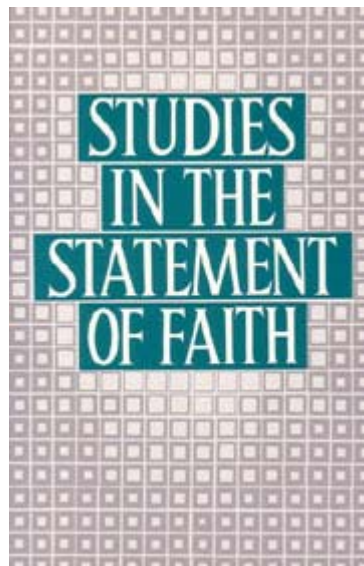


STUDIES
IN THE
STATEMENT
OF FAITH



Twelve of the foundation principles of faith are examined by different authors, giving further insight into the Statement of Faith and its application to the life of the disciple of Christ.

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Christadelphian Statement of Faith

Doctrines to be Rejected

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The Bible— Wholly Inspired and Infallible

EVERY Christadelphian Ecclesia has for its basis a Statement of Faith, which not only sets out the foundation beliefs upon which the ecclesia is established but links it in a worldwide fellowship with others who accept the elements of the faith which it defines. These elements are all based upon a belief in the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible. So vitally important for all Christadelphians is this particular belief that its definition is given a special title in our Statement of Faith—THE FOUNDATION. For if the Bible is not in fact “Wholly Inspired and Infallible”, as we proclaim it to be, “then is our preaching vain, and our faith is also vain”.

What makes the Bible unique amongst books? The Foundation Clause describes it as follows:

“That the book currently known as the Bible, consisting of the Scriptures of Moses, the prophets, and the apostles, is the only source of knowledge concerning God and His purposes at present extant or available in the earth, and that the same were wholly given by inspiration of God in the writers, and are consequently without error in all parts of them, except such as may be due to errors of transcription or translation (2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Corinthians 2:13; Hebrews 1:1; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 Corinthians 14:37; Nehemiah 9:30; John 10:35).”

What does the Bible itself intend us to understand by the words “by inspiration of God in the writers”? How can it be, in the terms set out in the Clause, “without error in all its parts”? These questions we endeavour to answer under the following heads:

1. The word of God as spoken by God Himself
2. As spoken by Moses and the prophets
3. As spoken by the Lord and his apostles
4. How those “holy men of God” were inspired
5. The inspiration of the written word in the Old Testament
6. The inspiration of the written word in the New Testament
7. The Bible wholly inspired, a complete revelation
8. Practical conclusions

The reader should consult all the Scriptural references given in the Statement, but the first one, 2 Timothy 3:16, is a key passage. It reads: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God.” The basic idea behind the English words “inspire” and “inspiration”, which is not specifically a Christian one, is that of a poet, artist or musician being breathed into by some divinity, so that his native genius for creative

work is raised to a higher level. Although there is some superficial connection, the Biblical meaning is much deeper and far richer, as we shall discover.

For the five words in the phrase “Given by inspiration of God” in our version Paul used only one, meaning quite simply “God-breathed”. What he is actually saying is not that God “breathed into” men who then wrote the Scripture, but that He “breathed out” the Scripture! We can understand this meaning better if we first apply it to the spoken word.

The Word Spoken by God Himself

All words spoken are “breathed out”, since that is the process by which the speaker’s thoughts or intentions are conveyed. The first recorded “God-breathed word” is in Genesis 1: “And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.” As we read on in this chapter we see the creation of the world unfolded in successive acts, introduced by “And God said” and concluded with the words “and it was so”. When we add to this the words of the Psalmist we are confirmed in our understanding that the movement of God’s Spirit, His “breathing out” and His word are interrelated ideas by which we can understand the working of his mighty power: “By *the word of the Lord* were the heavens made; and all the host of them by *the breath of his mouth* ... For he spake and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast” (Psalm 33:6).

The voice of God was heard directly at Sinai when He created a nation for Himself and gave them the Ten Commandments upon which their national constitution was to be based. These “ten words” (Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 4:13; 10:40) were “God-breathed”. The keeping of this law in their heart was to be the basis of Israel’s life, as surely as God’s breathing into man’s nostrils brought him into being and sustained him (Genesis 2:7; Acts 17:25). Again the “God-breathed word”, spoken directly from heaven by the Lord Himself, was an authoritative utterance, of creative power and life-giving force.

The Word Spoken by Moses and the Prophets

It is the fact, however, that after Sinai the direct voice of God was heard no more for two thousand years, not until “there came a voice from heaven” speaking to Jesus Christ at his baptism (Matthew 3:17, etc.). Yet God continued to speak to His people and what we have now to consider is how “the words of Moses, the prophets, and the apostles” fit into the same category as the directly spoken word of God.

The voice from heaven was so awesome that the people requested that they hear it no more. They said to Moses: “Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say: and speak thou unto us all that the Lord God hath spoken unto thee: and we will hear it, and do it” (Deuteronomy 5:27). The people expected the words of Moses to have all the authority of the word of God itself. More importantly, the Lord Himself endorsed their request (verse 28), and later set forth the principles upon which “the ministry of the prophets” would be carried out. With His servant Moses the Lord would speak “mouth to mouth, even apparently”, so there was no doubt that the words of the patriarch were the word of God (Numbers 12:6–7).

For Moses' successors in the prophetic line the process was defined in Deuteronomy 18:15–22, which should be read in full. Verses 17–18 read: "I (the Lord) will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him." The passage undoubtedly looks forward to the coming of the prophet greater than Moses, who would be the "Word made flesh", but the immediate application is to those men chosen by the Lord who would speak the authentic word of God Himself.

From this passage we understand that although "prophesying" was the "forth-telling" of God's word it also involved the "fore-telling" of what was to come. Several times in Isaiah 40–45 the Lord issued a challenge to the false gods and their prophets with words such as, "Behold the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them" (42:9). So great was the responsibility of the Lord's prophets that to presume to speak falsely in His name carried the penalty of death, while Israel were given tests to apply to satisfy themselves on the genuineness of the message, one of which was whether the prophet's words came to pass or not.

Another important test is the subject of Deuteronomy 13:1–5. To the test of fulfilment was added that of consistency. If the prophet's words came to pass—and after all, coincidence could not always be ruled out—then attention was to be focused upon whether the message was consistent with God's revealed purpose. No matter how remarkable the accompanying sign or wonder, words designed to lead Israel into apostasy carried their own imprint of falsehood, like the "many wonderful works" of those whom the Lord Jesus will refuse to acknowledge except as workers of iniquity "in that day" (Matthew 7:23).

The choice of the prophet was an integral part of the revelation. He was selected "from among their brethren" for his devotion to the Lord, for his humility and for his willingness to identify himself with his people in his ministry, whether they were responsive or hostile to him. "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations", the Lord said to Jeremiah (1:5). Isaiah's lips were cleansed and his sin purged, that he might be sent to a gainsaying people (6:5–9), while Amos was taken from following the flock, with the words, "Go, prophesy unto my people Israel" (7:16).

The Word Spoken by the Lord and His Apostles

Of the Lord Jesus Christ it is written, "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him" (John 3:34). This was seen at the time of his baptism, when John saw that the Spirit descended from heaven like a dove, "and it abode on him". Upon this "breath of God" was borne the Voice from heaven, which the disciples were later to hear on the Mount of Transfiguration, when it commanded them, "This is my beloved Son: *hear him*". By reason of this measureless gift of the Spirit together with the miraculous circumstances of his birth, the Lord was the very Word of God made flesh. In word and works he revealed the Father's purpose so that he could say to those who heard him, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). So unlike the first

Adam, who by the breath of God became a living soul, the last Adam, who could be rightly described as “the God-breathed Word”, became himself “a quickening (or, life-giving) spirit” (1 Corinthians 15:45).

The Lord’s words, then, were the authentic word of God, creative, life-giving and authoritative. “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by (R.V., in) his Son” (Hebrews 1:1–2). The words of those whom he commissioned and sent forth to witness to him were equally so, for they “preached every where, the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following” (Mark 16:20). Paul was no exception, even though he was “born out of due time”, for in words based on the prophet Isaiah’s (42:6,7), the Lord sent him specifically unto the Gentiles “to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light” (Acts 26:18). By this it was made plain that his apostolic mission was also in the full prophetic tradition, for that he was “a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles ...” (Acts 9:15).

How the Men of God were Inspired

Though the prophets and apostles were all men of their time, with their own characteristics and style, they were all prepared of God and thus supremely qualified for their mission. The choice of the men was as much part of the process of inspiration as the words which they spoke. We must now consider how they were “inspired” to speak, in the usually accepted sense of that term. Peter supplies the full explanation when he says, “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21).

He has been describing his experience at the Transfiguration, “when there came such a voice to (Jesus) from the excellent glory”. The words he uses for the “coming” of the voice really mean that it was “carried from heaven”, as we use an expression for the way a sound carries over a distance. It was once more the “God-breathed voice”, coming as dramatically as “the sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind” at Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4). It is in exactly the same sense that he is describing how the holy men of God were moved by the Holy Spirit. They were, if we may so speak, carried along by the breath of God as irresistibly as Paul’s ship was “driven up and down in Adria” (see Acts 28:27, where words similar to Peter’s describe the force of “the wind of God” in another manifestation).

Thus apostles and prophets were impelled by the Spirit, almost as though they were “God-breathed men”, and as they were carried along they spoke or wrote. So their words were the authentic word of God. In this way were the things of the kingdom reported “by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven”. Through their agency men and women can be born again, being begotten again unto a lively hope “by the word of God ... and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1 Peter 1:3, 12, 23–25).

The irresistible nature of this “being borne along by the Holy Spirit” can be demonstrated by the case of the prophet Jeremiah. Though naturally reluctant (1:6) the prophet had been obedient to the word of the Lord although it caused him much personal grief to deliver his heavy message (9:1–2). In chapter 20, however, the prophet

declared his resolve to make no mention of the Lord, “nor speak any more in his name”. The result was as remarkable as it was unexpected by the prophet: “But his word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay” (20:79).

Again, in the early chapters of the Acts we read of the considerable opposition, sometimes violent, of the rulers of the Jews to the apostolic preaching. Nevertheless, “with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus” for, as they themselves put it, “we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard”. It was true of them as it was of the prophets, that “the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man” (2 Peter 1:21).

The Inspiration of the Old Testament

So far we have considered only the God-breathed word. It was to “God-breathed scripture” that Paul was referring in 2 Timothy 3:16, however, and quite simply all that has been said about the word of the Lord must apply to that word in written form. By the miracle of writing words can be preserved and transmitted not only across space but also through time, a valuable process in every aspect of human life and indispensable for a Divine plan of the ages.

The God-breathed writings Paul referred to in 2 Timothy were the Old Testament Scriptures, all of them as surely the “writing of God” as the stone tables of the Decalogue, which had actually been “written with the finger of God”. Described as “the work of God” and “the writing of God” (Exodus 32:16), they were truly “God-breathed writing”, and the reader in any generation could become as fully aware of the word of God and His commandments as if he had stood with the throng before Sinai. The “evangelicals” might say that such a reader would miss the “experience” of the actual event. This is to forget that the memory of the “experience” faded from the people’s minds in a few days, while the word of the Lord abideth for ever.

Similarly, “the book of the law” written by Moses was the permanent record of the word exactly as he had received it, its authenticity attested as it was laid up “in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God”, together with the tables of stone (Deuteronomy 31:26). Other written records bearing a Divine sanction are referred to (cf. Joshua 24:27), as well as specific commands to men to write certain things in a book. In one notable example, at God’s command “Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the Lord, which he had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book”. The record proved indestructible, for when the king burnt the roll Baruch rewrote it on another roll “and there were added besides unto them many like words” (chapter 36). Likewise the other prophets wrote “the word of the Lord which they saw” or which “came” to them, until the Old Testament was complete.

The Inspiration of the New Testament

The same principle applies to the New Testament Scriptures as the Old. A study of the Pastoral Letters reveals that there was a body of New Testament writing which had the seal of an inspired Apostle’s approval, such as “the faithful sayings”, or “statements of

the faith” to which he refers. Peter categorically declares Paul’s own writings to be “God-breathed” in numbering them with “the other scriptures” in the very epistle in which he had defined “scripture” as work of “holy men of God ... moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 3:16). Paul himself invariably establishes his identity as “an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ” or “a servant of God”, as the guarantee of his authority in writing and declares that the words he uses were not “those which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth” (1 Corinthians 2:13). And the whole Scripture was complete when, at Christ’s command, John wrote the things which he had seen in a book, which no man was to add to or take away from, upon pain of exclusion from the blessings which it foretold (Revelation 1:1, 11; 22:18).

The Bible a Complete Revelation

These were the writings preserved in “the Book”, which we know as the Bible. The Old Testament recognises the existence of other books, such as the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel and the Book of Jasher, but they never formed part of “the whole counsel of God”. In the New Testament the recorded authentication by Peter of Paul’s letters is a guide to an inspired basis of acceptability which was undoubtedly applied to the rest of the collection.

The so-called “Canon of Scripture”—the test of what books were regarded as “scripture” to be included in the Bible and why—was in fact being applied all the time and its supreme tests were the attestation of contemporary men of God and the wholeness of the records which now constitute the Bible and their consistency with one another. It is completely false to say, as the critics do, that only those parts of the Bible are inspired which could not have been written by any other means. For its contents are not at all that which the human scientist, historian or poet would write. In the Bible the intricacies of Creation are not explained as though in a scientific textbook. It simply records that God created with a purpose and that man has a responsibility to his Creator, and this theme is pursued throughout all the books from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22. Its historical portions are Divinely selected history, dealing only with events and characters relevant to the unfolding of God’s purpose and passing by much that contemporary records or human interest would have set down. In the Hebrew Bible these books are known as the Former Prophets, since they “forth-tell” of how God spoke through events, while the Latter Prophets “fore-tell” or explain these events and point out their significance in the Divine scheme of things.

Practical Conclusions

The Foundation Clause recognises that over the long period of the Bible’s history there may be difficulties created by errors of transcription or translation. For the Old Testament at least we have the guidance of the Lord and his apostles in their quotation and use to assure us that nothing of substance has been lost or impaired. And given the meticulous process of copying later developed and the diligent labours of translators who believed that they were handling the Word of God, we may be sure that the Lord has overseen the preservation of all that which He gave as the only source of light and life to those who read.

We may rest in confidence, therefore, that our faith is based upon solid foundations and that our hope of the Kingdom and eternal life stands upon the Rock of Israel Himself. By the diligent reading and study of the Bible we may ourselves be strengthened and built up. Such faith and hope, however, must be matched by a sense of responsibility in handling the Word of God and answering its demands. In an age of doubt and distress, when prominent churchmen prefer their own opinion to the Bible message, denying the very basis of life and hope, when false brethren assert that there is a distinction to be drawn between revelation and inspiration, or that there are degrees of inspiration and the New Testament is more important than the Old, how vital it is that we look once more at our distinctive faith and its foundations and resolve to become even more truly “the people of the Book”!

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Concerning God

I—That the only true God is He who was revealed to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, by angelic visitation and vision, and to Moses at the flaming bush (unconsumed) and at Sinai, and who manifested Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the supreme self-existent Deity, the ONE FATHER, dwelling in unapproachable light, yet everywhere present by His Spirit, which is a unity with His person in heaven. He hath, out of His underived energy, created heaven and earth, and all that in them is. (Supported by over 50 quotations).

IN our discussions with acquaintances about the truths revealed in the Bible, we find ourselves discussing the mortality of man, the Second Coming of Christ, the nature of baptism and so on. But how often is the topic the nature and significance of God? Hardly ever. One reason is that many of our contemporaries have formed their own idea of God and they do not want it disturbed. “I like to think of God as ...”, they say, usually “merciful, always forgiving, never condemning anyone ...” In such a view sin and judgement have no place. For many people the person of Jesus has replaced that of God. It is often a sentimentalised portrait, invented by men for their own consolation.

Now it is clear that if our view of God is to have any authority, it must be based solely on His own revelation of Himself in the Scriptures. What do they have to tell us about this vital subject?

The Nature of God

The Bible speaks of our nature as “flesh and blood”, sometimes just “flesh”. How are we to think of God’s “nature”? The most explicit descriptions are from the Apostle Paul:

“Now unto the King Eternal, incorruptible, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Timothy 1:17, R.V.).

“The blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable, whom no man hath seen nor can see: to whom be honour and power eternal. Amen” (6:16, R.V.).

It is remarkable that in these descriptions the two terms most explicit about God’s nature are expressed as negatives: He is “incorruptible” (*not* corrupting) and “immortal” (*not* dying). We are, then, to think of God as having a “nature” the direct opposite of human flesh. God is most definitely “not a man”. Hence He is “eternal”, literally “of the ages” (R.V.m.). It is significant that Paul uses this term three times in one verse: “... to the King Eternal (of the ages) ... be glory for ever and ever” (unto the ages of the ages, R.V.m.). How impressed he must have been with the thought of the *everlasting* nature of God! No wonder that He is “invisible”, dwelling in unapproachable light!

Elsewhere the nature of God is described as “Spirit”, the regular Scriptural contrast with “flesh”.

“The Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses are flesh and not spirit” (Isaiah 31:3).

This conception of God as everything man is *not* has given rise to the speculation that He has no physical form at all. It is said that the Scriptural allusions to His “eyes” and “arm” and so on are only “anthropomorphisms”, that is ascribing to God human characteristics so that we may better understand. Thus God ceases to have any definite shape and becomes a “centre” of supreme glory and excellence.

But this is an unprofitable speculation, for God is consistently portrayed as a Personality with His own strongly marked characteristics. He reacts in positive ways, whether in grace or severity. The Son, now glorified, is at the right hand of the Father. Our conception of God as a Person, and not just as a centre of spiritual principles, is vital to our life of prayer and faith. Since the Scriptures themselves do not give any precise details about God’s “shape”, we do well to reject speculations which can reach no definite conclusion and can be of no practical help to us in increasing our understanding. Instead, we should concentrate on the portrait of God which His Word reveals to us.

The *power* of God as Spirit needs little stressing. God created the heavens and the earth and is supreme in them, bringing storm and fire and controlling waters according to His will; showing “signs and wonders” and executing judgements when they are needed.

“To him be the glory”

The sheer supremacy of God and the glory which should be ascribed to Him by puny mankind is a constant theme throughout Scripture. It is well expressed by David:

“Blessed be thou, O LORD (Yahweh) the God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the majesty, for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all” (1 Chronicles 29:11).

Greatness ... power ... glory ... majesty ... all in heaven and earth ... kingdom ... exalted .
. head over all ... We do well to read through these terms slowly to appreciate David’s profound sense of the majestic supremacy of God. It was shared by the Apostle Paul, as we have already seen.

To this sense was added that of God’s uniqueness. To Israel, God had revealed the significance of His Name Yahweh, the promise of the fulfilment of His covenant with their fathers. Their God was alone God, as Moses, recalling the great signs Israel had seen, exhorted them to keep in mind:

“Know therefore this day, and *lay it to thine heart* (R.V.), that the LORD, he is God in heaven above and upon the earth beneath: there is *none else*” (Deuteronomy 4:39).

And God Himself to Israel through Isaiah, at a time of their faithlessness:

“I am the LORD, and there is none else: there is no God beside me” (Isaiah 45:5).

It reappears in the New Testament, from the lips of Jesus in a general sense:

“I think thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth” (Matthew 11:25).

And from Paul in his letter to Timothy:

“... the only God ... the only Potentate ...” (1 Timothy 1:17; 6:15).

And to the Ephesians:

“One God, the Father, of whom are all things” (Ephesians 4:6).

The extent to which this sense of the majesty and uniqueness of God filled the minds of the faithful is demonstrated by their attitude in times of crisis. When the holy authority of God was questioned by rebellious Korah and his company, “Moses fell upon his face”, not in fear of the rebels, but in outrage at their blasphemous spirit. The Apostle Paul’s “I bow my knee unto the Father” (Ephesians 3:14), and “I charge thee in the sight of God” (half a dozen times in the Pastoral Epistles) express his constant awareness of the holy majesty of God. Many other examples could be quoted.

Two expressions from the Psalms and the Prophets convey the profound nature of this conviction:

“O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall *all flesh* come” (Psalm 65:2).

“The Lord is in his holy temple; let *all the earth* keep silence before him” (Habakkuk 2:20).

The devastating completeness of “all flesh” and “all the earth” bring home to us the inspired writers’ sense of God’s universal majesty and by contrast the sheer nothingness of human strength.

Our Attitude

At this point it is clearly relevant to ask what is *our* attitude in this most fundamental matter.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that we are in grave danger of losing our sense of the supremacy and majesty of God. We do not deny it, of course. We pay homage in prayer at our meetings, but how far is this vital conviction carried into our everyday life? How far does it form the core of our daily reactions? Abraham has shown us the way: the LORD was “the God before whom I walk”; God was before his mind, and apart from one or two lapses, influenced all his decisions. Does that same sense of God’s presence influence ours? Of course the spirit of our world, which inevitably exerts pressures upon us, will have none of it. God is to be regarded, if at all, as a large sized

man, to be addressed with familiar intimacy. His everlasting indulgence can be relied upon to overlook all human presumption.

Yet important results will follow from our neglect in this matter. If our sheer conscious devotion to our God begins to fade away, then our attitude to His Word will become less wholehearted. We shall cease to read it with reverent attention. Our sense of His holiness is impaired and our own neglect of His commandments seems less grave. Our own judgements begin to influence our choices in life. Sheer faith in God, “come what may”, like that of Daniel’s three friends, disappears. We are well on the way to becoming James’ “double minded” men and women.

