



Peter Hemingray  
and Peter Bilello

A study in the second  
section of the Birmingham  
Amended Statement of  
Faith

# Doctrines to Be Rejected

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Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith

Peter Hemingray and  
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*The original statements from The Ecclesial Guide,  
written by Robert Roberts in 1883*

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## Doctrines to Be Rejected

Peter Hemingray and Peter Bilello

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## CHAPTER FORTY-ONE APPENDIX 2: FABLES TO BE REFUSED OF 1868

## Chapter One

### Why the Series

#### Introduction

This is a systematic study of the section of our communities' Statement of Faith known as "Doctrines to be Rejected." By "our community" we mean the Christadelphians, and more particularly the largest group by far, which is commonly known as "Central" or, in North America "Amended" Christadelphians.

In the most common Statement of Faith, there are three sections: "Truth to be Received", "Doctrines to be Rejected", and "Commandments of Christ." Most of the focus of the discussions and writings we have concerning this Statement of Faith, or the BASF ("Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith") as it is normally referred to, concerns the first of these areas. There are quite a few books on the topic, and even the major one that is entitled *Studies in the Statement Faith*<sup>1</sup> only devotes one chapter out of 12 to doctrines to be rejected, and it is only a summary. In fact, there does not appear to be any systematic consideration in our literature of the individual doctrines, much less of their origin and development. In this book, we hope to remedy this deficiency, and put this area of our statement of faith in its true context. We will emphasize the importance of the doctrines, especially as they relate to our present-day situations. It must be admitted some of the

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<sup>1</sup> *Studies in the Statement of Faith*, published by *The Christadelphian Magazine and Publishing Association*

topics covered have, perhaps, little direct relevance to our challenges in our days, but the importance of this section and concerns and areas covered are still relevant.

Our approach will be the following:

Consider the history and development of the doctrines to be found in our current Statement of Faith

1. Present an overview of the main areas covered, and identify those areas that extend, amplify, or illustrate those doctrines covered in the area of “Truth to be Received.”
2. Present the “Doctrines to be Rejected,” in their normal numerical sequence.
3. Emphasize their relevance to our faith and our life as we search to discover the Truth as revealed in the Bible, both as relevant in our common walk and our struggle against the false doctrines common around us.

The origin of this series, as can be seen by the by-line, is twofold:

1. A long interest in the current and past statements of faith by the first name author
2. A study extending over many weeks, at the Adult Sunday School at the Ann Arbor Ecclesia, Michigan by the second author.

We leave it to our readers to discover which author was involved in which area!

## **Why the Study**

The significance and importance of our Statement of Faith is undoubted. Our community is largely bound together by the Biblical Principles that are to be found in the Bible, of which the BASF is regarded as a true account. It is not necessarily



## Doctrines to Be Rejected

the only true account: many ecclesias have adopted their own “Statement of Faith”, but all acknowledge the validity of the BASF. In areas of dispute, we tend to strongly emphasize a few phrases or sections. Many of these phrases are to be found in these doctrines to be rejected, for example:

- ☐ That the dead rise in an immortal state
- ☐ That we are at liberty to serve in the army, or as police constables
- ☐ That marriage with an unbeliever is lawful

These and many more were added to clarify the position of the community in times of dispute. And in fact, many of these additional doctrines help clarify the doctrines held by our community in several areas that are still to this day the subject of internal controversy, although often overlooked, ignored, or explained away.

## Objections to the Studying Doctrines to Be Rejected

There have been several objections raised against the current listing of “doctrines to be rejected” from inside our community, for example:

- ☐ It is suggested that the list grew up in an age when the community was growing and evolving significantly, so many of the doctrines to be rejected are not current today, or are worded in ways that are not understood or are offensive to the modern ear.
- ☐ Clauses utilizing language whose meaning has not changed, but that would not be used today because of certain sensibilities or associations should also not be discarded if they relate to important truths.
- ☐ 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, so why still use them?

## Reasons for Study

There are two reasons why the situation is somewhat different today.

- In the days the BASF was being developed, during the late nineteenth century in England, many newly baptized members were converts from one of the sects of “Christendom” and it was necessary to highlight the errors of any former denomination they might have belonged to.
- Also, there was at that time much greater knowledge of the scriptures and a wider acceptance that they should form the basis for belief.

However, we believe their inclusion helps clarify our position in many areas, and should not be ignored just because some situations and areas of controversy are no longer current.

In an ideal world, perhaps it would be best to re-write some of the clauses, and perhaps indeed re-cast the whole document in modern language. But there is absolutely no prospect of this happening, and no mechanism extant. When it was written, and modified, it was almost entirely drafted<sup>2</sup> by Robert Roberts, the dominant figure in the community and the acknowledged leader of both the largest segment and the largest ecclesia by far at the time. No such leader or ecclesia exists today.

## Further Study

It was the initial intention to list currently available Christadelphian pamphlets for each section, but many topics

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<sup>2</sup> There were two sections drafted by the Arranging Brethren of the Birmingham ecclesia, in particular the amendment to clause 24 and a minor change to the last of the doctrines to be rejected.

## Doctrines to Be Rejected

do not have ones that are readily available, and sometimes lack any at all. So, we would refer those interested to two books:

- *What the Bible Teaches* by Harry Tennant.
- *Bible Basics* by Duncan Heaster.

As to pamphlets, if you type in “Christadelphian Pamphlets” you should get to a page of [Christadelphia.org](http://Christadelphia.org) that has a good selection of Christadelphian pamphlets, most for free download. They cover many of the topics dealt with here, but not all.

## Chapter Two

### The Beginning: A Synopsis

The development of the beliefs of John Thomas took place over a long period, and until he wrote the articles resulting in *Phanerosis* in 1867, his ideas about God had not been finalized. But his mature wisdom is exemplified in his “synopsis” below.

This “Synopsis of the One Faith” was written by John Thomas, the true founder of the Christadelphian community, in 1867. It included one section on “As Believed by Christadelphians”, and a second section entitled “As perverted by the Apostacy”, both of which are as reproduced here.

#### The Second Section

##### (II) AS PERVERTED BY THE APOSTACY.

1. A triply-compounded God, without body and parts, defined as “Father Son and Holy Ghost.”
2. Jesus Christ, the Son, yet “very God,” incarnated and killed, to appease the wrath of that part of the triune God that remained unincarnate.
3. The Devil, a fallen but immortal archangel, the enemy of mankind, and great antagonist of the Deity; some think he is mortal and to be finally destroyed.

## A SYNOPSIS

OF

# The One Faith Taught by the Apostles.

(I.)

### AS BELIEVED BY THE CHRISTADELPHIANS.\*

One God, inhabiting light unapproachable, yet everywhere present by universal spirit, (irradiant from himself,) revealed to Israel and manifested in  
Jesus of Nazareth, a mortal man, who was born of Mary, by the Holy Spirit, and thus constituted the Son of God; he was  
cut to death as a "sin offering;"  
Exalted to the heavens "until the restitution of all things," thus confirming  
The Promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob  
The Covenant made with David, which have realisation in  
The Second (personal) Coming of Jesus to the earth;  
The Resurrection and Judgment of the whole household of God (just and unjust);  
The bestowal of Immortality on those who are found worthy, and appointed rulers in his kingdom;  
The Condemnation of the unworthy to the second death; the enthronement of Jesus Christ, the King of the Jews, and of the whole earth; the establishment of  
The Kingdom of God (the kingdom of Israel), in the Holy Land; involving  
The Restoration of the Jews from dispersion; the  
Destruction of the Devil and his Works, scripturally understood as sin and the lusts of the flesh, in every mode of manifestation, and the  
Subjugation of all kingdoms and republics on earth.  
The kingdom, in its mediatorial phase, will last one thousand years, and will destroy "all enemies," including death itself.  
The human race is essentially mortal, under the law of sin and death.  
Jesus, the Christ, through death and resurrection, brought immortality to light.  
salvation is attainable only by the belief of the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ; and  
Baptism (i.e., immersion) in water, for a union with that name.  
is necessary to understand the Old Testament in order to a correct New Testament faith.

(II.)

### AS PERVERTED BY THE APOSTACY.

A triply-compounded God, without body and parts, defined as "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."  
Jesus Christ, the Son, yet "very God," incarnated and killed, to appease the wrath of that part of the triune God that remained unincarnate.  
The Devil, a fallen but immortal archangel, the enemy of mankind, and great antagonist of the Deity; some think he is mortal and to be finally destroyed.  
Man, an Immortal ghost, tabernacling in an animal body.  
HUMAN DESTINY:  
The translation of righteous immortal ghosts or souls, (leaving the body in the article of death,) to kingdoms beyond the bounds of space. The descent of the wicked immortal ghosts or souls at the same crisis of experience, to a hell of fire and brimstone, to be tormented by devils throughout eternity.  
Face-sprinkling in infancy, a means of salvation  
Infants and idiots saved, whether sprinkled or not  
Salvation achieved by good works.  
Baptism (immersion) may be practiced, but is not essential to salvation.  
The heathen will be saved without believing the gospel  
Purgatory, a state or place for the purgation of souls.  
The resurrection, a re-uniting of the body and soul, in order that the souls of the wicked may be brought up from hell, and the souls of the righteous from heaven, for judgment  
The resurrected bodies of the righteous, spiritual, while the bodies of the rejected are fleshly bodies, in the judgment.  
The unjust (according to others) not subject to a resurrection.  
The Kingdom of God, the "Church."  
The kingdom, a state of bliss above the stars.  
Sabbath observance required of Gentiles.  
"Conversion," a change effected by the Holy Spirit, without a knowledge of the Scriptures.  
The one faith not necessary to salvation; any faith, with morality, being saving.  
"Conversion of the world" by the preaching of the gospel.  
The Old Testament superseded by the New Testament.

\* CHRISTADELPHIANS, a name derived from the Greek words, *Christou adelphoi* (brethren of Christ).—Col. i. 2; Heb. ii. 11—and adopted by those acknowledging it to distinguish them from the masses of Christendom. It is true of them what the Jewish elders in Rome said to Paul of the Christians of that time: "*Concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against.*"—(see Acts xxviii. 22.) They repudiate all the creeds of Christendom, as "*profane and old wives' fables.*"—(1 Tim. iv. 7.)

4. Man, an immortal ghost, tabernacling in an animal body.
5. HUMAN DESTINY: The translation of righteous Immortal ghosts or souls, (leaving the body in the article of death,) to kingdoms beyond the bounds of space. The descent of the wicked immortal ghosts or souls at the same crisis of experience, to a hell of fire

and brimstone, to be tormented by devils throughout eternity.

6. Face-Sprinkling in Infancy, a means of salvation
7. Infants and Idiots saved, whether sprinkled or not
8. Salvation achieved by good works.
9. Baptism (Immersion) may be practiced, but is not essential to salvation.
10. The heathen will be saved without believing the gospel
11. Purgatory, a state or place for the purgation of souls.
12. The resurrection, a re-uniting of the body and soul, in order that the souls of the wicked may be brought up from hell, and the souls of the righteous from heaven for judgment.
13. The resurrected bodies of the righteous, spiritual, while the bodies of the rejected are fleshly bodies, in the judgment.
14. The unjust (according to others) not subject to a resurrection.
15. The kingdom of God, the "Church."
16. The kingdom, a state of bliss above the stars.
17. Sabbath observance required of Gentiles.
18. "Conversion," a change affected by the Holy Spirit, without a knowledge of the Scriptures.
19. The one faith not necessary to salvation; any faith, with morality, being saving.
20. Conversion of the world, by the preaching of the gospel.
21. The Old Testament superseded by the New

## Doctrines to Be Rejected

Testament.

## Chapter Three

### The Necessity

#### Introduction

Above, we considered some of the objections to the inclusion of the “Doctrines to be Rejected,” and the reasons for their continuing use. It must be emphasized that, indeed, these are a vital part of the glue that binds are community together by defining, in many areas, doctrines and teachings that are no part of our beliefs, and must specifically be excluded. They also include several commandments that echo some of the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament: Thou Shalt Not: (For example, join the armed forces).

There are three sections of our Statement of Faith: (1) The Truth to be received, (2) the doctrines to be rejected, and (3) the Commandments of Christ. Together, these three parts form “A Statement of Faith Forming the basis of Our Fellowship.” As it is this Statement of Faith that holds the Christadelphian Community together, the three parts are inseparable. There are reasons as well as Scriptural Precedents for a set of negative as well as positive statements:<sup>3</sup>

- The Ten Commandments summarizing the Law God gave to His people Israel is possibly the best illustration to be found anywhere in scripture. The

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<sup>3</sup> This section, and the table below, is based upon the *Studies in the Statement of Faith*, Chapter 11, published by *The Christadelphian Magazine and Publishing Association*



last five commandments are all voiced as negative statements, 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.*”

- After the Law had been given through Moses to the infant nation, the implications of obedience were also emphasized. 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).

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” (Gal 5:19–25).

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 summarizing 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” (Rev 21:7, 8).

### **Relationship to “Truth to be Received”**

We will, in the table below, identify which of the clauses in the first section of the BASF, “The truth to be believe” as associated with and amplify these clauses. Note the ten have no associated clause.

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	—

## Doctrines to Be Rejected

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 doctrine of the Scripture	—
22.	That “heathens”, idiots, pagans, and	XVI

	very young children will be saved	
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	—

This list shows that some crucial teachings, necessary for belief and fellowship, only occur explicitly in the list of Doctrines to be Rejected. And just because the doctrine refers to a clause in the “Truth to be Received”, does not mean it merely repeats it. For example, we reject in #17 that “That the dead rise in an immortal state”, but the clause 24, the “amended” clause says “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’.” It does not explicitly cover the state of the resurrected, and this was a subject of controversy and division in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and still has echoes today as will be covered when we discuss it in due course.

