

ADAMIC CONDEMNATION: Legal or Physical ?

Vague and uncertain notions are entertained regarding this subject, and these can lead to serious error. One hears of such expressions as "legal" and "moral" condemnation being imputed to the posterity of Adam because of his sin; giving rise to the allegation that the moral or legal consequences of Adam's sin rest upon his posterity in that his sin is "imputed to his descendants".

That is contrary to Apostolic reasoning. Adam's descendants have become sinners through him it is true; that is, sinners of their own sins, as the result of the circumstances he brought them into; but not sinners of his sin, which would be an absurdity, and which Paul expressly excludes by saying they "sinned not after the similitude of Adam's transgression" (Rom. 5:14).

God is not so unjust as to blame a person for what somebody else did. He has expressly stated: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son." (Ezek. 18:20).

We are not "children of wrath through birth, but through fulfilling the desires of the flesh" (Eph. 2:3). True, Paul says that we are such "by nature", and the Greek word *phusis* signifies that which is produced by birth, but it is obvious, from his use of the same word in Romans 2:27, that it can

relate to actions that have become habitual. By giving way to our nature we become "children of wrath", but not because of our nature; and as the Lord never gave way to his nature, he was never a "child of wrath". Paul does not teach that God is angry with us because of our nature, but only when we of ourselves, when provided with the means to conquer it, set them aside and give way to the lusts of our nature.

At the same time, it is obvious from Paul's treatment of sin in Romans 5, that we are born into a constitution of sin. That, however is our misfortune not our fault. Paul wrote:

"By one man's disobedience many were made (Gr. constituted) sinners" (Rom. 5:19).

As a subject of King Sin (for Sin is personified as a monarch reigning over the realm of death — see v.21), and obeying its impulses without restraint, a person is in a state of alienation from God. This stems from "ignorance" which "alienates from the life of God" (Eph. 4:18). By obeying through baptism "that form of doctrine" delivered him (Rom. 6:17), however, a person proclaims his decision to sever his allegiance to the flesh (sin's flesh) and do service under God through Christ (Rom. 6:13).

A careful consideration of the evidence will reveal that Adamic condemnation is physical, and not

legal or moral. If it were the latter, it would imply the imputation of guilt on every person born without him or her doing anything to deserve that guilt. That would make God unjust. Physical condemnation, however, constituted the carrying out of the death penalty on Adam by bringing him under the curse of mortality. The mortality inflicted on Adam was inherited by his descendants. They are mortal because of sin, and in this weakened physical state, inherit a nature which is dominated by the lusts of the flesh, which were aggravated, or inflamed by sin in the first instance.

So mankind is no longer in the "very good" state of original creation (Gen. 1:31), but as described by God in Genesis 6:21, as "evil from youth".

This, as Brother Thomas declares in *Elpis Israel*, is our misfortune not our crime. It is something we must try to conquer in the strength derived through Christ (Phil. 4:13). We are only held accountable when knowing the means devised by Yahweh to control its influence, we refuse to use them. When a person knowingly and blatantly rejects the Truth he will be brought up from the dead for judgment.

Let us clarify these matters in our minds, so that we may see the principles of the Atonement simply and clearly.

In *The Christadelphian* for October, 1896, p.398, Brother Roberts makes reference to a group of "new errorists", who, among other things, taught: "That our mortality in Adam is not an affair of physical heredity, but a legal decree."

Obviously, a "legal" or "moral" defilement must carry with it a personal stigma of some kind, so that the one bearing it would appear personally abhorrent to God merely because of his nature.

Brother Roberts repudiated this concept of the Atonement, and clearly showed that the nature of the defilement was physical. This, however, had its reaction upon man's mental condition, for as a result of sin, as the *Unity Book* clearly states, he inherited "a nature prone to sin". This "prone-ness to sin" is so strong, that despite all efforts to the contrary, the most faithful have succumbed to it apart from the Lord Jesus. He did not do so, for he was strengthened of God (Ps. 80:17) to succeed, in the mission of mercy initiated by the Father for the salvation of those who will come unto Him in faith.

These observations are necessary in view of certain teaching being broadcast at the moment. For example, in a letter recently received from NSW, the following statements are made:

"Because Jesus was perfect, it is just for God to expect the same perfection of us, and it is just for God to condemn those who refuse the help offered.

"If Jesus could be perfect as a man, made in all points like us, then so can we — with the same help.

"... And let it be clear — proneness to sin is a self-inflicted mental and moral condition — not a physical thing inherited from Adam.

"I believe you are preaching a false gospel and a false Christ."

For What Are We Baptised

Some teach that we are baptised for our nature, and that the act of baptism takes us "out of Adam into Christ". Such an expression

develops out of the concept that the defilement inherited from Adam is legal and not physical. Whilst baptism comprises a step that can ultimately take us "out of Adam", this latter consummation will not be reached until we are changed into immortality at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

For the term "in Adam" describes the physical state of mortality; and this remains our state until we are "changed in a twinkling of an eye, at the last trump" (1 Cor. 15).