The present writer believes that the decline of real reverence for God is a basic cause of that laxity and casualness sometimes manifested among us today. It is a matter urgently requiring the attention of all our ecclesias, all our speakers and writers, and each one of us individually. Particularly this sense of the majesty and the holiness of God needs impressing upon all our Sunday School scholars, our Youth Groups, and those who come to learn the Truth. It is the essential foundation for that “knowledge of the truth” “in faith and love” which will preserve us all unshaken in devoted service in this “present evil world”.

It goes without saying that this vital attitude will be immensely reinforced by our corresponding sense of the unworthiness and futility of human nature, compared with the Spirit of God. “I who am but dust and ashes” was not just a pious phrase for Abraham. It was the conviction of his being.

“The only wise god”

The quotations which support our statement on God, declare that His supreme power has been exercised at all times in *wisdom*:

“O LORD, how manifold are thy works! In *wisdom* hast thou made them all ...” (Psalm 104:24).

“the LORD of hosts ... wonderful in counsel ... excellent in wisdom ... supreme in wisdom ...” (Isaiah 28:29; 40:1).

“... the only wise God ...” (Romans 16:27).

Here is a vitally important element to add to our sense of God’s majesty. He is not only Lord of heaven and earth: He is a wise Lord. Now the essence of wisdom is the power to judge the present and so to take what action which will be best for the future. That is precisely what God has done through all the history of human beings possessing free will. In the calling of Abraham, in the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, in the choice of David, in the life of Jesus, in the preaching of the gospel, in the Second Coming—these all display the result of the foreknowledge of God and His wise decisions in view of the great end to be achieved: “The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:12).

Now here is a valuable idea, for it must be true for us too. If God is supremely wise in His dealings with rulers and empires, and with devoted individual servants like David and Paul, must He not be so for us too? As Hanani the seer declared to Asa, King of Judah, in rebuke for his faithlessness:

“The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him” (not sinless, but devoted to Him alone) (2 Chronicles 16:9).

Our affairs are not too trifling for Him, for He has a vital interest in all His saints, those devoted to His worship. In the trials that inevitably come upon us from time to time, we must trust to the wisdom of our God, mistrusting our own personal desires, knowing that “all things” will ultimately work for our good, if we are among those that honour His Name. Consider the understanding of Paul, as he reviewed God’s acts in the call of “the Jew first” and then of the Gentiles through centuries of troubled history, and exclaimed:

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!” (Romans 11:33, R.V.).

If we can share the apostle’s unshakeable faith in the wisdom of our God, we shall find comfort and the strength to “be content with such things as we have” and to “endure to the end”.

“God is spirit”

The Spirit of God is certainly that almighty power by which He created the heavens and the earth, accomplished His great acts among mankind, has granted powers to chosen individuals to demonstrate their authority in His service, and knows all things, even in the lives of individuals (“Whither shall I flee from thy presence?”—Psalm 139).

But it is vastly more. It is that quality of His inner nature which we can only call His character, His moral principles, the unshakeable precepts by which He has made known to mankind His own true significance. It is expressed in His “thoughts” (which so often in Scripture means intentions, purposes), and in His will, both for mankind and for His saints. Happily we are not left to devise our own description, for God Himself has done it for us. To Moses, desiring to know God’s ways and His glory, God promised: “I will make all my *goodness* pass before thee and will proclaim (My) Name ...” The true glory of God was not that dazzling light, from which Moses had to be shielded, but in His spiritual nature, the true significance of His Name:

“The LORD ... a God full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy and truth (faithfulness) ... forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty” (Exodus 33:13, 18–19; 34:6, R.V.).

So emerges the great revelation that the Almighty God has certain clear standards of right and wrong which we can only call moral, but the Scriptures call them spiritual, because they are the expression of His mind, or Spirit. When Jesus declares to the

woman of Samaria, “God is Spirit” (not “a Spirit”, which misleads), he is referring to the spiritual *mind* of God, as he shows by continuing: “he that worshippeth him (must do so) in spirit (same word) and in truth”. The great contrast is between “the Spirit (of God)” and “the spirit of the world ... of the flesh ... of error”.

So God is “*holy*”, set apart from man not only by His incorruptible nature but by His “mind of the Spirit”. Peter lays out for us the plain consequences of this:

“As he that called you is holy; so be ye yourselves holy in all manner of living; because it is written, Ye shall be holy, for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:15–16).

The Bible portrait of God as “Spirit” has immense implications for us in our daily living. Of what use is it to profess to worship God who is Spirit and yet to manifest a spirit which owes more to the desires of our own nature in self-indulgence, covetousness and pride than it does to the true Spirit of God? It can but invite the chilling rebuke: “Depart from me; I never knew you ...”

God the Father

From the beginning of Israel’s existence as a nation, God described Himself as their Father: “Israel is my son, my first-born” was His declaration to Pharaoh in Egypt. Through the long centuries of their experience the faithful learnt to appreciate the fact:

“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him; for he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust” (Psalm 103:13–14).

Although the word ‘love’ is comparatively rare in the Law and the prophets, there are abundant allusions to God’s mercy, grace and loving kindness. The idea is there when the word is not.

In the New Testament the supreme manifestation of God as Father is in the person of His beloved Son. Jesus constantly refers to God as “my Father”, and when addressing the faithful, as “your heavenly Father”. The infinite grace of God, so dear to the psalmists and the prophets, becomes the “love of God”, clearly shown in the giving of His beloved Son as a means of redemption, in His everlasting kindness to His saints, and in His granting to them that new relationship with Himself, in which they are not only heirs but “sons and daughters”. As John explains:

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God: and such we are ...” (1 John 3:1, R.V.).

But there is caution to be observed even here. In this age when shallow emotionalism about “the love of God” is not uncommon, it is well to be warned by the words of the faithful. Jesus’ saying, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth” (Matthew 11:25), warns us that though God is truly “our Father”, He does not cease thereby to be the Great Creator of all things, worthy of our constant reverent worship. The apostle Paul teaches us the same lesson. Quoting to the Corinthians the promise to Israel, “Come out from among them ... and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters”, he does not hesitate to add, “saith *the Lord Almighty*”, and to go on to

exhort them to strive after holiness “in the fear of God”, that is in reverent worship (2 Corinthians 6:17—7:1).

God is indeed Father, but He is concerned about the spiritual welfare of His children. He knows that they can only attain this if they continue in reverence for His Name and in obedience to His commandments. He knows too that there are times when correction and discipline (the “chastisement” of Hebrews 12) are the only way to nurture true sons and daughters, worthy of their calling. We do well if we can accept this in our daily service.

“God all ... in all”

Even our brief outline of the significance of God has been enough to reveal His sheer immensity. We have rather naturally become accustomed to thinking of “the truth” as a series of doctrines to be understood, and so it is. But it is clear that the “doctrine of God” is vastly greater than any one of them.

The reason is not far to seek: the Lord God of heaven and earth stands behind all the teaching that has been revealed to us, from the creation of the world and of mankind, to the final phase of the Kingdom of God. For the faithful He has been the source of all light in their native darkness. The thought of Him has been their consolation and faith in Him has been their strength in times of trial. The knowledge of Him, made clearer to them in the Person of His Beloved Son, has been a guide and an inspiration in their life of service.

One thing becomes clear: we do well to have as our foundation clause that firm statement on the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. From them, and them alone, we derive all our essential understanding of our God in all His diverse manifestations, for they are “God-breathed” (see the first article in this series). The very Spirit of God is in them, made so wonderfully accessible to us.

Back to the Scriptures then let us go, in reverent and attentive reading, with the prime aim of “knowing and understanding God”, *all* of Him as revealed in all His Word. For in the words of psalmist and apostle:

“God keepeth truth for ever ... executeth judgement for the oppressed ... giveth food to the hungry ... looseth the prisoners. The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind ... upholdeth the fatherless and widows; but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down. The LORD shall reign for ever ...” (Psalm 146:6–9).

“For of him and through him and unto him are all things. To him be the glory for ever. Amen”.

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² *The Christadelphian* : Volume 127 Bd. 127. electronic ed. Birmingham : Christadelphian Magazine & Publishing Association, 2001, c1990, S. 127:44-48

Concerning Mortal Man

III—That the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth on the earth was necessitated by the position and state into which the human race had been brought by the circumstances connected with the first man.

IV—That the first man was Adam, whom God created out of the dust of the ground as a living soul, or natural body of life, “very good” in kind and condition, and placed him under a law through which the continuance of life was contingent on obedience.

BEFORE we can appreciate that Jesus Christ is the answer to our deepest needs, we need to recognise what the problem really is that he came to resolve. Failure to get a clear understanding of this has led to many past errors. Thus the Statement “of the faith once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3) opens with a foundation statement about the Bible, states the vital truth about God (Clause I), and is about to outline that concerning the person and work of the Lord Jesus (Paragraphs II, VIII, IX and X), when time is taken—in Clauses III-V—first to define the problem Christ came to solve.

Man is Mortal

Passers-by might have smiled as they walked by ecclesial notice boards bearing the words “Man is Mortal”, thinking it a strange belief to want to publicise. But it remains a vital truth. We have long thought it necessary to point out that the immortality of the soul is derived from pagan, especially Greek, sources. For this wrong view of the human condition has triggered wrong beliefs about heaven going—if souls are immortal the righteous must go somewhere after death! And it then follows that there must be somewhere less pleasant for the unrighteous, who are doomed to live for ever in imagined torment, just because of the unhappy logic of the initial error. Hence people have had to invent hell fire, and then a Devil to supervise these torments.

By contrast, the teaching of Scripture is both clear and fair. When we die we return to dust; there we lie unconscious, as though we were in a dreamless sleep. Some people are destined to remain for ever in that death state: they could be described as dead in the dust, or as asleep perpetually. Jeremiah (51:39) uses that language of the Babylonians who were destined to die as a result of the Persian conquest of the city. The Psalmist (49:19, 20) says of all without “understanding” that they will perish as though they were beasts; “they shall never see light”.

Others have the hope of being rescued from the bondage of death. Their sleep in the dust is to end in an awakening. Daniel (12:2) contains the promise that “many (not ‘all’) that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake”; that was the Psalmist’s personal hope (17:15) and it was the clear teaching of the Lord and his apostles. Isaiah brings both prospects together. Contemplating the dominion of God, he recalls others who have sought to exercise rulership. Of those “lords”, who are now extinct, he says:

“They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish” (26:14).

Both their memory and, in many cases, the remembrance of others about their existence has ceased. The majority of people who have died are now as if they never existed: they know nothing, and we know nothing about them. But a minority are known to God; they died in the hope of resurrection at the coming of Christ and Isaiah said of them:

“Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead” (26:19).

“As in Adam ...”

These are the facts of our situation, but what of the underlying reasons? How do we come to be so placed? What is our position before God, and what is expected of us if we are not to “perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16)?

It is a matter of historical record that God created Adam from the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath of life (Genesis 2:7), whereupon he became a “living being”. As a result of that process, having been made “in the image of God” (1:27), he was “very good” (1:31), as was all God’s creation. This condition of being was clearly not the same as perfection, else there would have been no scope for expansion and further development; but neither was he flawed in any way, nor was the earth in which he lived. He and Eve had every opportunity and blessing that they needed, including the opportunity to develop mentally and emotionally.

God put them to the test, by introducing the Law of the Tree, so that their affections and desires could be developed, and then demonstrated. The tragedy was that they first learned to love themselves above all else. Thus Eve wanted what she saw: she would not wait for the eternal realities (2 Corinthians 4:18). The Tree was desired as a source of wisdom without effort; it offered God-likeness outside of the discipline of law (Genesis 3:6). And while its very existence had provided the pair with a knowledge of right and wrong, after eating of the fruit they had experience of good and evil, and the taste was bitter indeed. Now they were to discover that God’s Word was irrevocable law, and that the warnings He had given were not idle threats, but intended for their good, to keep them from evil.

Eve did not originate the idea that she should eat of the tree. The record is quite clear that she was prompted to experiment by the subtle, guileful serpent, who deceived her (Genesis 3:1–5; 2 Corinthians 11:3). The temptation came from without, not within. The implication is that it would never have occurred to her to eat of the fruit, had it not been suggested.

And, just as the serpent put the idea into her mind, Eve put the idea—or rather the fruit—to Adam “and he did eat”. She ate while under the influence of the serpent’s deception; Adam ate wilfully (1 Timothy 2:14). It seems that he deliberately chose to

stay with her, rather than choose separation. In so doing, he declared a preference for human companionship rather than Divine fellowship and became the author of human misery. He might have been able to act as Eve's saviour or redeemer had he remained in the Garden; banished, they became partners in sin and inevitably victims of death.

“As by one man ...”

Scripture does not merely record Adam as a sinner, or even as the first wilful sinner; it declares him to be the father of sin and death who begat many sons after his fallen likeness. He alone came from dust by the actual act of creation, but in that we are bound up with his fate we too can be considered, figuratively, to be “of the dust” (Genesis 18:27; Job 4:19; 33:6; Ecclesiastes 3:20; 1 Corinthians 15:47, 48). When Paul says “as is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy”, he is not merely referring to our eventual fate. He is declaring that by our birth we are inevitably identified with Adam; he belonged to the earth and so do we, by nature. Without rebirth our condition is one of “corruption” and “dishonour”; we are “natural”, “earthy”, “flesh and blood” (verses 42–50). Faced with the prospect of this existence only, we are thus “most miserable” (verse 19).

From the outset, Adam's transgression was seen as something with far reaching significance: it was not simply that it introduced death into the world. Mortality was the physical consequence of Adam's sin. We shall later consider the moral implications. Death had been the deterrent that God presented to Adam: “Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (2:17). That came to pass. On the day of the transgression Adam was assured that he would die (3:19), for when God's judgement was delivered there was no possible doubt about the eventual execution of the sentence. From then on there was no doubt about Adam's death, which eventually came when he was 930 years old (5:5).

The curse placed upon him had two interesting aspects in this respect. First, death is the last thing to be mentioned. Second, it is manifestly clear that God expected Adam to live for a long time before his death:

“Cursed is *the ground* for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it *all the days of thy life*; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, *till thou return unto the ground*; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (3:17–19).

It has been argued that God was anticipating the outcome of sacrifices that were to be offered that day for Adam and Eve (3:21), and was therefore able to ignore the death sentence that would otherwise have come into immediate effect. But the more likely explanation is that the earlier warning, “*in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*”, did not mean summary execution on the day of the transgression—that would have ended human existence almost before it had begun and make barren any process of salvation—but it indicated the beginning of a process of death: that Adam would become a dying creature, from that day on. There is an interesting parallel in 1

Kings 2:37–42, where Solomon had placed Shimei under a prospective sentence of death, which was eventually fulfilled.

Adam's condition was different after his sin from his earlier created state which was described as "very good". He now knew and felt the corruption of mortality. He was physically flawed, where previously he was not.

God's Sentence on Mankind

This is how the Statement of Faith explains what happened:

V—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 all his posterity.

This accords with the wide ranging effects of the curse we have already noted: there was much more involved than simply the passing of the death sentence upon Adam himself. For example, Eve was not expressly told that she would die, yet she did. Adam was obviously a representative man for the purposes of the judgement on sin, as he had been for the act itself—a sort of federal head, a representative, for all mankind. And the sentence was universal: the curse permeated the whole of God's created earth, man's existence and nature included.

This is how the apostle Paul understood the position, as he explained it in his letter to the Romans. There he explains how all have come under the dominion of sin (3:9–18); how all, save Christ, have failed to achieve perfect obedience (3:23, 24); and how all this came about because of Adam's transgression:

“By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so *death passed upon all men*, for that all have sinned ... *death reigned* ... even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression ... Through the offence of one *many be dead* ... for the *judgment was by one to condemnation* ... For by one man's offence death reigned by one ... judgment came upon all men to condemnation ... by one man's disobedience many were made sinners” (5:12–19).

Death gained control of the world, claiming all earth's creatures as its victims, and condemning them to suffer its dominion. Paul makes it clear that Adam was not subject to death before he ate of the tree, though that obviously does not mean that he was then immortal, else he could never have died. Death came because of sin and it was “passed on” to all men down the human chain: as a result of Adam's sin many have therefore subsequently died, because:

- a. they inherited Adam's dying nature and,
- b. they too have sinned.

We die because our nature is such that we cannot live for ever, and we show that God has justly condemned mankind to death when we commit sinful acts and deeds which demonstrate our wilful association with Adam.

As Romans 5:19 makes clear: “As by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” By Adam’s disobedience we were constituted *sinners* before God, having become sharers by birth in all the results that came by Adam’s transgression. By contrast, by accepting the saving work of Jesus we can be accounted righteous, by faith and through baptism. It all turns on the Federal Head we choose to be our ultimate representative. We necessarily start in Adam, but are urged to prefer Christ, and to associate with him.

All Creation Cursed

Paul sees the full effects of the Adamic curse as permeating the whole of human existence. In Romans 8:18–23 he describes the effects, through both the animals and inanimate order:

“I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. *For the creature (the creation) was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.* For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:18–23).

At some length, Paul had spelled out, in Romans 7, how he was himself subjected to frustration, from the very core of his being and, as 8:23 makes clear, this working of sin “in his members” (7:23) was his post-baptismal experience, not that of his previous Pharisaic life. In summary, Paul’s letter to the Romans supplies a full analysis of the origin and the effects and conditions of sin. It attributes them to Adam’s initial act, showing that a belief in the special creation of this “son of God” answers the otherwise unanswerable moral issues of life.

A Sentence Which Defiled ...

No-one can argue with the facts we have just considered: we are now a dying race: that is an inescapable part of our experience. Death is “a physical law of our being”. But in what sense can the sentence that was passed upon Adam be regarded as something that “defiles” us? Does this terminology imply that we are to blame for the nature we bear, that we are in some way guilty before God from the beginning of our conscious existence?

In addition to the physical condition of his body, making the grave his certain destiny, Adam’s sin also created in him something which affected all his future actions. Once he

had made a wilfully wrong choice, his “knowledge of good and evil”, was awakened. Before, he had known what “evil” was by definition—it was the breach of God’s Law. After, he knew about evil by his experience, and it left a bitter aftertaste. He could never again have the guileless innocence that existed when he was created. He was ashamed of his actions; they “hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden” (Genesis 3:8), and this separation from God featured in all of his future life. Henceforth temptation would arise both from without and from within. Just as mortality became the experience of all human life, the inner tendency or propensity to please himself rather than God was also passed on to all his descendants, for Adam’s knowledge of good and evil was inherited by all his children: “Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed” (James 1:14).

For these reasons Scripture styles the nature we bear “sinful flesh”. It has been inherited by all mankind as Scripture testifies frequently. Consider these passages:

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9).

“And (Jesus) said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness” (Mark 7:20–22).

“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psalm 51:5).

“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not ... O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Romans 7:18, 23).

“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Galatians 5:17).

“Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:14, 15).

It is important to recognise that we are not to blame because of these tendencies: they are inherited, and not our fault. In the same way, we die because our bodies have an inbuilt obsolescence; we are dying creatures from our birth onwards. The sentence that was first passed upon Adam will be carried out on us too, in due course, for we are mortal. Paul is careful to observe that “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin”. This is the physical condemnation of Adam’s sin. But then he goes on to deal with the moral dimension. He adds that “death passed upon all men, *for that all have sinned*” (Romans 5:12).

He does not simply say that we die because Adam sinned, though one consequence of Adam’s sin was, as we have seen, that we inherited a body which is mortal: we are

dying creatures. He confirms that we do not die for Adam's sin: that would be an unjust action, incompatible with a righteous God. Paul's further point extends this idea of God's righteousness by explaining that we prove the justice of His sentence when we choose the same option Adam chose: to abandon God's holy law and follow Sin's wicked ways. We then come under the jurisdiction of Death (as though it were an Overlord!) by virtue of our own choice, and suffer the inevitable, for "the wages of sin is death" (6:23).

This is a subject that needs further examination in the light of the life and experience of the Lord Jesus Christ, who "did no sin", though he was "made in all points like as we are". He died because he inherited mortality, and was raised because he lived a sinless life.

But in our case, it remains true that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). We follow the promptings of our nature, incline towards those things that "be of men" (Matthew 16:23); we love the world and all that is in it, "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16), instead of the things that are of the Father. As a result, we fall victim to the way of the world, become subjects in the kingdom of Sin and Death ("I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died", Romans 7:9). Thus it is that, left to ourselves, we can only have expectation of an *eternal* habitation in the dust of the ground.

The Divine Initiative

The nature of man was, and is, such that there has never been any prospect of our being able to rescue either ourselves or our brothers from the prison house of death. The ransom is too great to pay (Psalm 49:7–9), the task is insurmountable. By thus submitting to the urgings of our sin-prone condition, we are "children of wrath", "alienated and enemies *in (our) mind* by wicked works", separated "from the life of God" (Ephesians 2:3; Colossians 1:21; Ephesians 4:18). Continually exposed to the temptation to sin we are in need of redemption by Divine intervention.

The consequences of the sentence passed upon Adam have been inherited by all his descendants. There are two aspects: physical and mental. We can transfer from Adam to Christ now, by renewing our minds after the pattern of the Son's. But fully to restore the relationship with God terminated by Adam's sin, our lowly bodies must be transformed—as was the Lord's, for "flesh and blood with its enduring propensity to sin cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 15:50). Firstly there needs to be a transformation in the way we think: no longer like Adam, but like Christ. Then, when Christ returns we can be "clothed upon"; "this mortal (shall) put on immortality" (2 Corinthians 5:1; 1 Corinthians 15:53). In short, we must all be changed, within and without.