Strong objections have also been made to the somewhat archaic language, particularly to clause #22, “That ‘heathens’, idiots, pagans, and very young children will be saved.” We will cover this topic in its turn, but we must realize that this simply reflects the belief we have, that an understanding of the Gospel message is essential to salvation. Those totally incapable of rational thought (“idiots” in the language of #22) are, of course, incapable of understanding: it should be noted that this wording does not restrict the Father’s power to save whomsoever He chooses.<sup>4</sup>

Of course, it is not surprising the several of the doctrines to be rejected reflect controversies and disputes of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and are of little concern in the 21<sup>st</sup>. For example, #28, concerning Josephism, troubles few, and British Israelitism, #33, has few present-day adherents.

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<sup>4</sup> This phrase is quoted from some of the voluminous discussion regarding this topic, here as in *The Christadelphian*, 2009, p445.

The way that this Birmingham Statement of Faith was generally adopted reflects the fact that until the 1960s the Birmingham ecclesia in the center of Birmingham was both by far the largest ecclesia in the world and the home ecclesia of the editor of the main magazine of the denomination, *The Christadelphian*: even so, it was not until around 1900 that its statement saw general acceptance, even as the then editor, C.C. Walker, emphasized it was not the “Christadelphian” statement of faith, only the one in use by the Birmingham ecclesia.

There have been many suggestions as to additions that should be made to the doctrines to be rejected over the years, and many ecclesias have added ones to their own statements, but lacking any central authority it seems unlikely that any changes will be made.

It must be stressed that although the BASF is regarded as common denominator, a common set of beliefs among Christadelphians, it has never been called “The Christadelphian Statement of Faith,” as required as THE ecclesial statement. In 1903, C.C. Walker wrote:

“THE CHRISTADELPHIAN STATEMENT OF FAITH”

Brother R. W. asks us to countenance the movement at the antipodes to “give up the word ‘Birmingham’ and substitute ‘Christadelphian.’” Our answer must be as before: We have no authority so to do. Neither has anyone else. The Birmingham ecclesia can only speak for itself; and it is so with every other ecclesia... The principle of ecclesial independence must be jealously guarded, and it is the beginnings of things that have to be watched. There is no desire on the part of the Birmingham ecclesia to impose its form of words on any ecclesia; but there can be no valid objection to any ecclesia adopting it if it sees fit.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *The Christadelphian*, 1903, p. 412

## Chapter Four

### The History

#### Development by Robert Roberts

It is almost entirely to Robert Roberts we owe the development of our Statement of Faith in its present form, with its associated Doctrines to be Rejected and Commandments of Christ. In this, he largely followed the efforts of his mentor John Thomas, and as we saw in the first chapter, Thomas had published a “synopsis” in 1867 divided into two parts, “truth to be believed” and “fables to be refused.” It was not his first such statement: as was shown in the book on John Thomas<sup>6</sup>, he wrote a series of statements of his beliefs, from 1845 to 1870: the one in 1867 is the most complete summary.

It must be stressed that the Birmingham Statement of Faith as originally conceived was intended for the use of the Birmingham ecclesia, and that ecclesia only. It was many years before it began to be adopted by other ecclesias, and in fact other ecclesias had published earlier ones<sup>7</sup>.

The first recorded Christadelphian<sup>8</sup> “Statement of Faith” for the Birmingham in England, was published in 1868, as shown in notes in *The Christadelphian*. This was re-issued annually,

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<sup>6</sup> “JOHN THOMAS, His Friends and His Faith” by Peter Hemingray, *The Tidings*, 2003

<sup>7</sup> One David Brown had written one for the London Ecclesia in 1867

<sup>8</sup> The name was invented by John Thomas in 1864.

bound with a register of members and constitution. Many survive, including the one issued in 1868, along with a few issued as separate “Statements of Faith.” From these, it is clear is that the statement was only slightly modified, except in format, until 1883, apart from in 1873 as discussed below. There was a complete rewrite in 1883, when it was re-issued as part of *The Ecclesial Guide*. It is very noticeable that his “Doctrines to be Rejected” were very much compressed and simplified, without changing their essence. And, as with the “Truth to be received”, there were no biblical references given in 1883.

In 1886, it was revamped again:

- ☐ The “foundation” clause was added, after controversy the year before about partial inspiration.
- ☐ Biblical references were added to the 1883 version both to the “Truth to be accepted” and to the “Commandments of Christ”, where none were included before. However, none were added to “Doctrines to be Rejected.” Note that both sections in prior statements of the Birmingham Ecclesias prior to 1883 had included references, but there was not a section on the Commandments of Christ prior to 1883.
- ☐ Several changes were also made to the “Doctrines to be rejected”, as discussed below.

The subsequent changes were made due to the several more controversies that troubled the community over this time, although the major structural change in 1883 was for a wider audience than just the Birmingham Ecclesia. Until the last two changes, in 1898 and 1919, the author in every case was Robert Roberts. It has not been changed since 1919.

We will deal with some of the modifications, the reasons behind them, and their implications for today, as we deal with the individual statements in their turn. But the changes can be



## Doctrines to Be Rejected

considered in broad-brush terms. Specifically:

- Arguments over the nature of Christ were instigated by Edward Turney in 1873, and these caused a controversy that has had ripples down to this day, and caused a major change to “Fables to be Refused.”
- The “partial inspiration” dispute that was initiated by Robert Ashcroft in 1885 also caused the introduction of the “foundation” clause to the statement of faith, and a corresponding clause added in the doctrines to be rejected.
- Another discussion about the atonement, but customarily related to the question of judgment responsibility, was initiated by John James Andrew in 1894. This caused a modification to the statement of faith in 1898, after the death of Robert Roberts, but there was no resultant change to the “doctrines to be rejected.”<sup>9</sup>
- There were several additions to the “Doctrines to be Rejected” in 1886, after the “Partial Inspiration” dispute above. They increased the number to 35 from 31, and eliminated one: none of these additions had any correspondence to those of John Thomas. The last change in 1919 was a modification of #35, when phrase “or as police constables” was passed in a failed attempt to head off what became the “Berean” division. Note that one of the clauses “5a. - That Christ was of a different nature from other men” was dropped in 1886.

## Current Doctrines to be Refused

1. That the Bible is only partly the work of

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<sup>9</sup> Many Christadelphians in North America rejected this amendment, following the lead of Thomas Williams. The resultant division survives.

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.

## Doctrines to Be Rejected

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.

Note: “or as police constables” was added in 1919

## Correspondence to “Fables to be Refused”

The table below compares the current “Doctrines to be rejected” to the “Fables to be Refused” as written by Robert Roberts from 1868 to 1879. The only significant change made over this period was in 1873, when number 18 was drastically overhauled. This is discussed below.

Fables to Be Refused (1868 – 1879)	Doctrines to be Rejected as 1883, in The Ecclesial Guide of that date. In Bold added in 1886: item 5a dropped
	1.—That the Bible is only partly the work of inspiration—or if wholly so, contains errors which inspiration has allowed.
<b>17.</b> The Trinity.—That God is not three, but One, out of whom are all things—even the Spirit and the Son.	2.—That God is three persons.
<b>18.</b> THE ETERNAL SONSHIP OF CHRIST,—That the Son of God was not co-eternal with the Father, but is the result of the Father’s manifestation in the flesh, by operation of Holy Spirit upon Mary, in the manner defined in par.	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.
	5a. - That Christ was of a different nature from other men

## Doctrines to Be Rejected

<p><b>19. THE THIRD PERSON IN THE GODHEAD.</b>—That the Holy Spirit is not a person, but the vehicular effluence of the Father, filling all space, and forming the medium and instrument of all the Father's operations.</p>	<p>6.—That the Holy Spirit is a person distinct from the Father.</p>
<p><b>20. THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.</b>—That the immortality of the soul is a pagan fiction, subversive of the first law of the Deity's moral government, viz. that the wages of sin is death.</p>	<p>7.—That man has an immortal soul.</p>
<p><b>21. THE THEORY OF DISEMBODIED EXISTENCE.</b>—That there is no existence in death, conscious or unconscious, and that the popular belief in heaven and hell is a delusion. Therefore</p>	<p>8.—That man consciously exists in death.</p>
<p>A. That the wicked will not suffer eternal torture, but will be engulfed in total destruction after resurrection.</p>	<p>9.—That the wicked will suffer eternal torture in hell.</p>
<p>B. That the righteous will not ascend to kingdoms beyond the skies at death or at any other time, but will inherit the earth forever.</p>	<p>10.—That the righteous will ascend to the kingdoms beyond the skies when they die.</p>
<p><b>22. SUPERNATURAL PERSONAL DEVIL.</b>—That there is no such thing as a supernatural personal devil, the devil of Scripture being a personification of sin in its several phases and manifestations among men.</p>	<p>11.—That the devil is a supernatural personal being.</p>
<p><b>23.</b> That the kingdom of God is not "the Church," or a region beyond the stars, but a system of things to be established under Christ on earth, in</p>	<p>12.—That the Kingdom of God is "the church"</p>

the Holy Land.	
<b>24. THREE-FACT GOSPEL.</b> —That the gospel is not the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ merely, but “the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.”	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.
<b>25. NO JUDGMENT AT THE COMING OF CHRIST.</b> —That the judgment of the saints at the tribunal of Christ, when he comes, is not a simple allotment of rewards, but a dividing of the faithful from the unfaithful, with reference to the question of life or death.	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.
<b>26. THE FIRST RESURRECTION.</b> —That the resurrection at the appearing of Christ is not confined to the faithful, but extends to all who have made a profession of his name, whether faithful or not.	16.—That the resurrection is confined to the faithful.
<b>27. IMMORTAL RESURRECTION.</b> —That those thus rising are not in a glorified state, but appear before Christ in their natural body, to have it decided whether they are worthy of being clothed upon with immortality, or deserving of a return to corruption.	17.—That the dead rise in an immortal state.

## Doctrines to Be Rejected

<b>28. IMMORTAL NATIONS IN THE MILLENNIUM.</b> —That the subject-nations of the thousand years are not immortal.	18.—That the subject-nations of the thousand years are immortal.
<b>29. JUDAISM AND SABBATARIANISM.</b> —That the law of Moses is not binding in any of its enactments, except those retained in the letter of the apostles;	19.—That the law of Moses is binding <b>on believers of the Gospel.</b>
<b>29b.</b> and the observance of Sunday as popularly enjoined is unscriptural.	20.—That the observance of Sunday is a matter of duty.
<b>30. BABY BAPTISM AND INFANT SALVATION.</b> —That baby sprinkling is an invention of man, and infant salvation a doctrine opposed to Scripture.	21.—That baby-sprinkling is a doctrine of Scripture.
<b>31. RESURRECTION OF HEATHENS, IDIOTS, BABES, ETC.</b> —That heathens, idiots, pagans, and very young children will never see the light of resurrection, but pass away as though they had not been, the resurrection being restricted to those who are responsible to the divine law.	22.—That “heathens”, idiots, pagans, and very young children will be saved.
<b>32. SALVATION WITHOUT THE GOSPEL.</b> —That salvation is impossible without a belief of the gospel, however moral a man’s life may be.	23.—That man can be saved by morality or sincerity, without the Gospel.
<b>33. SALVATION WITHOUT BAPTISM.</b> —That under the apostolic dispensation salvation is impossible without baptism.	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.
<b>34. THE VALUE OF BAPTISM IN A STATE OF IGNORANCE.</b> —That baptism is of no avail in the absence of an understanding and belief of “the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.”	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.
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Note: Included here are the original fables to be reused, from 1868, complete with Biblical References, as Appendix 2.

## Changes in 1873

As discussed in Chapter 8, under the DTBR #4, “Jesus had a free life,” Edward Turney introduced a new theory about the nature of Christ, so Robert Roberts, among other reactions, changed his ecclesia’s statement of faith, under the section called “Fables to be refused.” He also made major changes under “Truth to be believed”, but this is outside our scope.<sup>10</sup>

**1868. XVIII.—THE “ETERNAL SONSHIP ” OF CHRIST.** That Jesus was not co-eternal and co-equal with the Father, but was created of the Father, by operation of Holy Spirit upon Mary: a mortal man, partaker of flesh and blood, having no pre-existence, made in all respects like unto his brethren; yet, through the moral and intellectual energy derived from his paternity, without sin.

**1879 XVIII. —THE “ ETERNAL SONSHIP ” OF CHRIST, AND THE FREE-LIFE DOCTRINE.—**

That the Son of God was not co-eternal with the Father, but is the result of the Father’s manifestation in the flesh, by the operation of the Holy Spirit upon Mary, in the manner defined in paragraph VII\*, and that when he so appeared, his life in the flesh was no more a “ free life ” than that of his brethren whom he came to redeem, but was “in all points,” what theirs was, as his mission (to put away death by death) required, the difference between him and them being that he was without transgression. [Ps xxi 4 added]

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<sup>10</sup> For an excel sheet detailing the various changes made, contact [phemingray@gmail.com](mailto:phemingray@gmail.com)

## Changes in 1886

In 1886, Robert Roberts made several changes to the statement of faith.

1. He added a “foundation clause” on Inspiration because of the controversy in 1884-5
2. At the urging of the ecclesia, he added references to all the sections on “Truths to be believed”
3. However, he did not add references to the “Doctrines to be rejected”, although his previous statements did (see Appendix 2)
4. He removed the Doctrine to be rejected #5, as discussed below, chapter 8
5. He added the doctrines to be rejected #'s 32-35. These seemed to have been added because of problems at the time, although not necessarily in the period 1883-6.

The original Doctrines to be rejected as of 1883 are included as Appendix 1.

