind for they had been lost from the very start and were without hope of life for evermore.

Then Jesus tells us in Luke 12:4, “I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.” Jesus Himself was not afraid of death and does not wish us to be. Death is not the end but the beginning of a greater life and Jesus wants us to share it with Him. However there are conditions as He says in John 12:25, “He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.”

A little explanation regarding ‘hating’ ones present life may be helpful; the Greek word is wide-ranging and simply means to “love less.” So it’s a matter of what or who we love more and of what or who we love less. Vine’s Expository Dictionary explains the Greek word to mean “A relative preference of one thing over another.” In passing it also helps us understand Luke 14:26 where Jesus said, “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.” This taken literally would contradict Jesus teaching that we are to love one another even as He loves us, so we must understand the Greek meaning correctly.

At this point I wish also to bring in the matter of the two Greek words each translated “life”; they are “*psuche*” meaning our natural life. This life is in our blood (Leviticus 17:11), and when Jesus was crucified it was His “*psuche*” or life in the blood, which He laid down and never received again. (Luke 24:39). The other Greek word for life is “*zoe*” and when Jesus rose again from the dead He rose with “*zoe*” or spirit life as we read in Revelation 1:18, “I am he that liveth (*zao*), and was dead; and, behold, I am alive (*zao*) for evermore.”

When Jesus was near the end of His preaching He told His disciple in Matthew 26:2, “You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.” Yet the disciples seemed not to take this in and expected Jesus to continue preaching indefinitely. Then, in another

place it is recorded (John 12:23 & 24), “The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. 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.” Here we see that Jesus, although He knew He was going to be glorified, He was thinking more of others. Here was an opportunity for Him to include many others to share in that glory. Even as God is love so His Son also showed the same quality in Himself.

Then we come to the Last Supper and it was here that Jesus said to the disciple Luke 22:15, “With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you.” And here the word ‘desire’ shows just how much Jesus loved His disciples for the Greek word is elsewhere translated “lust” so what Jesus was saying is that “with lust I have lusted to eat this Passover with you! Why? Surely there is no other way He could express His great love for all who would come to Him for salvation. Then in John 26 Verse 27, we read that Jesus took the wine saying, “this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” This takes us back to John 15 where we read “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

This sacrifice also ended the Law of Moses. A true sacrifice indeed which ended the old covenant during which animal sacrifices were required for forgiveness; but we are told that none of these animal sacrifices could take away sin and this is what Jesus did as John the Baptist had said when he baptised Jesus before the start of His ministry – “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.”

It is of interest to note that ‘Sin’ here is in the singular and does not apply to all the sins of mankind. It applied to the one sin of Adam by which Adam was redeemed. The one sin of Adam, the first son of God, by creation, for whom Jesus died. The life of Adam was replaced by the life of Jesus – the corresponding life – the perfect sacrifice. Had Adam died for his sin as he expected, he would not have had any descendants but he lived by the grace of God and we have all inherited his life - Adamic life – a condemned life as the Apostle Paul explains.

From the time of Adam to the time of Jesus all sins were ‘covered over’ or if you prefer they were provisionally forgiven. It is only through Jesus sacrifice that sin is taken away.

Before the crucifixion Jesus showed His care and concern for others so He warned them as we see from Mark 14:27, “And. “Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered” but He was determined that His work should be finished. When in the garden of Gethsemane Jesus was near to breaking point; it was not death He feared, but the manner of death, the savage cruelty of crucifixion; a terrible sight He must have seen for the Romans wished to make a spectacle of wrong doers and many were crucified for all to see. Upon the arrival of the guards who had come to arrest Him, one of the disciple drew a sword and smote off the a servants ear but Jesus forbade him and healed the servant at once saying to his disciple, “ “Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? (Matthew 26:52-54).

Let’s now consider briefly what Jesus achieved during His lifetime and by His sacrificial death.

He was Son of God born under the Law of Moses which He kept perfectly, a life free from all sin; any disobedience would have resulted in His losing the right to the life God had given Him just as Adam lost his right to his life. Had Jesus failed in this His whole mission would have failed.

He preached the Gospel of salvation for all who had faith in Him and His sacrifice. He proved Himself to be the Son of God by many miracles and was accepted by the faithful but rejected by Authorities and leaders.

His sacrificial death redeemed all people but not all people will benefit from it. People through all the ages who have been and are faithful to God have been forgiven their sins through faith.

His death established the New Covenant through which we can receive salvation by baptism into His death and at which time we receive newness of life in Him. "I am come that they might have life and have it more abundantly."

Jesus said, "I am the door of the sheep...by me if man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."

In all of this we see it was necessary for Jesus Christ to lay down His life - which He did willingly, but the most important point is that we never see anywhere were Jesus His death to be a punishment. Although He suffered greatly He consistently made the most of every opportunity to do good which included buying the human race and to save all who would come to Him. Jesus gave up His natural life, and asks us to do the same, and so endeavour to follow Him in living a perfect life and trusting in our heavenly Father in all our ways. "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect." - Matthew 5:48. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.

Finally a few words from Revelation 5 verse 9&10, "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; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

With love in Jesus to all our readers as we await His return, Russell.

Christ's Appreciation

When we turn to the story of the Master, we see how gloriously Christ appreciated. That was His way of life that blossomed in His company. When the woman broke the alabaster box, He alone appreciated what it meant. When the widow cast her mite into the treasury, He saw in a flash the splendour of her giving. Others appreciated a cup of wine, He a cup of cold water, and that was characteristic of His life. Hating sin as no man ever hated it, because He knew the Father with such perfect intimacy. The wonderful thing about the Lord is how He appreciated the common heart.

He saw the worshipping woman in the harlot, the disciple in the despised tax-collector, the rock in the un-stabled will of Simon Peter.

Common things were beautiful to Him – the lily was more wonderful than Solomon; sparrows, a drug upon the market, were in His eyes fed by the catering of God,

Anon.

Biblical Truth is Everywhere

New archaeological excavation uncovers a fascinating Biblical truth

By Leah Rosenburgh

August 18, 2020

When the land of Israel reveals so many Biblical truths, how can you deny it? These have got to be some of the most mind-blowing discoveries! Many know that the Bible is true. The hope is that people don't need these Biblical proofs. But for those who do, the truth is everywhere.