New World ... New People

The inner transformation begins at baptism and is destined to reach its consummation at the Coming of Christ when those "in Christ", whether living or dead, hope to be

changed outwardly (1 Corinthians 15:51). That will be the time when the Edenic curse is also lifted, at least in part, at the establishment of the Kingdom. Those who believe will then enter that long awaited New World for New People.

Such a prospect is only possible because God has exercised an initiative. He has sent His Son to redeem us from the dominion of Sin and Death, and to bring us into His Kingdom. How that was achieved is the subject of the Clauses we are to consider next, God willing.

TECWYN MORGAN³

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Concerning the Nature of Christ

II—That Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, begotten of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit, without the intervention of man, and afterwards anointed with the same spirit, without measure, at his baptism.

BEFORE considering the uniqueness of the Saviour provided by God, it was necessary first to learn of God Himself; of His majesty, glory, righteousness, wisdom, and power; and also of His Fatherhood, His love for His children, and His concern for their ultimate well-being (February, pages 44–48). Man’s need has also been considered (March, pages 84–88). Separated from God by his sin, and wearing a nature made weak through sin, man was in desperate need of salvation from sin and redemption from death. The response to this need was the gift of a Son:

“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:16, 17).

Familiarity with these words should not dull their significance or conceal the detailed implications of what God has done through Christ. In him God has provided for a world of sin the means of escape for all who will avail themselves of it. Both God’s response and man’s need are carefully mentioned in this scripture. Man is “perishing”, and cannot live for ever without God’s intervention; he is “carnal, sold under sin” (Romans 7:14). The condemnation of the world occurred, not when God sent Christ, but as a direct consequence of the disobedience in Eden. Jesus came to save man from sin and death, not to condemn him to some additional fate.

Like the clause in the Statement of Faith which echoes its teaching, this scripture does not here stress Jesus’ similarity with the rest of mankind whom he came to save, but his wonderful uniqueness. He was God’s “only begotten Son”. The other aspect is introduced elsewhere and will be considered later, but first the Sonship of the Saviour commands attention.

The Son of God

It was right and good to call the angels who rejoiced at creation “sons of God” (Job 38:7), as it was also to speak of Adam, the culmination of that creation, as “the son of God” (Luke 3:38). But neither the angels, nor Adam and Eve were “begotten” as was Jesus. The closeness and sensitivity of the relationship between the Lord God and the maid of Nazareth does not diminish, rather does it give greater emphasis to the importance of this phrase to the nature of the Saviour. He was *begotten* the Son of God. His relationship to his Father thus began earlier; at conception, when “the Holy Spirit” came upon Mary, and “the power of the Highest” overshadowed her. She was told by

the angel Gabriel: “That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God”. She was given the information that Jesus was a son from the moment of conception, and that he was “holy” when he was begotten; separated right from the beginning for the special task of reconciling mankind to God. These unique characteristics mark him out from every other being, human or angelic:

“For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?” (Hebrews 1:5).

Further, these special arrangements for God’s Son are an implicit proof of what is written about the desperate need of mankind, and about man’s hopeless plight. Man is both dying and sinful, for “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). Each man, having produced sin in his life, has shown the righteousness of this condemnation, and his utter inability to redeem himself. There would have been no need for the unique provision of Jesus if mankind, given sufficient time, could have produced its own saviour. God knew it could not, and the begetting of Christ was thus absolutely crucial to the success of his mission—the Saviour had to be the only *begotten* Son of God.

“Begotten by the Holy Spirit ... without the intervention of man”

Adam transmitted to all his posterity a mortal and sinful inheritance when he “begat a son in his own likeness” (Genesis 5:3). Jesus, as God’s only Son, bore the imprint of his Father, and this relationship was his unique inheritance. Man was specifically not involved. Only in this way could the child in Mary’s womb be the Saviour of man. Others can become the sons of God, but they have to be begotten by the word of truth (James 1:18) as a result of willing and faithful submission to its precepts; Jesus was a Son from the womb.

His begetting by the power of the Holy Spirit gave Jesus qualities that can only be described as divine. He was his Father’s Son, and shared many of His characteristics. He knew His Father’s will instinctively, where the rest of mankind needs to learn it, by laying “precept upon precept”. It was therefore due to his Sonship that Jesus repelled with a ready recourse to his Father’s Word each temptation as it arose. Faced with similar circumstances, his brethren struggle long and hard before fully recognising the way God wishes them to follow. Nor do they always take heed to His will when they finally decide how to act.

This unique quality that marks Jesus out as God’s Son was shown prophetically when Isaiah recorded about the Christ: “The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him ... and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord” (11:2, 3). A recent Jewish translation of this passage gives greater emphasis to Jesus’ instinctive understanding: “He shall *sense the truth* by his reverence for the Lord” (*The Tanakh*). David, writing words that only Christ could truly speak, explained how this responsiveness to God’s will was assured: “I was cast upon thee *from the womb*: thou art my God *from my mother’s belly*” (22:10).

The Virgin Mary

This scripture invites a consideration of Mary, the young maiden who became “the handmaid of the Lord”. What was so special about her that she should be “the mother of my Lord” as her cousin Elisabeth addressed her (Luke 1:43)? Two aspects are revealed in the scriptures. Firstly, she was a virgin. This does not mean in her case merely “a young woman”, though the original word (in both Hebrew and Greek) bears this general meaning. She accurately described her situation when she said: “I know not a man” (1:34). All the later calumnies, regularly produced by Jesus’ enemies, are the products of corrupt and impure minds. Jesus was “not born of fornication” (John 8:41); Mary was untouched: she had never been joined to a man.

The second aspect revealed about Mary has to do with her attitude of mind. She may have been of “low estate”, as she described herself in her beautiful prayer (Luke 1:48), but God who looks on the heart saw in her a responsive character, fit both to bear and to rear His Son. These two aspects are important because Mary’s virginity proves the miraculous conception of Christ: he could only be God’s Son; and her lovely character provided a basis for the instruction in good things Jesus was to receive from his earliest days: “Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother’s breasts” (Psalm 22:9).

Anointed with the Spirit of God

Begotten by the spirit as it “overshadowed” Mary, Jesus was also later endowed with God’s spirit. Just as his miraculous birth is a denial of the apostate view of the divinity and personal pre-existence of Christ, so also is the absence of the Spirit-power of God from his life for “about thirty years” (Luke 3:23) until it was bestowed at his baptism. In order “to fulfil all righteousness” Jesus, when he was baptized, indicated his acceptance of the role his Father had prepared for him long before the foundation of the world (Matthew 3:15). Because he was prepared always to do his Father’s will, and had shown this determination during the years when he “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luke 2:52), God publicly acknowledged: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17).

What father would not bestow all he has on his *only* son? Why should God withhold anything from Jesus? He was His Son, His heir, and had shown obedience during his years in the family of Mary and Joseph in Nazareth as his knowledge of God’s purpose increased. Whereas other men in the scriptures had been allowed strictly limited use of God’s power for selected purposes, Jesus had recourse to the whole panoply of His might—subject always to the will and grant of his Father. He told those who came to arrest him: “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels” (Matthew 26:53).

In Jesus, therefore, God’s words to David were fulfilled. Speaking of a descendant who would be anointed to reign as king on David’s throne in Jerusalem, God had said: “I will be his father, and *he shall be my son* ... my mercy shall not depart away from him” (2 Samuel 7:14, 15). The promises made to the patriarchs of old were all awaiting the promised Saviour. Only one with the credentials of an only begotten Son of God would ensure their satisfactory completion. Thus, after looking at the reality of the nature of mankind (Clauses III-IV), the Statement of Faith refers to God’s plan of redemption,

contained in the Old Testament promises (Clauses VI and VII), before returning to speak of Jesus' part in them.

VIII—That these promises had reference to Jesus Christ, who was to be raised up in the condemned line of Abraham and David, and who, though wearing their condemned nature, was to obtain a title to resurrection by perfect obedience, and, by dying, abrogate the law of condemnation for himself and all who should believe and obey him.

IX—That it was this mission that necessitated the miraculous begetting of Christ of a human mother, enabling him to bear our condemnation, and, at the same time, to be a sinless bearer thereof, and, therefore, one who could rise after suffering the death required by the righteousness of God.

X—That being so begotten of God, and inhabited and used by God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was Emmanuel, God with us, God manifest in the flesh—yet was, during his natural life, of like nature with mortal man, being made of a woman, of the house and lineage of David, and therefore a sufferer, in the days of his flesh, from all the effects that came by Adam's transgression, including the death that passed upon all men, which he shared by partaking of their physical nature.

Jesus had not only a closeness of relationship to his Father, born out of his unique Sonship, but “he took on him (the nature of) the seed of Abraham” (Hebrews 2:16). He was therefore both Son of God and Son of Man at one and the same time in the unity of his nature. His character displayed his unique relationship to God, but like all who are “made of a woman, (he was) made under the law” of sin and death (Galatians 4:4). It is not helpful when attempting to understand Jesus' nature to separate these two aspects of his being. Jesus was a whole and complete character. He brought his closeness to God to bear upon the problems all human beings receive as sons of Adam, and overcame them. He could only do this if he truly shared these same characteristics. The established church's view of Jesus as a divine being in an envelope of human flesh (what they define as the Incarnation) utterly fails to provide an answer to this need.

The uniqueness of Jesus' conception helps describe how provision was made for his victory over sin and death. No other explanation fulfills all the requirements. We have seen how it explains his Sonship, for he was begotten by the power of the Spirit. But through Mary he was also heir to all that comes to the children of Adam: he shared their condemned nature, and knew the impulses to sin which every man and woman has to face.

After the first temptation awakened within mankind the knowledge of good and evil, promptings to sin arose both from without and from within: “Every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed” (James 1:14). Jesus, the writer to the Hebrews recorded, “was in all points tempted like as we are” (Hebrews 4:15). For him also, therefore, temptations came both externally and internally. These have been carefully recorded, lest anyone should doubt the reality of Jesus' sharing his brethren's condemned nature. Two examples from the end of his life illustrate this well. When he was on the cross giving his life in obedient service, he was taunted by the crowd: “If

thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross” (Matthew 27:40). How easy it would have been to rationalise the decision to do as they asked. Such a magnificent declaration of the power he had from God would surely convince the most hardhearted in the crowd! But, as on all previous occasions, the temptation was not allowed even a foothold in his consciousness. As soon as it came, it was repulsed.

A little earlier, his internal agony is recorded so that we can appreciate how he struggled against all the desires that arise from flesh. When praying earnestly in the garden, Jesus said: “O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done” (Matthew 26:42). No one suggested this to him at this time. The disciples were asleep; they could not even watch with him for one hour! Significantly, immediately before he offered the prayer, he had said to them something which was as true for him as it was for them: “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (verse 41).

Jesus’ victory over sin, though it was made possible by his Sonship, was not therefore a foregone conclusion. He was not just acting out a part so that his Father’s honour could be satisfied, or so that He could not be charged with injustice. God’s condemnation of Adam’s race was wholly just. Adam sinned, and brought upon his descendants as well as upon himself the punishment God had declared. His sin centred upon his choice to forsake communion with God for short-term gain. God had asked for willing obedience to a simple command, but Adam and Eve though they knew better. Each subsequent generation, faced with similar choices in life, has followed where they led, confirming the justice of God’s sentence.

But then the Son was born. Into a world of darkness and death came the light of life!

“God with us”

As a descendant of Adam; Jesus was mortal and subject to every temptation that is common to man. He was thus like all who have ever lived. But unlike them he was wholly devoted to his Father’s will. Jesus saw each temptation for what it really was, the urge to take a path which would lead him away from God’s glory. Where all who have sinned “have come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23), Jesus showed his worthiness to share it. His reactions to every situation were able to teach men and women what God wishes from them. Having in the midst of mankind someone who always did the Father’s will was openly showing divine and eternal qualities “in the flesh” (i.e. in human nature). As Jesus had to tell Philip, “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). The apostle Paul’s comment is forthright: “God was manifest in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16). The relationship with man in Eden, hinted at when God walked “in the garden in the cool of the day” (Genesis 3:8), existed within Jesus himself: “I and my Father are one”, he said (John 10:30). In him God’s will was done on earth, as a pattern for his disciples to follow (Matthew 6:10).

This situation had been anticipated as a further implication of the involvement of Mary in God’s purpose of redemption. Isaiah wrote: “A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel (God with us)” (7:14). Denial of the reality of the virgin birth—something which is common among many who yet claim to be followers of Christ—has serious implications for belief in three crucial aspects regarding the person of the Saviour. The importance of these qualities is shown in the Apostle’s

words about Jesus: “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Hebrews 5:8, 9).

The means of reconciling man to God, by providing for the forgiveness of his sins and redemption from death, required that the Saviour should have these unique qualities. In the scriptures, the fact of the virgin birth provides the only acceptable explanation of them:

1. God was the Father of Jesus *from his conception*

Death had entered into man’s experience because of disobedience. The righteousness of God demanded that only complete obedience in every department of life could be rewarded with immortality. For Jesus, who had always done God’s will, He “loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it” (Acts 2:24). The possibility of such complete obedience to the Father’s will was, as has been shown earlier, due to his unique Sonship, not just of his instruction in Godly things from his birth. There needed to be a sensitivity and awareness of divine truth in order fully to respond to the careful rearing in God’s ways provided by the devotion of Mary. His relationship to God formed the basis for the obedience of his life, and his subsequent resurrection from the grave.

2. Jesus shared sinful mortal flesh with the rest of mankind

But Jesus’ compliance with God’s will could not have benefited the rest of mankind unless he had overcome in himself the consequences of Adam’s sin they struggle with every day of their lives. God had not sent Jesus “to condemn the world”, but he had been sent to deal with the world’s condemnation. He did not condemn mankind, but he did condemn Sin. Until Jesus lived a perfectly obedient life in God’s sight, Sin had reigned over man from the time of the first transgression. Men and women had become so immersed in sin there seemed no way out. Their weak and dying natures were a constant reminder that their ways were not God’s. The only way to break the cycle of disobedience—sin—death was to achieve a victory over sin in the arena where Sin had always reigned supreme; i.e. in human flesh, whose characteristics were the result of sin in the first place. Jesus’ relationship with Adam, through Mary, was thus the basis for his suitability to take away “the law of sin and death”. The apostle Paul explained this work of Jesus as follows:

“What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Romans 8:3).

This is an important verse, containing crucial teachings about the suitability of Jesus for the task he was to accomplish:

1. The law had shown that man is powerless to achieve his own salvation. He is weak, sinful and dying.
2. When man had failed, God sent Jesus;

3. who is His *own* (i.e., His *only*) Son,
4. to deal with Sin—the root cause of all man’s problems.
5. Jesus shared the frail characteristics of mankind’s physical mortality.
6. Only in this way could he condemn Sin on its own territory—sinful flesh.

3. Jesus manifested to the world the glory of God

In achieving this victory, it must never be forgotten that Jesus was “God with us”. The work was God’s work; Jesus was God’s instrument of salvation. He both provided the way of escape for his brethren, and, by personal example, showed the way of life they should follow. Having fashioned his mind according to his Father’s word, so that all his actions were in harmony with it, only the condemnation of sin, which he experienced in his own mortal frame, hindered him from entering into fulness of perfection with God. He died with the words of Psalm 31:5 on his lips: “Into thine hand I commit my spirit”, expressing his complete devotion to his Father in every aspect of his life. Perhaps he completed the quotation as he emerged from the tomb: “thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth”!

“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow ... and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9–11).

The scriptures’ explanation of how men and women can be involved in his victory and his exaltation will be the subject of next month’s article, God willing.

MICHAEL ASHTON⁴

⁴ *The Christadelphian* : Volume 127 Bd. 127. electronic ed. Birmingham : Christadelphian Magazine & Publishing Association, 2001, c1990, S. 127:124-128

The Saving Work of Christ

XII—That for delivering this message (of repentance and the promised kingdom), he was put to death by the Jews and Romans, who were, however, but instruments in the hands of God, for the doing of that which He had determined before to be done, viz., the condemnation of sin in the flesh, through the offering of the body of Jesus once for all, as a propitiation to declare the righteousness of God, as a basis for the remission of sins. All who approach God through this crucified, but risen, representative of Adam’s disobedient race, are forgiven. Therefore, by a figure, his blood cleanseth from sin.

XIII—That on the third day, God raised him from the dead, and exalted him to the heavens as priestly mediator between God and man, in the process of gathering from among them a people who should be saved by the belief and obedience of the truth.

XIV—That he is a priest over his own house only, and does not intercede for the world, or for professors who are abandoned to disobedience. That he makes intercession for his erring brethren, if they confess and forsake their sins.

IN last month’s article looking at clauses in the Statement of Faith about Christ and his sacrifice, we concluded that Jesus was uniquely fitted to be the Saviour of mankind. Because “he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham”, his victory over sin was complete both for himself, and for all whom he came to save:

“Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:17).

By his obedient sacrifice Jesus overcame the power of sin in himself and showed he was deserving of immortality. As a representative of all who are bound by mortality and temptation his victory gave hope of life to all who are prepared to accept him as their saviour. He was sinless while all his brethren are sinners. Though tempted like us, he never failed to follow God’s will in every aspect of his life. All the rest of mankind, however good any one individual may be, fall short of the glory of God. How then can their sins be cleansed and sinfulness removed? To answer this question we need to retrace our steps.

“Jesus Christ is come in the flesh”

Jesus’ descent from Mary enabled “him to bear our condemnation”, as Clause IX of the Statement of Faith declares. Six important scriptures are cited in support of this declaration, making it even more amazing that so many who claim to be followers of Christ should deny its truth. This heresy was anticipated by the John, who said

categorically, the “spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come *in the flesh* ... is that spirit of antichrist” (1 John 4:3). But if Jesus’ descent from Mary enabled him to bear our nature and its condemnation, God’s Fatherhood enabled him “to be a *sinless bearer* thereof”. We have marvelled at how he was always aware of God’s will, and discussed how this knowledge was the result of his Sonship—he was the only begotten of the Father, and therefore it was possible for him, as for no other, to be “full of grace and truth”.

Two distinct, but connected, consequences had arisen for Adam’s descendants because he had been disobedient to God’s law. They were all born dying creatures—mortality was part of their physical nature—and temptation to sin was also constantly present with them. The two go hand in hand, for: “By one man’s disobedience ... sin entered into the world, and death by sin” (Romans 5:19, 12). Man can only be fully free from temptation if he is also freed from mortality. The same was true for Jesus; he needed to be redeemed from death to be freed from the temptation to sin. His total obedience showed him undeserving of death: “It was not possible that *he* should be holden of it” (Acts 2:24), or as Clause VIII expresses it: “He obtained a title to resurrection by *perfect obedience*”. Yet his obedience could only be completely shown when temptation no longer had a hold over him. So long as the possibility of failure remained, however remotely, his obedience was not consummated until his death. Therefore, “*by dying* he abrogated the law of condemnation”, called in the scriptures “the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2). Earlier the Apostle had shown that “law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth ... for he that is dead is freed from sin” (Romans 7:1; 6:7).

Jesus’ unique parentage made wonderfully possible the removal of these two consequences of Adam’s sin. As a *sinless* sharer of man’s condemnation, his death allowed God righteously to abrogate (i.e. cancel) the “law of sin and death” in his case. His perfect obedience (possible only because he was God’s only begotten Son) allowed God to raise him from the dead. Jesus thus declared by his life and in his death that God’s condemnation of sin was wholly just. Sin had to be destroyed on the territory it had claimed when Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s command. Only in Jesus was this accomplished. It had been proved by declaration of God, and by man’s experience that “there is none righteous, no not one” (Romans 3:10, quoting Psalm 14:3). When Jesus came, sharing that nature, he recognised it for what it is. He said, “Out of the heart (out of man’s *mind*) proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, blasphemies: these ... defile a man” (Matthew 15:19, 20). Only by entering into the experiences of all mankind could he be their saviour, reconciling them to God.

All of God

“Jesus came into the world to save sinners”, was Paul’s description of this work of Christ to redeem mankind from all the evils brought about by sin (1 Timothy 1:15). This should not obscure the fact that it was God’s plan for the salvation of mankind. In Jesus God condemned Sin. When He saw there was no eye to pity and no arm to save, God’s own right arm wrought the victory. Into a world languishing in the darkness of men’s evil deeds, God sent forth the light of life. Wherever we turn in the process of salvation, the Lord God, Creator of heaven and earth, is the prime mover.

The Clauses in the Statement of Faith that present the scriptures dealing with salvation from sin emphasise this point. “*God* determined ...”; those involved were *His “instruments”*. *God* “raised Jesus from the dead”; *God* “exalted” him. All was done “to declare the righteousness of *God*” compared to the sinfulness of man. The objective was the reconciliation to God of fallen mankind. Sin had separated between God and man. If the power of sin could be controlled and its territory transferred from sin’s ownership to God’s, men and women could understand the fellowship with Him that had been present for a short time in Eden before sin and death entered the world, and would eagerly await the time when mortality and continuing temptation will be removed from those who are to benefit from Jesus’ victory.

By an incredible paradox Jesus was taken by Jews and Romans, who conspired together to kill him, because they denied this very message of salvation. They became unwitting accomplices in the process, marking themselves as undeserving of its benefits—”They cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them? He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others” (Luke 20:15, 16).

He is our Mercy Seat

The whole act, though one of judgement upon those denying its truth, was essentially the proclamation of God’s goodness and mercy, the qualities revealed so long before to the patriarchs, and manifested during his ministry by the Son of God himself: “Merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth” (Exodus 34:6). The Lord’s life, given wholly in service to God and man, thus became a *living* mercy seat, the place where atonement and forgiveness of sins can be effected. Upon the mercy seat in the tabernacle had rested the manifestation of God’s glory. The same had been abundantly plain in the loving character of the Lord: “We beheld his glory”, wrote the beloved apostle, “the glory as of the only begotten of the Father” (John 1:14).