## Chapter Five

### Inspiration #1

*Doctrine to be Rejected #1: That the Bible is only partly the work of inspiration—or if wholly so, contains errors which inspiration has allowed.*

This DTBR, given above, can be restated in a positive way: The Bible, in its original text, is altogether the work of inspiration, and that God has been the true author of every part of His Word, thereby constituting it as an infallible, error-less document, at least in its original manuscript.

#### History

The opening clause in the Christadelphian statement of Faith is not numbered: it was added in 1886 after a controversy initiated by Robert Ashcroft, who issued a magazine called *The Biblical Exegetist*.<sup>11</sup> In it, he proposed that the

The inspirational power would, therefore, probably come upon the writers in silence, and it would serve as an infallible guide to them for all its purposes. This, of course, would only apply to the original documents, and, in our view, to only such parts of them as could not otherwise be produced. Though the primal fact of inspiration “cannot be altered or expunged by any subsequent events,” there is no evidence that a supernatural power has been possessed by copyists and translators, guaranteeing the absolutely infallible transmission of the sacred records.

Extract from *Biblical Exegetist*

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<sup>11</sup> Some of the enormous body of Christadelphian literature dealing with this controversy was summarized in *The Tidings*’ Special Issue on “Inspiration”, August 2015. It will not be repeated here. See also *The Testimony* Special Issue on “Inspiration”, July 1982.

Bible was only partially inspired, in that some parts must be considered the product of erring human beings, and in turn could be in error.

The topic of what exactly was meant by inspiration of the scriptures had not previously troubled the community, so it was not surprising this suggestion was not well received. This resulted in the following two additions to the then-current statement of faith:

- ☐ The foundation clause that heads the whole statement, as shown below.
- ☐ A new clause added to the Doctrines to be Rejected.

**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.

The addition of this clause then recognizes the vital importance of accepting that every word of Scripture is that which proceeded from the mouth of God (Matt 4:4). If we doubt this, we can progress no further in our knowledge of the Truth, for the whole reliability of Scripture is called into question. If it is only partly God's Word, we are not bound to submit to its authority, and may even be at liberty to disagree with some of its teachings. In addition, who would decide which parts of the Bible were truly inspired by God, was inspired and which were not.

It might be noted that the Bible also has "the writings" as well of the Scriptures of Moses, the Prophets, and the Apostles:

- ☐ Poetic books: Psalms, Proverbs and Job.
- ☐ Five Festival Scrolls: Song of Solomon, Ruth,

Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther.

- Historical books: Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles.

## Consequences

We can summarize these as follows:

- The Foundation Clause recognizes 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 Jesus and his apostles in their quotation and use to assure us that nothing of substance has been lost or impaired.
- Given the meticulous process of copying later developed, and the diligent labors of translators who believed that they were handling the Word of God, we may be sure that the LORD has overseen the preservation of the word, although we must be careful not to ascribe this to any particular Hebrew or Greek manuscript or to any particular Bible Translation.
- 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.

## Another Controversy

Much detail concerning the whole topic and ramification of Biblical Inspiration can be found in the special issue referred to above and its bibliography. It is undoubtedly because the Brotherhood was so well armed against spurious theories of inspiration that problems in this area hardly arose for almost eighty years after the controversy in 1885.

However, neither the Foundation Clause nor the associated Doctrine to be Rejected defines what is meant by “inspiration”, and this gave rise to quite a discussions, as reflected in the columns of the community’s magazines in the 1960s (although not so much in *The Christadelphian*). These bear witness to the fact that the critical views of theological scholarship had again penetrated the Brotherhood. Brethren had lost the careful habit of saying, “The Spirit through John writes...”—speakers and writers were being unconsciously influenced by their wider reading of non-Christadelphian commentators, and had begun to speak without qualification of “Paul’s style” or “Hosea’s tenderness”; younger generations had grown up who did not know the answers about the supposed discrepancies or inconsistencies in the Bible, which the apparently learned world took almost for granted; and not a few brethren actually began to flirt openly with the latest theories from the arenas of theology and Biblical studies—“latest theories” that were in many cases little other than old views in new dress.

It might, therefore, be useful to briefly summarize the considerations and conclusions of the articles that dealt with this topic, as reflected in several articles from that period. They amplify and expand on exactly what is, and was, intended by the phrase (converting to the positive) “That the Bible is totally work of inspiration, and does not contain any errors which inspiration has allowed.” Although the controversy of the 1960s has died down, the topic still crops up from time to time.

So let us briefly consider exactly what “inspiration” entails, and the errors which sometimes happen when you attempt to define too closely exactly what happens between the mind of God and the written word.

## Verbal Inspiration<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Some part of this section is based upon an essay by A.D. Norris

Fundamentally, of course, the doctrine of Verbal Inspiration builds upon the high confidence in the detailed accuracy of Scripture implied is such words as “one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law till all things be accomplished” (Matt 5 :16), which in its context includes the prophets as well, and by implication the whole Old Testament; and “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matt 24:35), in which the Lord makes the same claim for his own words, and by implication for those of his messengers, whom the Spirit was to “lead into all truth” (John 16 :13). It dwells on the detailed use of Scripture’s niceties such as can be found in the Lord’s and Paul’s use of the Scripture, and seeks to account for them.

The expression will be used, then, to mean that the original disclosure of everything that truly forms a part of Scripture was verbatim what God intended it to be. That is, the ultimate motivation of Scripture is from above. Whatever the will of man may have been, it was not the real reason why the Scripture came into being, seen with respect to the divine purpose. God’s counsel overrides where it is necessary, but steers the course throughout, so that Scripture, when it is formed, is what He intended.

It is important to make this point clear, because the doctrine has often been condemned on the assumption that it made the “authors” of Scripture into mere automata, men who lose their freewill entirely when they write or speak as they are moved by the Holy Spirit.

But large portions of Holy Scripture bear evident marks of the personalities of their writers. We can illustrate this by Jeremiah’s account of his own frame of mind when he was obliged to reveal God’s promises of woe against a background of bitter persecution (Jer 15:10; 20:7-12); or by Psalm 51, which reveals David’s personal penitence after his sin with Uriah’s wife; or by Paul’s confession of his own

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in *The Christadelphian*, 1964, p 296.

feelings of affection for those among whom he labored (“I thank my God on every remembrance of you”, and the like). It would be impossible to maintain that any of these men in such circumstances was acting passively under compulsion when in this way he disclosed his heart, and any doctrine which sought to do so would be self-condemned.

The prophets write as the occasion brings forth their inspiration by God, moved from time to time according to His will. But to Jesus, God gives not the Spirit by measure. “Verily, verily”, means to him that he has God with him in all his utterances. “I say unto you” lacks nothing of the force of, “God says to you through my lips.” As God reveals in the Letter to the Hebrews, He has in the last days spoken to us in His Son.

It is this Son of God who gives such a high evaluation to the Scriptures. We do well to remember when we walk with the Word of God that we tread on holy ground. This will not prevent our searching, nor will it put blinders on our eyes, but it will preserve us from rashness, and help us to show due respect to what God has “magnified above all His Name” (Psa 138:2).



## Chapter Six

### The Trinity #2

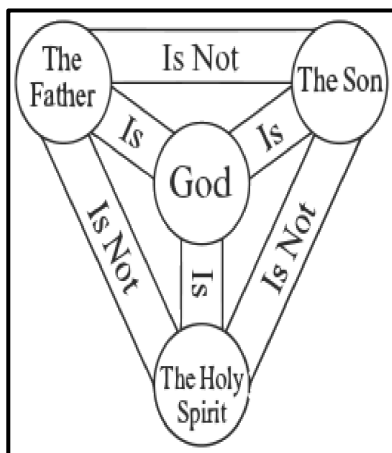
*Doctrine to be Rejected #2: That God is three persons.*

It can be restated, perhaps, in a positive way: “The doctrine of the Trinity being false, it remains that God is a Being of Spirit; the Lord Jesus Christ is His Son, born of the Virgin Mary; the Holy Spirit is His power.”

#### History

This is an example of a doctrine not really dealt with in the “Truth to be received,” but which is a doctrine that fundamentally separates us most of the Christian Churches around us. John Thomas appears to have discarded the orthodox doctrine of The Trinity early in his studies of the Truth, perhaps influenced by Elias Smith, who preceded him in the Disciples Church in Philadelphia.

However, his full mature view of God was not developed until around 1847, when, as a result the views of Dr. Lara, a Jew, John Thomas wrote a series of articles later reprinted as



*Phanerosis*. Some of this is represented in the first section of the “Truth to be received.” However, the doctrine of the Trinity is not specifically rejected in it, but that erroneous belief is, and always has been, specifically rejected by all Christadelphians. The form of words has changed, as below, but the idea has remained.

1. “Synopsis of the One Faith” by John Thomas (1867): (As Perverted By The Apostacy): “A triply-compounded God, without body and parts, defined as “Father Son and Holy Ghost.”
2. “Fables to be Refused” by Robert Roberts, (1870 till 1883): “The Trinity.—That God is not three, but One, out of whom are all things—even the Spirit and the Son.” This has the following references:
  - “But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him” (1 Cor 8:6).
  - “One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph 4:6).
  - “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 2:5).
  - “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).
  - “And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49)

## The Trinity

We need to be careful in discussing the Trinity, because we often attack the Trinity on the basis of the Nicene Creed, which says Christ is “God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father.” Rather, we ought to discuss it in terms of modern-day beliefs, which say:

- The Trinity is One. We do not speak of three Gods but of one God. Each of the Persons is fully God. They are a Unity of Persons in one divine nature.
- The divine Persons are distinct from each other. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not three appearances or modes of God, but three identifiable persons, each fully God in a way distinct from the others.
- The divine Persons are in relation to each other. The distinction of each is understood only in reference to the others.<sup>13</sup>

## Brief History of the Doctrine of the Trinity

According to almost all Biblical scholars, Scripture does not contain a formulated doctrine of the Trinity. Although there is much debate as to whether the beliefs of the Apostles were merely articulated and explained in the Trinitarian Creeds, or were corrupted and replaced with new beliefs, all scholars recognize that the Creeds themselves were created in reaction to disagreements over the nature of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These controversies, however, were great and many, and took some centuries to be resolved. Of these controversies, the most significant developments were articulated in the first four centuries by the Church Fathers in reaction to Adoptionism, Sabellianism, and Arianism.

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<sup>13</sup> U.S. Catholic Catechism for Adults

**Adoptionism** was the belief that Jesus was an ordinary man, born of Joseph and Mary, who became the Christ and Son of God at his baptism (c. AD 269).

**Sabellianism** taught that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are essentially one and the same, the difference being simply verbal, describing different aspects or roles of a single being (c. AD 220).

In the fourth century, **Arianism**, as traditionally understood, taught that the Father existed prior to the Son who was not, by nature, God, but rather a changeable creature who was granted the dignity of becoming “Son of God”.

In AD 325, the Council of Nicaea adopted the **Nicene Creed** that described Christ as “God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father”, as mentioned above.

### **Discussing the Trinity<sup>14</sup>**

What do theologians mean when they affirm that the one who so lived and so died was “very God,” co-equal with the Father from all eternity? To one who has not been cradled in Trinitarian belief such propositions seem self-destructive. Surely, if God required us to believe in the Trinity, He would teach the doctrine in plain language.

Even the fact of the Creator’s existence is taught plainly and reiterated in the Bible. “There is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me” (Isa 45:21). Such expressions are frequent in Scripture. The greatness, power, and knowledge of God are all emphasized in language that cannot be mistaken. If we are to believe that God, supremely great, wise and powerful, in some way became a human baby and was born of a woman, we may surely expect that the doctrine be taught in plain language. We may not

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<sup>14</sup> Some of this section is based upon an old pamphlet by Islip Collyer, “The God We Worship”.

reasonably expect to understand the details, but where is a plain affirmation of the fact?

All Bible students are aware that the Bible does not contain any such affirmation of the doctrine of the Trinity. There is no language used in any way comparable to that of the Athanasian Creed, or the creeds of modern Catholicism. When a supporter of the Trinity is challenged to defend his belief from Scripture, he quotes passages from which inferences may be drawn in harmony with his creed, but which, certainly, played no part in forming it. The favorite passages for such a purpose are those in which a form of language is used agreeable with the idea that Christ existed as a person, previous to his birth. The same form of language is often employed, however, where no such doctrine is involved. When we read in the book of Genesis: "Kings shall come out of thy loins," everyone understands the sense in which the words are used. When, however, the Lord Jesus expresses the truth of his divine origin in similar language, "I came forth from God," it is regarded as proof that he came as a personality before being born as a baby. There is nothing to favor such a construction except the natural prejudice of opinions in which people have been nurtured.

Most of the passages quoted by Trinitarians are of this character. Often there is a companion passage that might have been designed to correct misconceptions and show the true meaning.

Thus, the Lord Jesus said: "I and my Father are one," (John 17:11), but he also prayed that the disciples might be one, even as he was one with the Father. He spoke of "Glory I had with thee before the world was," (John 17:5), but the Apostle Paul also used the same language regarding the brethren, (Rom 8:30) showing that it was in the foreknowledge of God that Christ and all his disciples lived before the foundation of the world. The Apostle Peter so speaks regarding Christ: "Who, verily, was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world but was manifest in these last times" (1 Pet 1:20).

Jesus said: "I have power to lay down my life and I have power to take it again," (John 10:18) but he also added, "This commandment have I received of my Father" (also John 10:18). He said: "I am from above," but he immediately added, "ye are from beneath." Their life and character was from beneath, so that they were entirely earthly; his life and character were direct from God, so that he was the Lord from Heaven. Jesus said that the Father had sent him into the world, but he added "even so, have I sent you into the world." In neither case are we to suppose the existence of the personality previous to birth.