Archaeology in Israel is different than archaeology throughout the rest of the world.

It does not only uncover history, but it proves the Bible's validity. Archaeologists can see the Bible as they excavate throughout Israel. The words come to life. The verses fly through the air as they dig up more and more truth. It is actually more difficult to disprove the Bible than to prove it!

Connecting to the Past

Jews mourn the destruction of the first and second Temples and Jerusalem every year on the 9th day of Av in the Jewish calendar. Excavations like these make the destruction more palpable. It makes the mourning more real. There is something real to mourn. There were such evil rulers in the world that destroyed another's precious and holy city so violently that the proof still exists thousands of years later. The destruction remains, and so do the tears of the Jewish nation.

All the archaeology that has been uncovered in Israel is just a manifestation of everything the Jewish people still believe in and still feel. Every ritual and custom is hidden in the dirt and the stones.

And it is truly amazing.

Remember the words of Paul in Colossians 3:12-15 :

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

From the New International Version

Now And Afterward.

Now, the sowing and the weeping,
Working hard and waiting long;
Afterward the golden reaping,
Harvest-home and grateful song.

Now, the pruning, sharp, unsparing,
Scattered blossom, bleeding shoot!
Afterward the plenteous bearing
Of the Master's pleasant fruit.

Now, the plunge, the briny burden,
Blind faint gropings in the sea
Afterward the pearly guerdon *
That shall make the diver free.

Now, the long and toilsome duty
Stone by stone to carve and bring;
Afterward the perfect beauty
Of the palace of the King.

Now, the tuning and the tension
Wailing minors; discord strong;
Afterward the grand ascension
Of the Alleluia song.

Now, the spirit conflict-riven
Wounded heart, unequal strife;
Afterward, the triumph given
And the victor's crown of life.

Now, the training, strange and lowly,
Unexplained and tedious now;
Afterward the service holy,
And the Master's "Enter thou."

Frances Ridley Havergal.

*guerdon = reward

Who Is To Blame?

Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, that he was born blind, but that the work of God should be made manifest" (John 9:35).

It is a strong point with many that all the suffering, disease, and even death is the result of Adam's sin, and that apart from that catastrophe all would be well, living in peace and tranquillity.

God made man upright and of very good human nature; He also gave him a life with desires that burn within with restless fires, tossed to and fro his passions from vanity to vanity - and still all these gifts to man are not sin. He must first take of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and overcome these passions by obedience to God's command "Thou shall not..."

From what we know human nature the trial was too severe for Adam and Eve. He was a free agent, and as it was possible to obey his Creator, the sin was his own; but that sin did not change his nature. We can only conceive that it makes him a Godly man; his eyes were opened and he knew good and evil.

The fact that a good righteous man in the person of Abel was born to Adam and Eve soon after the first offence disproves the 'original sin' theory that men could, having learned good and evil, live and be commended by God for their righteous acts. No one need sin if they overcome the passion that lead to it - "When lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin." To look upon it and meditate upon it in the heart is the way in which sin is conceived and brought forth in the act.

Joseph second only to Pharaoh in Egypt, was cornered by the queen, "Come, lay with me." Joseph had the courage to set a unique example - "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

Doubtless Adam was a better and humbled man after his transgression - but what of the sin and suffering, disease, and blindness and imperfection, in human nature: would these things be if Adam had obeyed God?

God purposed first of all there should be the natural way wherein man would experience good and evil, for in no other way would man develop a character acceptable to God.

So we look upon evil, suffering and deprivation as a God-send for our good. What would have happened if there had been no sin? We are not told in Scripture, but we do know that no one sinned because this man in front of Jesus was born blind.

Moses said "I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue. I am not eloquent." God said, "Who hath made man's mouth and who maketh the dumb or deaf, or the seeing or the blind? Have not I the Lord?"

Why blame all these things on 'original sin'?

If we can only receive all these of nature in the right perspective, we would see how necessary to the building up of character are things that seem to be against us.

No doubt disobedience is a great evil yet God shows great mercy to all.

For an answer to this we should study the Federal Principle and the gift of righteousness, that no flesh should glory in His presence - in all this the wisdom and love of God to man is shown and to be admired.

The sentence of death upon Adam was immediate and real, but there was a binding again in the lamb that was slain. In Adam all are dead; in Jesus Christ all who will may live - "I pray you" says the apostle, "be reconciled to God."

It is a false notion and a fool's paradise to put all the blame of our own actions upon the false idea that owing to 'original sin,' which is also false, we must necessarily do wrong. The notion is against all commands to do right; to be holy and to be 'dead' indeed to sin.

Man must ever be responsible for what he believes and does; man is man and master of his fate in the light of what has been revealed in the Bible.

Brother Frank Skinner.

Effectual Prayer

“The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” - James 5:16. Prayer is the most powerful means of finding truth and we must first of all seek earnestly and diligently for our heavenly Father's guidance without which we can never come to an understanding of the work of God in Jesus Christ. It is wise to reason with Him and gain knowledge and understanding Link these thoughts with the words of Jesus in His Sermon on The Mount (Matthew 7:7) “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened

Understanding The Scriptures

“This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.”

We read these verses in Jesus prayer and are recorded for us in John chapter 17 verse 3, and from this we see that the great privilege of obtaining eternal life depends on knowing God and Jesus Christ, and what has been revealed to us by them. The only source to turn to for this information is His word as left on record in the Bible, this was written by men who were moved by the Holy Spirit, and so its contents do not consist of ideas of men, but of God's thoughts. As the Apostle Peter also wrote to the early churches, “Knowing this first that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old times by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:20,21).

But for the right understanding of the Scriptures, knowledge of the Old Testament is as important as that of the New. In fact, once we comprehend the link between Old and New Testaments we have much of the clue to the complete understanding of the Word of God. So in this essay we shall briefly survey a few events and prophecies mentioned in the Old Testament and referred to again in the New.