The Apostle Paul used the same historical truth to explain the reality of the forgiveness of sins through Jesus: “God hath set forth (Christ) to be a propitiation (Greek, *hilastērion*, mercy seat) ... for the remission of sins” (Romans 3:25). Under the law, the offerings for forgiveness of sins were accompanied by the sprinkling of blood upon the altar: and the great annual day of atonement had as its most solemn moment the occasion when the High Priest, clad only in plain white robes, passed through the veil with the blood of the nation’s sacrifice to be sprinkled on the mercy seat. This was “a figure for the time then present”, the writer to the Hebrews declared, “but Christ being come an high priest of good things to come ... *by his own blood* entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption” (Hebrews 9:9, 11, 12). All the sacrifices under the law were figurative. The slain animal was only representative of the one who made the offering and did not itself benefit from having been offered. The nation needed reminding that these offerings “can never take away sins” (Hebrews 10:11) in order to appreciate more fully the uniqueness of Jesus’ sacrifice.

As the law so often reminded its readers, “the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls” (e.g. Leviticus 17:11). The sacrifice of Jesus was not therefore solely his crucifixion. That view is the emotional, substitutionary belief that lies so often behind the statement: “Jesus died for

me!” A true understanding of his sacrifice recognises that it was his obedient *life* given completely and selflessly in service; and the completeness of the sacrifice was marked by his being “obedient unto death” (Philippians 2:8).

Having shown himself free from sin, and having been granted immortality, “death hath no more dominion over him” (Romans 6:9). “He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25). As the blood-sprinkled mercy seat was a sign to the Israelites of the atonement obtained for the nation’s sins, so the completely offered life of Jesus is “the basis” for the remission of our sins. His victory can ultimately be ours. He is freed from sin, and no longer under death’s dominion. For Christ’s sake, and because of his sinless life, we can become related to his victory, and not to Adam’s failure. We still bear the consequences of that failure—mortality and temptation. But upon honest repentance, faithfully believing that what God has promised He is able to perform, sins can be forgiven. “Therefore”, as the Statement of Faith records, “*by a figure*, his blood cleanseth from sin”. For it is not the actual blood that cleanses, but what the shedding of Jesus’ blood represents. When Christ returns he will reward his faithful followers with a changed nature free from sin and death: “This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality ... Death is swallowed up in victory!” (1 Corinthians 15:53, 54).

It is sometimes stated by critics of the Christadelphian community that we do not believe in the doctrine of justification by faith. Sometimes brethren themselves suggest that the Statement is deficient in this regard. The clauses reviewed in this article, and in last month’s, introduce this doctrine, placing it properly in the context of the scriptural teaching concerning the atoning work of Christ. Many so-called ‘Christian’ groups emphasise salvation by faith, yet do not recognise Jesus’ own relationship to his sacrifice. The truth is that this is “the basis” for the remission of sins. “The process” of salvation is, as described in the words of Clause XIII, “gathering from among (men) a people who should be saved by the belief and obedience of the truth”—as elsewhere defined.

The Apostle James carefully struck the balance required between “belief” and “obedience” when he stated simply, yet profoundly, “Faith without works is dead” (James 2:20).

He is Risen Indeed

The hallmark of Jesus’ victory, and the focal point of the Apostles’ message to the Jews gathered in Jerusalem at Pentecost, was his resurrection from the dead. “His soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption ... We all are witnesses”, Peter proudly stated (Acts 2:31, 32). This too was the work of God, who had determined beforehand both “the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” (1 Peter 1:11).

Until he returns to the earth as King over God’s kingdom, Jesus is at God’s right hand in heaven. The disciples who had eagerly anticipated the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, and who had expected the glorified Jesus to take his power and reign immediately after his resurrection, had to learn that “the times of refreshing ... from the

presence of the Lord” still lay some time in the future (Acts 1:6; 3:21). These times are in the Father’s power, for He has “appointed a day” for the righteous judgement of the world (Acts 17:31). Until that time there is opportunity for men and women to associate themselves with the Son and his victory. The era and reign of law had ended; the dispensation of grace began when Jesus emerged from the tomb.

While the priests under the law showed the incomplete nature of their work by standing day after day to minister the sacrifices, Jesus’ perfect sacrifice was marked when “he *sat down* on the right hand of God”. His “one sacrifice for sins for ever” does not mean however that he is now idle, merely waiting for the time when “his enemies be made his footstool” and he can bring the nations under God’s righteous rulership (Hebrews 10:11–13). His sacrifice being past, his priestly function commenced; he was the offering, the offerer, and the priest. The sacrifice has been accepted. Jesus himself has already benefited from it, for he is the firstfruits of them that sleep (1 Corinthians 15:20). He now mediates on behalf of his brethren, and does so with a “fellow feeling true” because he not only “knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust”, as the Psalmist recorded concerning the omniscience of the Father (103:14); the special quality Jesus brings to his priesthood is his truly sympathetic understanding of the infirmities of his brethren, having experienced them himself to the full (Hebrews 4:14, 15).

An Advocate with the Father

For mankind there could be no more appropriate priest, manifesting God’s requirements and revealing His mercy, and sympathising with every difficulty faced by his people. He was also wholly qualified to represent mankind before God, for he was sinless: “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1).

The Statement of Faith helpfully draws attention to a verse in Proverbs. It well catches the human tendency towards self deception, first manifested when Adam and Eve, recognising their nakedness, vainly attempted to cover themselves and their sin: “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Proverbs 28:13).

Until the Lord returns, this ever-continuing confession of sins to the Father requires that forgiveness shall be granted “for Jesus’ sake”. “Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). The importance of “the name of Jesus” in this saving process cannot be overestimated. We have no means of approach to God, other than through Jesus. Forgiveness of sins has been made possible only through his redeeming work. Salvation has been made available to all, for God “will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). But He has established the basis on which this approach can be made. Jesus himself declared about his disciples: “I pray for them: *I pray not for the world*, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine” (John 17:9). He is therefore “a priest over his own house only, and does not intercede for the world” (Clause XIV).

This Clause in the Statement of Faith does not mean, as some detractors have insisted, that only Christadelphians will be saved or benefit from Christ's mediation on their behalf. To claim this would be arrogance in the extreme. Judgement belongs to the Father and Son alone, and will be exercised by them at Jesus' return. But the scriptures do teach that Jesus himself declared that his priestly work is limited to those who are known to God, who have been adopted into His family, and who strive to remain faithfully in His house, or as the Statement of Faith makes plain: "Over his own house only".

For many this is an unpalatable truth. Wishing to see Jesus as an amiable saviour, ever forgiving, always generous and true, they fail to add to this list of his qualities those describing his justice and righteousness. We must never forget that, in addition to being "full of grace", he is also "full of truth". Like his Father he will not "clear the guilty", meaning by that phrase the unrepentant sinner. He can only intercede on behalf of those who approach the Father in his name, who are truly "in him". Even those who claim this allegiance but who deny it utterly by their thoughts and actions cannot expect his intercession to operate for them: "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins" (Hebrews 10:26). The principle which makes forgiveness conditional was established in the scriptures, and Jesus taught it to his disciples when they asked him how to pray: "Forgive us our debts, *as we forgive our debtors*" (Matthew 6:12).

We rejoice in these truths, believing they embrace the gospel of salvation, given from a just and righteous God, who "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son". We therefore raise our prayers to God, addressing them because of the relationship forged between Christ Jesus and those he came to save:

O God in highest heaven,
 Our God that hearest prayer,
 Through Christ—whom Thou hast given,
 Our Advocate, Thine heir:
 Now, strong in hope, united,
 Around Thy feast we meet;
 Receive from him our incense;
 He is Thy Mercy-seat.

(Hymn 197)

MICHAEL ASHTON⁵

⁵ *The Christadelphian* : Volume 127 Bd. 127. electronic ed. Birmingham : Christadelphian Magazine & Publishing Association, 2001, c1990, S. 127:164-168

The Promise of a Kingdom

VI—That God, in His kindness, conceived a plan of restoration which, without setting aside His just and necessary law of sin and death, should ultimately rescue the race from destruction, and people the earth with sinless immortals.

AT the centre of God's creative plan was His desire to "make man in our image". Earlier studies in this series have reflected on the greatness and glory of God's being and character. The key to the realisation of God's plan was that men and women should live together in peace and harmony with God and each other, both caring for and benefiting from their natural environment. For this to happen they must be merciful and gracious, aware of each other's needs and able to use their intelligence and strength for their common good and in ways which maintain the balance of nature.

Today mankind has become increasingly conscious of this vital need to understand and preserve the environment. The terrifying consequences of technological advances which enable man to annihilate himself and to destroy the world have brought home to thinking people the urgent need for peaceful coexistence. Only in response to God can man achieve the necessary characteristics of mercy and grace, patience, slowness to anger, goodness and truth. None of these qualities of God's character can exist in isolation. They are at the heart of successful relationships, between man and man and between man and nature. But for them to exist and take effect, righteousness is required. Our English word righteousness comes from "right-wiseness". Only when things are right can they work to plan. Only from God the Creator comes our knowledge and understanding of the wisdom that is right.

Growing up into Him

The Statement of Faith uses the word *restoration* of this plan, because when the creative work of God reached the stage when the earth was ready for man to commence his stewardship and probation, all was "very good", and the Lord God could walk in the midst of His creation. Man must return to this harmonious relationship in order to remove the consequences of his folly in breaking that harmony by selfish behaviour in defiance of the Creator's laws. So the concept of God dwelling in the midst of His people, "tabernacling" amongst them is a recurring image of Scripture, Finally—

"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: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:3, 4).

Such a situation represents more than a restoration. It is the consequence of a *development*, a development which God had in mind from the beginning of time, “before the world began (R.V., times eternal)” (Titus 1:2). God knew that He must give man freedom if man was to be able to reflect the qualities of God’s character. How, for example, can love be compulsory? If man is to be able to know and experience love, he must be free. For that freedom to have any meaning, man must be given the opportunity to exercise it, to have a choice, to be responsible. God knew that although man would be given every opportunity to make the right choice, it was almost inevitable that he would try to reach equality with God by a short cut. The plan that God conceived was not thought up at the point when Eve was deceived by the serpent. From the very beginning, God anticipated that man would need to be brought through a process of *education*, and that this process would involve learning from experience, including the experience of failure.

We can best understand this profound truth by reflection on our own knowledge of effective parenting. A parent provides the best for their children, seeks their well-being in all things. But a good parent does not over-protect, does not seek to immunise their child against reality. For the child to come to maturity, he must be free, must be able to exercise responsibility, and allowed to make mistakes—even painful mistakes. Without that process there is no growing up.

God’s Purpose from the Beginning

This is why the Bible consistently presents God’s plan of salvation as having been conceived *from the beginning*:

“God (has) saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus *before the world began* (R.V., times eternal)” (1 Timothy 1:9);

“*In the beginning* was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God” (John 1:1);

“He hath chosen us in him *before the foundation of the world*, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love” (Ephesians 1:4).

As has been pointed out in an earlier article, the Statement of Faith emphasises more than once that *it was necessary* that God should provide the means of achieving man’s salvation from sin and death, because, as a loving Father, He knew that there was no other way:

“God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

To sum up, we have a loving, all-wise Creator, who designs and plans a wonderful universe, within which He places the Earth with its infinite variety, marvellous balance and endless potential. It is His good pleasure to create a race of beings with the possibility of reflecting His own glory and sharing in eternal and delightful fellowship

with Himself and each other, managing and profiting from the good and beautiful environment which He provides.

But from the beginning, God anticipated that man would need to learn, and through bitter experience, before the ideal could be attained. Inasmuch as we can begin to understand these things, we can see how chaos precedes order, how failure is essential to success, how pain is linked to pleasure, how risk accompanies reward. And so we may dare to suggest that the Fall itself was an essential part of God's creative purpose. Without it, we could be only automatons, with no creative, independent life of our own.

A parent knows what pleasure, opportunity and fulfilment will come to a child who can ride a bicycle. It is virtually impossible for that to be achieved without the frustration and pain of the learning stage. But would we deny our children the opportunity and final delight because we anticipate grazed knees, bruised arms, disappointment and tears on the way?

Christ, the Centre of Creation

The analogy can take us only so far. For God appreciates that without the help that His strong arm provides, man *cannot* succeed. A Saviour is required to demonstrate to the full what God intends to achieve (he is "the image of the invisible God"). He can both show the necessity for sin to be removed for man to act in righteousness and wisdom in cooperation with the Creator, and by his unique victory over sin provide the means (he is "the firstborn of all creation"). Thus Jesus declares God's righteousness and is the justifier of those who believe in him (Romans 3:26). Man's progress from innocence to failure to success is made possible by Christ; man *needed* to go forward from Eden, along the steep and rugged pathway, through the valley of the shadow of death to the blessings of dwelling "in the house of the Lord for ever". As our hymn proclaims:

"In him the tribes of Adam boast
More blessings than their father lost."

For us to be "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light", we needed both to experience and be delivered from "the power of darkness". For us to be "translated into the kingdom of his dear Son", we needed to learn the meaning of "redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins". For this reason "all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (Colossians 1:12–17). At the very centre of the divine process of education, making possible the essential purpose of creation, is the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Promised Seed

The Statement of Faith gives full emphasis to this centrality of the Lord Jesus Christ in the purpose of God, and the promise of the Kingdom depends upon him. The next Clause continues:

VII—That He inaugurated this plan by making promises to Adam, Abraham, and David, and afterwards elaborated it in greater detail through the prophets.

The Scriptural passages which support this clause have as their common link the prospect of a seed, one “born of a woman”, though sent forth of God (Galatians 4:4). As a consequence of man’s disobedience to God’s commands he came under the bondage of sin and death (Romans 5:12; 8:20–23). God already knew how He would rescue man from this situation, by a way which would provide the means of man’s salvation at the same time as making clear that sin must be removed. His covenant with Adam was a promise of deliverance:

“I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15).

The ensuing conflict reached its climax and its resolution in the one who had to be the Son of God, but who was “made to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). With telling imagery, the Genesis passage speaks of the impact of sin upon the Saviour, subject to the same “flesh and blood” inheritance as all of mankind. But his victory over sin and his willingness to lay down his life was the ultimate declaration of God’s righteousness. The bruising of his heel accomplished a far more devastating bruise to the head of all that was associated with the progeny of the serpent. The power of death itself was destroyed, that man might be delivered from the bondage of sin’s heritage (see Hebrews 2:9–18). Thus “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself” (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Blessings for All Nations

Abraham’s faithful obedience to God’s commands provides the basis for God’s promise of a seed who would “possess the gate of his enemies” and bring blessings to all the nations of the earth (Genesis 22:17, 18). His willingness to sacrifice his own son surely indicated Abraham’s understanding of the need for a saviour. David, “the man after God’s own heart”, showed similar outstanding faith and particularly in the Psalms we are given an insight into his perception of the need for sin to be removed before “all the kindreds of the world shall worship before thee” (Psalm 22:27); cf. Psalms 51 and 32). The promise of an everlasting kingdom was dependent upon the seed who would be chastened with the stripes due to the children of Adam (2 Samuel 7:12–16).

Here and in the prophetic passages describing the kingdom, the emphasis is on the removal of the barrier between God and man—which could only be achieved through the intervention of God. And with the removal of sin, man would be able to manage properly the earth’s resources and deal successfully with the problems of human society:

“He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of the people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God: we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation” (Isaiah 25:7–9).

An Everlasting Covenant

The promises made to Abraham and David were strongly emphasised by Brother Thomas and Brother Roberts because their close reading of Scripture revealed how frequently these covenants are referred to and underpin the key features and principles of the New Covenant:

- A seed of promise, of God yet of man, able to take away sin;
- A people to demonstrate God’s ways;
- A land at the centre of that purpose;
- Blessings for all nations;
- Salvation dependent upon a covenant between God and man—God’s grace and man’s faithful response.

The kingdom of Israel provided a pattern and a parable of God’s grace. God’s plan is about *real people*, in a *real place*. His glory is to fill the earth. And in spite of the failings of His people, God’s promises will not be revoked. “The hope of Israel” is an outstanding demonstration of God’s covenant love, of His power to turn hearts of stone to hearts of flesh. No wonder Paul marvels at “the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God” (Romans 11:33)! Those who through Christ become “Abraham’s seed, heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29) must see in the covenants the outworking of the very grace in which they hope to stand.

The Essence of the Gospel of the Kingdom

After dealing in more detail with the nature of Christ in Clauses 8–10, covered in the preceding articles, the Statement returns to the plan of salvation which Christ has made possible:

XI—That the message he delivered from God to his kinsmen the Jews, was a call to repentance from every evil work, the assertion of his divine sonship and Jewish kingship; and the proclamation of the glad tidings that God would restore their kingdom through him, and accomplish all things written in the prophets.

We see how well the Statement now brings together:

- *Repentance*—a change of heart, recognising that God’s purpose cannot be achieved without the removal of sin. So Jesus preached:

“The kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15).

- *The Lord Jesus Christ*—the one who, because he is Son of God, speaks with the authority of his Father; the one who saves from sin; the anointed one, the Messiah. He is thus Prophet, Priest and King. His followers must recognise the fulness of his authority and the significance of his titles. Nathanael sums them up in his declaration:

“Thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel” (John 1:49).

- *The Kingdom of God*—with its past development in the Kingdom of Israel, and its future fulfilment when Christ comes in power and glory:

“Ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom God” (Luke 13:28, 29).

Each facet of the message is part of the whole glad tidings. The fulfilment of the promises cannot come without the removal of sin, which depends upon the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ had to be the Son of God to accomplish this removal of sin and the bringing in of everlasting righteousness. The kingdom of God is about faithful men and women freed from sin, living by God’s laws in harmony with Him, with each other and with the environment. By this means at last God will have achieved His plan to make man in His image and He will dwell among them.

Knowledge Brings Responsibility

It was the failure of Jewish orthodoxy to recognise the need for each of these elements that caused their blindness. They felt they were ready for God’s kingdom, that as a consequence of their descent from Abraham and the careful keeping of their own version of the law of Moses, they would be rewarded with a triumphant deliverance from the Romans and the establishment of the Jewish state to rule the rest of mankind. But repeatedly the Lord emphasised that there could be no crown without a cross. For sin must be recognised for what it is and repudiated before God’s Word can bring forth fruit to His honour and glory.

We must not show the same blindness. The Lord has gone away into a far country, leaving us to recognise our need to prepare for his coming again. For all that is written of him in the law and the prophets and the psalms will certainly be fulfilled (Matthew 5:17; Luke 24:44). How thrilling is the prospect of a world free from man’s selfish works!

Each of us must assess how well we have understood these vital principles and appreciated the need for repentance and a new life, as we wait for the promised kingdom. How well are we using the talents given us to develop? The servants who gain their reward in the day of the Lord’s coming are those who have been active in their Master’s service *now*. Otherwise they will find that the kingdom of God will be taken away from them, as it was from the Jews (Luke 12:35–48; 19:11–27; Matthew 25:14–46; 21:43, 44).

The kingdom is promised to those who are “faithful and wise”!

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“The only name under heaven”

XV—That he sent forth apostles to proclaim salvation through him, as the only name given under heaven whereby men may be saved.

XVI—That the way to obtain this salvation is to believe the gospel they preached, and to take on the name and service of Christ, by being thereupon immersed in water, and continuing patiently in the observance of all things he has commanded, none being recognised as his friends except those who do what he has commanded.

XVII—That the gospel consists of “the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ”.

THE uniqueness of Christ is beyond question. It is no accident that it was at Caesarea Philippi, a town which took its name from Caesar Augustus that Jesus should ask the question, “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” (Matthew 16:13). No other teacher or philosopher in all the world can claim Jesus’ relationship with his Father. All other teachers, whether Jew or Gentile, follower of God or pagan, are different from him.

Jesus stands apart from them all. To the seeker after Truth, he says: “Follow me!”

Who else said of Truth, not that he taught it but that it is he: “I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6); of a vision of God, not that he had received one but that it is to be seen in him: “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9); of all that supplies man’s greatest need, not that he had brought it but that it is he himself: “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (John 6:35).

Other teachers may carry a light, like a torchbearer, but only Jesus says, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12).

The Father of lights reveals to Peter the answer to Jesus’ question: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16, 17). Truly, if the greatness of a man is to be estimated by just two things: the extent of his influence on mankind and the purity of his character, then Jesus Christ is unique in his greatness.

In the multicultural society which now surrounds us, we must brook no compromise. The Lord Jesus Christ is unique; his is the only name under heaven “whereby we must be saved”; salvation is not possible apart from him! There is no truth in the philosophy that provided a believer is sincere, whether Buddhist, Taoist, Sikh or Moslem, that he will “find” God and His purpose. These idolatrous faiths are different in their outlook and purpose—above all they are “a lie” (Revelation 22:15). They are systems of death for they have no faith in the living God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, nor do they offer any hope of salvation from sin or redemption from death, the vitally important aspects of the living gospel. It is highly significant that the Lord’s name means, God saves. The message was given to Joseph: “Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:2).

Faiths that deny this unique contribution of the Lord Jesus Christ are not consistent with God's revelation of His purpose. But what of the variety of Christian belief? Is it enough just to know of Christ's work and words, or is something more required?

The Bible answer is clear: we must become disciples of Christ; his friends; his brethren. The process commences with the message of the gospel.