## **Reading the Bible**

Try, for a little while, to imagine the case of a man who has no prejudices studying the Bible to find the truth revealed regarding God and Jesus Christ. Surely, he would study the law given to Israel as the first step towards finding the true God. He would read the records of the birth of Christ to find exactly who Christ was.

This is only common sense. If we have a reliable biography of a man, we can soon ascertain who his parents were if we will consult the chapter dealing with his birth. We must not bring a theory from outside and then try to find odd passages in the book that can be made to harmonize. Consult the first proclamation of a law to find the authority of the law-giver. Go to the account of a man's birth to find a plain statement of his ancestry.

If we adopt such a method with the Bible we are left in no doubt as to the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. God made proclamation to Israel: "Hear, O Israel, the LORD your God is one LORD" (Deut 6:4). This doctrine was supported by all the prophets. There were many angels, who, being sent by God, could speak the words of God, but it is always made clear, that, above them all, was one supreme God and Creator. The Jews recognized no Trinity.

If we turn to the record of Christ's birth, the account of his ancestry is as explicit as anything that has ever been written: "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee," said the angel to Mary. 'The Power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, therefore that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God'" (Luke 1:35).

Even a man who holds the doctrine of the Trinity may well pause at these words. Why should the third person of the Trinity come upon Mary so that the second person of the Trinity should be born of her? And why is that word "therefore" there? Try, however, to put yourself in the place of a man with no pre-conceived opinions to defend, searching the Scriptures in the pursuit of truth. In the Old Testament it is made clear that God is One. By the power of His Spirit He knows all and can perform all according to His will. In Psalm 139 there is a wonderful description of the Spirit filling the universe, and in its penetrating powers being equal to the actual presence of God. This Spirit came upon prophets to make them speak divine truth. It is constantly referred to as the "Word of the LORD." But, although God's word was spoken, men all sinned, and no one was found to carry out God's will perfectly. The word became articulate, the word became writing, but in Old Testament times it was never made flesh.

The student passes on to the New Testament Scriptures to read of the Savior provided by God. He learns there, that the Holy Spirit came upon a chosen virgin of the house of Israel, not merely to make her speak the words of God, but to make her conceive a son without ever having known man. The child born was, therefore, to be called the Son of God. He was born as a babe, nourished according to nature, and as he grew he increased in wisdom and in favor. Early he showed his superiority to other children. He grew to manhood and constantly proclaimed his dependence on the Father who had sent him.

□ "The words that I speak. I speak not of myself.

The Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works” (John 14:10).

- “My Father is greater than I” (John 14:28).
- “Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father” (Mark 13:32).

Even after his resurrection from the dead, when the days of fleshly weakness were over, he speaks of ascending “to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” Even after the ascension, the book of Revelation is described as “the revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to him.” In that book we still have the expression, “My God.” (Rev 4:12)

If the student pursues the matter further, studying the writings of the apostles, he will find the plainest of re-affirmations of the truth. “There is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 2:5).

These statements are in harmony with Christ’s own presentation of the matter. He addressed the Father as “the only true God.” In claiming power over all flesh, he made it clear that this authority was given him by the Father. In harmony with this, the Apostle Paul, in writing of the time of the end when death shall be finally vanquished, states that God will put all things under Christ. He points out a truth that should be manifest, that God, being the giver of this subjecting power, is obviously excepted from the “all things” that are to be subjected. When all the works of creation are finally subdued by Christ, then, the Son shall be subject to the one who put all things under him, that “God may be all in all” (1 Cor 15:28). Study these words of the Apostle. They cannot be harmonized with the Trinitarian view, but they blend perfectly with the true doctrine of the Bible.

## Summary

A man who could study the Word of God entirely without



## Doctrines to Be Rejected

prejudice would assuredly find no difficulty in grasping its teaching. One God with supreme power and understanding. One spirit or emanating power of God, carrying the searching knowledge of the Eternal to the desert, to the grave, or to the uttermost part of the sea, filling even the darkness with a divine light of knowledge and power as if the very presence of the Creator were there (Psa 139).

By His Holy Spirit, God made chosen servants speak His Word. By the same Holy Spirit He made a chosen virgin give birth to a Son who was, therefore, called the Son of God. By the in-dwelling power of His Spirit, He gave the Son wisdom and strength, so that he became a perfect manifestation of the divine character, the Word of God in the form of a man. By the same power He will put all things under the feet of this perfect mediator until the time when the last enemy shall be destroyed.

When we recognize the truth that Christ was begotten by the Holy Spirit of God as taught in the Gospel narrative of his birth, all that is written regarding him becomes intelligible. He was the living Word, as the Bible is the written Word. He was the perfect expression of the will of God in the form of a man. He was “God with us,” — a manifestation of the character (Luke 1:80), of the Father in a living conscious being, who really grew in knowledge and increased in wisdom, (Luke 2:52), who really suffered and overcame, really died and was raised to life again.

Beware of any doctrine that shall, in effect, deny that the Father is the only true God, and that Jesus is the Son who can reveal the Creator to us. Remember that the Lord Jesus, in praying to the Father, said, “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent”.

## Conclusion

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.

## Chapter Seven

### Pre-Existence #3

*Doctrines to be Rejected #3: That the Son of God was co-eternal with the Father.*

This can be positively stated as: Jesus was begotten of the Virgin Mary; he was only “known” beforehand in the mind and purpose of The LORD from the beginning.

#### History

This current statement can be compared with that written by Roberts in 1871 (or before):

The “Eternal Sonship” Of Christ. — That the Son of God was not co-eternal with the Father, but is the result of the Father’s manifestation in the flesh, by operation of Holy Spirit upon Mary, in the manner defined in paragraph vii. (Luke 1:35; Matt 1:20; Rom 8:3; Heb 2:14,17; 4:15).

In particular, this statement can be compared to the Statement of Faith, clause 8 which reads:

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 Cor 15:45; Heb 2:14-16; Rom 1:3; Heb 5:8-9, 1:9; Rom 5:19-21; Gal 4:4-5; Rom 8:3-4; Heb 2:15; 9:26; Gal 1:4; Heb 7:27; 5:3-7; 2:17; Rom 6:10; 6:9;).

This Doctrine to be rejected is particularly concerned with the so-called “Pre-existence of Christ.” It is also partially related to clauses 1, 2, 9, and 10, which will not be repeated here: they are primarily concerned with the nature and Christ and his sacrifice.

This phrasing, that Christ was God’s “Manifestation in the Flesh” is an almost direct quote from 1 Timothy 3:16: the word “manifested” in the KJV translation (and many others) is in the Greek φανερώω, or *phanerosis*, which of course is the title of John Thomas’ book.<sup>15</sup>

The italicized portion is now to be found elsewhere in the “Truth to be received”:

- ☐ Jesus was... God manifest in the flesh – Clause 10
- ☐ Begotten of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit – Clause 1

## The Pre-existence of Christ

So this doctrine to be rejected, “*That the Son of God was co-eternal with the Father*” is intended to reject the common non-biblical idea: that Christ pre-existed. To quote from the article on “Pre-existence of Christ” from Wikipedia:

The concept of the pre-existence of Christ is a central tenet of the doctrine of the Trinity. Trinitarian Christology explores the nature of Christ's pre-existence as the Divine hypostasis called the Logos or Word. This “Word” is also called God the Son or the Second Person of the Trinity. Theologian Bernard Ramm noted that “It has been standard teaching in historic Christology that the Logos, the Son, existed before the incarnation. That the Son so existed before the incarnation has been called the pre-existence of Christ.” Other aspects of Christology explore

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<sup>15</sup> The KJV has “God was manifest in the Flesh”: almost all modern translations have “He was manifested in the flesh” or similar: for the change from “God” to “He” see the notes in the NET Bible.

the incarnation of this Divine being as the man Jesus. In the words of the Nicene Creed, Christ “came down from heaven, and was incarnate.” Some Protestant theologians believe that God the Son emptied himself of divine attributes in order to become human, in a process called *kenosis*, while others reject this.

It is interesting to note the same article comments:

[There are] those who consider themselves Christians while denying the pre-existence of Christ, [but] who nevertheless accept the virgin birth. Today the view is primarily held by Christadelphians...[They] consider that Christ is prophesied and foreshadowed in the Old Testament, but did not exist.

### **The Arguments – Starting with Adam<sup>16</sup>**

The nature of Christ is a fundamental subject, and our understanding must be based on the whole of God’s revelation. Because God’s only begotten Son is central to the purpose of Creation, Christ occupies a unique position in the whole revelation of this purpose. Type, symbol, parable, prophecy — all are used in the Old Testament in anticipation of the arrival of the Messiah, and the New Testament must be seen through these different aspects. This approach is not taken by those who argue for the pre-existence of Christ, since their case is based more or less wholly on the New Testament, and in particular the Gospel of John, without generally making any use of Old Testament references. However, unless we use the Old Testament to help interpret the New Testament, we shall inevitably end up going astray on the subject of Christ’s nature.

The requirement for a son of God and the requirement for a Messiah is thus central to the purpose of God as set out in the first two chapters of Genesis. The Sonship of Christ and his

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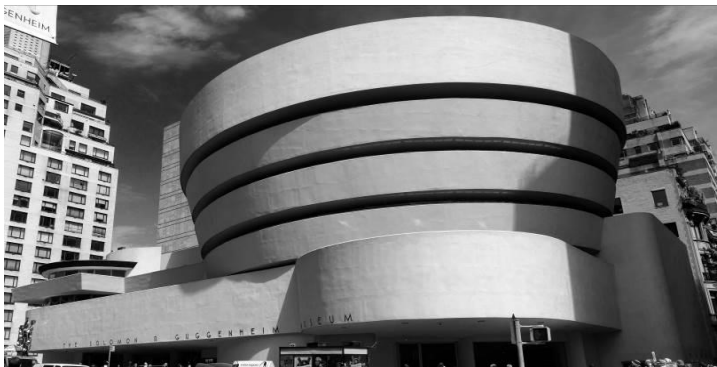
<sup>16</sup> Some of this section is derived from an article by Andrew Perry in *The Testimony*: 1983 p 383.

lordship, then, have their roots in the creative purpose of God.

Due to the Fall, however, a new creation was required. A second and last Adam was brought into being, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Jesus Christ is the man at the center of the new creation of God. This man is the new Lord of creation, given from heaven “The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven” (1 Cor. 15:47). Thus he was the fulfilment of the purpose of God as shown in the creative actions of Genesis 1 and 2. The New Testament references must therefore be considered in the context of the Old Testament prophecies of Jesus.

### **How Did Jesus Pre-exist?**

Jesus was of God, his origins were of old, his existence was from “before the earth ever was” because, as John explains, he was the Idea that was in the beginning, the divine Idea through which the heavens and the earth were created, and for which all things exist.



### **Guggenheim Museum**

In this sense his existence is before everything else, because everything (the Universe) was formed for him and through him. Without him, says John, was not a single thing made that was made. This is a profound spiritual, physical and literal truth that goes far beyond common misconceptions of

## Doctrines to Be Rejected

Pre-existence. Jesus Christ preceded the creation of the Universe because he is the Reason that the Universe exists. Jesus Christ was the cause of the creation of the Universe in a very similar sense that a child's crib is designed and built expressly to nurture a baby that is yet to be born, or that the Guggenheim Museum was conceived, designed and constructed for the expression of art yet to be created.

As a literally and physically real person (in the concrete sense that most people regard as “real” i.e., “in the flesh”) it is evident that Jesus had no conscious existence as a person until after Mary conceived him through the Holy Spirit some 2000 years ago. He grew from a baby through childhood and into adulthood, and learnt obedience in the experience of his suffering. His creation and perfection involved a process of time and events, just like you and I, and so for him the world was made the way it is... as it is for us also if we are “in him”.

The difficulty that early theologians had with passages like John 1, which caused them to develop a “Pre-existence” theology, was the common human tendency to think in concrete terms, to think that for something to be “real” it is of necessity physical, concrete, or in the flesh. As someone once said, “I know it is real because I can kick it.”

So when the Bible speaks of Jesus as coming down from heaven, of being from before the world was, or even as of a Creator for whom the heavens and the earth were the work of his fingers, the concrete thinker assumes a personal and physical pre-existence of Jesus is what must be implied. In so doing he misses a most profound truth about both his own existence, the appearance of Jesus, and for that matter the creation of the entire Universe.

What is missed is the importance and power of an idea.

Let's go back to the Guggenheim Museum. Today, I can visit it, walk around it, sit inside it and admire the art contained inside. Today, the Guggenheim Museum is a concrete reality that I can kick, a physical icon of New York City to the

whole world. But it wasn't always so. For many years, those soaring concrete spirals were but sketches of ink on paper. And many years before that, its shape was but a gleam in the eye of its architect. The Guggenheim Museum was nothing more than an idea.

Today, looking at the concrete reality it is easy to forget the importance of the idea, and the importance of the mind behind the idea. Frank Lloyd Wright was undoubtedly an architectural genius even if his ideas were difficult to translate into concrete realities.

But were it not for his unique mind and the unique ideas of this unique mind, then the Guggenheim Museum as we know it would not exist. I would not be able to walk around it, sit in it, marvel at it, much less kick it...or if I could, it would be in something very different. Guggenheim Museums do not just appear just because cement trucks can mix concrete.



And so, it is for any special creation. The idea precedes the concrete reality.

- ☐ The idea is translated into sketches.
- ☐ The idea inspires fellow minds.
- ☐ The idea determines the schedule.