In the first book of the Bible we read, after a short account of the creation, how Adam and Eve sinned; of their attempt to cover themselves with fig-leaves and of God's making them animal skins for their covering instead. This teaches, right from the start, an important lesson, which is borne out by later incidents in the Bible and which cannot be impressed too strongly - when man has sinned, God is eager and willing to forgive. But it must be on His terms; what God says, man must do and not what man thinks. So let us pursue the history given in the Book of Genesis a little further. We learn next of Cain and Able. They both brought an offering to God. We are told that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground, and that the Lord had not respect to his offering; that Abel brought sheep of his flock and that the Lord had respect to his offering, and we ask, Why?

Before we attempt to answer this question we ought to point out two important principles to be applied always when trying to get any information from the Bible, and to study it properly. The first is that the Bible is full of cross references. An incident or a prophecy dealt with at one place is referred to again in another – often where least expected. We shall find several examples of this as we go on. For now let us point out that this being so, then in order to understand the Bible really completely and thoroughly, it is indispensable to read it right through from beginning to end; not once, but several times.

The second principle is that many things mentioned in Scripture have a two-fold meaning; the obvious one, which appears just from a superficial reading of it, and also a more hidden meaning which is only revealed much later in Scripture and which we can only therefore get to know by reading through the whole of the Bible. For example, we read early on in Genesis of two trees that were in the Garden of Eden; the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and the Tree of Life, and we are told that when Adam and Eve sinned they ate of the first, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and as a consequence God withheld from them the Tree of Life by driving them out of the Garden. Now this Tree of Life is mentioned again in the very last chapter of the Bible, the last chapter of the Book of Revelation given by Jesus Christ Himself. This last chapter gives a description of the throne of God in the Kingdom finally to be established on earth, and an invitation to anybody willing to avail himself of a place in that Kingdom.

This is what we are told of the Tree of Life, “And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the Tree of Life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations” (Revelation 22:1,2). And as a further cross-reference we go back again to the Old Testament where the prophet Ezekiel described a vision very similar to the one just referred to in the Book of Revelation. This is the vision of the Temple in Jerusalem, restored after the return of Christ which we hope will shortly come to pass. Again we read of waters issuing out of the midst of the Temple of God. These waters are to be endowed with a life-giving force. Again we read of trees at the bank of the river. This is what we are told of these trees, “And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed, it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary, and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine.” (Ezekiel 47:12).

So then, from all these dispersed statements we learn this: in the future Kingdom, the throne of God, with the Temple, occupies the centre, and from it issues a river that contains some life-giving force. On its bank there is a tree and this tree bears fresh fruit every month and its leaves are connected with the power of healing.

All this information we get by putting all the statements of this life-giving tree together. So here, then, is an example to show the necessity to read the whole Bible, because only then are we in a position to know where to find all that is taught therein on a particular subject. Also, the Book of Revelation from which we took one quotation, is a book full of symbolical language, although not a single symbol used is in any way mysterious; they are all explained in earlier books of the Bible if only we know where to look for them. It is not easy to say whether the tree is one of the many symbols, or whether there will, in fact, be such a tree (or trees) in the New Jerusalem to be established. One thing is certain, that is that the tree mentioned in Genesis was, at any rate, an actual tree, though no details about it are revealed. And so we see how this tree, mentioned in the Book of Genesis eventually becomes a symbol of eternal life and of healing. Finally, the waters which we have seen to issue from the throne and the Temple of God are tied up with the description of the Garden of Eden in Genesis, where we read that a river went out from Eden to water the Garden, which divided into four, flowing roughly north, south, east and west.

So all these statements, apparently taken at random, dovetail together. They all show one and the same pattern, the centre of which is occupied by the Glory of God, and every time it is mentioned we read of a river, a tree and the idea of eternal life and health connected with it. This, incidentally, shows the Divine inspiration of Scripture, for the writers of all these books lived many centuries apart.

We shall now apply these principles to answer our first question, Why was Cain's offering of the fruits of the ground rejected, and why was Abel's offering of the firstling of the flock accepted? Let us look, then, where the matter is mentioned again and we find this about Abel, in the Epistle to the early Hebrew believers, “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts, and by it he being dead yet speaketh” (Hebrews 11:4). From this we see that faith, and the kind of sacrifice brought, both have something to do with it. Note also the clause, “by which faith he obtained witness that he was righteous. God

testifying of his gifts.” From this we see how we must go about to please God - first, faith, then doing what God commands us. Let us now pursue these two subjects separately, Faith and Sacrifice.

Sacrifice. Let us take the second one first. The bringing of animal sacrifices occupies a central part of the Old Testament, not only in the Law of Moses, for it is much older than that. In fact, we can trace it back to the fall of man in Eden, for when God clothed the first pair with skins, some animal must have been slain. Furthermore, all men on record long before Moses, of whom it is recorded that they were approved of God, brought an animal sacrifice at least once. In fact, the promises of blessings which God made to all His righteous servants were confirmed in that God showed, in some visible manner, that He accepted their sacrifice. But all these were animal sacrifices. Sacrifices of the fruits of the field are only exceptional and were commanded in the Law of Moses as thank offerings. But the sacrifice as a means of forgiveness of sin was always an animal offering, and under the Law of Moses, it was a strict commandment that the blood of the animal was to be poured out to the ground. So then, the acceptable sin-offering in the sight of God, is an animal. That was why Abel had offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, and that was why God witnessed that he was righteous. It is vital to realise that these sacrifices and the shedding of their blood were not just ancient customs which somehow at the time of Christ had become out of date. Their meaning is fully revealed in the New Testament and without this revelation we cannot possibly understand the mission of Christ.

First of all then, let us look into the kind of sacrifice, the sacrifice necessary to obtain God’s pardon for a sin committed was a lamb without blemish, so the children of Israel were commanded by Moses. And John the Baptist introduced Jesus Christ as “The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Also in the Book of Revelation we read of the throne of God and the Lamb, which again refers to Christ. So it is evident that these lambs pointed to Christ. His blood was shed when the Roman soldiers pierced His side on Calvary, and although the Roman soldiers did not know it, this was not just something that happened by chance, for this was the way that Christ should reconcile the world to God, and this was in the plan of God ever since the first pair sinned: that is, ever since God’s forgiveness of sin became necessary. This is why John introduces Him as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, for the whole of Adam’s posterity remained under the consequence of his sin. The writer of Hebrews deals with the meaning of these sacrifices and how they pointed to Christ, in great detail. Space does not permit us to go into it in detail here but we must give just one verse from it showing the necessity of the shedding of the blood, part of the Law of Moses. We are told “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22). Cain, who brought of the fruit, cannot possibly have shed blood. One of the first principles in God’s dealings with man is that we can obtain His favour only if we come to Him on His terms and that in faith, that if we do our part, the promises which God made for those who love Him He is able and willing to fulfil.