The Apostolic Witness

We have heard the message of life, not only because of Jesus himself, but also because he gave others a charge: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19, 20). The twelve, including Matthias, began preaching in Jerusalem (Luke 24:47) and it was because of the persecution instigated by Saul that others went to Samaria (Acts 8:1, 2). As we read the record in Acts, we become increasingly aware that nothing was done by the apostles in their own name but always in the name of Jesus Christ (see, for example, 3:6; 9:15, 17; 16:18).

The faith we hold is an apostolic faith; that is, it is the faith preached by Jesus and given to those "sent forth" in his name. It is not a faith which has developed *in its content* since the last apostles fell asleep; indeed we are warned against any such development: "I ... exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for (i.e. strive to defend) the faith once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). Timothy and all subsequent believers are exhorted by Paul, "to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me by (A.V. margin) many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:1, 2). These things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ are here for us in the word of God. It is in the Scriptures that God has spoken of Himself and of His purpose. In these Scriptures and in no other there is sufficient revealed to make a person "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15).

The message of the gospel has been proclaimed—and still is being proclaimed—by faithful men, very much in the spirit of Paul's words to the brethren and sisters living in the capital of that empire which stands for all that opposes God:

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:6).

The Growth of Faith

Believing this gospel message is no automatic process—yet there is a sequence of events which God in His love for the world has set in motion. First, He sent His only begotten Son whose whole life was given in perfect service to the will of his Father. Jesus "learned obedience by the things which he suffered" (Hebrews 5:8) and thereby set an example. The "beautiful feet" of Jesus (Isaiah 52:7) became "the beautiful feet of

them that preach the gospel of peace”; and so the sequence of possible events was set in motion. They were sent; they preached the gospel; others heard; some believed, and of those, some “called upon the name of the Lord” (Romans 10:13–16).

Sadly, not all believed and it is just the same today. There are some who hear, but find the price too high. Not all who hear are prepared to give themselves up to Christ, for it requires self-denial and humility: “Let a man deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24). The gospel is to be obeyed: men and women are called to a life of obedience. Jesus learned obedience, so what of ourselves? We too must learn—first by repentance and a realisation of our need for forgiveness, and second by living a new quality of life.

Earlier we spoke of the uniqueness of Jesus. He learned the lesson through all his suffering, and his obedience was perfect. Jesus is the one stainless man, the one sinless human being. He said, “Come unto me ... and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). We are lost sheep; not only is he not lost, but he is the good shepherd. We are sick; he is not only well but the physician. Our lives are forfeit; his is not only his own but is the price he willingly paid. We are all sinners—every one of us; he is not only sinless, but the Saviour. So all of us must fall at his feet. It is because of his perfect obedience that:

“God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9–11).

Our Attitude of Mind

How essential then is repentance: to turn from a way of life (really, a way of death) which ends in perpetual sleep, to a new and *living way*. Our sorrow and regret must be real. There must be no hankering after that old way of life. “The old man” will constantly seek to reassert that previously unchallenged authority over our minds and hearts. We seek forgiveness “through Jesus Christ our Lord”. Such forgiveness extended to us by God is limited; not by Him, but by us. It is limited by the extent of our own willingness to forgive those who for one reason or another upset us: “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive your trespasses. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:14, 15). The prospect of denying ourselves access to the forgiveness made available through Christ is, and should be frightening. Yet God has promised, and Jesus has made it possible for our sins to be “taken away” by the Lamb of God.

By ways of providence in each believer’s life, he comes to learn of the gospel message, and by the grace and mercy of God puts on the name of Christ in baptism. Just as truly as a bride takes the name of her husband, so we take the name of Christ. We die in those waters, and it is not any death we die but that of our Saviour himself—we are “baptized into his death” (Romans 6:3). The importance of complete immersion for the faithful believer lies in this relationship with the death of Christ: “We are buried with him by baptism into death” (verse 4). Furthermore, the Apostle stresses that this burial is *with him*, that is with Christ. The association could not be closer. Recognition that the old

life had as its object the satisfaction of selfish desires brings the desire to bury it; to deny it any more opportunity of mastery.

But baptism, if it was only relating the believer to Christ's death, would hold no hope of future glory, nor any evidence of a changed relationship now. Yet, "if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Christ ... dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (verses 8, 11). All we then do is seen by our Father—whom we could not previously address in such an intimate way. He is our Father, because now we are in Christ: we belong to him, we have been bought with a price of inestimable worth.

There is no part of day nor night which should be free from his service and neither should we want it to be. Yet "we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear", for his service is perfect freedom—a freedom to do not as we like, but as we ought. Even here faith continues to grow. At first it was acceptance of a statement of belief as revealed in the Scriptures, but now it develops into a relationship of awe and finally of love and trust in the God of Heaven, our Father.

Our Practical Response to His Love

Let us suppose for a moment that there is someone whom we love and respect, someone for whom we would do anything. We would not knowingly upset him or make him unhappy, and if there were something we know would particularly please him then we would go out of our way to do just that. How then can we turn our backs on Jesus' words: "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14)? He laid down his life for us while we were yet sinners! It is a command of Jesus that his disciples should "do this in remembrance of me". How can we deny Jesus the pleasure it affords him when he sees his brethren and sisters remembering what he achieved for them? And more even than that, how can any brother or sister sit on the fringes of the ecclesia and involve themselves so little in the life of the body?

It is so easy to apply to others those words in the parable of the sower: "Yet hath no root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation (pressure) or persecution ariseth because of the word by and by he is offended" (Matthew 13:21). But what of ourselves? We are all called to a patient continuance in well doing.

It is true that for some the pressure to conform is almost unbearable—to join with others at work or in the neighbourhood where we live; to have a boyfriend or girlfriend, indeed to get married and have a family at almost any price; to be successful at work by climbing the promotion ladder. Our Lord knows about all of these things and he understands; he learned obedience by the things which he suffered, and more pertinently: "Christ also suffered *for us*, leaving us an example that we should walk in his steps" (1 Peter 2:21).

We are called to a life of holiness and purity, not a life of compromise; to a life of concern, patience and forgiveness, not of indifference, animosity and censure; to a life of humility and worship, not of self-seeking, pride and idolatry.

Looking Forward

The salvation which God so graciously offers to mankind not only gives hope for the future but also brings the reality of the life of Jesus here and now. The apostle writes,

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

True believers in Christ have taken the name of Jesus, and by baptism and a life of faith are heirs of the Kingdom of God. That promise we take on trust. It is part of the development of our commitment as the days of waiting go by. In the gospel message God’s righteousness is revealed. Our faith and trust in Him grow and increase. Yes, we believe that God is. But that “He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” is a truth that becomes clearer as we become more diligent. That the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth should give His Son for the salvation of each believer and should see fit to tell him about that grace through His word is quite overwhelming. The grace wherein we stand is the favour of God extended towards those who respond, who are God’s heirs:

“He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world ... having predestinated us unto the adoption of children ... and if children then heirs, heirs of God” (Ephesians 1:4, 5; Romans 8:17).

Jesus himself is the heir of all things and yet we are invited to be “fellow-heirs”. Here is our ambition in life, one of present and future fulfilment: “to do justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God”. The journey to the kingdom will be blessed because that journey is undertaken in His all-saving Name.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:3–5).

TREVOR PRITCHARD⁷

⁷ *The Christadelphian* : Volume 127 Bd. 127. electronic ed. Birmingham : Christadelphian Magazine & Publishing Association, 2001, c1990, S. 127

“The things of the kingdom”

XVIII—That the things of the Kingdom of God are the facts testified concerning the Kingdom of God in the writings of the prophets and apostles, and definable as in the next twelve paragraphs.

UPON hearing of the arrest of John the Baptist, Jesus “came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:14, 15). The twelve, too, were sent forth “to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick” (9:2). Like the mustard seed in the Lord’s own parable of the kingdom, the message of the kingdom grew; the glad tidings spread, so much so that, when he multiplied loaves and fishes for the five thousand, he “perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king” (John 6:15).

The temptation was instantly dismissed. It had been dismissed already when, in the wilderness, the devil “shewed unto him the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time” (Luke 4:5–7). But the event recorded in John 6 was a turning-point: faced with the provocation to claim the kingship *then*, he “withdrew again into the mountain himself alone” (verse 15, R.V.). His mission was now to be chiefly among his own, and in parables he taught the principles of the kingdom; he revealed its secrets. When his disciples asked him to explain to them the parable of the sower, he said, “Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables” (Luke 8:10).

Yet even those closest to him did not fully comprehend. No doubt they took too literally his announcement of the transfiguration, “There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God” (9:27); or his kindly assurance, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (12:32). Time was for them foreshortened and, “because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear” he cautioned them with the parable of the pounds (19:11–27); he gave them also the Olivet prophecy so that “when ye see these things come to pass, ye know that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand” (21:31).

“Lord, wilt thou at this time ...?”

But after his death and resurrection, surely at last—thought some—the time was ripe? What now stood in the way of kingship? “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). Patience was required, then as it is now, until the times and seasons, “which the father hath put in his own power”, are fulfilled. The time was not yet. The King had to be taken from them, ascending to the Father’s right hand—“whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (3:21).

Among the apostles and in the growing ecclesias, disillusionment was soon displaced by confidence: they knew and taught that the promises to Abraham and David were to be fulfilled by the return of Christ from God’s right hand to raise the dead and judge the

world in righteousness. In Ephesus, Paul “spake boldly ... disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God” (19:8). In Rome, awaiting Caesar’s pleasure, he “received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God” (28:23, 31).

The message of the kingdom is woven into the epistles, and new enlightenment is given as questions have to be answered, or controversy stilled. And the final vision is granted us in Revelation as John heard a voice in heaven say, “Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ” (12:10).

The New Testament, then, spells out the “things of the kingdom of God”, referring us back to the Hebrew scriptures for the origin of the promises; pointing us forward to “things which must shortly come to pass” (1:1), leading up to the return of Jesus Christ as King of Kings and Lord of lords.

But that is not everywhere how the kingdom of God is seen. From the earliest days, speculation and human philosophy were preferred to Bible truth. A literal kingdom? No, was it not rather some mystic rule over men’s hearts? Or, if you must have a kingdom, then surely it cannot be a literal, earthly kingdom as imagined by the Jews. In any case, is not the kingdom in heaven, and do not men’s immortal souls go there to enjoy Christ’s reign in bliss? And if they are there, then there is no need for Christ’s return—see how one false doctrine can breed others!

It has been suggested that our Statement of Faith devotes a disproportionate number of clauses to “the things of the kingdom”. It is true that perhaps half the clauses relate to the promise of the kingdom and its fulfilment, but there is little profit in analysing the B.A.S.F. in such a way. If there is a predominance of statements concerning the kingdom it is certainly because the doctrine is important; it is also perhaps in measure a reflection of the spirit of the times in which the Christadelphian community was born.

Elpis Israel

Brother John Thomas wrote *Elpis Israel: An Exposition of the Kingdom of God, with Reference to the Time of the End and the Age to Come* because the things of the kingdom had been lost sight of in the churches. The robust faith of the apostles had become a vague gospel of an after-life not requiring the resurrection of the dead, a judgement, nor the restoration of Israel; what is more, it hardly required adherence to particular standards if all but the most depraved souls winged their way to heaven. *Elpis Israel*, and similar works which followed it, represented the restatement of a Gospel which, though never altogether eclipsed, had been ignored by generations of theologians.

The following few lines from this work remind us of its vigorous style:

“The truth is defined as ‘the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ’. This phrase covers the entire ground upon which the ‘one faith’, and the ‘one hope’, of the gospel are based: so that if a man believe only the ‘things of the kingdom’, his faith is defective in the ‘things of the name’; or, if his belief be confined to the ‘things of the name’, it is deficient in the ‘things of the kingdom’.

There can be no separation of them recognised in a ‘like precious faith’ to that of the apostles. They believed and taught all these things” (Part II, chapter 1, page 189).

“The things of the name” have been considered in earlier articles in this series, but how right it is to link—as Philip did in his instruction (Acts 8:12)—Bible teaching about the character and work of the Lord Jesus Christ with the teaching of the kingdom. The above quotation drives home the principle that the kingdom is not an isolated, and certainly not a mere ‘political’ aspect of the Gospel, but one which is associated with every other doctrine and particularly with the nature and redemptive work of Christ. The kingship of the Lord in no way conflicts with his sacrificial work: whilst the wise men came looking for “him that is born King of the Jews” (Matthew 2:2), Simeon blessed God that “mine eyes have seen thy *salvation*”, and Anna spoke of him “to all that looked for *redemption* in Jerusalem” (Luke 1:30, 38).

XIX—That God will set up a kingdom in the earth, which will overthrow all others, and change them into “the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ.”

The kingdom is the central theme of God’s plan for mankind. Throughout the ages, man has sought to build great empires for his own glory. Daniel’s visions had to do with world empires which would succeed those of his own day and extend far into the future, until such a time when they would give way to a permanent and perfect kingdom: “In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed ... and it shall stand for ever” (2:44).

In a later vision, details emerge of the role of the saints in that future state: “And the kingdom and dominion ... shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom” (7:27). Echoes of Eden are to be heard in this prophecy, for was it not God’s desire that the man He had created in His image should “have dominion over ... all the earth” (Genesis 1:26, 28)? Where Adam and his descendants failed, the “Son of Man” succeeded, as it was foretold of him: “Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands” (Psalm 8:6).

The verses cited under Clause XIX of the B.A.S.F. include several from Daniel and Revelation, and also a selection from Isaiah, and with extracts from some of these we can now conclude this part: “Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment ... The mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains ... and all nations shall flow unto it ... They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (32:1; 2:2; 11:9).

XX—That for this purpose God will send Jesus Christ personally to the earth at the close of the times of the Gentiles.

We have already established that the return of Christ is a literal event, necessary for the consummation of all things. Daniel 7:13 is one of the Old Testament ‘proofs’ attached to this clause, and it is one we should do well to quote more often, and relate to the obvious parallels in the New Testament: “Behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days ... And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom ... which shall not be destroyed” (verses 13, 14). Our cross-references take us to the Olivet Prophecy: “Then shall they see the Son of

man coming in the clouds with great power and glory”; and on to Revelation: “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him” (1:7).

But the New Testament abounds with the certainty of the promise that “he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:20, 21). Christadelphians have consistently declared the doctrine of the Second Coming: let us not waver now in our conviction that it is “at the doors”, nor be distracted by “scoffers ... saying, Where is the promise of his coming? ... The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night ... Be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless” (2 Peter 3:3–14).

XXI—That the kingdom which he will establish will be the kingdom of Israel restored, in the territory it formerly occupied, viz., the land bequeathed for an everlasting possession to Abraham and his seed (the Christ) by covenant.

The kingdom had its origins in Eden, in the creation of man in God’s image, for what else is the kingdom but the restoration of all things as they were when man lived in the presence of God on earth? The word ‘kingdom’ does not actually appear in Genesis, but the beginnings of the idea are very evident. After all, Melchizedek, *king* of Salem, was there, as early as chapter 14; and to Abraham it was promised, “Kings shall come out of thee” (17:6, 16; 35:11). In addition, God’s covenant with Abraham assured him of a land and a seed—both plural and singular—in perpetuity. The promise of the kingdom thus becomes the heritage of the nation of Israel and our theme, beginning as a fine thread, grows into an intricately woven tapestry.

The word ‘kingdom’ actually occurs first (in connection with the people of God) in Exodus 19:6, where Israel were destined to “be unto me a kingdom of priests”. Balaam was granted remarkable insight into God’s purpose when he prophesied of Israel that, “his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted” (Numbers 24:7). But the topic comes into the forefront of Bible language when Israel demanded of Samuel a king. God allowed the request, and so the ‘kingdom of God in the past’ was born. This has always featured largely in instruction for baptism simply because it is the type and precursor of the kingdom to come. It was, after all, very literally God’s kingdom. Even the Queen of Sheba, when she visited Solomon, recognised who was truly king: “Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee to set thee on his throne, to be king for the Lord thy God” (2 Chronicles 9:8).

Glorious as that kingdom was, for a time, its end was calamitous: “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” (Ezekiel 21:27). For the kingdom to be restored, there must be one of the tribe of Judah: “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet” (Genesis 49:6, R.V.). Thus are we led to Messiah, God’s anointed prince, and to a succession of prophecies which speak of his righteous and eternal reign on the throne of David, as King in Jerusalem and over all the earth. “For the kingdom is the Lord’s: and he is the governor among the nations” (22:28).

As we so often say to our friends, a kingdom implies a king, a people and a land. We have seen how the kingship of Christ was foreshadowed. Other passages teach us how the nation of Israel was chosen to be “an holy people ... a special people ... above all

people that are upon the face of the earth” (Deuteronomy 7:6). And with the choice of the people of Israel came also the choice of their land, “a good land ... a land which the Lord thy God careth for” (8:7; 11:12). Yet, though of course the role of Christ has not changed, the people and the land have been redefined. Some of the branches of the Jewish olive tree have been pruned because of disobedience, and Gentile branches have been grafted in (Romans 11). The land too has been extended. God promised Abraham “all the land which thou seest ... all the land of *Canaan*” (Genesis 13:15; 17:8); Paul could write of “the promise that (Abraham) should be the heir of the *world*” (Romans 4:13).

The widening of the promises does not, however, diminish the importance of Israel, and it is here that the distinctiveness of Christadelphian understanding showed itself in the nineteenth century. There are other communities today who claim to have ‘rediscovered’ the place of Israel in God’s purpose but at the time of the formulation of the B.A.S.F. our emphasis on Israel was unique: it was enshrined in this and the following two clauses.

XXII—That this restoration of the kingdom again to Israel will involve the ingathering of God’s chosen but scattered nation, the Jews; their reinstatement in the land of their fathers, when it shall have been reclaimed from “the desolation of many generations”; the building again of Jerusalem to become “the throne of the Lord” and the metropolis of the whole earth.

When the First Zionist Congress had yet to take place, when the Balfour Declaration was a daydream, and only a few thousand Jews actually lived in Palestine, Christadelphian preaching of the restoration of Israel was a remarkable phenomenon—a very real demonstration of faith in the prophets of old. In *Twelve Lectures on the Teaching of the Bible* (1862), republished as *Christendom Astray* in 1884, Robert Roberts had much to say on the regathering of Israel, for example:

“Are there no brighter days for Israel? Are their calamities to have no end? Is Jehovah’s anger to burn against them for ever? Let us hear the prophet: ‘Thus saith the Lord: Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them *all the good that I have promised them*’” (Jeremiah 32:42).

With abundant quotations from Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Micah, Zephaniah, and Zechariah and Romans, Brother Roberts shows how overwhelmingly clear is Bible teaching on the reclamation of the land, the regathering of the Jews, and the restoration of Jerusalem. Our brethren and sisters gazed eagerly for signs of such developments: we take their accomplishment too readily for granted.

But the State of Israel is not the kingdom. Ironically almost everything about Israeli society will have to be undone before the Lord Jesus Christ can reign from Zion. It is because the Lord God remembered His covenant that He has graciously brought His people back to the Land—and even now the numbers are being swollen with tens of thousands of fresh immigrants. But great changes will have to take place before “the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Micah 4:2).

XXIII—That the governing body of the kingdom so established will be the brethren of Christ, of all generations, developed by resurrection and change, and constituting, with Christ as their head, the collective “seed of Abraham”, in whom all nations will be blessed, and comprising “Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets”, and all in their age of like faithfulness.

The details of the inauguration of the kingdom are the subject of later parts of the Statement of Faith. Though we may have lively discussions about the precise sequence of happenings, we have a common expectation of the events that will lead up to God being “all in all”. Christ’s own resurrection gives the assurance that those in Christ will also be raised—“Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming” (1 Corinthians 15:23); then follows the judgment—“by that man whom (God) hath ordained” (Acts 17:31); and then will follow the millennial reign, leading on to the restoration of the paradise that was marred in Eden—“The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them ... and be their God” (Revelation 21:3).

In the above clause there is reference to “the governing body of the kingdom”, to assist the Lord in extending his authority throughout the earth: “When the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also (the apostles) shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matthew 19:28; Revelation 3:21). And, in humility, we can look forward to the involvement of the saints of all ages in this great work. Meanwhile we must use wisely the time of our probation: “If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, *we shall also reign with him*” (2 Timothy 2:11, 12).

We await with joy the coming of the King, “when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe” (2 Thessalonians 1:10).

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⁸ *The Christadelphian* : Volume 127 Bd. 127. electronic ed. Birmingham : Christadelphian Magazine & Publishing Association, 2001, c1990, S. 127

Resurrection and Judgement

ONE of the joys of believing Bible teaching is to discover how all teaching holds together as a single structure, inter-dependent and interlocking. To disturb one part is to disturb the whole. This holds true for our basic doctrines and for the life in Christ: each is a unit and both are bound together in the life of faith.

When it became clear to our early brethren of the nineteenth century that man is mortal, a whole series of other doctrines were brought into true focus. Immortality, no longer taken for granted as a gift from God at birth in an immortal soul, would be bestowed on the faithful when Christ returned to the earth; therefore the dead would require a resurrection, and both living and dead would stand before the judgement seat of Christ; those found faithful would be clothed upon with immortality, and those found unacceptable would perish in the second death.

Key verses of Scripture made this abundantly plain:

“We must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

“The Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom” (2 Timothy 4:1).

“God, who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil ... in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ” (Romans 2:5, 6, 16).

“For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then shall he reward every man according to his works” (Matthew 16:27).

“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power” (Revelation 20:6).

Who Will be Raised from the Dead?