## Doctrines to Be Rejected

- ☐ The idea obtains the materials.
- ☐ The idea forms the concrete.
- ☐ The idea is translated into concrete reality.
- ☐ The idea is the beginning.
- ☐ The concrete is the end.

This is how John might have described the creation of the Guggenheim Museum:

- ☐ In the beginning was the idea. The idea was with Frank Lloyd Wright.
- ☐ The idea was an expression of the mind of Frank Lloyd Wright.
- ☐ And the idea was made concrete, the Guggenheim Museum.

And so it is for Christ.

- ☐ In the beginning was the Idea.
- ☐ The Idea was with God.
- ☐ The Idea was an expression of what God is.
- ☐ And the Idea was made flesh, Jesus Christ the Son of God.
- ☐ The Idea was translated into the sketches we see in the Old Testament, in the law and the prophets.
- ☐ The Idea inspired the minds of the faithful of old.
- ☐ The Idea determined the history of the earth, raised up kings and nations, brought floods and famines, blessings and curses.
- ☐ The Idea formed the heavens and the earth, the mountains and the valleys, the moon and the stars, and all that in them is.

- The Idea brought forth people and formed them for his name.
- Everything that is and has been and will be is through this Idea.

## **The Idea was Christ**

And John's other point was that we (i.e., the apostles) have actually seen him, we have talked to him, we have touched him, we have handled him, we have eaten with him, we have seen him crucified, we have seen him raised from the dead, we have seen him ascend on high!

John had actually seen the concrete reality, the Idea of God from before the beginning, seen the Son of God in the flesh.

John appeals to the human limitation of only taking concrete realities seriously by emphasizing his personal experience with the flesh and blood reality of Jesus Christ. But the drama and importance of seeing Christ in the flesh is only meaningful because he was the Idea that founded the entire Universe from the beginning, the Anointed Son of God, and easily the most amazing thing ever to happen in the history of the earth...and so in Christ the Idea has been fulfilled, and we have hope that the Idea works.

And to those of us who will hear him he has given the power to likewise become sons of God...and so fulfil the Idea in a multitude of individuals.

So this view also helps us understand why Jesus could say with perfect gravity, "Before Abraham was, I am." If the earth and all the Universe were formed for Christ, then how much more was Abraham's existence for Christ? Abraham was called out from Ur for Christ. And God could swear to Abraham by his very own self-existence that the promise (the Idea) would be fulfilled because, as John 1 says, the Idea was God. As surely as God exists, his Idea will see its fulfilment, his mind will be expressed, his word will go forth and it will

surely achieve its purpose. So, when we see Christ, we see God, for “how can you say show us the Father when you have seen me?” Jesus Christ was such an exact replica of God, such an exact copy of the mind of God, his character and personality such a spark of the divine, that for us he effectively is God.

Furthermore, if we take heed to his word, then we too will be part of the divine Idea, we too will have characters and personalities that replicate the divine, we too will be one with God. This has always been God’s agenda and Idea from the beginning.

So the apparent “pre-existence” language that appears from time to time and causes such confusion of thought in popular theology is the language of ideas and thoughts, of mind and character and personality. John Thomas would say they are the language of God Manifestation. They are statements of the reality, importance and force of the divine ideas and relationships that have energized and created the entire world; things visible and things invisible.

When God expresses his mind, real things happen.

### Summary

- ☐ “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).
- ☐ 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
- ☐ Mary was told by the angel Gabriel: “That holy thing

which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God”

- ☐ Mary 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?” (Heb 1:5).
- ☐ God was the Father of Jesus from his conception
- ☐ Jesus shared sinful mortal flesh with the rest of mankind
- ☐ Jesus manifested to the world the glory of God.

## Chapter Eight

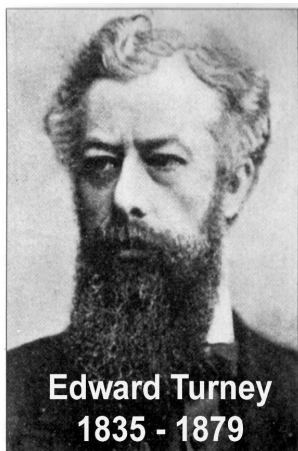
### Free Life #4

*Doctrine to Be Rejected #4: That Christ was born with a “free life.”*

This can be positively stated as: Although Jesus Christ was the Son of God, he inherited the temptation to Sin from his descendancy from Adam, and although without sin, in some sense needed salvation by his own sacrifice, as he shared our nature.

### History

We now come to the first of the numbered doctrines that was added by Robert Roberts after the first statement, as written sometime before 1871. The Doctrine to be rejected is #4 in the 1883 edition: **That Christ was born with a “free life.”** It is also the first of several statements that are hard to understand in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, removed as we are by almost 150 years from the controversy that gave rise to it.



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. The doctrine that Christ was born with a “free life” is the counterpart to the essential teaching about the Lord’s nature defined in Clause 8 — that “he also himself likewise took part” of the nature we bear, a nature related to death and producing temptations to sin (Heb 2:14). Had he chosen not to offer himself so 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.<sup>17</sup>

The phrase a “free life” signifies that Christ’s nature was not under Adamic condemnation as is that of all other members of the human race, and that therefore his sacrifice was a substitute for the “lives” of others. It denies that Christ could have been claimed by death, and needed saving from that fate.

## Edward Turney

He was the individual most closely associated with the false doctrine of “free life.” In 1873, two years after the death of John Thomas, Edward Turney and Robert Roberts fell out over their understanding of the theological significance of the death of Christ, as Turney held to the “free life” view: he “Renounced” his previous beliefs, which were identical to the of Robert Roberts. Hence the term Renunciation. Roberts, strongly disagreeing, announced in *The Christadelphian* that he “withdrew fellowship” from Turney and all who held his beliefs. This resulted in a division: only a minority in Birmingham, but the majority of the Nottingham Ecclesia followed Turney. (Nottingham at the time was probably the equal on Birmingham in size, and almost equal in influence.)

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<sup>17</sup> *The Christadelphian*, 1990 p. 127

Turney started a magazine, initially called *The Christadelphian Lamp*, but in 1875 this was changed to *The Christian Lamp*. By early 1877, under the effect of illness, he withdrew as editor, and he died a few days before his 44<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1879. Initially many ecclesias sent in intelligence, including a number from North America, but by the time volume 9 came to a close in 1883, only the Nottingham and Leicester groups appeared to be of any size, although there were a few others scattered about England. (There does not appear to have been any later issues.) So this controversy dwindled away, only to be revived in the 1950s: some will have come across the Nazarene Fellowship, a tiny group that promotes Turney's views to this day.

Much more could be said about this dispute<sup>18</sup>, but we will focus instead on the doctrinal aspects as related to “free life.”

### Free Life: The Doctrines

Renunciationism is defined as follows by Robert Roberts:

That the body of Jesus did not inherit the curse of Adam, though derived from him through Mary; and was therefore not mortal; that his natural life was ‘free’; that in this ‘free’ natural life, he ‘earned eternal life,’ and might, if he had so chosen, have avoided death, or even refused to die upon the cross, and entered into eternal life alone; his death being the act of his own free will, and not in any sense necessary for his own salvation; that his sacrifice consisted in the offering up of an unforfeited life, in payment of the penalty incurred by Adam and his posterity, which was eternal death; that his unforfeited life was slain in the room and stead of the forfeited lives of all believers of the races of Adam.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, essentially if one believed in “free life” applied to

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<sup>18</sup> See *The Logos* magazine, Vol 63 – 64, 1996 – 1997 under the title “Nottingham Revisited”

<sup>19</sup> *The Christadelphian* October 1873: p. 460

Christ it would be equivalent to making him a God (i.e., not sharing our human nature). This is the same as the doctrine of the Trinity voiced in slightly different words. This false doctrine is the counterpart to the essential teaching about the Lord's nature defined in "Truth to be received" #8:

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 Cor 15:45; Heb 2:14-16; Rom 1:3; Heb 5:8-9, 1:9; Rom 5:19-21; Gal 4:4-5; Rom 8:3-4; Heb 2:15; 9:26; Gal 1:4; Heb 7:27; 5:3-7; 2:17; Rom 6:10; 6:9;)

It should be noted that this statement was accepted by Edward Turney and his affiliates, but twisted as described by Roberts in the quote above.

The traditional view of Christadelphians is that Christ, like a High Priest, under the Law of Moses, sacrificed first for himself, then for the people—not that he had committed actual sin, but that, being human, he possessed a sin-prone nature—and that Christ died as an example to his followers both of how to follow God's commands, and of what the weaknesses of human nature merited, namely annihilation. "He also himself likewise took part" of the nature we bear, a nature related to death and producing temptations to sin (Heb 2:14). Had he chosen not to offer himself so that we could have hope of life, death would still have claimed him; his own salvation from death could not be considered apart from ours. Hence Jesus' 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 possible for him to die as a result of his own sin.

This whole area (i.e., of the precise nature of Christ and his relationship to his own sacrifice) is not a topic to be dealt



with lightly. It has caused, and is still causing, controversy within our community, and to go further than the relatively simple statements of the Bible and our pioneer brethren is not an arena to enter without an acknowledgement that the ways of our Heavenly Father are almost, if not totally, beyond our human comprehension.

## References to Jesus Shared Our Same Nature

- “Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh” (Rom 1:3-4).
- “And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight” (Col 1:21-22).
- “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (1 Pet 2:24).
- “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one” (Job 14:4)
- “How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?” (Job 25:4)
- “A sinless man made subject to the consequence of sin” (*Law of Moses*, R. Roberts).
- “The statement that that he did these things ‘for us’ has blinded many to the fact that he did them ‘for himself’ first—without which he could not have done them for us; for it was by

doing them for himself that he did them for us. He did them for us only as we may become part of him, in merging our individualities in him by taking part in his death, and putting on his name and sharing his life afterwards” (*Law of Moses*, R. Roberts)

- “It was a sacrifice operative on himself first of all; for he is the beginning of the new creation, the first fruits of the new harvest, the foundation of the new temple...As such, it was needful that he should himself be subject of the process and the reaper of the results. Hence the testimony (Heb 13:20)...that by his own blood, entering into the holy place he obtained (middle, or self-subjective, state of the verb) eternal redemption (“for us” is interpolated) Heb 9:12. The Father saved him from death for his obedience unto death.” (*Law of Moses*, R. Roberts).

### **1883 DTBR #5: That Christ was of a different nature from other men**

This was clearly intended to disprove the theory of Turney, as we considered under DTBR #4 above. That Christ was of the same nature as ourselves is a fundamental aspect of our view of Christ: as Harry Tennant<sup>20</sup> summarized:

The other error was to say that the nature of Christ was similar to but different from our own; that the child Jesus was in some way apart from our sinful nature. Each of these errors, whilst in some way seeking to ‘elevate’ Christ, destroys the very process of redemption. The trinitarian teaching makes it impossible for the Son of God really to be born or really to die, since by that doctrine he is and always has been the eternal Son, and therefore must still have been

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<sup>20</sup> *The Christadelphian*, 1992 p.364.

## Doctrines to Be Rejected

alive during the three days when his body lay in the tomb.

The other doctrine—about Christ’s nature being other than of our flesh—removes the heart of the teaching that Christ conquered the devil in the very nature in which it had reigned supreme (Hebrews 2:14). Only by that means had God ordained that Christ could by his life, death and resurrection obtain immortality—this nature clothed upon with immortality—for himself and all who are his.

That the child Jesus was partaker “of flesh and blood”, like those he came to save, is made plain by a series of Scriptures. In combating the error that had already arisen in his day, the apostle John wrote:

“‘Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.’ (1 John 4:2, 3)

“‘The flesh’ is called ‘his flesh’ in Hebrews 5:7 and 10:20, and ‘sinful flesh’ in Romans 8:3. It is the flesh in which of itself ‘dwelleth no good thing’ (Rom 7:18).

Thus, Christ shared our nature with all its infirmities, and by his victory ‘condemned sin in its own flesh’ (as brother Thomas wrote), and, by that very means, would become a merciful and faithful high priest, truly understanding us in our temptations.

We suspect that Robert Roberts by 1886 decided that the controversy around the views of Turney had subsided, and this DTBR was redundant compared to his #4.

## Chapter Nine

### Christ's Nature #5

*Doctrine to Be Rejected #5: That Christ's nature was immaculate.*

This doctrine to be rejected can be restated in a positive way: Through his birth, Christ inherited a nature sin-affected, and destined to death, being mortal, as are all others.

This is the second of the numbered doctrines that was added by Robert Roberts after the first statement, which was written sometime before 1871. The Doctrine to be rejected is #5 in the 1883 edition: **That Christ's nature was immaculate.** In common with #4, **That Christ was born with a "free life"**, it is also hard to understand in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Also in common with #4, it had its roots in the controversy generated by Edward Turney.

#### **"Immaculate"**

The major problem with this phrase is that, in normal usage, the word "immaculate" is largely used of a person's dress or behavior. From a dictionary you find it defined in such terms as:

1. Completely clean; extremely tidy, such as "his clothes were immaculate"
2. Completely flawless, etc., such as "an immaculate rendering of the symphony"

3. Morally pure; free from sin or corruption, such as “immaculate conception”
4. Biology: of only one color, with no spots or markings

However, if you hunt through Christadelphian literature, it is almost always the third definition that applies.

Robert Roberts, during the heart of the dispute, wrote about one of the questions put to him by Edward Turney:

QUESTION 32. — If Jesus was neither a sinner by constitution nor an actual transgressor, in other words, if free from sin, was he not therefore **immaculate**?