Faith. This brings us now to the second part of the question of the sacrifice of Abel; his faith. For the inspired writer of the letter to the Hebrews leaves us in no doubt that Abel’s faith played an essential part, and was just as important a reason for his acceptance as the actual sacrifice itself; in fact, the promises made by God to those who faithfully serve Him and who accept them in faith, is the second important theme, besides the one on sacrifice, running right through the Bible. In a very vague way Christ was intimated to Adam and Eve after they sinned, for God promised them a seed who would bruise the head of the serpent, the cause of the first sin.

More promises were made to Abraham. He said to Abraham that in his seed would all nations be blessed, and that his seed would become an innumerable multitude. God made this promise at a time when his wife, Sara, was already old, and He fulfilled it in that Sara, through a miracle, bare him a son in her old age. But Abraham believed God long before this was fulfilled. He knew that with God nothing is impossible, and he believed God when a messenger told him that Sara herself would have a son, though at that time she was at least 90 years of age. This is an important statement, “And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.” (Genesis 15:6). Why this statement is so important is revealed in the New Testament, especially in the epistles to the Romans and Galatians. In the latter, Paul repeats this very verse to show that, in his own words, “they which are of faith the same are the children of Abraham.” (Galatians 3:6,7). Space permits us to give only a summary of what Paul has to

say on this righteousness by faith. Christ is not only the Son of God, but also the Son of Mary, who was a Jewess. Hence this is the Seed of Abraham in whom are all nations are to be blessed, and Paul goes on to show that if we show the childlike undoubting faith of Abraham, not regarding anything God promised as impossible, though not the natural seed of Abraham, are Abraham's seed by adoption, and at the same time, belong to Christ.

Jesus Christ, by the way is not only the Seed of Abraham, He is also the Seed promised in Eden, and we have seen that He is also the Lamb of God; the offering for sin. So once again we see how Old and New Testaments dovetail together, one common thread running through both. We can now get, perhaps, an insight into an observation made earlier in this essay, namely, that on important occasions, God always confirmed His promises by showing visibly that He accepted the sacrifices brought by His servants. The important thing is that both sacrifice and promises are related to Christ; He is the centre of both, and indeed all past history was determined by God with the final object of setting up His Kingdom with His own Son as the King. And not King only but the One who personally reconciled the world to God by giving His own life and took our sins upon Himself, who was sinless.

There are many later revelations about Jesus Christ by the prophets. Let us just say that in the last books of the Old Testament it is clearly shown that at a time not too distant, God will re-gather His chosen people, Israel, into the Holy Land, and the Kingdom of God is there to be established with the ancient nation of Israel restored, and Christ, the Ruler of Israel, and indeed of all the other nations. This is the Kingdom of God preached by Jesus Christ and His Apostles. So then the connection between the Old and New Testaments, so vital to the understanding of Scripture, is this:

(1) The shedding of blood is absolutely necessary for the remission of sins. The animals so killed were symbols of Christ who came to reconcile the world to God by giving His own life-blood.

(2) The promises of eternal life are to those who serve God in a child-like faith, counting nothing impossible with Him. These promises centre round Christ and the future Kingdom of the faithful ones, who, by that time, will have obtained eternal life, symbolised by the trees of which we spoke earlier. They will gain this life by the resurrection from the dead. They are also regarded as the children of Abraham to whom these promises were first made.

Allow me to close with an appeal to the reader to read the whole Bible; gradually but systematically, preferably a portion daily, according to some plan. There are many printed Bible guides in use, they all have their "for's" and "against's" but any one will serve its purpose as long as it takes you through the whole Bible. Only so is it possible to become acquainted with the Word of God. That many may get this vital knowledge of what God has left on record for those desiring His favour, is the writer's earnest prayer.

"Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exerciseth loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." (Jeremiah 9:23,24).

"Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." (Micah 6:6-8).

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counsellor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." (Romans 11:33-36).

Brother Leo Dreifuss.

We wish to introduce - Veritas and His Friends

Is the early autumn of the year, when the heat of summer has wearied us, and we seek the new scenery and the fresh breezes of the sea coast, it often happens that we are agreeably surprised by old acquaintances turning up, who have sought the same healthy spot for a similar reason to our own. Leisure, past acquaintance, and a desire to make ourselves as agreeable as possible, lead us to a certain extent to company together; the hours pass more agreeably, conversation is more animated, and the needed stimulant and recreation are increased by this fatigueless contact.

This may explain how it was that four acquaintances were found together one evening seated in free and earnest conversation in a comfortable room after a pleasant day had been spent in rambles on the coast. By invitation, Pietas, one of the four, had persuaded the other three, Dubitas, Mentor, and Veritas, to come to his lodging to have some supper and some chat. He was not one of those who, finding himself unable to entertain his friends with his wit, bought them ice-creams. He was intelligent and hospitable, and added to the attraction of his not too frugal table by the spices of his sincere and sensible observations. The other three were decent men enough, each of the three having a fair amount of individuality which distinguished him from the other two. Dubitas was the one who seemed the most readily impressed, but then the impression was not a deep one, and wore off soon, so that you could not help feeling that he took nothing very seriously, and had no profound conviction of anything. Mentor was a man with a low square head, not given to talking much, matter of fact, without ideality or the power of scientific imagination. His conceptions were narrow and cautious, his tone hard and dogmatic. As for Veritas, there was nothing about him particularly striking; he gave you the impression of an entirely sensible man without genius or eccentricity; a man of temperance and moderation, rather than anything else, though this was rather from his manner than his utterances, which sometimes astonished those who did not know him intimately, by their apparently excessive and sweeping condemnation of things. The meeting had been brought about chiefly for the purpose of enabling the gentleman last mentioned to state for the information of his old acquaintances, what those singular religious opinions were which rumour said he had for some years espoused. All that they knew was that once he had been a very regular, earnest, and esteemed worker in what are called orthodox ranks, but that at last he had severed himself from every kind of association with his former comrades and connected himself with an unknown people; unknown, saving that they called themselves in what seemed somewhat arrogant language, "The Brethren of Christ."