But, what determined whether a man would be raised from the dead? Certainly, the faithful saints asleep in Christ would come forth. Which of the remaining vast congregation of the dead would also be raised, and why? A key verse in Daniel gives a strong lead in providing a satisfactory answer:

“Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (12:2).

Many, not all, will awake to a day of decision, a day of separation between faithful and unfaithful, with eternal consequences, everlasting life or eternal shame and contempt. This theme runs through many of the parables of the Lord Jesus: wise and foolish virgins, good and bad fish, sheep and goats, faithful and unfaithful holders of pounds or talents, and houses built on rock or sand.

Clearly, resurrection day is also a day of judgement. The Judge is God, but He has given all judgement to the Son (John 5:26–29). Judgement will be at the Judgement Seat of Christ. The Judge will hold in his gift, everlasting life or weeping and gnashing of teeth in outer darkness and the second death.

What, then, is the relationship between those who appear before him and the Lord himself? Why is it appropriate that Christ should be the Judge? The answer is that he is the door to salvation and it is our relationship to salvation that is decisive on judgement day. It is our relationship to Christ that determines what the judgement will be. The Judge will be known to those who are to be judged. How will he be known?

“Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them ... Everyone that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not” (Matthew 5:24–27) is particularly helpful in this respect. The word of Jesus and our response to it provides the key.

A similar warning was given by the Lord Jesus Christ when contending with the unbelieving Jews of his day:

“He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).

“The last day” is the day of resurrection and judgement, the day when the faithful will receive everlasting life (see John 6:39, 40, 44, 54):

“But he (Jesus) shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out” (Luke 13:27, 28).

From such scriptures it was plain that there would be faithful and unfaithful at the judgement seat of Christ. Would these two kinds be confined to the household, i.e. those who had been baptized? Or would others also appear before the Lord for judgement? The latter must be the case because Luke 13 also tells us that the particular ones rejected by the words of Jesus had not “entered in at the strait gate” in order that they might be saved. They knew about the gate but had remained outside.

The Simple Principle

This helps in our understanding: it is when our understanding has been sufficiently enlightened and our conscience sufficiently moved that we become responsible to the Lord Jesus Christ for judgement. When we are moved to obey, we enter the path that leads to everlasting life; when we reject what we know and lead our own life regardless

of Christ's way, we nevertheless will be answerable to him when he returns. Those who die without light remain for ever undisturbed in the congregation of the dead.

In his well-known article "True Principles and Uncertain Details", first published in 1898 (pages 182–9), Brother Roberts wrote:

"RESPONSIBILITY, *General Principle*: That men are responsible to the resurrection of condemnation who refuse subjection to the will of God when their circumstances are such as to leave them no excuse for such refusal."

Our Statement of Faith follows the same line:

XXIV—That at the appearing of Christ prior to the establishment of the Kingdom, the responsible (namely, those who know the revealed will of God, and have been called upon to submit to it) dead and living—obedient and disobedient—will be summoned before his judgement seat, "to be judged according to their works" and "receive in body according to what they have done, whether it be good or bad".

Were we to make any other consideration the basis for resurrection and judgement, we would immediately disturb our understanding of other doctrines. Supposing, for example, that we were to make baptism the ground for resurrection, we would then have to say, What is there about baptism which of itself makes us responsible to judgement? It could not be simply knowing about baptism and its meaning, otherwise we would be accepting a basis similar to the definitions given above. The reasons would lie deeper than that and they usually resolve themselves into saying that it is our acceptance of a covenant relationship with Christ through his death that makes us liable to resurrection.

In other words, on that view, even though we knew all about the covenant relationship, and felt its call, that would not create a responsibility to appear before Christ at his appearing. This view was pursued to its end by some who left our fellowship in the late nineteenth century and declared that unbaptized persons could not be raised for judgement. A kindred but somewhat modified view is still held by members of a fellowship in North America who do not accept the definition of responsibility proposed by Brother Roberts and embodied in our Statement of Faith.

How much less complicated and more in accord with the tenor of Scripture is the belief we hold.

Four Classes of People

It is, perhaps, easiest when examining the subject of those who will appear before the Lord Jesus when he comes, to consider the world's inhabitants as consisting of four classes:

1. Those "whose ignorance is involuntary and helpless. They are born and die under the sentence pronounced upon Adam: 'Out of the ground wast thou taken, and unto dust shalt thou return'. This is the end of their beginning. 'They remain in the congregation of the dead', being helplessly sinners by constitution."

2. “Those to whom God sends the light, but who shut their eyes against it, loving darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. These are not only sinners by constitution, but *wicked sinners*, who refuse to come under a constitution of righteousness to God.”
3. “Those who come under a constitution of righteousness, and are therefore *saints* ... thus they begin to do well, and for a patient continuance in well-doing they receive glory, honour, incorruptibility, and life at the first resurrection as the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.”
4. “Those saints who did run well, but did not continue in well-doing; way-side, stony ground, and thorn-choked professors.”

The above classification is quoted out of interest because it appeared in *The Herald of the Kingdom* in 1854 and was the work of Brother Thomas.

Both Brother Thomas and Brother Roberts at first understood that those in Classes 3 and 4 would be raised at the first resurrection, but those in Class 2 would not be raised until the second resurrection at the end of the millennium. Later they modified that view and demonstrated that all the unfaithful, whether or not baptized, will be raised at the first resurrection (see *Christendom Astray* and *Eureka*).

Where and How Long?

Speculation as to precisely where the judgement will take place—Sinai or Jerusalem, for example—and how long it will take, has engaged a great deal of attention. There are many interesting scriptures concerning events before and after the judgement and, like all scripture, command our interest and belief; but, as Brother Roberts wrote in his article:

“**Uncertain detail**—Where will he (Christ) set it (the judgement seat) up? Will it be in Palestine, or in Egypt, or in the Arabian Peninsula, in the solitudes of Sinai? We cannot be sure. All available evidence seems to point in the direction of the last-mentioned; but an uncertain detail must not be made a basis of fellowship. We must not insist upon a man believing the judgement seat will be set up at Sinai or any particular place so long as he believes that ‘Jesus Christ will judge the living and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom’.”

Our sole thought on that Day will be *what* the Judge will say to us, and not *where* the judgement is taking place or *how long* it will last.

Will the Faithful Dead be Raised Immortal?

Some have contended that since the Lord Jesus knows all about us there is no point in bringing the faithful to judgement. Scriptures adduced in this connection include 1 Corinthians 15:51 and Romans 8:1. A corollary to such a view is to question why there should be any judgement at all. Why not raise the faithful immortal and leave the

unfaithful where they are? Why raise some people only to consign them to the second death?

The answer is that God has ordained it. It is right in God's eyes, and should therefore be so in ours, that certain unfaithful persons will stand before the One whom they have seen fit to reject—Caiaphas, for example (Mark 14:63) and many others (Luke 13:28, 29)—and it is abundantly evident from the parables of Christ that the accepted and the rejected will receive the judgement and its consequences from the Lord himself. Christ will reveal his assessment of all who appear before him (1 Corinthians 4:4, 5).

Furthermore, when the Lord returns, the faithful and unfaithful yet alive will also be gathered together for judgement (2 Thessalonians 2:1; 2 Timothy 4:1). They will be in their present mortal condition. There are no scriptural grounds for asserting that the faithful dead will be raised immortal but the faithful living will have to be differently dealt with.

Perhaps the confusion arises from knowing that neither the faithful dead nor the faithful living will face death but together will be ready for immortality. But this is different from saying that they are already at that point immortal. In fact, the process is described as follows:

“For this corruptible must *put on* incorruption, and this mortal must *put on* immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:53).

“For in this (present earthly house of our bodies) we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven” (2 Corinthians 5:2).

At the second coming and after the judgement, the faithful enter into the life of the age to come (Matthew 13:43; 25:46). The precise moment when the faithful are made “like him” is not made known to us; nor is the time of the ultimate annihilation of those who are rejected by the Judge. The Statement of Faith says:

XXV—That the unfaithful will be consigned to shame and “the second death”, and the faithful invested with immortality and exalted to reign with Jesus as joint heirs of the kingdom, co-possessors of the earth, and joint administrators of God’s authority among men.

“The meek shall inherit the earth”

At the beginning of man's history when He created man and woman, the Lord God declared that they were to “have dominion” (Genesis 1:26). Only when Christ had conquered sin and death was the way secured by which redeemed men and women could attain to what had been purposed from the foundation of the world. God has determined a day in which His kingship will be made manifest in the Man whom He has appointed and has declared by raising him from the dead.

Meanwhile the Lord Jesus shares the Father's heavenly throne (Revelation 3:21) and will remain in heaven until the day when he shall be “revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that

obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8). This is the time when the Son of man shall come in glory, and all the holy angels with him, to sit on the throne of his glory, the throne of David in Zion (Matthew 25:31; Luke 1:32; Psalm 2:6, 8).

The Day will be such as the world has never seen. Christ will be glorified in his saints and admired in all them that believe (2 Thessalonians 1:10). When he is King of kings and Lord of lords, then the saints will share his throne (Revelation 3:21) and will live as kings and priests, reigning with Christ for a thousand years (Revelation 20:6).

In that day “a king shall reign in righteousness and princes shall rule in judgement” (Isaiah 32:1). The inheritance of individual saints and their positions in the kingdom of God will be pronounced by Christ on behalf of his Father (Matthew 20:23; Luke 22:29; 19:17, 19).

Being Christlike today is the prerequisite for being Christlike in that Day.

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⁹ *The Christadelphian : Volume 127* Bd. 127. electronic ed. Birmingham : Christadelphian Magazine & Publishing Association, 2001, c1990, S. 127

The Millennium After

XXVI—That the Kingdom of God, thus constituted, will continue a thousand years, during which sin and death will continue among the earth’s subject inhabitants, though in a much milder degree than now.

CONTEMPLATION of the coming Kingdom is the very stuff of our faith and fellowship in the Truth, the focus of all our hopes and prayers. It is, or should be, the joy of all the saints. As the glorious day rapidly approaches, our eyes are lifted to the vision, because our “redemption draweth nigh”.

For men and women of faith, it was always thus. Patriarchs “looked for a city which hath foundations” and prophets foresaw the “regeneration” when Israel would be restored. The time of blessing for all nations would be an era of tranquillity and profitable activity when, as the beautiful Song of Solomon depicts, the Beloved and his Bride would share the joys of their garden in all its fruitfulness. But no one spoke of a “millennium” in biblical times—at least, not until the end of the First Century A.D., when brethren and sisters read the closing pages of the Lord’s letter to the ecclesias. Then, in six references in Revelation 20, that which had been perceived only dimly through the prophets was spelt out clearly. Until that time, faithful men had spoken of the Kingdom of God in terms of “for ever”; even Nebuchadnezzar learned that the kingdom of the God of heaven would “never be destroyed” and would “stand for ever.” Only the Apostle Paul, through special revelation, wrote of “the end” of the Kingdom, when Christ would hand it back to the Father.

Why, then, does Jesus put a limit on its duration? One thing is certain, there can be no contradiction between the concept of the kingdom which lasts for a thousand years and the one which endures for ever. “The Lord sitteth King for ever” (Psalm 29:10) is not limited in time, nor will be the Kingdom when God’s will shall be done on the earth as it is in heaven. The fact is, the ultimate objective that “the earth shall be filled with my glory”, can only be realised when sin and its consequences are annihilated. That is to be the work of Christ in the coming age, when the governments of the earth become the “kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ”.

Why One Thousand Years?

The answer must be: because the Creator has judged this to be an appropriate period for the necessary transformation to be achieved. Perhaps a hint of a millennium was given to Daniel when he saw the coming day of judgement and learned that the beasts would have their dominion taken away, though their lives would be prolonged for a “season and a time”— 2×360 years, plus a “set time” of 280 years (Daniel 9). Also, the writer to the Hebrews compares “the rest ... which remaineth for the people of God” with the seventh day of creation (4:4, 9), thus establishing a link which has greatly intrigued students of Bible chronology. However, we cannot assume that the Apostle Peter’s “one day with the Lord is as a thousand years” (2 Peter 3:9) is a sufficient basis for measuring the time periods in God’s purpose.

The concept of a divine “week” of 7000 years for the reconciliation of man with his Creator is stimulating and thought-provoking. But we must be careful; as a tempting instrument for calculating the date of the Lord’s return or the commencement of the Millennium, it is full of danger. For a start, it requires acceptance of the precise chronology, generally attributed to Archbishop Usher, which puts the Creation at 4004 B.C., a date which many others have challenged, believing Genesis 1 to have been earlier. Brother John Thomas did not agree with Usher, and in *Chronikon Hebraikon* (published, up to 1949, with *Elpis Israel*) he listed a number of variants which were current in his time. His own calculations led him to 4089 B.C., and he suggested that the Millennium would begin some years before A.D. 1910 when the world “would be 6000 years old”. Brother Thomas pointed to unresolved questions about whether there would be a 40 year “time of trouble” before or after the opening of the new age (Daniel 12:1; Micah 7:15) and about the length of the “little season” which follows the Millennium (Revelation 20:3), if everything was to be encompassed within a precise 7000 years.

The lesson is important for our present consideration: whatever our personal inclinations in the use of chronology, the definition of dates or the interpretation of historical events as they unfold do *not* form part of our Statement of Faith. We should not let them attain the status of First Principles.

The Sabbath Rest

However, there *are* parallels between the principle of a day of rest and the Kingdom of our Lord. The Sabbath was a refreshing retreat from the self-seeking labours of the preceding days, and it provided an opportunity to reflect on God’s goodness in releasing His people from their bondage in Egypt. In the same way, the Millennium will be “the times of refreshing ... from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19) and an age of worship such as the world has never experienced. Yet the Sabbath day, for all its calm and restfulness for the observing Jew and its benefits to the nation as a whole, was imperfect. Sin was still present, though much tempered by family devotions and by eyes turned to the Tabernacle or prayers directed to Jerusalem. Men still died on the seventh day and women were still anguished in childbirth. So it would be a mistake for us to visualise the thousand years as a perfect world, a fantasy wholly unrelated to present experience. Such fantasies are the stuff of heaven-going theories; but, in truth, the Kingdom *at its outset* will be very earthy, awaiting the transformation which the new King and his saints will bring to it.

The immortals who “possess the kingdom” will immediately experience a wonderful release from “this vile body” and the burdens of sin. In full health and energy, and with an ever-expanding appreciation of God’s ways, their eyes will be set on the unfinished work of bringing the peoples to their Saviour. Among their mortal subjects will be many who will have gladly accepted the King’s invitation to recognise his authority, perhaps because they remembered in “the day of visitation” the countless CHRIST IS COMING messages preached by faithful witnesses to the Gospel. On the other hand, there will be those who “will not have this man to reign over us”; for potentates will not easily give up their power and the masses will not forego their “rights”. Nations will “rage” and the common people “imagine a vain thing”, when they “set themselves against the Lord and his anointed”. “Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us”, will be their chant (Psalm 2:1, 2).

At the beginning of the Millennium it may take some time for the full effects of Christ's presence in the earth to work through to the nations across the globe. There will be much to be done at his Headquarters, in Palestine. For example, the King must set up his administrative base in Jerusalem (a city to be rebuilt after the ravages of the great earthquake) and the "redeemed" are to ascend into the hill of the Lord and be joined in marriage with the Lamb. Then there is the second exodus of the Jews to be arranged (Isaiah 11:11), as well as their purging out in "the wilderness of the people" and their bringing "into the bond of the covenant" (Ezekiel 20:35–38). The Land, from Syria to Egypt, must be divided between the tribes, with the "holy portion" in its midst and the house of prayer for all people being constructed. From thence, with Israel established as "the head, and not the tail, of the nations", the King's ambassadors will move to their appointments across the world in their roles as judges, teachers and counsellors. It will take some time before the full splendour of the Kingdom is apparent.

After the initial battles against the Lord, the "binding" of Satan, with all the restraints on human deceitfulness, will bring immense relief, and wickedness will abate. Most inhabitants will learn the benefits of obedience; but there will be habitual and incorrigible sinners who will discover that the rulers, with Spirit insight, have the power to execute just and summary punishment (Isaiah 65:20). Yet even among the finest of mortals, human nature will remain and, as ever, only through recognition of the Lamb and the sinner's appeal for pardon will the way of *eternal* life be opened up.

XXVII—That a law will be established which shall go forth to the nations for their "instruction in righteousness", resulting in the abolition of war to the ends of the earth, and the "filling of the earth with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea".

World harmony will not be achieved by force of arms, but through learning how to live righteously. Peace operates on two levels; peace with God, and then peace with one's neighbour. The two "great commandments" will form the basis of harmony with the Creator and with the people around, while spiritual education will be the prime instrument in making the earth a happy place for its inhabitants during the Millennium. Further, the transition from a multitude of religions, which in the past have divided nations in bloodshed and hatred, to a single form of worship will enable Godly standards to be set and righteousness to be cultivated. Justice will be seen to be done, because its basis will be consistent and will be recognised across all borders. The results will be remarkable: "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever" (Isaiah 32:17).

To "open the blind eyes", to "preach good tidings unto the meek" and for the "everlasting gospel" to go out to all who live on the earth will be the joyful work of the saints. The outcome will be that every level of society will "flow" to Israel to see the King and learn his methods. Week by week the Jews will lead the way to the temple services (Isaiah 66:23), while year by year former enemies will come to enjoy the Feast of Tabernacles (Zechariah 14:16). The desire of Gentile envoys "out of all languages of the nations" to observe the blessings accorded to Israel will be a majestic fulfilment of the promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3, as well as a reversal of the curse in the division of families at Babel. It is not certain whether Zephaniah's promise of a "pure language" indicates a return to one universal language at an early stage of the

Millennium. Rather does the text suggest a common ability for all men to “call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent” (Zephaniah 3:9), perhaps on the model of Pentecost when, through the Spirit gift “firstfruits” of the Kingdom given to the Apostles, those “from every nation under heaven ... heard them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God” (Acts 2:5, 11).

In time, this process of education will filter into every corner of the earth. Habakkuk, in a telling figure, recorded that as the waters in the ocean occupy every crevice of the deep, so will the *knowledge* of the glory of the Lord fill the earth (2:14). This is the work for which brethren and sisters are now being trained!

We must not suppose that the Millennium will be an age of dull uniformity, of intellectual or creative stagnation and the suppression of every culture. On the contrary, the many references to the “kindreds of the earth”, “kings”, “nations” and “small and great” (e.g. Revelation 20:2) invite the thought that there will be a marvellous assembly of diverse cultures and national identities, the best of their talents being developed to the benefit of neighbours and the service of the world community. “The nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and their honour into it” (Psalm 72:10; Revelation 21:24).

XXVIII—That the mission of the Kingdom will be to subdue all enemies, and finally death itself, by opening up the way of life to the nations, which they will enter by faith, during the one thousand years, and (in reality) at their close.

This clause in the Statement of Faith places prior emphasis on the removal of opposition to Christ, and then on the final conquest of the grave. This serves to remind us (as a previous article pointed out) that “the things concerning the Name of Jesus Christ” are as important as “the things of the kingdom”. The Millennium is not an end in itself, but its objective is for the Son and Saviour to present a sinless, deathless race to his Father. First, human opposition must be subdued, using the Word of God (“sharper than any two-edged sword”) as the instrument of command, for “he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked” (Isaiah 11:4). Only then will it be possible to “destroy ... the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations” (Isaiah 25:7). Both these aspects of the dominion of Christ are clearly summed up in one of the supporting texts: “For he must reign, until he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Corinthians 15:25, 26).

There is a gentler touch in the Clause’s reference to the “opening up of the way of life”. Our minds go to the tree of life in Eden, planted by the pure river of water that flowed from the Garden. Revelation 22 takes us to the Millennium and depicts the multiple “tree of lives”, by their water source, providing diverse nourishment throughout the year. They are the “trees of righteousness”, to whom men will come for spiritual food, their life-giving oxygen made available for the “healing of the nations”. A lovely prospect!

Gog and Magog

What are we to make of the worldwide rebellion which breaks out at the end of the Millennium (Revelation 20:8)? Some have suggested that it is the same event as described in Ezekiel 38. However, close comparison shows that the circumstances are different, the armies of Ezekiel 38 coming from the north, whereas those in Revelation 20 are from “the four quarters of the earth”. How, we may ask, can there be a mighty resurrection if Christ is the Prince of Peace? If “they shall learn war no more”, how will they fight? If the King and his fellows are all-seeing into the hearts of men, how can war preparations proceed unseen? The answer must be that the event is neither unseen nor unexpected. This must be by the “determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God”. The nations are worked up by clever propaganda from “Satan—that old Serpent”, who has been loosed deliberately from his long bondage. In the closing moments of the Millennium this vile source of temptation, whose work began in Genesis with the deceiving of the woman and the subsequent promise of a fatal blow on the serpent head, is again allowed to enter the Garden of the Lord, to exercise his deceits for one last time. Surrounding the camp of the saints in Jerusalem, the misguided invaders are overcome by fire from heaven and, finally, the Serpent-power of sin which tempted the lusts of the flesh, the eyes and the pride of life, and which crucified the sinless Son of God, is consigned to the flames for ever.

It is Christ’s ultimate demonstration that he is the conqueror; a sign to the world that “the end” has come. The dark deeds of Genesis and Calvary have been finally avenged! “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

XXIX—That at the close of the thousand years, there will be a general resurrection and judgement, resulting in the final extinction of the wicked, and the immortalisation of those who shall have established their title (under the grace of God) to eternal life during the thousand years.