Answer. — This question is founded on premises not conceded in the foregoing answers. **Jesus certainly was not immaculate**, if by that is meant incorruptible in nature; or, a nature free from impulses in a sinful direction. He was not an actual transgressor. All the desires of the Adamic nature, which he had in common with ourselves, were kept in absolute subordination to the Father’s will. But he partook of the flesh of sin (English version—sinful flesh); and if this is what is meant by “a sinner by constitution,” then he was a sinner by constitution. His mission required that he should be in the nature of the transgressing race. The blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin, because they had nothing to do with the transgression. The nature of angels had nothing to do with the transgression. Therefore, ‘he took not on him the nature of angels;’ but the seed of Abraham was of a transgressing and condemned nature. Therefore, he took on him the seed of Abraham, and was made, in all things, like unto his brethren (Heb 2:17).”<sup>21</sup>

In this he was only reflecting the views of John Thomas before him, for in 1856 Thomas wrote:

But if the human nature of Christ were **immaculate** (excuse the phrase, O reader, for since the Fall we know not of an **immaculate** human nature) then God did not ‘send Jesus in

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<sup>21</sup> *The Christadelphian*, 1873, p. 322–323.

the likeness of sinful flesh'; he did not 'take hold of the seed of Abraham', he did not 'become sin for us'; 'sin' was not 'condemned in the flesh'; and 'our sins' were not 'borne in his body upon the tree'. These things could not have been accomplished in a nature destitute of that physical principle styled 'sin in the flesh'. Decree the immaculateness of the body prepared for the Spirit, Psa 40:6, Heb 10:5, and the 'Mystery of Christ' is destroyed, and the gospel of the kingdom ceases to be the power of God for salvation to those that believe it.<sup>22</sup>

## **False Teaching: Its Ancient Origin**

The false teaching about this matter goes back to the 5<sup>th</sup> century, to the Council of Chalcedon, which was a church council held from October 8 to November 1, AD 451, at Chalcedon (a city of Bithynia in Asia Minor). The judgements and definitions of divine nature issued by the council marked a significant turning point in the Christological debates that led to the separate establishment of the church in the Western Roman Empire during this century.

Many Anglicans and most Protestants consider it to be the last ecumenical council. These churches, per Martin Luther, hold that both conscience and scripture preempt doctrinal councils and generally agree that the conclusions of later councils were unsupported by or contradictory to scripture. The Council of Chalcedon was convened by Emperor Marcian, with the reluctant approval of Pope Leo the Great, to set aside the 449 Second Council of Ephesus, which would become known as the "Latrocinium" or "Robber Council."

The Council issued the 'Chalcedonian Definition,' which repudiated the notion of a single nature in Christ, and declared that he has two natures in one person and hypostasis; it also insisted on the completeness of his two natures:

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<sup>22</sup> *Herald of the Kingdom*, 1856, p. 268.

Godhead and manhood. His begetting by the power of the Holy Spirit gave Jesus qualities that can only be described as divine: thus, according to the Council, his nature was “immaculate”, i.e., he could not sin in any way.

### The Truth

Jesus 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. 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” (Isa 11:2-3).

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” (Heb 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 (Gal 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. Jesus’ compliance with God’s will could not have benefited the rest of mankind unless he had overcome in himself the temptations to sin arising from his nature, which those he

came to save struggle with every day of their lives.



## Chapter Ten

### Holy Spirit #6

*Doctrine to Be Rejected #6: That the Holy Spirit is a person distinct from the Father.*

This statement can be restated in a Positive way: The Holy Spirit is the exclusive power that emanates only from God, which performs His determined actions.

#### History

John Thomas had a similar view in his “Synopsis”:

THE THIRD PERSON IN THE GODHEAD.—That the Holy Spirit is not a person, but the vehicular effluence of the Father, filling all space, and forming the medium and instrument of all the Father’s operations.

It was developed as he considered the nature of God and the falsity of the Trinity.

It can be compared with that of Robert Roberts in 1868:

That the Holy Spirit is not a person, but the vehicular effluence of the Father, filling all space, and forming the medium and instrument of all divine operations.—(Job xxvi, 13 ; xxxiii, 4; Psa. civ, 30; Neh. ix, 30.)

#### Introduction

The Statement is also associated with three statements (among others) in “Truth to be received”:

1. That the only true God...the 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.
2. That Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, begotten of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit.
3. That being so begotten of God, and inhabited and used by God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was Emmanuel...

And another one in the Doctrines to be Rejected:

1. That a man cannot believe without possessing the Spirit of God.

The DTBR #6 was written, of course, against the conventional doctrine of The Trinity, which we dealt with in considering #2, "That God is Three Persons." However, the whole topic has become much wider than the consideration of The Trinity, because of two factors

1. The rise of Pentecostalism, with its emphasis on the Gifts of the Spirit in this age.
2. In our own community in the 1970s, there was an enormous amount of controversy over whether, and how, the Holy Spirit is directly active today in guiding the individuals and ecclesias.

The first problem has troubled a few in our community, particularly as it relates to faith healing. But the second caused a flood of books and articles at the time. We will deal with both separately. We will do so mainly by adapting sections from what has been written in recent years by prominent brethren.

## **Gifts of the Spirit Today<sup>23</sup>**

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<sup>23</sup> The Section is derived from "The Holy Spirit" By Harry Tennant.

From time to time there have been groups claiming that once again that Holy Spirit gifts are available to mankind. In modern times both the Pentecostal and the Charismatic movements have made such claims. Speaking with tongues, known as glossolalia, is the gift which exceeds all others in claims of this kind. Rarely is it claimed as an ability to speak foreign languages in the manner of the apostles (Acts 2:4,6,11). Instead it is said that those concerned are given ecstatic utterance which they do not themselves understand but have to depend on others to provide the interpretation.

For the most part, this phenomenon is made known in meetings of committed members of the groups concerned. It is not used as a principal means for preaching the Gospel as they see it, and this is contrary to the direct instruction and practice laid down in Scripture (1 Cor 14:22-25). Indeed, there is no evidence whatsoever that the modern phenomenon is in any way related to the gift of tongues as described in the New Testament. Nor is it unique to “Christian” groups. The same occurrences are to be found amongst members of eastern religions and in the Mormon movement. We believe that the phenomenon arises from “religious excitement”, an emotional state of mind, and not from any action by God through His Holy Spirit.

Similar considerations arise about the supposed “gift of healing.” Healings wrought by the apostles were never carried out at “healing meetings.” There was no religious service, no emotional fervor produced by hymn-singing and preaching, but instead direct and positive healing in the open, on the spot, for all to see; or in private by an apostle (Acts 3:1-10; 9:36-41). These miracles followed the pattern of the healings of the Lord Jesus Christ. For the most part, the Lord healed by a touch or by the spoken word and the results were immediately evident.

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Available from *The Christadelphian Magazine and Publishing Association*.

Both the procedures and the results of modern healings are widely different from those of New Testament times. There are many failures and often a lack of permanence in the healing achieved. Such was not the case with the apostles. In those days, a man who had never walked was healed in an instant and could run for joy (Acts 3:1-10). A dead woman was restored to life by the quiet prayer of one apostle and his spoken word to the corpse (Acts 9:36-41). Healers of today belong to non-Christian groups, Spiritualists, and others as well as Charismatics. The Holy Spirit cannot be the common factor. It is much more likely to be a result of the power of the mind of the healer upon the mind and will of the person who has come to be healed. Whatever may prove to be the explanation, a far more basic inquiry must be conducted into the claims of those who profess to be moved by the Spirit.

### **The Holy Spirit in Action Today**

In the 1970s, there was some dispute about how the Holy Spirit can be said to act in our time. Essentially, this resulted in two different views. These can be summarized as:<sup>24</sup>

1. The "Traditional" view was that the gift of the Holy Spirit consisted of divine supernatural help, which was given to the first century Ecclesia to assist the early brethren in the work of establishing the Truth in the earth. The Holy Spirit was withdrawn when this was accomplished and the Ecclesia established. Such gifts are not received by any today. As far as we today are concerned, we have available in the word of God the result of the Holy Spirit acting upon apostles, prophets and other inspired writers. If, of our own free will, we allow this word to influence our minds there is created in us a new mind, or spirit, which is referred to as "the Spirit of Christ" or "Spirit

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<sup>24</sup> Summarized by AD Norris in "The Holy Spirit And The Believer Today" and a work of the same title by John Allfree

of God" which is recognized by works of righteousness, otherwise known as fruits of the Spirit.

2. An alternative, somewhat modified view of the Holy Spirit today is that the gift of the Holy Spirit is not to be identified with the miraculous powers, but is an inner power of righteousness received by all believers at baptism. It is not sufficient simply to assimilate in the mind the Word of God, and allow the Word to do its work in our lives, which alone produces righteousness by obedience to its commands. Rather, in addition to the Word, God sends His Holy Spirit into the life of the believer to strengthen him against temptation and help him to overcome his sin. This Holy Spirit or Comforter, which gives strength and courage cannot be explained, but its working can be felt within as it works the transformation of the mind. The receiving of this Holy Spirit is thus part of the process of salvation; in fact without it, salvation would appear to be impossible.

It must be said that the second view is not widely held. Rather the current mainstream view is as follows<sup>25</sup>:

1. The Bible was wholly given by inspiration of God.
2. The only true God is everywhere present by His Spirit.
3. The Spirit is a unity with His person in heaven.
4. Creation was effected out of God's own underived energy.
5. The Son of God was begotten of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit, and afterwards anointed with the same Spirit without measure at his baptism.

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<sup>25</sup> Slightly modified from the Editorial in *The Christadelphian*, Dec 1983, by Alfred Nichols.

6. 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 manifested in the flesh.
7. The only way in which God makes known His saving revelation is in His Word, and by this alone we come to knowledge of the truth.
8. It is this Word, mixed with faith in our hearts, which produces the growth of the mind of the Spirit within us.
9. Christ-like behavior is formed in us, as Paul expressed it, by the influence and effect of the Word of God at work in the believer's life, through his understanding and conviction.
10. Those who by believing and obeying the words of "the Lord the Spirit" thus enter into the fellowship of the Lord Jesus Christ are "in the Spirit" and share in the "fellowship of the Spirit".
11. The gifts and signs of the Spirit were evidences of the truth of the Gospel at the outset of its first declaration in the name of Jesus Christ.
12. Comfort is to be obtained from the continuing work of the angels as "ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation".
13. In line with the beliefs of our earlier brethren, we affirm our belief in the continuing care of God and of our Lord Jesus, without seeking to limit or even define all the ways in which the Father fulfils His promise to be ever with His people and to be their helper:

God also by the same Spirit sustains in the spiritual life those whom He has begotten unto a lively hope. We can call this by the non-scriptural phrase of "providence" if we like, and the phrase is a useful

distinction between the work of the visible hand of God, capable of objective assessment, and those experiences and events which we feel, usually with hindsight, that God has overruled. But we must then ask, “Who provides? Who is at work?” and “By what means?” The answer must still be “My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19).<sup>26</sup>

The following are expressly denied:

1. That the Holy Spirit is a person distinct from the Father.
2. That a man must receive and possess direct from God the power of the Holy Spirit to hold fast to the faith once it has been espoused.
3. We reject all expositions which rest squarely on the doctrine of the Trinity where God the Holy Ghost is the Comforter.

This neatly summarizes the vast amount of literature in our community on the subject. Note in particular item (13) above. It is impossible to fully define the way the Holy Spirit operates in believers today, but we acknowledge it is only through the grace of God, and the gift of His son, we have the hope of salvation. We know our prayers are answered, but we cannot always know how.

## Conclusion

The Spirit of God is 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, in ways we

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<sup>26</sup> Alfred Nichols, *The Spirit of God* (CMPA; Birmingham).

do not always understand.

- Knows all things, even in the lives of individuals.

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 that owes more to the desires of our own nature in self-indulgence, covetousness and pride than it does to the true Spirit of God:

“Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast” (Psa 139:7-10 NIV).



## Chapter Eleven

### Immortal Soul #7

*Doctrine to Be Rejected #7: That man has an immortal soul.*

It can be restated in a positive way: The soul of man defines his being, his life, his existence; and is related to his attitude and emotions. As such, it ceases to exist when the breath of life departs.

#### History

This was the second (after baptism) doctrine that John Thomas developed. In December 1835, he proposed a series of 34 questions that addressed this topic, and the strong reaction he received was the real point at which he divvied from the Campbellites. So it is not surprising he included it in his “Synopsis “Man, an immortal ghost, tabernacling in an animal body.”

And Robert Roberts in 1868 had:

**20. THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.**—That the immortality of the soul is a pagan fiction, subversive of the first law of the Deity’s moral government, viz. that the wages of sin is death.

#### Introduction

This doctrine to be rejected is closely associated with two others:

1. That man consciously exists in death.
2. That the righteous will ascend to the kingdoms beyond the skies when they die.

This particular doctrine is interesting, because it is almost always phrased as a negative when we describe our beliefs, as in: “we do not believe in an immortal soul.” In addition, we rarely focus on this aspect of our faith: a quick glance at a sample of accounts of “what Christadelphians believe” from the Internet finds no explicit mention of this doctrine. This is despite the fact that it is one of the aspects of the beliefs, in which we differ sharply from most other Christian denominations.

## **The Immortal Soul and the Early Church**

The concept of the soul’s supposed immortality was first taught in ancient Egypt and Babylon. “The belief that the soul continues in existence after the dissolution of the body is,,,speculation...nowhere expressly taught in Holy Scripture...The belief in the immortality of the soul came to the Jews from contact with Greek thought and chiefly through the philosophy of Plato, its principal exponent, who was led to it through Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries in which Babylonian and Egyptian views were strangely blended”.<sup>27</sup>

Plato (Greek philosopher 428-348 B.C.), as a student of Socrates taught that the body and an “immortal soul” separate at death. One major source comments on ancient Israel’s view of the soul:

We are influenced always more or less by the Greek, Platonic idea, that the body dies, yet the soul is immortal. Such an idea is utterly contrary to the Israelite consciousness, and it is nowhere found in the [Old

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<sup>27</sup> *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1941, Vol. VI, “Immortality of the Soul,” pp. 564, 566.