Meeting, as these had accidentally done at the coast, with opportunity and curiosity combining, it was arranged that an evening or two should be spent with Pietas, to enable them to talk these things over.

As they commenced supper, Pietas observed in a quiet, kindly, and introductory way, "Whatever attitude we may individually take in regard to religious truth, two things are undeniable - that each man ought to be perfectly honest in the matter, and that in the measure that our friends seem to have used their intelligence in arriving at their conclusions, so should they be respectfully considered. Dubitas and Mentor both nodded, leaving it to Veritas to reply.

"I quite agree with you there; but reflection on facts has shown me that anything like incorruptible honesty to oneself is very difficult to maintain, and therefore very seldom seen in men."

"If you will consider," he went on, "how men are prepared for the 'sacred office,' as it is called, and how all their after associations and circumstances constrain them to abide where they are, you will not wonder that religious truth is not a living growth within the mind, but a shell rather that resists all changing influence from without. Seldom does the creature cast its shell and find a new environment for its progressive being."

"But," said Pietas, "you would not have such training neglected by which the young are prepared to take the position of disappearing elders."

"O no," was the reply, "it is not exactly the system I am deprecating, but I simply point out the great and almost insurmountable difficulties surrounding a man as the result of his necessary education. I

think you must admit those difficulties and admit that it will require a high type of honesty to enable a man to accept of truth wherever he may find it.”

“O yes, I do admit that,” returned Pietas. Here Mentor broke in, saying, “I think, Veritas, if you except the clerical profession, which I grant is hedged round with peculiar difficulties, the honesty you admire is a commoner quality in men than you imagine. I think the tendency of the age is to take an independent out-look upon things. What is your opinion, Dubitas?” “I? Oh, I think there is a great deal of talk about independence, and precious little of it. I am supposed to know something about free-thought, but as far as I know anything there never was a more lashed and ironed crew under hatches than free-thinkers.”

“I think,” said Pietas, “that Veritas is right as to the fact that such absolute honesty is scarce, but it seems to me he is wrong in demanding such unattainable virtue in a world like this.” “If you will excuse me saying so,” said Veritas, “that is an instance of the false and maudlin charity that is so common just now, and looks ridiculous when that ideal life is remembered which the teachers and guides of the Christian world are ever setting up before us. I say let that man, at any rate, who holds up the Christ to the admiration of men, have an honesty that shall protect him and his sailing from the scorn and contempt of his fellows. As to that ‘noblest work of God,’” he added, looking across at Mentor, “being more generally found, I shall be pleased to find my opinion mistaken, and will look sharply round for instances of this species.”

A smile gracefully finished off the repartee.

“Well,” remarked Pietas, “I am sure we are each prepared to credit each other with entire honesty, and we are now perhaps ready to listen to our old friend Veritas giving some account of himself. Now, Veritas, tell us all about it.”

“I would prefer,” said Veritas, “that this account of myself should be discussed by you in a friendly way; that is, I do not wish simply to gratify you with a story, but to draw your attention to what I hold to be the truth.”

In reply to this, Pietas gave the assurance that his friend need not think they sought amusement, but that they would break in upon his narrative often enough, showing him his successive slips down the incline of error, and doing their best to win him back to virtue.”

“Well,” began Veritas, “there is one point in which I have not departed from the position taken by people called orthodox, and that is that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments contain the word of God to man. On that I have as firm a hold as most who profess as much, and since I came to interpret the scriptures as I now do; that conviction has immensely strengthened.”

“I am glad,” said Pietas, “to hear you say that you still hold to the Scriptures; I am sorry to confess there have been (among us who are reckoned very faithful people), a great many concessions to those who seek to dislodge the Bible from its throne in the realm of theology.” “I hold,” said Veritas, “that if you dethrone the Scriptures in that province, you immediately fall into utter confusion, anarchy, and darkness; for apart from them there is no authority under heaven that can announce religious truth, or prescribe religious duty. Without the oracles of Deity all is guesswork, and the mere spinning of human brains.” “I have an idea,” observed Dubitas, “that we can find some ‘brain spinning’ in the Christian Scriptures; in fact, I have come to regard all the sacred books of the world as the products of the human mind, in which fact and fancy are interwoven; myth and marvel and mental vagaries are blended together. No doubt there are sublime ideas and fine sayings to be found in all the sacred books of different nations, but the science of religion is showing us that the pretensions to divine origin which are made by all these books, are not to be accepted in any literal sense.”

Dubitas ambled through this utterance in a very uncertain and hesitating manner, as though he were walking on sand that yielded at every step. Pietas seemed a little chafed at the remarks of his friend, which was perhaps natural, as he had nothing to say in reply, it was a matter that he had never thought or

read about; having allowed the stout affirmations of the Bible's infallibility of his clerical leaders to suffice him. Veritas said, with even more quietness than usual; "I have heard that opinion expressed before, and have done my best to make myself acquainted with the so-called sacred literature of the East, as far as it has been translated, and I have come to two conclusions - first, that nothing like the same tacit and implied claim exists in this literature that God is its author, as exists in the case of the Christian Scriptures; and second, that the occasional and mystic beauty to be discerned in the pages of the former, is not to be compared with that sustained and yet restrained majesty of the Bible, which is the signature of God to nearly every page that it contains." "If you will listen to me for two or three minutes," added Veritas, "I will try to point out the broad difference between the literatures in question."