The same principles of knowledge, belief, obedience and faith which have applied since Adam was first formed must also operate in the Millennium. Even under the beneficent rule of the Kingdom there is no automatic entry into eternal life. Men must be judged “according to their works”, as written up in the books (Revelation 20:12). This requires that there be a “general” resurrection of *all* who have died during the thousand years; for *all* have been made responsible by the “*knowledge* of the glory of the Lord”. Together with all the living, they will stand before the Judge, and the unfaithful will be removed to destruction, along with “the earth and the heaven” (the political arrangements of the mortal rulers and subjects). The climax comes with the opening of the Book of Life, in which are inscribed the names of those who, as the Statement of Faith says, “have established their title to eternal life”.

That Book has been opened before—at the *first* resurrection. Wonderfully, it was there with the Creator from the beginning, when the bride-companion was fashioned for His Son and when faithful men and women were “chosen from the foundation of the world ... that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ” (Ephesians 1:4, 10).

XXX—That the government will then be delivered up by Jesus to the Father, who will manifest himself as the “all-in-all”; sin and death having been taken out of the way, and the race completely restored to the friendship of the Deity.

The fruits of the Lord’s sinless life and the reconciliation of the cross are now to be truly seen in a race of beings who are wholly at one with their Father and Friend. The Son, having fulfilled all that was asked of him, will remain for all time “My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”. Without the distractions of sin and mortality which had surrounded them during the Millennium, the saints are free to move forward into an endless age of fulfilling activity.

It is not for us to speculate on how or where the new family of God will occupy themselves beyond the Millennium. It has not been revealed. Suffice it to say that it was the *earth*, the brightest jewel in God’s universe, which was prepared for men and women to have dominion over all His creatures. It was the *earth* which He “formed to be inhabited”, and it is the *earth* to which “the tabernacle of God” will come when “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: for the former things are passed away” (Revelation 21:3, 4)

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Doctrines to be Rejected

PREVIOUS articles in this series have stressed the importance of each clause in the Statement of Faith in building up a summary of Bible teaching. From the Foundation Clause which emphasises the need for implicit belief in the inspiration of the scriptures to Clause XXX which looks forward to the day when “God will be all and in all” there is set forth a logical progression of Divine teaching which finds the honest assent of Christadelphians throughout the world who meet in a fellowship based upon belief in all these doctrines. Our studies have also shown that the Statement of Faith is not a creed—something which history proves can soon lead away from the scriptures of truth—but a useful epitome of their teachings. Contemplation of each clause of our Statement leads to a closer consideration of the Word of God itself.

In advising the use of a *written* Statement, Brother Roberts wrote in *The Ecclesial Guide* that, “A mere understanding as to the definitions of truth to be received is apt to become dim and indefinite, and the way is open to the gradual setting in of corruption. So long as it is understood that the written definition is not an authority, but merely the written expression of our identical convictions, there is not only no disadvantage, but the reverse, in reducing the faith to a form that shuts the door against misunderstanding” (Section 34, page 23).

In an attempt more firmly to shut the door against misunderstanding, the Statement of Faith from its earliest days has included a section composed entirely of negatives. At first it was called “*Fables to be Refused*”. Each of the statements in the section now headed “Doctrines to be Rejected” is the obverse of the positive teachings included in the first part of the Statement of Faith and headed “Truth to be Received”. For example, the Foundation Clause about the inspiration of the scriptures is strengthened by the first in the list of doctrines to be rejected: “That the Bible is only partly the work of inspiration—or if wholly so, contains errors which inspiration has allowed”—a summary of some of the criticisms raised against belief in total inspiration. It is impossible for someone to believe both the positive definition and its negative counterpart. The latter gives greater emphasis to the meaning of (and the implications for a belief in) the former.

Balancing both parts of the Statement, and showing that Christadelphians do not believe that faith is merely an intellectual exercise, “The Commandments of Christ” are always attached to the Statement of Faith. Their fundamental importance to the definition of our beliefs and grounds of fellowship will be discussed in next month’s article, God willing.

Some Objections Considered

If there have been objections raised against the need for a written basis of belief and fellowship—and these do occur from time to time—there have been much more sustained objections against the listing of doctrines not believed. Some ecclesias feel so strongly that the truth should only be preached in positive ways, they do not include any

Doctrines to be Rejected in the Statement of Faith appended to their ecclesial constitutions. Other reasons are also given in support of omitting them: it is suggested that the list grew up in an age when the community was being forged on the anvil of controversy, and that many of the doctrines rejected in the list are not current today, or are worded in ways which are not understood or are offensive to the modern ear. “That Christ was born with a ‘free life’” (No. 4) and “That ‘heathens’, idiots, pagans, and very young children will be saved” (No. 22), are examples of those often quoted in this context.

The fact that a definition is not immediately understood is insufficient reason to discard it. If it describes a false belief rejected by those who uphold the truth of the scriptures it should be included. As can be seen from the list set out later in this article, the false doctrine “that Christ was born with a ‘free life’” is the counterpart to the essential teaching about the Lord’s nature defined in Clause VIII—that “he also himself likewise took part” of the nature we bear, a nature related to death and producing temptations to sin (Hebrews 2:14). Had he chosen not to offer himself in order that we could have hope of life, death would still have claimed him; his own salvation from death was inextricably bound up with ours. In other words, his life was not “free” from the condemnation placed upon Adam and all his descendants, as has been claimed by those who allege that, unlike us, Jesus received his life direct from God and it was never forfeit.

Clauses utilising language whose meaning has not changed, but which would not be used today because of certain sensibilities or associations should also not be discarded if they relate to important truths. Modern and more sympathetic attitudes to mental disorders do not change the facts concerning how men and women can avail themselves of the hope of salvation. Until the Truth can be understood, there can be no commitment to it in faith. We would not today phrase false doctrine No. 22 in the same way, but we do subscribe wholeheartedly to Clause XVI which sets out the process of man’s involvement in salvation—belief (i.e. hearing and faith), baptism, and patient observance of God’s commands.

In the early days of our community there was a greater awareness of the need to define the differences between our beliefs and those of others who also claimed to rest their faith on Bible teachings. Brother Thomas’s work *Clerical Theology Unscriptural* and Brother Roberts’ book *Christendom Astray* show how these essential differences were always tackled head on. There are two reasons why the situation is somewhat different today. Then, virtually *every* convert was a convert from one of the sects of ‘Christendom’ and it was necessary to highlight the errors of his former association in order to show the beauty and integrity of the Truth. There was also much greater knowledge of the scriptures and a wider acceptance that they form the basis for belief. The separation between truth and falsehood could only be accomplished satisfactorily by including both positive and negative definitions.

Scriptural Precedents

The general absence today of these two factors by no means invalidates the section in the Statement of Faith which lists doctrines that are wholly incompatible with the definition of the “Truth to be Received”. The Word of God itself uses a comparable

method to give emphasis to its positive truths, and moreover does so under widely differing circumstances. The following passages are only a few examples of the many occasions where this method occurs:

1. The Ten Commandments summarising the Law God gave to His people Israel is possibly the best illustration to be found anywhere in scripture. The last five commandments are all straight negatives, introduced by the chilling phrase, “Thou shalt not ...” But the other five are by no means wholly positive, even though the effect of all ten should have been both positive and beneficial to the believing Jew. He was told, for example, to “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy”, and that this could only be achieved if “in it *thou shalt not* do any work”. God also declared that He is “the Lord thy God who brought thee out of Egypt”, therefore “*thou shalt have no other gods*”.
2. After the Law had been given through Moses to the infant nation, the implications of obedience were also emphasised. If God’s people obeyed His commands, they would receive abundant blessings, “in the city ... in the field ... when thou comest in ... when thou goest out”. However, if they disobeyed, not only would the blessings be withheld, but “*cursed shalt thou be* in the city ... in the field ... when thou comest in ... when thou goest out” (Deuteronomy 28).
3. The examples are not limited either to the Law of Moses or to the Old Testament. When the Apostle Paul listed the attributes that should flow from a believer’s association with the Lord Jesus Christ, calling them “the fruit of the spirit”, he set forth the positive outworking of the gospel, saying that “against such is no law”. But this list is immediately preceded by another containing activities wholly incompatible with the new life in Christ. These, by contrast, are “the works of the flesh”. Only by placing side by side these contrasting ways of life could the Apostle declare so forthrightly the positive and constructive conclusion that must be drawn: “They that be Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:19–25).
4. One final example, taken from the Lord’s own final message, must suffice in making the point that the scriptures abound in negative definitions to strengthen and define positive truths. In summarising the message of the apocalypse, the voice from heaven revealed to John that, “he that overcometh shall inherit all things”. The measure of those who are the heirs of God’s eternal promises is shown by describing who will not inherit: “the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and idolators, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone” (Revelation 21:7, 8).

The principle, therefore, of utilising positive and negative definitions to give greater emphasis to Bible teachings comes from the Word of God itself, and should not cause us any concern. Furthermore, as can be seen from the extent and nature of the negative commands in the Ten Commandments, some aspects of the truth are better expressed in this fashion. So, while some of the Doctrines to be Rejected are the exact opposite of the Truths to be Received, some are only implied in the first section of the Statement, and some grow more out of a consideration of the Commandments of Christ.

The following list attempts to relate the positive and negative definitions, and it is immediately apparent that some of the Doctrines to be Rejected, like the negative commands in the Ten Commandments, stand on their own without an obvious positive counterpart:

Doctrines to be Rejected	Truth to be Received
1. That the Bible is only partly the work of inspiration—or if wholly so, contains errors which inspiration has allowed	Foundation Clause
2. That God is three persons	I
3. That the Son of God was co-eternal with the Father	I,II,VIII,IX,X
4. That Christ was born with a “free life”	VIII
5. That Christ’s nature was immaculate	VIII
6. That the Holy Spirit is a person distinct from the Father	I
7. That man has an immortal soul	IV,V
8. That man consciously exists in death	—
9. That the wicked will suffer eternal torture in hell	—
10. That the righteous will ascend to the kingdoms beyond the skies when they die	VI,XIX,XXIII
11. That the devil is a supernatural personal being	—
12. That the Kingdom of God is “the church”	XVIII,XIX
13. That the Gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ merely	XVII,XVIII
14. That Christ will not come till the close of the thousand years	XX,XXVI
15. That the tribunal of Christ, when he comes, is not for the judgement of saints, but merely to divide among them different degrees of reward	XXIV
16. That the resurrection is confined to the faithful	XXIV
17. That the dead rise in an immortal state	XXIV
18. That the subject-nations of the thousand years are immortal	XXVI
19. That the law of Moses is binding on believers of the gospel	—
20. That the observance of Sunday is a matter of duty	—
21. That baby-sprinkling is a matter of duty	—
22. That “heathens”, idiots, pagans, and very young children will be saved	XVI
23. That man can be saved by morality or sincerity, without the Gospel	XVI
24. That the gospel alone will save, without the obedience of Christ’s commandments	XVI

25. That a man cannot believe without possessing the Spirit of God	XVI
26. That men are predestined to salvation unconditionally	XVI
27. That there is no sin in the flesh	V
28. That Joseph was the actual father of Jesus	II
29. That the earth will be destroyed	XIX
30. That baptism is not necessary to salvation	XVI
31. That a knowledge of the truth is not necessary to make baptism valid	XVI
32. That some meats are to be refused on the score of uncleanness	—
33. That the English are the ten tribes of Israel, whose prosperity is a fulfilment of the promises made concerning Ephraim	—
34. That marriage with an unbeliever is lawful	—
35. That we are at liberty to serve in the army, or as police constables, take part in politics, or recover debts by legal coercion	—

Teachings not Mentioned Elsewhere

This list shows that some crucial teachings, necessary for belief and fellowship, only occur explicitly in the list of Doctrines to be Rejected, and that the declaration of our faith would be poorer and open to some serious misunderstandings without it. That “all the dead unconscious lie”, which we sing in one of our hymns (No. 297), is one of these truths not completely taught in the earlier section (No. 8). Another denies the awful teaching that God has eternal torments in store for the wicked (No. 9). Though it is difficult to believe that the positive teachings in the Statement of Faith concerning Adam being “sentenced to return to the ground from whence he was taken” could possibly be accepted by anyone believing in a conscious existence after death, it is surely right to close the door against any such confusing mixture of truth and falsehood.

Alongside the important position accorded in Bible teaching to the mortality of man must be placed a true understanding of “the devil”. Because this is a subject so widely misunderstood by most so-called “Christian” groups it is necessary to define carefully what the scriptures mean. While the first part of the Statement of Faith explains the holy nature of God, and the fallen condition of man, something which became “a physical law of his being”, it would be possible also to believe in the existence of “a supernatural personal (evil) being”. This belief is roundly rejected in No. 11.

There are two false teachings listed concerning details in the Law of Moses which are no longer applicable to the believer in Christ (Nos. 19 and 32). The Sabbatarian view of Sunday is rejected in No. 20; as is the idea of British Israelism in No. 33.

The list concludes with two important matters which concern how the believer puts his convictions into practice in daily life, neither of them having been previously mentioned in the list of Truths to be Received. Marriage should be “only in the Lord”, as the

Apostle advised the Corinthian ecclesia (1 Corinthians 7:39); and certain matters involving our relationship with the state are expressly clarified—military and police service, involvement in politics, and “going to law” (Nos. 34 and 35).

Are Additions Acceptable?

This brief review of the subjects included in the Doctrines to be Rejected should be sufficient explanation of its importance as an integral part of the summary of our beliefs and the basis of our fellowship. But one further aspect demands our attention. Is it right for other doctrines to be added to this list, in order to close the door against current heresies? It is occasionally suggested that to meet the particular needs to which attention is drawn by controversy or disagreement between brethren, ecclesias should clarify their position by stating the belief or beliefs they are rejecting by including them in their Statement of Faith.

This has happened in the past, and indeed a proportion of our current Doctrines to be Rejected were added in this way. Confusion arises, however, when additions are made piecemeal. The Statement of Faith provides the basis of fellowship for brethren and sisters throughout the world, and additions made to meet a purely local (and therefore perhaps only a limited) need can sometimes become barriers to wider fraternal communication. Certainly no additions should be made which change the intention of other clauses in the Statement; and there is a real danger that additions would seek to define more closely subjects where the scriptures themselves contain only limited information.

Despite the fact that there are some matters covered in the Doctrines to be Rejected which are not raised positively or explicitly in the first part of the Statement of Faith, it is wise to be wary about including new issues by adding them to a document that is both tried and tested. Also it would clearly be wrong where a definition of Bible teaching already exists in the Statement to frame a negative definition that denies more than the positive clause affirms. For these reasons it has often been considered a wiser course for ecclesias to use other means to deal with problems that may arise.

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The Commandments of Christ

AS we draw to a conclusion this series of articles on The Statement of Faith, it will be profitable to remind ourselves of the Clause in our Constitution which binds us together in our ecclesias and as a community:

That we accept and profess the doctrines and precepts of Christ, as taught in the apostolic writings, and defined (positively and negatively) in the annexed Statement of Faith and Epitome of the Commandments of Christ.

Month by month we have gone through the doctrines of Christ seeking to make plain the positive declarations of our faith and their impact on other, contrary doctrines. We have now arrived at the real moment of truth: true belief can exist only where Christlikeness shines from the believer's life.

How wise were our brethren when they set these things in order and showed that the foundation on which we rest comprises both the doctrines and the precepts of Christ. In other words, we rest upon the whole of Christ's teaching, namely, the elements of our faith and the pattern of godly living.

Christ was all of our doctrines alive in himself: he was the living statement of faith. We are urged repeatedly to strive to imitate him in all things. Paul's call to Timothy is the rallying cry to all of us:

“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give thee charge in the sight of God who quickeneth all things, and before Jesus Christ, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Timothy 6:12–14).

We, too, made a good confession before witnesses and now we must endeavour to keep the commandment without spot or rebuke. The Christ formed in us by the word of faith must become evident in lives we lead.

The Challenge

The saving truth is for sinners—provided that they are determined to forsake their old way of life. The truth has to make a difference. “That they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”, is how the Lord Jesus describes the believer's life and witness. All of us know that there is no point in declaring that we have the truth, if our lives are a flat denial of it:

“The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity” (2 Timothy 2:19).

We should “purify ourselves, even as he is pure”. The seed of the truth should bring forth the fruit of the Spirit; if not, it is being hindered because it is not sincerely held. In other words we are failing to give it a “good and honest heart” in which to grow. When we fall short of the image of God in Christ Jesus, God is merciful to us provided that we truly repent and seek forgiveness and strength through Christ our Advocate. But if we deliberately lead a way of life in one way or another—in business, in unfaithfulness in marriage, in neglect of the Word and the fellowship of the ecclesia, for example—we risk losing eternal life. Now is the time to take stock and put ourselves in the hand of God.

According to Godliness

If we ponder the matter, it becomes evident that what we are and what we believe are not two separate parts of the truth: they are one truth. Christ Jesus was the way, the truth and the life in every part of himself: in his heart and mind, in his works of compassion and wonder, in his fellowship with his disciples, and in his controversy with those who sought to be his adversaries. He was the Way, the Truth, and the Life, at all times and in every place.

Paul repeatedly emphasised the links between faith and the life in Christ:

“Holding faith, and a good conscience” (1 Timothy 1:19).

“The words of the Lord Jesus Christ, and ... the doctrine which is according to godliness” (1 Timothy 6:3).

“Hold fast the form of sound words ... in faith and love” (2 Timothy 1:13).

“The acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness” (Titus 1:1).

God intends that we should be changed by the faith we hold. It should strike at our conscience and bring us to repentance (a complete change of mind) and to conversion (an about-turn to face God). The clauses of our Statement of Faith are not meant to dissect the faith into identifiable, but dead, parts; instead, they are designed to bring us to the living Christ, that in him through the mercy of our heavenly Father we might forsake dead works and walk in newness of life.

Life Eternal

There are occasions in daily life when we become aware of things to come before they actually arrive. Children anticipate dinner by the rich aroma of the coming meal as they pass the kitchen door. Most of us have caught the fragrance of a garden before we have entered. As citizens of the coming kingdom of God we have become aware of the commands of the King and seek to live as though he were here. Brother Thomas’s translation of Hebrews 11:1 is helpful in this respect and tallies well with the renderings to be found in the N.I.V. and R.S.V.: “Faith is a confident anticipation of things hoped for, a full persuasion of things not seen”.

When we invite guests to stay with us, we prepare for their coming: their rooms are ready, the meals are planned and our own activities are adjusted to make the stay of our guests as enjoyable as possible. If preparation is necessary for temporal pleasures, how much more vital is it that we live in a state of readiness and of tip-toe expectancy for the life of the kingdom to come.

Peter provides stepping stones to godly living: living as though we were on the threshold of the Lord's return:

1. Grace and peace ... through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord
2. According as his divine power hath given us all things that pertain to life
3. Through the knowledge of him that called us to glory and virtue
4. Whereby are given ... exceeding great and precious promises
5. Through these ye might be partakers of the divine nature
6. Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust (2 Peter 1:2–4)

Whilst not yet enjoying it, we have all that pertains to the life to come. We have a knowledge of God and of the Lord Jesus which, when it blossoms into the fullness of the age to come, will be life eternal indeed. The exceeding great and precious promises are intended to lead us away from the corruption that is in the world through lust. We shall not receive incorruptible bodies unless we have truly put on the new man and actively rejected "the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" (Ephesians 4:22). We must "let no corrupt communication proceed out of" our mouths (Ephesians 4:29).

As there are "doctrines to be believed" and "doctrines to be rejected", so there are thoughts to be cultivated and thoughts to be banished, words to be said and words to be stopped, works to be done and works to be refused.

Hallowed be Thy Name

This is the first of the petitions in the Lord's prayer. It relates to the age to come and to the kingdom on earth. Hallowing the name of our Father has to be our first priority. Everything we are and can be in Christ has come from the Lord God himself: it rests upon what God is in His very nature, as expressed in the covenant Name, Yahweh, and made explicit in God's unique Fatherhood in begetting His only beloved Son and in His extended though different Fatherhood in making us sons and daughters of the living God.

The essence of that Name is expressed in the momentous declaration to Moses:

"The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty" (Exodus 34:6–7).

This is the name we are to hallow: not in word only, but with all our being. In nothing are we to obscure or sully or defame the name of God, but in everything we are to make known what God is by the way we live.

In our personal, private lives God is to be hallowed. In our relationships with other individuals, whether in Christ or otherwise, God is to be seen. In our choice of partner, in our marriages, and with our children, mercy, grace, longsuffering, goodness, truth, and forgiveness are to be evident as tributes to the One who has been pleased to call us His children. In ecclesial life especially, the name of God should be made manifest. All unbecoming behaviour in any of our meetings, all jealousy and envy, rivalry and pride should vanish in the presence of Christ, he who was the perfect, living hallowing of his Father's name. In our witness to or defence of the truth, our words and demeanour should make known both grace and truth, in that order, and should set forth the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.

“Why call ye me Lord?”

It is sometimes said that certain non-believers are better ‘Christians’ than are some of us. We know what is intended by this expression, even though it is untrue in two ways. Sometimes we can learn many lessons from the way in which others behave in daily life. Sometimes we are poor examples of what we are supposed to be. But no man can be truly Christian unless he believes what is essential for salvation, and unless his works are motivated by the faith he holds.

But, it is true that the Lord himself uttered a warning on similar lines to the thoughts we have just considered:

“Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not things which I say?” (Luke 6:46).

We must seek to match our profession by a life that speaks of Christ. In the parable, it was the foolish virgins who cried, “Lord, Lord, open to us”, but they had failed in daily life fully to prepare for the Lord's coming. We scan the signs of the times in vain, if we do not show our belief in the Lord's return by washing our robes in the blood of the Lamb. It will only be to our condemnation, if we are able to recite the faith of the Christadelphians, but do not truly know the Lord whom we have professed to serve.