Testament].<sup>28</sup>

Similarly, early Christianity, after the age of the apostles, was influenced by Greek philosophies even as the gospel of Christ was being preached to the Greek and Roman world. By A.D. 200 the doctrine of the immortality of the soul became a staple of the beliefs of the established church. It is often argued by Christadelphians that these beliefs came in much later, but much of this is based upon ambiguities of language. What is certain is that such beliefs are not to be found in the Bible, neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament.<sup>29</sup>

### Since the Reformation

Although scattered groups apprehended the truth about the immortal soul, it was only with the reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century that many came to the correct understanding. Of the well-known names, perhaps Isaac Newton and the Anabaptists are the most worthy of mention. By the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, belief in “soul sleep” or “Conditional Immortality”, two terms for this doctrine, became widespread, and to this day such groups as the Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Seventh Day Adventists are strong believers in “sleeping in the dust.” In addition, many mainstream theologians have come to deny the traditional view on Hell, so the old “hell fire and damnation” form of preaching has almost disappeared. The denial of the immortality of the soul has gone from being a minority view in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to part of main stream Christianity, at least among the theologians and thinkers of the churches.

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<sup>28</sup> *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1956, Vol. II, “Death,” p. 812

<sup>29</sup> See “*Sleeping in the Dust*” by Jonathan Burke (A Christadelphian). An older work from the 1950’s, “*The Conditionalist Faith of our Fathers*”, by Leroy Froom, an Adventist, has much information, but some seems to be a little overstated.

## John Thomas

John Thomas started off his new-found Christian faith in the USA as a Campbellite, being baptized as such in 1832. His stay in that denomination was not long, for one of the causes of division between himself and the Campbellites was over the doctrine of the immortal soul. He gives in several places the account of the origin of his beliefs, perhaps the most interesting being in *The Herald* for 1859. It is as follows:

We proceed then to remark, that in 1834, while residing in Richmond, VA., we started two questions in this country, which may be presented in the form of the following propositions, namely, that

1. No person destitute of the “One Faith” previous to his immersion is the subject of the “One Baptism.”
2. The animal man is in no sense immortal.

When we started the questions, it was more in the spirit of inquiry than of perfect conviction; and it is also probable that, if we had not been violently opposed, and bitterly persecuted, the matter would have dropped...

The second proposition is self-evident to those who know the truth, and it was not long before we came to be certain of its verity. From 1835 to the present time we have never wavered in our conviction...<sup>30</sup>

So, apart from a prior dispute over exactly who needed to be baptized, the recognition of the falsehood of the doctrine of the immortal soul has been one of the distinguishing hallmarks of the Christadelphian faith, as it was so called in 1864, thirty years later. This statement, or one like it has been consistent; for example:

- Man, an immortal ghost, tabernacling in an animal body. (John Thomas, *Synopsis of the One Faith*, 1867).

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<sup>30</sup> *Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come*, 1859, p. 66.

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- That the immortality of the soul is a pagan fiction, subversive of the first law of the Deity’s moral government, viz. that the wages of sin is death. (Robert Roberts, *Statement of 1871*).
- “Soul” in the Bible means, primarily, creature; but it is also used of the various aspects in which a living creature - man or beast - can be contemplated, such as person, body, life, breath, mind. It never expresses the idea of immortality. (*Christadelphian Declaration* — recent)

In Our Preaching

There are a few pamphlets available that offer guidance<sup>31</sup>, and the section in *Wrested Scriptures*<sup>32</sup> is useful. In addition, the New English Translation (the NET) Bible with its notes is most helpful. For example<sup>33</sup>:

New English Translation (2005)		
Word	Old Testament	New Testament
Hell	Never (NET): (KJV 31)	16 (NET): (KJV 39)
Soul	36 (NET): (KJV 419)	18 (NET): (KJV 39)
Passage	Genesis 2: 7 The Lord God formed the man from the soil of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.	
NOTE		
‘The Hebrew term ( <i>nefesh</i> , “being”) is often translated “soul,” but the word usually refers to the whole person. The phrase ( <i>nefesh khayyah</i> , “living being”) is used of both		

<sup>31</sup> “After Death What?” (Fred Pearce.) CMPA Publication  
<sup>32</sup> *Wrested Scriptures* (Ron Abel) July 2011, edited by John Allfree.  
<sup>33</sup> Derived from “Sleeping in the dust”, Op Cit.

animals and human beings (see 1:20, 24, 30; 2:19).'	
Passage	Genesis 35: 18 With her dying breath, she named him Ben-Oni. But his father called him Benjamin instead.
NOTE	
'Heb "in the going out of her life, for she was dying." Rachel named the child with her dying breath.'	
Passage	Deuteronomy 32: 22 For a fire has been kindled by my anger, and it burns to lowest Sheol; it consumes the earth and its produce, and ignites the foundations of the mountains.
NOTE	
<p>'tn Or "to the lowest depths of the earth"; cf. NAB "to the depths of the nether world"; NIV "to the realm of death below"; NLT "to the depths of the grave."</p> <p>sn <i>Sheol</i> refers here not to hell and hell-fire – a much later concept – but to the innermost parts of the earth, as low down as one could get. The parallel with "the foundations of the mountains" makes this clear (cf. Psa 9:17; 16:10; 139:8; Isa 14:9, 15; Amos 9:2).'</p>	

## Chapter Twelve

### Death State #8

*Doctrine to Be Rejected #8: That man consciously exists in death.*

This can be positively stated as: At death, man ceases to exist in every respect. He has no consciousness in death.

#### History

The early statement of faith by Roberts, in 1868, has a similar thought (The one of 1871 is identical):

21. The Theory of Disembodied Existence.—That there is no existence in death, conscious or unconscious, and that the popular belief in heaven and hell is a delusion.

John Thomas had no directly equivalent statement in his synopsis, but it is implied by his whole rejection of the idea of an immortal soul, and was often referred to as a belief in “soul sleep” (but not by him).

#### References from 1868

The following Biblical references are cited:

- “For in death there is no remembrance of you; in Sheol who will give you praise?” (Psa 6:5 ESV).
- “For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they

any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun... Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest” (Eccl 9:5,6,10).

- “For the grave cannot praise thee, death can not celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth” (Isa 38:18-19).
- “Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.” (Psa 146:3,4).
- “For now should I have lain still and been quiet, I should have slept: then had I been at rest... Which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad, when they can find the grave?” (Job 3:13,22).
- For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth.(Isa 38:18-19)

Note: the third reference was given in 1868 as Psa 46:3-4, and this was repeated at least through the 1877 version, but The Declaration has the (presumably) correct version.

Other references often cited are:



- “For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity” (Eccl 3:19).
- “For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him. Though while he lived he blessed his soul: and men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself. He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light. Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish” (Psa 49:17-20).

## **Birmingham "Statement of Faith" From 1871**

### **A Statement of the “One Faith,”**

*Upon which the Christadelphian Ecclesia of Birmingham is founded;  
together with*

**A Specification of the Fables current in the  
Religious World,**

*Of which they require a rejection on the part of all applying for  
their Fellowship.*

### **PART SECOND.—FABLES TO BE REFUSED.**

**XXI.—THE THEORY OF DISEMBODIED  
EXISTENCE.**—That there is no existence in death,  
conscious or unconscious, and that the popular belief in  
heaven and hell is a delusion.<sup>1</sup>

**1.** Psa. vi. 5; Eccl. ix. 5, 6, 10; Psa. xli. 3, 4; Isa. xxxviii. 18, 19;  
Job iii. 13, 22.

Daniel has a remarkable statement on this subject. It is especially significant because of the use made of the same idea in the New Testament. His prophecy contains this reference to events in “the last days”, when God will show

His power once more in the earth, at “a time of trouble such as never was.”

“Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan 12:1-2).

It is noticeable that all these references are from the Old Testament, and in fact a belief in the immortal soul is absent from the Old Testament.

## **New Testament**

The situation is different when we look at what the Jews of Jesus’ time believed, particularly the Pharisees and Essenes<sup>34</sup>. It is clear that there was much effect of the Greek or Hellenistic views on the Immortality of the Soul, and such beliefs appear to have become part of the beliefs of many Jews by the time of Christ. So to be realistic, we need to turn to what Jesus and the apostles taught about the afterlife. The teachings about resurrection at the return of Jesus is clear, but as we know from many of those around us, this does not preclude the idea of some sort of afterlife

To answer this question it is essential to understand what the attitude of Jesus, and the Apostles after him, to the writings now known as the Old Testament. The facts are clear and beyond question: they all accepted “the law, the psalms and the prophets”, as the inspired Word of God. They quote from them constantly in support of their preaching; they never

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<sup>34</sup> “Two independent doctrines of the afterlife for the individual emerged in Judaism, probably during the last two centuries BC: the doctrine of the resurrection of bodies and that of the immortality of souls. In time (probably the first century AD), these two doctrines became conflated so as to yield the theory that, at the end of days, God will resurrect dead bodies, rejoin them with their souls, which never died, and the individual human being, reconstituted as he or she existed on earth, will come before God in judgment.” Cited from the Wikipedia article on “Christian Mortalism”, May 2016.

contradict or cast doubt upon any Old Testament passage, but rather seek to draw out the true significance of what was written. You would thus expect the New Testament writings to agree in their teaching with the Old, and so it proves. Here are a few examples.

There had been a tragedy in Galilee. Roman soldiers had killed a number of Jews in a religious riot. Some Jews came to Jesus to tell him of it. His response is very significant. Do you think, he asked, that those Galileans who died were greater sinners than all the other inhabitants of Galilee, because they suffered such a fate? Not at all, he said, but I tell you this: “except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:1-31)

Now “to perish” in the Bible means just what it means to us: to cease to exist with no suggestion of survival. There is no escaping the teaching of Jesus here: all mankind will perish, unless they repent. This is just like Psalm 49; man is like the beasts that perish, unless he understands. Here we have the first hint of the answer to our question, “Understand what?” It has evidently something to do with repentance.

Jesus also agreed with Daniel, who had declared that “many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake” (12:21). This is how John’s Gospel records his saying:

“...The hour is coming, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his [Jesus’] voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:28-29).

Look where the dead are: “in the tombs” (“sleep in the dust of the earth”, Daniel); they “come forth” by resurrection (“they awake”, Daniel); they come forth either to life or to judgement. The harmony between Jesus and Daniel is complete; the Lord is endorsing the teaching of the Old Testament on this important matter of the place, the state, and the fate of the dead.

The Apostles uphold the same teaching. John, in the best-known verse of the New Testament, declares: “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, **should not perish**, but have everlasting life” (3:16).

The words we have emphasized are frequently ignored, but there is no escaping the verdict that those who do not “believe on” Jesus (in the way the Scriptures explain) will perish, that is cease to exist.

The Apostle Paul has the same message. Writing to the believers in Ephesus, he tells them that before they came to know and believe in Christ, they were “without Christ having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12). This is a shattering saying. It tells us plainly that if we are not related to God through Christ, in the way He requires, we are “without hope.” How precious must be that “understanding” that can save us from such a fate!

The Apostle James tells his readers not to make too confident assertions of what they will do at some future time. You never know what will happen tomorrow, he says; and then adds: “What is your life? For ye are a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (James 4:14 RV).

Daniel’s description of the dead as “sleeping” in the grave is reproduced by the Apostle Paul. The believers at Thessalonica were mourning the death of some who had believed in Christ:

“I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep (he means in death), that ye sorrow not, even as the rest who have no hope...For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven...with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise...”(1 Thess 4:13,16).

Notice what this passage is saying: the faithful believers who have died are “asleep”; those who do not believe have “no

hope”; Christ personally (note “himself”) will descend from heaven; and the faithful dead will rise-from the grave of course. Here are basic teachings which are found throughout the New Testament. They are foundation truths of the Gospel.<sup>35</sup>

### Conclusion

The “proof texts” used by many are ably dealt with in *Wrested Scriptures*.<sup>36</sup> However, we need to be careful about relying solely or too heavily on the Old Testament references when we consider this topic. The certainty of the doctrine is not in dispute: but to rely on specific passages from Ecclesiastes is somewhat dubious. For example, we cited Ecclesiastes 3:19: but you can glance down and see “Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?” (Eccl 3:21). In the context of the book, what is this whole passage teaching? Only that Solomon was searching for the meaning of life, and having difficulties in coming up with a satisfying answer.

So as we work our way through these “doctrines to be rejected”, we need to be careful to avoid merely repeating the standard Christadelphian “proof texts,” without considering the background to the New Testament. There was a long time, 400 years, between the close of the Old Testament of the time of Jesus.

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<sup>35</sup> Cited from “After Death, What?” by Fred Pearce, pamphlet available from *The Christadelphian Magazine and Publishing Association*.

<sup>36</sup> *Wrested Scriptures* (Ron Abel) July 2011, edited by John Allfree.

## Chapter Thirteen

### Hell #9

*Doctrine to Be Rejected #9: That the wicked will suffer eternal torture in hell.*

This can be positively stated as: The wicked are destined to eternal oblivion in the grave, excepting only those of their number who are answerable to God and will be raised to condemnation, to return eternally to the grave.