The others simultaneously expressed their pleasure in listening, and Veritas went on: "I can't expect you to see this breadth of difference as I see it, for I assure you the difference is vastly wider to myself now than it was when I took carelessly for granted the loose (I can't say interpretations), suppositions as to what the Bible teaches. You speak of beauty in the literature of the Aryan family of religions, and I confess it, but to me it is the dim and fitful beauty of an early twilight, in which uncertain light it would be quite unsafe, nay, fatal, to take a journey along an unknown path, where precipices and chasms yawn on either side. Whereas Bible beauty - Christ-light - makes for the world a perfect noon, brilliant and oceanful; in which the largest human thought can revel and the deepest feeling bathe; in which every duty is transfigured, and the whole intended life of man is as clear as day, and the whole path of it, definitely sure from birth to death. The difference between these literatures is given when the two words *natural* and *revealed* religion are uttered. Meaning by 'religion' the means by which man may be renewed in loyalty to God, then the Aryan writings show us man's own thoughts upon this subject.

Ever in the past, profound and earnest minds, lifting themselves free from the corruption of their age, have been exercised by the grand problems of religion. To such God has never left himself without witness. Nature has spoken to their heart. The love of the weeping rain and the smiling season; the plentiful products of the ground, with the glory of the sun and stars, have been to them some of the facts on which they have thought out a religion of nature. How strange it would have been if their faculties, dealing with such facts, had not produced some gem of thought or lovely flower of sentiment. Neither is it wonderful that when wrapt in thought and intensely feeling after God, they should really imagine themselves inspired from him, and utter themselves in words that convey that belief. All this is natural without any imputation of imposture, or suspicion of priestly cunning. The sacred books of India, Persia and China, are largely to be accounted for in this way.

"I can quite agree with all that," said Dubitas, "but what is there to show that this does not explain the origin of the Christian Scriptures also!"

"A great deal," promptly replied Veritas, "which I can only briefly point out this evening. In the first place, I think it can be maintained that all religions cannot possibly be false; that there must be a true line somewhere. I think the facts of human nature and history demand this: the religious phenomena of all ages require an explanation. The explanation that is usually given by sceptical writers, is that religion has sprung from the vain desire of man to explain the mystery of the universe, and that it has been begotten of ignorance and fear. But this is floored by the fact that religiousness as a natural instinct strengthens as intellectual and moral development proceed, which ought not to be the case if the sceptical explanation were true. Setting aside reference to any definite theological formulas or acceptance of any alleged historico-religious facts, it may be safely said that the cultivated mind of the world has a more highly developed religious instinct now than in past days. For a proof of this compare, or rather contrast, the time and temper of present-day scepticism with that of a hundred years ago. Many of the leading agnostic thinkers in this country are remarkable for the strength of their religious instincts. Well, all this wants explaining: we hold that universal instincts such as these which deepen as the ages flow on and as intelligence increases, demands this fact, that religion is somewhere true and that its truths are somewhere to be found. If that is a sound argument, then your objection, Dubitas, that what explains one sacred book may explain all, falls to the ground."

Mentor and Pietas both listened with growing attention: it was evident to them that Veritas knew what he was talking about.

“Then the question arises,” Veritas continued, “where among the various literatures called sacred, may the real facts of religion be found? Of course, if the voice of the people were consulted on this question, the believers in each faith would settle it in favour of their own Scriptures, I think we cannot do better, therefore, than leave it to the judgment of such as have made the comparative science of religion a special study, always remembering (at least I always remember) that the accurate apprehension of the wonderful teachings of the Bible is not wholly possessed by such; a traditional interpretation having obscured the glory of the Truth, as it had done to the Jewish Rabbis in the days of Jesus Christ. But, this remembered, you will find the experts (Max Muller for instance) telling us that for sublimity which is highest reason as well, there is no literature to be compared with the Christian Scriptures.”

“But,” said Dubitas, “is it not possible that religious predilections and bias will explain all this: the patriot loves his own country best, and Christians think their own faith the truest and best.” “If you will remember,” replied Veritas, “whose critical opinion I am adducing, you will know that this opinion leans to the view that all the faiths of the world are essentially true, which shows that such bias does not in its case exist; at the same time it affirms the superiority of the Christian Scriptures over all other writings. Your example of the patriot who loves his country best has no force, for whoever heard of the patriot who affirmed that his Lincolnshire fens were grander than the Swiss mountains.”

Supper was now over, and wheeling their chairs into an irregular square, they crossed their legs and prepared themselves for further discussion. The room was airy yet warm; the change from trifles to earnest conversation was refreshing; each seemed to be intellectually better than his usual self in the presence of the others, and as the most perfect good feeling obtained, the evening was passing very agreeably.

“Besides,” Veritas continued, “the claims of the Christian Scriptures do not rest only on their incomparable sublimity, but also on their historic credibility. I mean that the teachings of the Bible have a historical basis which, when it is fairly apprehended, is quite convincing. But the force of this is pretty nearly lost to religionists generally, owing to the gloss which tradition has given to the Scriptures. This will appear, I dare say, in the course of our conversation.”

“I hardly see,” said Pietas, “what it is you refer to when you speak of the historical basis of the Scriptures. Do you mean the historical evidences for the genuineness of the various books?”

“No,” answered Veritas, “I do not refer to that, although what was in my mind has some near connection with the subject you refer to. I am not at all surprised that you did not apprehend me, for your school has never understood that Christianity is a thing rooted and ramifying through human history, from its first planting in Eden to its perfect fruition in a renewed heaven and earth, with “Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.” But what I meant was that the Bible was trustworthy, because it shows us God conducting a movement among men in the earth, which movement we are able to verify at certain points by appealing to the facts of history,”

(To be continued...)

“Redemption is release for a ransom. All who become God’s servants are therefore released from a former lord by purchase. The Purchaser is God; and the price or ransom paid, the precious blood of the flesh of Christ, as of a lamb without spot and without blemish.” - Eureka, page 50.

This is our basic foundation upon which we build the whole structure of God’s plan of salvation as centred in Christ Jesus. This meaning of redemption cannot be put more plainly nor concisely. It expresses our belief in such a way that we do not wish to add, alter, take away, nor even qualify one word. We believe if this was studied the basic idea of Redemption would be solved and understood”

Brother F. J. Pearce.

Doing Nothing

Over against the virtues of a serviceable life stand in sharp contrast destructive qualities like cruelty, rapacity, and hatred. Against these and all their kin the Master loosed His wrath, but he knew well that the majority of folk are not so much tempted to fall away from the positive service into positive destructiveness, as they are tempted to fall between the two into negative uselessness. It is worth our while, therefore, to note the intensity and persistency with which the Master bore down upon this deadly sin.