On this theme, in an answer to a correspondent, Brother Roberts wrote in *The Christadelphian* for 1896, p.382:

"Men were baptised in the apostolic age for the remission of their individual sins — always. Read and see if it is not so; never for condemnation in Adam. This is an affair of nature, as established by law. We are not delivered from the death we inherit in Adam till mortality (that is, constitutional deathfulness) is 'swallowed up of life'. You are wrong in supposing we have ever thought otherwise. The *Instructor*, which we wrote some 15 years ago, expresses our meaning exactly, thus:

"QUESTION 35 — Why is man in his present mortal and evil state? Answer: Man is mortal because of sin. It is God's law that sinners must die. Adam, our first father, sinned, and was sentenced to death before he had any children. Death began with him, and came to us through him. We receive the nature that he had after he was condemned to die. We thus inherit his sentence of death. Besides this, we are all sinners ourselves' (p. 14)."

"So also in the questions at the end for children under eight:

"QUESTION: What was the consequence of their (Adam and Eve's) disobedience? Answer: They were sentenced to die, and they were driven out of the beautiful garden to get their living by labour. QUESTION: Are we under this sentence? Answer: Yes, because we are their children. We have come from them. It was a sentence that cursed their bodies, and we have the same bodies."

We fully endorse these words of Brother Roberts. When we refer to Adamic condemnation, therefore, we are not referring to the fiction of moral or legal guilt that some have assumed rest upon the posterity of Adam, but to the fact of mortality, and its effect upon the body's proneness to sin, which we have all inherited.

When Paul wrote of the "condemnation" that was pronounced as the result of sin, the effects of which have been inherited by his posterity (Rom. 5:16, 18), he used the noun *katakrima*, which, according to Vine, relates to "the sentence pronounced" with "a suggestion of the punishment following". This meaning of the word illustrates the significance of Clause 5 of the Statement of Faith:

"That Adam broke this law, and was adjudged unworthy of immortality and sentenced to return to the ground from whence he was taken — a sentence which defiled and became a physical law of his being, and was transmitted to his posterity (Gen. 3: 15-23; Rom. 7:18-24, etc.)."

Paul's use of the word *katakrima* illustrates this clause, and reveals that the carrying out of the sentence proclaimed (and it had been proclaimed before sin had been manifested, as a warning of its result — Gen. 2:17), reduced

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Adam to the state of mortality and fleshly weakness which is the condition of humanity today.

There is a need for us to clarify our thinking in relation to the

Atonement, so that we can simply and clearly comprehend and express the principles that are so closely related to our personal salvation.

PONDERING THE PROVERBS

43. How To View Sin

"Fools make a mock of sin" (Ch. 16:9).

The idea of sin depends upon the idea of God. A thing is sinful because God forbids it. Take God's command away and a man is then at liberty to do just as he inclines to. Expediency will be his only check. The idea of anything being sin is in that case a chimera — a fiction of a sour imagination: which is how sin is estimated by the fools who are in the enormous majority throughout the world. They may be deterred from doing a thing because it is unmanly, or because it is dishonorable in human eyes, or because it would not pay, but the idea of a thing being sinful has no weight with them. This, with them, is old-womanish and weak. They make a mock at sin because they make a mock at God. The reality and dreadfulness of sin is felt in proportion as the reality and dreadfulness of God is realised. He has given us the means of realising this by the exhibition of His hand in the past. The record is authentic and convincing, but in the midst of the world's Babel, the record is cast behind the back. "Blessed are they that keep his testimonies and that seek him with the whole heart."

44. How To Be Happy

"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine; but a broken spirit drieth the bones" (Ch. 17:22).

Every man recognises this to be true. What does the fact point to but this, that gladness is the normal state of man. But we are face to face every day with this other fact, that sorrow and not gladness is the prevalent state of man. Hence a third fact is involved — that there must be some cause for the actual human state being so different from the normal state. This third fact the Bible and nothing else supplies; that man is out of joint with

God. Adam expelled from Eden is the typical position of the world race. There can be no true merriness of heart till reconciliation is consummated in a full return to friendship with God. Mankind will then know the truth of what David says: "In thy favor is life." Broken spirit and dry bones will be the universal experience till the proclamation is made: "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain."

45. How To Be Wise

"Incline thine ear to wisdom: apply thine heart to understanding" (Ch. 2:2).

This means making an effort. An effort is necessary. There are things that require no effort, such as breathing, seeing with the eyes, getting hungry, etc. Such things that come by effort are more precious and more enjoyable than those that come of themselves. Because of this, and the trouble necessary to get at them, the bulk of mankind, as things are now upon the earth, never attain them. The schoolboy prefers play to lessons; and would never learn if he were left to himself. Grown schoolboys are mostly the same; hence men, almost universally, die without understanding. That which is agreeable is their rule: not that which is wise. God calls upon us to act differently; to "incline" and "apply" our minds to the highest wisdom — the knowledge of Himself, and His ways, and His purpose as revealed. Obedience will prove sweet in the end, and nonetheless because it has to be yielded as the cost of self-denial meanwhile,

— R.R.