We must respond as did the Psalmist:

“When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek ... One thing have I desired of the Lord, that I will seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple” (Psalm 27:8, 4).

Only by constantly meeting the Lord God and His Son in our daily reading of His Word, and by fervent and regular prayer, and by fellowship with those of like precious faith in remembrance, witness and spiritual study can we be sure of the faith we hold and be helped in the path of life.

Brethren in Christ

We state that we are brethren in Christ. This must be more than a statement, it must be our whole aim:

“Brethren, ... this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13–14).

As a community we have been remarkably preserved. But, we live in an age when old orders are being swept aside, not because they were wrong or lifeless, but because the tide of human freedoms breaks through every kind of restriction and discipline so that the heart of man might find its full expression in unrestrained self-indulgence.

We see the effects of this in our own brotherhood. Family life is invaded by man-made influences which, though sometimes innocent in themselves, break up the family circle, steal precious time by useless pursuits, and push Bible reading and prayers and wholesome discussion into the back rooms of our minds. Gadgets, gimmicks, electronics of one kind and another, and all kinds of home improvements and comforts compete with Christ for our eternal destinies. More and more marriages are breaking down and families are shattered. Children are denied the double-parenthood ordained by God. Ecclesias are racked by pain in seeking to help when these things occur.

We need to return to the old standards. Our homes should be a true refuge from worldly influences, places where all the members feel safe and have the Bible and the Lord Jesus Christ as the governing influences. None of these things come as by magic or in a moment of time. As brethren in Christ we have to take positive steps to have light in our dwellings as did the children of Israel in Egypt’s days of darkness.

There is no community on earth as blessed as we are, no fellowship so wonderful as ours. Let us rise up and build in these last days for the honour of God and of His Christ, and for the well-being of all of us in preserving the truth in word and deed.

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A STATEMENT OF THE FAITH FORMING OUR BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP

THE FOUNDATION.—That the book currently known as the Bible, consisting of the Scriptures of Moses, the prophets, and the apostles, is the only source of knowledge concerning God and His purposes at present extant or available in the earth, and that the same were wholly given by inspiration of God in the writers, and are consequently without error in all parts of them, except such as may be due to errors of transcription or translation (2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Corinthians 2:13; Hebrews 1:1; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 Corinthians 14:37; Nehemiah 9:30; John 10:35).

TRUTH TO BE RECEIVED

I.—That the only true God is He who was revealed to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, by angelic visitation and vision, and to Moses at the flaming bush (unconsumed) and at Sinai, and who manifested Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the supreme self-existent Deity, the ONE FATHER, dwelling in unapproachable light, yet everywhere present by His Spirit, which is a unity with His person in heaven. He hath, out of His own underived energy, created heaven and earth, and all that in them is (Isaiah 40:13–25; 43:10–12; 44:6–8; 45:5; 46:9–10; Job 38, 39 and 40; Deuteronomy 6:1–4; Mark 12:29–32; 1 Corinthians 8:4–6; Ephesians 4:6; 1 Timothy 2:5; Nehemiah 9:6; Job 26:13; Psalm 124:8; 146:6; 148:5; Isaiah 40:25–27; Jeremiah 10:12–13; 27:5; 32:17–25; 51:15; Acts 14:15; 17:24; 1 Chronicles 29:11–14; Psalm 62:11; 145:3; Isaiah 26:4; 40:26; Job 9:4; 36:5; Psalm 92:5; 104:24; 147:4–5; Isaiah 28:29; Romans 16:27; 1 Timothy 1:17; 2 Chronicles 16:9; Job 28:24; 34:21; Psalm 33:13–14; 44:21; 94:9; 139:7–12; Proverbs 15:3; Jeremiah 23:24; 32:19; Amos 9:2–3; Acts 17:27–28; Psalm 123:1; 1 Kings 8:30–39, 43, 49; Matthew 6:9; 1 Timothy 6:15–16; 1:17).

II.—That Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, begotten of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit, without the intervention of man, and afterwards anointed with the same spirit, without measure, at his baptism (Matthew 1:23; 1 Timothy 3:16; Acts 2:22–24, 36; Matthew 1:18–25; Luke 1:26–35; Galatians 4:4; Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 3:16–17; Isaiah 11:2; 42:1; 61:1; John 3:34; 7:16; 8:26–28; 14:10–24).

III.—That the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth on the earth was necessitated by the position and state into which the human race had been brought by the circumstances connected with the first man (1 Corinthians 15:21–22; Romans 5:12–19; Genesis 3:19; 2 Corinthians 5:19–21).

IV.—That the first man was Adam, whom God created out of the dust of the ground as a living soul, or natural body of life, “very good” in kind and condition, and placed him under a law through which the continuance of life was contingent on obedience (Genesis 2:7; 18:27; Job 4:19; 33:6; 1 Corinthians 15:46–49; Genesis 2:17).

V.—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 all his posterity (Genesis

3:15–19, 22–23; 2 Corinthians 1:9; Romans 7:24; 2 Corinthians 5:2–4; Romans 7:18–23; Galatians 5:16–17; Romans 6:12; 7:21; John 3:6; Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:22; Psalm 51:5; Job 14:4).

VI.—That God, in His kindness, conceived a plan of restoration which, without setting aside His just and necessary law of sin and death, should ultimately rescue the race from destruction, and people the earth with sinless immortals (Revelation 21:4; John 3:16; 2 Timothy 1:10; 1 John 2:25; 2 Timothy 1:1; Titus 1:2; Romans 3:26; John 1:29).

VII.—That He inaugurated this plan by making promises to Adam, Abraham, and David, and afterwards elaborated it in greater detail through the prophets (Genesis 3:15; 21:18; Psalm 89:34–37; 33:5; Hosea 13:14; Isaiah 25:7–9; 51:1–8; Jeremiah 23:5).

VIII.—That these promises had reference to Jesus Christ, who was to be raised up in the condemned line of Abraham and David, and who, though wearing their condemned nature, was to obtain a title to resurrection by perfect obedience, and, by dying, abrogate the law of condemnation for himself and all who should believe and obey him (1 Corinthians 15:45; Hebrews 2:14–16; Romans 1:3; Hebrews 5:8–9, 1:9; Romans 5:19–21; Galatians 4:4–5; Romans 8:3–4; Hebrews 2:15; 9:26; Galatians 1:4; Hebrews 7:27; 5:3–7; 2:17; Romans 6:10; 6:9; Acts 13:34–37; Revelation 1:18; John 5:21–22, 26–27; 14:3; Revelation 2:7; 3:21; Matthew 25:21; Hebrews 5:9; Mark 16:16; Acts 13:38–39; Romans 3:22; Psalm 2:6–9; Daniel 7:13–14; Revelation 11:15; Jeremiah 23:5; Zechariah 14:9; Ephesians 1:9–10).

IX.—That it was this mission that necessitated the miraculous begetting of Christ of a human mother, enabling him to bear our condemnation, and, at the same time, to be a sinless bearer thereof, and, therefore, one who could rise after suffering the death required by the righteousness of God (Matthew 1:18–25; Luke 1:26–35; Galatians 4:4; Isaiah 7:14; Romans 1:3–4; 8:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 2:14–17; 4:15).

X.—That being so begotten of God, and inhabited and used by God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was Emmanuel, God with us, God manifest in the flesh—yet was, during his natural life, of like nature with mortal man, being made of a woman, of the house and lineage of David, and therefore a sufferer, in the days of his flesh, from all the effects that came by Adam's transgression, including the death that passed upon all men, which he shared by partaking of their physical nature (Matthew 1:23; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 2:14; Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 2:17).

XI.—That the message he delivered from God to his kinsmen the Jews, was a call to repentance from every evil work, the assertion of his divine sonship and Jewish kingship; and the proclamation of the glad tidings that God would restore their kingdom through him, and accomplish all things written in the prophets (Mark 1:15; Matthew 4:17; 5:20–48; John 10:36; 9:35; 11:27; 19:21; 1:49; Matthew 27:11–42; John 10:24–25; Matthew 19:28; 21:42–43; 23:38–39; 25:14–46; Luke 4:43; 13:27–30; 19:11–27; 22:28–30; Matthew 5:17; Luke 24:44).

XII.—That for delivering this message, he was put to death by the Jews and Romans, who were, however, but instruments in the hands of God, for the doing of that which He had determined before to be done—viz., the condemnation of sin in the flesh, through the offering of the body of Jesus once for all, as a propitiation to declare the

righteousness of God, as a basis for the remission of sins. All who approach God through this crucified, but risen, representative of Adam's disobedient race, are forgiven. Therefore, by a figure, his blood cleanseth from sin (Luke 19:47; 20:1–16; John 11:45–53; Acts 10:38–39; 13:26–29; 4:27–28; Romans 8:3; Hebrews 10:10; Romans 3:25; 15:8; Galatians 3:21–22; 2:21; 4:4–5; Hebrews 9:15; Luke 22:20; 24:26, 46–47; Matthew 26:28).

XIII.—That on the third day, God raised him from the dead, and exalted him to the heavens as priestly mediator between God and man, in the process of gathering from among them a people who should be saved by the belief and obedience of the truth (1 Corinthians 15:4; Acts 10:40; 13:30–37; 2:24–27).

XIV.—That he is a priest over his own house only, and does not intercede for the world, or for professors who are abandoned to disobedience. That he makes intercession for his erring brethren, if they confess and forsake their sins (Luke 24:51; Ephesians 1:20; Acts 5:31; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 8:1; Acts 15:14; 13:39; Hebrews 4:14–15; John 17:9; Hebrews 10:26; 1 John 2:1; Proverbs 28:13).

XV.—That he sent forth apostles to proclaim salvation through him, as the only name given under heaven whereby men may be saved (Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:19–20; Luke 24:46–48; Acts 26:16–18; 4:12).

XVI.—That the way to obtain this salvation is to believe the gospel they preached, and to take on the name and service of Christ, by being thereupon immersed in water, and continuing patiently in the observance of all things he has commanded, none being recognised as his friends except those who do what he has commanded (Acts 13:48; 16:31; Mark 16:16; Romans 1:16; Acts 2:38, 41; 10:47; 8:12; Galatians 3:27–29; Romans 6:3–5; 2:7; Matthew 28:20; John 15:14).

XVII.—That the gospel consists of “the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8:12; 19:8, 10, 20; 28:30, 31).

XVIII.—That *the things of the Kingdom of God* are the facts testified concerning the Kingdom of God in the writings of the prophets and apostles, and definable as in the next twelve paragraphs.

XIX.—That God will set up a kingdom in the earth, which will overthrow all others, and change them into “the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ” (Daniel 2:44; 7:13, 14; Revelation 11:15; Isaiah 32:1, 6; 2:3, 4; 11:9, 10).

XX.—That for this purpose God will send Jesus Christ personally to the earth at the close of the times of the Gentiles (Acts 3:20, 21; Psalm 102:16, 21; 2 Timothy 4:1; Acts 1:9, 11; Daniel 7:13).

XXI.—That the kingdom which he will establish will be the kingdom of Israel restored, in the territory it formerly occupied, viz., the land bequeathed for an everlasting possession to Abraham and his seed (the Christ) by covenant (Micah 4:6–8; Amos 9:11, 15; Ezekiel 37:21, 22; Jeremiah 23:3, 8; Genesis 13:14, 17; Hebrews 11:8, 9; Galatians 3:16; Leviticus 26:42; Micah 7:20).

XXII.—That this restoration of the kingdom again to Israel will involve the ingathering of God’s chosen but scattered nation, the Jews; their reinstatement in the land of their fathers, when it shall have been reclaimed from “the desolation of many generations”; the building again of Jerusalem to become “the throne of the Lord” and the metropolis of the whole earth (Isaiah 11:12; Jeremiah 31:10; Zechariah 8:8; Ezekiel 36:34, 36; Isaiah 51:3; 60:15; 62:4; Jeremiah 3:17; Micah 4:7, 8; Joel 3:17; Isaiah 24:23).

XXIII.—That the governing body of the kingdom so established will be the brethren of Christ, of all generations, developed by resurrection and change, and constituting, with Christ as their head, the collective “seed of Abraham”, in whom all nations will be blessed, and comprising “Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets”, and all in their age of like faithfulness (Daniel 12:2; Luke 13:28; Revelation 11:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:15–17; John 5:28, 29; 6:39, 40; Luke 14:14; Matthew 24:34, 46).

XXIV.—That at the appearing of Christ prior to the establishment of the Kingdom, the responsible (namely, those who know the revealed will of God, and have been called upon to submit to it), dead and living—obedient and disobedient—will be summoned before his judgement seat “to be judged according to their works”; and “receive in body according to what they have done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Timothy 4:1; Romans 2:5, 6, 16; 14:10–12; 1 Corinthians 4:5; Revelation 11:18).

XXV.—That the unfaithful will be consigned to shame and “the second death”, and the faithful, invested with immortality, and exalted to reign with Jesus as joint heirs of the kingdom, co-possessors of the earth, and joint administrators of God’s authority among men in everything (Matthew 7:26; 8:12; 25:20; Daniel 12:2; Galatians 6:8; 5:21; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; Hebrews 10:26–28; 2 Peter 2:12; Revelation 21:8; Malachi 4:1; Psalm 37:30–38; Proverbs 10:25–29; 1 Corinthians 15:51–55; 2 Corinthians 5:1–4; James 1:12; Romans 2:7; John 10:28; Matthew 5:5; Psalm 37:9, 22, 29; Revelation 5:9; Daniel 7:27; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; 2 Peter 1:11; Revelation 3:21; 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 5:10; Psalm 49:7–9; Luke 22:29–30).

XXVI.—That the Kingdom of God, thus constituted, will continue a thousand years, during which sin and death will continue among the earth’s subject inhabitants, though in a much milder degree than now (Revelation 20:4–8; 12:15; Isaiah 65:20; Ezekiel 44:22, 25; 1 Corinthians 15:24, 28).

XXVII.—That a law will be established which shall go forth to the nations for their “instruction in righteousness”, resulting in the abolition of war to the ends of the earth; and the “filling of the earth with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea” (Micah 4:2; Isaiah 42:4; 11:1–5; 2:4; Habakkuk 2:14).

XXVIII.—That the mission of the Kingdom will be to subdue all enemies, and finally death itself, by opening up the way of life to the nations, which they will enter by faith, during the thousand years, and (in reality) at their close (1 Corinthians 15:25, 26; Revelation 21:4; 20:12–15; Isaiah 25:6–8).

XXIX.—That at the close of the thousand years, there will be a general resurrection and judgement, resulting in the final extinction of the wicked, and the immortalisation of those who shall have established their title (under the grace of God) to eternal life during the thousand years (Revelation 20:11–15; 1 Corinthians 15:24).

XXX.—That the government will then be delivered up by Jesus to the Father, who will manifest Himself as the “all-in-all”; sin and death having been taken out of the way, and the race completely restored to the friendship of the Deity (1 Corinthians 15:28).

DOCTRINES TO BE REJECTED

1. That the Bible is only partly the work of inspiration—or if wholly so, contains errors which inspiration has allowed.
2. That God is three persons.
3. That the Son of God was co-eternal with the Father.
4. That Christ was born with a “free life”.
5. That Christ’s nature was immaculate.
6. That the Holy Spirit is a person distinct from the Father.
7. That man has an immortal soul.
8. That man consciously exists in death.
9. That the wicked will suffer eternal torture in hell.
10. That the righteous will ascend to the kingdoms beyond the skies when they die.
11. That the devil is a supernatural personal being.
12. That the Kingdom of God is “the church”
13. That the Gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ merely.
14. That Christ will not come till the close of the thousand years.
15. That the tribunal of Christ, when he comes, is not for the judgement of saints, but merely to divide among them different degrees of reward.
16. That the resurrection is confined to the faithful.
17. That the dead rise in an immortal state.
18. That the subject-nations of the thousand years are immortal.
19. That the law of Moses is binding on believers of the Gospel.
20. That the observance of Sunday is a matter of duty.
21. That baby-sprinkling is a doctrine of Scripture.
22. That “heathens”, idiots, pagans, and very young children will be saved.
23. That man can be saved by morality or sincerity, without the Gospel.

24. That the Gospel alone will save, without the obedience of Christ's commandments.
25. That a man cannot believe without possessing the Spirit of God.
26. That men are predestined to salvation unconditionally.
27. That there is no sin in the flesh.
28. That Joseph was the actual father of Jesus.
29. That the earth will be destroyed.
30. That baptism is not necessary to salvation.
31. That a knowledge of the truth is not necessary to make baptism valid.
32. That some meats are to be refused on the score of uncleanness.
33. That the English are the ten tribes of Israel, whose prosperity is a fulfilment of the promises made concerning Ephraim.
34. That marriage with an unbeliever is lawful.
35. That we are at liberty to serve in the army, or as police constables, take part in politics, or recover debts by legal coercion.

THE COMMANDMENTS OF CHRIST

1. Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you (Matthew 5:44).
2. Resist not evil: if a man smite thee on one cheek, turn to him the other also (Matthew 5:39, 40).
3. Avenge not yourselves; rather give place unto wrath; and suffer yourselves to be defrauded (Romans 12:18–19; 1 Corinthians 6:7).
4. If a man take away thy goods, ask them not again (Luke 6:29–30).
5. Agree with your adversary quickly, submitting even to wrong for the sake of peace (Matthew 5:25; 1 Corinthians 6:7).
6. Labour not to be rich; be ready to every good work, give to those who ask; relieve the afflicted (1 Timothy 6:8; Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:16; James 1:27).
7. Do not your alms before men: let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth (Matthew 6:1–4).
8. Recompense to no man evil for evil: overcome evil with good (Romans 12:17).
9. Bless them that curse you; let no cursing come out of your mouth (Matthew 5:44; Romans 12:14).
10. Render not evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing (1 Peter 3:9).
11. Pray for them that despitefully use you and afflict you (Matthew 5:44).
12. Grudge not; judge not; complain not; condemn not (James 5:9; Matthew 7:1).
13. Put away anger, wrath, bitterness, and all evil speaking (Ephesians 4:31; 1 Peter 2:1).
14. Confess your faults one to another (James 5:16).
15. Be not conformed to this world: love not the world (Romans 12:2; 1 John 2:15).
16. Deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts. If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off (Titus 2:12; Matthew 5:30).
17. Servants, be faithful, even to bad masters (Ephesians 6:5–8).
18. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate (Romans 12:16).
19. Owe no man anything (Romans 13:7–8).

20. In case of sin (known or heard of), speak not of it to others, but tell the offending brother of the matter between thee and him alone, with a view to recovery (Matthew 18:15; Galatians 6:1).
21. Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart (Matthew 22:37).
22. Pray always; pray with brevity and simplicity; pray secretly (Luke 18:1; Matthew 6:7).
23. In everything give thanks to God and recognise Him in all your ways (Ephesians 5:20; Proverbs 3:6).
24. As ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them (Matthew 7:12).
25. Take Christ for an example and follow in his steps (1 Peter 2:21).
26. Let Christ dwell in your heart by faith (Ephesians 3:17).
27. Esteem Christ more highly than all earthly things: yea, than your own life (Luke 14:26).
28. Confess Christ freely before men (Luke 12:8).
29. Beware lest the care of life or the allurements of pleasure weaken his hold on your heart (Luke 21:34–36; Matthew 24:44).
30. Love thy neighbour as thyself (Matthew 22:39).
31. Exercise lordship over no one (Matthew 23:10–12).
32. Seek not your own welfare only, nor bear your own burdens merely, but have regard to those of others (Philippians 2:4; Galatians 6:2).
33. Let your light shine before men: hold forth the word of life. Do good to all men as ye have opportunity (Matthew 5:16; Philippians 2:16; Galatians 6:10).
34. Be blameless and harmless, as the sons of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (Philippians 2:15).
35. Be gentle, meek, kind-hearted, compassionate, merciful, forgiving (2 Timothy 2:24; Titus 2:2; Ephesians 4:32).
36. Be sober, grave, sincere, temperate (Philippians 4:5; 1 Peter 1:13; 5:8).
37. Speak the truth every man with his neighbour: put away all lying (Ephesians 4:25).
38. Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as unto the Lord, and not unto men (Colossians 3:23).

39. Be watchful, vigilant, brave, joyful, courteous and manly (1 Corinthians 16:13; Philippians 4:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:6–10).
40. Be clothed with humility: be patient toward all (Colossians 3:12; Romans 12:12).
41. Follow peace with all men (Hebrews 12:14).
42. Sympathise in the joys and sorrows of others (Romans 12:15).
43. Follow after whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseful (Philippians 4:8).
44. Refrain utterly from adultery, fornication, uncleanness, drunkenness, covetousness, wrath, strife, sedition, hatred, emulation, boasting, vainglory, envy, jesting, and foolish talking (Ephesians 5:3–4).
45. Whatever you do, consider the effect of your action on the honour of God's Name among men. Do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31; 3:17).
46. Reckon yourselves dead to all manner of sin. Henceforth live not to yourselves, but to him who died for you, and rose again (Romans 6:11; 2 Corinthians 5:15).
47. Be zealous of good works, always abounding in the work of the Lord, wearying not in well-doing (Titus 2:14; Galatians 6:9).
48. Speak evil of no man (Titus 3:2).
49. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly (Colossians 3:16).
50. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt (Colossians 3:8; 4:6).
51. Obey rulers; submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake (Titus 3:1).
52. Be holy in all manner of conversation (1 Peter 1:15–16).
53. Give no occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully (1 Timothy 5:14).¹³

¹³Robert Roberts: *The Ecclesial Guide*. The Christadelphian, 1989; 2002, S. 41