No out-breaking evil is reported of the pious travellers, the priest and the Levite, who in the parable of the Good Samaritan left the robbed and wounded man untended in his trouble. One asks in vain what positive wrong they did. The Master's condemnation falls on them because they did wrong. They "went by on the other side." No oppressive wrongs are mentioned in the story of Dives (rich man), who feasted sumptuously while Lazarus lay uncared for at his gate (Luke 16:19-31). The indictment concerns only what Dives did not do. He was useless. No destructive vices are reported of those who stand condemned in the great parable of the judgment (Matthew 25:1-46). The indictment against them is a comprehensive charge of uselessness: "I was hungry, and ye did not give me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not."

Everywhere in the teaching of our Lord this central emphasis is found. Sometimes He illustrates His thought in forms of business. No positive dishonour is charged against the man of one talent who hid his entrustment in a napkin while his fellows profitably traded with their capital and multiplied it (Matt. 25:14-36). He is accused by the Master of doing nothing. But in the Master's eyes no charge is more terrific. He was "a good-for-nothing servant;" he must be cast into "outer darkness."

Sometimes the Master, illustrates His thought in forms of agriculture. Three kinds of ground, stand heartily condemned in the parable of the sower (Mark 4:1-20). One was hard and would not take the seed, one was stony and gave the seed thin rootage; one was rich and grow choking weeds. But the gist of the final fault in every case lay here: the ground was useless.

Sometimes the Master illustrates His thought in terms of domestic life. A most amiable boy is pictured in the parable where the father asks his two sons for service in the vineyard (Matt. 21:28-31), "I go, sir," said one, a winsome, well-intentioned, gracious lad. "But he went not, said Jesus. That negative is one of the most damning charges that can be brought against a human life. However well-intentioned, the boy was useless. The Master's praise goes rather to the son whose words were not gracious, but who did the work.

H. E. Fosdick.

THE GOLDEN CALF

This incident about which we read in Exodus 32, was a very sad one in the history of Israel. It was human nature at its worst. Yet from it we can learn several things, so that it is worth our while to consider the incident for a few moments.

The root cause was lack of faith; lack of faith in God and lack of faith in their leader Moses.

Deeply rooted in human nature is the desire to follow a leader; to belong to some community. We have examples of that in history, to our own day, when not so long ago the German people in two successive generations followed blindly their leaders to destruction. A better example is the life of primitive tribes who are divided into village communities, each with its own tribal head and to whom his subjects leave all their decisions to make and to whom they render a hundred percent obedience. The

best or perhaps worst example, though taken from the world, is a gang of youngsters. We have many of them in large cities, rival gangs, each with their leader who somehow by sheer bluff and noise manages to impress. There is something in common to all these groups of people; as long as things go well for them they put complete trust in their leader. His word is law; they render him their obedience and rarely think for themselves. They are quite happy to leave the thinking to their leader and to do whatever he tells them. They idolise their leader: but let something go wrong, or somebody else establish a rival claim to leadership, and the changeability of human nature appears at its worst. The person who only a short time ago was always right in the sight of his followers is all of a sudden no longer the leader they want. Loyalty changes to rebellion nearly instantaneously; the one who had done all the thinking for them suddenly cannot do anything right.

This unreliability of human nature was often apparent in the history of the children of Israel and an example of this is the incident we are considering now. God, by the hand of Moses, brought Israel out of Egypt “by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm.” He delivered them from the Egyptian army at the Red Sea, and a little later, from the army of the Amalekites. He fed them with Manna and quails and things had generally gone well for them. It seemed that their confidence in Moses had become established by then; they promised obedience and when they were terrified at the presence of God on Mount Sinai, they had declared with one united voice “All the words which the Lord hath said will we do.” Here was, or at least it seemed there was complete loyalty. Yet only a little later, when they were getting anxious about Moses not coming back, they changed with such an astonishing suddenness and completeness. The same people who only shortly before said “All the words which the Lord hath said will we do,” now said, “Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us out of the land of Egypt; we wot not what is become of him.”

In this last sentence lies perhaps the root of the trouble; “As for this Moses, the man that brought us out of the land of Egypt...” They did not say anything about God having brought them out. It seemed they still lacked faith in God. In their minds, it seems, it was Moses rather than God who did the works. So, true to human nature, when they lost confidence, they turned on him. Then, when Moses returned and, at the command of God, took very drastic measures to restore loyalty, they were behind him again, almost as if nothing had happened - at least until the next incident.

Let us look at the fickleness of human nature from this point of view. When they made the golden calf they willingly gave Aaron all their jewellery; they put their whole heart and soul into it; yet after Moses restored obedience and went unto the mount the second time and returned with the new tables of the covenant, they put even more energy into the new enterprise, of making the tabernacle. They did not lack any willingness to give, for we read, they even brought more than enough. It shows how a common purpose, good or bad, can make people give to the last ounce of their energy and the last of their possessions.

How do we stand who are Israel after the Spirit? If we are hasty in condemning the children of Israel for their rebellion let us remember this: whereas their leader was absent from them for two periods of forty days and nights in order to go into the presence of God for them, ours is absent from us in body, but in the presence of God for us all the time. Do we always realise that we have a leader just as the children of Israel had in Moses? And more than a leader; a High Priest and Saviour, an Advocate with the Father, who, though absent in body, very present in spirit all the time. He sees us and observes us constantly; not like Moses, who did not actually see the Israelites make the golden calf, but only learned about it when God told him while he was on the Mount. I think we must all admit that most of our sins would not be committed if we did not fail to realise Christ's presence. In this respect we are all rather like school-children who try to commit a misdeed when their teacher is not looking. So, in some measure we are somewhat in the same position as the Israelites during Moses' absence. It is very easy to misjudge people when we ourselves have never been under exactly the same circumstances.

But Christ's constant presence in spirit holds more reasons of comfort for us than grounds for warning, for, unlike the Israelites, we are not wondering what has become of our Leader. We know only too well that He died for us and rose again, and that just as Moses returned from that mountain top in Horeb, even so our Master will return, for this He promised, and unlike Moses, who, while in the Mount,

learned only through God, what was going on in the camp, Jesus Christ, by the Spirit of God, sees, hears and knows for Himself what is going on everywhere and He knows what we are thinking also.

We read that the children of Israel gave of a willing heart of their possessions and labour for the making of the Tabernacle. Do we always give to the best of our ability and, if necessary, of our possessions, for the work of Christ? Are we always sincere in singing "Take my silver and my gold; not a mite would I withhold."? Whatever the shortcomings of the children of Israel, and there were many, in this they were genuine: they really did not withhold anything in their power for the building of the Tabernacle. If ever there was an offering of willing hearts pleasing to God, it was then.

Let us then follow the Israelites after the flesh in their good example and also learn from their shortcomings. Let us do God's service with a willing heart and let us be ever aware of the presence of Jesus Christ and take comfort in the knowledge that He, the Good Shepherd, the resurrection and the life, directs all our paths from the cradle to the grave.

Brother Leo Dreifuss.

CONFUSED BY ROMANS 5:13-17 ?

Sometimes we come across passages in the Bible which we find confusing and we have to pass over them until we can understand them better. Everyone finds this and here is a case in question – Romans 3, verses 13 to 17. The King James Version reads: - "For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)

Comment: "Nevertheless," says Paul, "Death reigned from Adam to Moses." What death? Why, the death which came by Adam's sin and which hung over him and his posterity, deferred in the mercy of God through the slain lamb, the typical sacrifice of Christ, who suffered it instead of Adam, and all in his loins on the federal principal.

"Even over them who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." What does Paul mean here by sinning after the similitude of Adam? The answer is clear. There was no Garden of Eden, there was no forbidden tree, and consequently they could not sin in this way.

Were they under any other law?

There is nothing in the record which says so until Moses; Paul says "Where no law is there is no transgression," and John says "Sin is transgression of Law," so what constituted the sin which was in the world when there was no law until Moses? Surely it must be the "sin constitution" which entered the world by Adam's disobedience whereby all are counted as being dead, having been sold under sin and which is reckoned to be "The Sin of the world," which Jesus as the Lamb of God came to take away by giving the equivalent life Adam had forfeited.

Brother Phil Parry

Bible verses that have helped change people's lives.

Romans 8:28 & 29, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

Romans 8:1, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”

Philippians 2:3, “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others”.

Acts 20:24, “...nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”

2 Timothy 2:20 & 21, “In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honour and some for dishonour. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honour, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work”.

Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

James 1:2-4, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”

Matthew 10:37, “He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”

Ephesians 3:20 “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us”

Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant

After Jesus had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. A centurion there had a slave whom he valued highly, and who was ill and close to death. When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to him, asking him to come and heal his slave. When they came to Jesus, they appealed to him earnestly, saying, “He is worthy of having you do this for him, for he loves our people, and it is he who built our synagogue for us.”

And Jesus went with them, but when he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to say to him, “Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; therefore I did not presume to come to you. But only speak the word, and let my servant be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this,’ and the slave does it.” When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, he said, “I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.” When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health. -

Luke 7:1 to 10 (The New Revised Standard Version)

Mary and Martha

In Luke 10 we have the lovely story of Mary and Martha. Martha had invited Jesus and His disciples to her home and there may have been other guests too, and then in verse 39 we are read that Mary “sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word, but Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things .but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

What makes this story so acceptable is what Martha and those with her understood by what Jesus said, for “that good part” referred to the special meal which is prepared for chief guests at mealtimes. As her chief guest was Jesus she was preparing the best portion of everything especially for Him. Jesus gently turned it around and said He was giving Mary the “best portion” who was sitting at His feet taking in all that He said.

May we all do likewise and sit at Jesus feet while He gives us that “Best Portion.”

From A Facebook Forum - “Christian Discussion” forum :-

A question was asked on this forum, “Do you believe in the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ or that he died as a representative? Please provide biblical references in your answer. Thank you.”

It is known that this Questioner (a Christadelphian) does not believe that Jesus Christ lay down His life as a Substitute for us but that He was a Representative man with sinful flesh who had to die a violent death in order to rid Himself of that sin dwelling in His flesh and thereby show us what sinful flesh deserves. He believes Jesus had to die for Himself first of all and then it was for us also.

We of The Nazarene Fellowship believe Jesus Christ laid down His life in place of Adam’s life.

Adam, the son of God by creation, was told that if he ate of the forbidden tree he would be put to death that day. Adam did eat of the forbidden tree, yet he was not put to death, but an animal, most probably a lamb, was slain in order to provide Adam with a covering for his sin. His life was not taken away but it was now forfeited to the law of sin and death. It is explained later in the Bible that his life was under condemnation – so he now had a condemned life.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God by birth, lay down His life as explained in Psalm 69:4, - “They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored that which I took not away.” This is a prophecy regarding Jesus’ crucifixion. That is substitution.

Coming to the New Testament, in 1 Corinthians 6:20 The Apostle Paul tells us, “For ye are bought with a price:” Now, buying and selling is substitution too. - we substitute our money for what we purchase.

In Colossians 1:14, Paul tells us that “The Father... hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood,” Again, Redemption is a type of purchase.

Jesus Christ said of Himself in Matthew 20:28, “even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many”- A ransom is the price paid for redemption. Which again is substitution.

Also Acts 20:28, “feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”

Matthew 13:45 & 46. “Again, 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.”

1 Corinthians 6:20, “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.” (also 7:23)

1 Peter 1:18 & 19, “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:”

Revelation 5:9, & 10, “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; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”

When Jesus laid down His life as the ransom price for Adam's redemption He also purchased all that was Adam's, that it his offspring for we all have Adamic life – so we are all included in His purchase of Adam.

Jesus Christ did not receive His life from Adam. The reason for the ‘Virgin Birth’ was to give Him a new life direct from God – life like He gave to Adam – a life free from Adamic condemnation.

When Adam died at the age of 930 it was not as a punishment for his sin but the natural end to a natural life for are told in Hebrews 9:27, “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:” If natural death was the punishment for sin then many will be punished twice.

Brother Russell Gregory

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Luke 13:34 & 35

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!

Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verify I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, ‘Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.’ ”

Even so, Come Lord Jesus.