### History

This doctrine, associated with is as that of conditional immortality or the sleep of death, goes back in the history of our community to 1835, when John Thomas wrote his “34 questions.” They include, in part:

1. If, as soon as the breath is out of a man's body, he be instantly translated to heaven or hell, how can he be said to be dead, and to rise again from the dead; is a man in heaven or hell, dead and alive at the same time? If so, where do the scriptures teach this?
2. Do the scriptures teach that men and women, and children, come from heaven and hell when they rise from the dead; or do they not rather teach, that men's mortal bodies will be made alive, i.e. re animated by the spirit, i.e. the power of God, as the body of Jesus was?

It is also interesting that the earliest Statement of Faith of Robert Roberts, written in 1868, says:

## Doctrines to Be Rejected

That the popular belief in heaven and hell is a delusion, therefore, the wicked will not suffer eternal torture, but will be engulfed in total destruction after resurrection.

### Origin of Hell

The concept of hell held by most professing Christians does not come from the Bible. Their beliefs originated from pagan philosophy.

Before proving the truth about hell from God's Word, we need to take note of the world's traditional beliefs:

The New Jewish Encyclopedia comments on the subject of hell in a very definitive manner:

Judaism does not teach a specific concept of hell. It is assumed that evildoers will be punished, but the manner and place of chastisement are left to the justice of God.

One of the most concise summaries of orthodox Christians' traditional concept of hell is found in the *Encyclopedia Americana*:

As generally understood, hell is...whither lost or condemned souls go after death to suffer indescribable torments and eternal punishment...It is the place of divine revenge, untempered, never ending. This has been the idea most generally held by Christians, Catholics, and Protestants alike.

As to the similarity of the concept of hell among various religions, the article continues, "The main features of hell as conceived by Hindu, Persian, Egyptian, Grecian, and Christian theologians are essentially the same."

The writings of Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) made a strong impression on Catholics during the later Middle Ages. His work *The Divine Comedy* provided vivid detail of sufferings in the dismal setting he described as hell or "Inferno."

His influential writings describing this inferno were inspired by many influences, including those of the Greek

philosophers, and, strangely, it has been argued, the philosophy of Islam.<sup>37</sup> All these ideas were from sources other than the Bible.

Strangely, the Catholics have recently repudiated this concept of hell as a place. Pope John Paul II, in a statement published on July 28, 1999:

The images of hell that Sacred Scripture presents to us must be correctly interpreted. They show the complete frustration and emptiness of life without God. Rather than a place, hell indicates the state of those who freely and definitively separate themselves from God, the source of all life and joy.

### **Bible Usage in the Old Testament<sup>38</sup>**

In the Authorized Version of the Old Testament the word ‘hell’ appears thirty-one times, however, in the Revised Standard Version of the Old Testament the word ‘hell’ does not appear in any of these verses, instead the word *sheol* appears. What does *sheol* mean? *Sheol* is a transliterated Hebrew word that means “a hollow and subterranean place, full of thick darkness” (Gesenius). The New International Version of the Old Testament does not use *sheol* or “hell” in any of these verses but rather “grave,” “death” or “the depth”.

In none of the verses where *sheol* appears is there any association with the idea that this is a place of torment or punishment. The verses that do comment on what is experienced in *sheol*, but indicate that there is a complete lack of conscious thought or deliberate action there. For example:

- “For in death there is no remembrance of Thee: in the grave [*sheol*] who shall give Thee thanks?” (Psa 6:5);

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<sup>37</sup> See the Wikipedia article on “Divine Comedy”.

<sup>38</sup> These two sections are from the *Testimony’s* “Basic Bible Principles, on “Hell”.



- “there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave [*sheol*]” (Eccl 9:10);
- “the grave [*sheol*] cannot praise Thee, death cannot celebrate Thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for Thy truth” (Isa 38:18).

“Hell” in the AV of the Old Testament is, therefore, to be understood as referring to that place to which all are gathered at death.

## Hell in the New Testament

In the Authorized Version of the New Testament the word ‘hell’ appears twenty-three times. This may cause confusion because in the original Greek three different words are to be found. These are *Gehenna*, *Hades*, and also *Tartaros*, which occurs once in 2 Peter 2:4.

The confusion is compounded in the New International Version, which renders *hades* as ‘hell’ in Luke 16:23, as “grave” in Acts 2:27 and as ‘hades’ in Revelation 1:18. In the Revised Standard Version there is less confusion and more consistency because *Gehenna* is always translated “hell”, and *hades* is left as “Hades” (Matt 16:18 uses “death”, but the margin indicates “Hades”).

What do these Greek words mean?

*Gehenna* means “the valley of (the sons of) Hinnom”. In the Old Testament it is associated with idolatry, fire rituals and child sacrifices (2 Kgs 23:10; Jer 7:31,32; 19:1-6; 32:35).

The normal Christadelphian view is<sup>39</sup>:

In New Testament times *Gehenna* was still associated with fire and death. It was the place where the bodies of convicted criminals were thrown and where waste materials were deposited to be destroyed by the ever-burning fires. With the

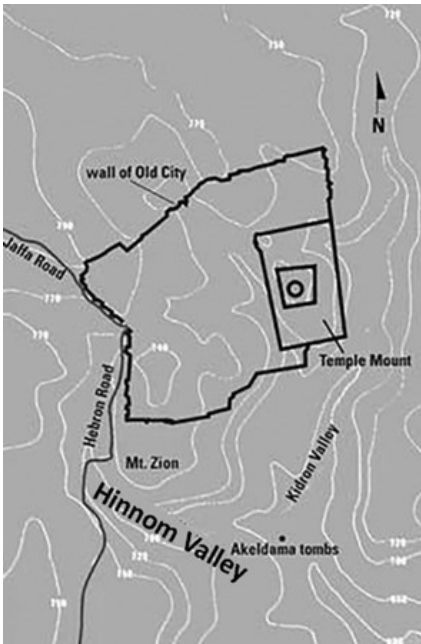
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<sup>39</sup> See [http://christadelphianbooks.org/agora/art\\_less/h08.html](http://christadelphianbooks.org/agora/art_less/h08.html), etc.

exception of James 3:6 it is used only by Jesus, and in passages in which he is stressing the certainty of annihilation at death if behavior and attitudes are not changed. “Hell fire” is not, therefore, speaking of the nature of the punishment for those adjudged as wicked but is a picture of what will happen to the unworthy. As the hot and corrosive conditions in the valley of Hinnom utterly destroyed anything left there, so the unworthy will cease to exist.

*Hades* is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *sheol* and generally refers to that which the dead occupy: the grave. It is translated as ‘grave’ in the AV in this passage: “O death, where is thy sting? O grave [hades], where is thy victory?” (1Cor 15:55). This appears to be quoting Hos 13:14, where, interestingly, *sheol* is translated ‘grave’: “O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave [sheol], I will be thy destruction”.

The treatment of Hades is essentially quite correct. The



discussion of *Gehanna* is essentially that repeated in almost every Christadelphian source we have seen. There is no doubt that *Gehanna*, “the valley of Hinnon”, is undoubtedly the place of burial of convicted criminals as well as the location of “80 burial caves, most of which date to the time of Jesus, what archaeologists and other scholars refer to as the Herodian period (37 BC – 70 AD). Some of these tombs

are in magnificent condition, still standing to their full height”<sup>40</sup>. But it probably did not gain this association because the garbage of the city was burned there: this is a very late tradition, recorded only in around 1200 AD by Rabbi David Kimhi.

However, the association of the valley with unquenchable fire in the minds of the Jews that Jesus was addressing is almost certainly correct. For the theme of the “accursed valley” is developed in extra biblical literature (that written after the close of the Old Testament). In these writings, *Gehenna* represents an eternal, but still localized, place of judgment (1 Enoch 27) bearing that name: (2 Baruch 59:10, 85:13; 4 Ezra 7:36). Isaiah, in a tradition parallel to the judgment in Jer 19:11-14, states, “their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched” (Isa 66:24 NIV). Though the two symbols (the valley and the unquenchable fire) do not refer to each other directly, they are associated with each other in these extra biblical texts. Within the New Testament, these symbols are largely interchangeable metaphors (Mark 9:43). The association is likely due to the intertestamental synthesis of Jeremiah 7:32 and Isaiah 66:24, the original (burnt) sacrifices offered in Hinnom, or the tradition that the Maccabees burned enemy corpses in it.<sup>41</sup>

Thus the Christadelphian view that hell (*Gehanna*) represented burning and complete destruction at the time of Jesus, and hence for our interpretation of the Bible, is correct. But the explanation is that it was a place of the burning of garbage, and hence of perpetual fire and destruction, is based upon a dubious tradition of a millennia later the time of Jesus.

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<sup>40</sup> See “Akeldama, Potter’s Field or High Priest’s Tomb?” By Leen and Kathleen Ritmeyer, *Biblical Archeology Review* March/April 1994.

<sup>41</sup> Based on the entry on *Gehenna* in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. The same information is included in some modern major Biblical commentaries.

## Chapter Fourteen

### Heaven #10

*Doctrine to Be Rejected #10: That the righteous will ascend to the kingdoms beyond the skies when they die.*

The doctrine concerning Heaven-going can be stated in a positive way: None ascend to heaven; the Lord Jesus being the only exception, and in this case for the purpose of his continuing mediatorial work. The righteous await the return of Christ for the bestowal of immortality.

#### History

John Thomas had a closely related section: The kingdom, a state of bliss above the stars, although of course his recognition of the coming Kingdom on Earth eliminated this idea.

Robert Roberts had very similar words in 1868: That the righteous will not ascend to kingdoms beyond the skies after death, or at any other time, but will inherit the earth forever

#### Introduction

“And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven” (John 3:13).

Heaven is certainly not “man’s eternal abode” but “God’s throne” (Matt 5:34), for “no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven” (John 3:13). And if

Peter could say of David that “He is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day...for David is not ascended into the heavens” (Acts 2:29, 34), then who else could expect to go there? The late William Temple in his book *Nature, Man and God* neatly summed the hope of the Christian by writing: “The authentic Christian doctrine is a doctrine not of immortality, but of resurrection.”

### **False Doctrine**

The vast majority of Christian denominations teach that there is no such thing as death, if “death” is properly defined as “the total absence of life.”

Instead, according to their teaching, when the body dies, the “soul,” the “real you,” goes to heaven or hell, and keeps right on living either in eternal bliss or eternal torment. Therefore, most Christians do not believe that people actually experience “death” when their body dies.

Some scholars believe the shift in belief came because the Kingdom of God (i.e., Christ’s return) wasn’t immediate. Once the religions of the world accepted the idea that the “soul” or “spirit” did not die when the body died, the next step was to determine its post-mortem address. Where does the soul live after the body dies? A study of the various religions of the world shows that it was, and still is, very common to believe that “good” people go either to the abode of the gods (sometimes called “heaven”), while evil people go to a place of punishment or torment. These beliefs eventually found their way into both Judaism and Christianity.

### **“Man is Mortal”**

This 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! It then follows that there must be somewhere less pleasant for the unrighteous, who are doomed to live forever in imagined torment. 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 forever in that death state: they could be described as dead in the dust, or as asleep perpetually. As Jeremiah says: “In their heat I will make their feasts, and I will make them drunken, that they may rejoice, and sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the LORD” (Jer 51:39).

The Psalmist (Psa 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 ruler-ship. 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” (Isa 26:14).

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 second coming of Christ: “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” (Isa 26:19).

## Death State

The view of the death state in the New Testament is clearly not of the dichotomy of Heaven or Hell. Rather, the death state is likened to being asleep, and we all know that we are unconscious, unaware of our surroundings, in that state.

- “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan 12:2).
- “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep” (1 Cor 11:30).
- “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed” (1 Cor 15:51).
- “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him” (1 Thess 4:14).

## What is Heaven?

So what is Heaven? It is a very common term, being used 420 times or so in the Bible. If we just look at the New Testament, the term is used 284 times, 94 times in the plural, but it is hard to see any particular significance in these latter occurrences. Heaven is used in several different ways, and it helps to briefly consider the major aspects. It is noticeable that in no case is it described as a place to which we ascend when we die: there are no pearly gates, no clouds, none of our antecedents looking down on us. So let us look briefly at the chief ways it is used in the New Testament.

1. Heaven (and earth) were created by God  
“Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:” (Acts 4:24)

2. Heaven is a term for the firmament, the realm above the earth

“Behold the fowls of the air (Greek *ouranos*: heaven)”  
(Matt 6:26).

“And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven” (Mark 6:41).

3. Jesus will come down from Heaven

“And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come” (1 Thess 1:10).

4. God is in Heaven

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.  
(Matt 5:16)

5. Heaven is the origin of the events described in Revelation

“And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God” (Rev 21:2-3)

6. Heaven is the dwelling place of angels

“Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt 18:10).

7. Heaven has been and will be opened

“And [Paul] said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God”



## Doctrines to Be Rejected

(Acts 7:56).

Nowhere is it used of a place where the soul goes when we die.

## Chapter Fifteen

### Devil #11

*Doctrine to Be Rejected #11: That the Devil is a supernatural personal being.*<sup>42</sup>

The doctrine can be re-stated in a positive way: The Devil is variously manifested as that which falsely “accuses.” It is the manifestation of the ungodly characteristics of sin’s flesh, and will cease to exist when sin is ultimately destroyed:

### History

The rejection of this doctrine was made clear by John Thomas in his *Elpis Israel*.<sup>43</sup> However, for completeness we

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<sup>42</sup> Note the subject of “demons” is quite different, but it is not covered in the Statement of Faith.

<sup>43</sup> “This enemy within the human nature is the mind of the flesh, which is enmity against God; it is not subject to His law, neither indeed can be... This is the accuser, adversary, and calumniator of God, whose stronghold is the flesh. It is the Devil and Satan within the human nature; so that ‘when a man is tempted, he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed’. If a man examine himself, he will perceive within him something at work, craving after things which the law of God forbids. The best of men are conscious of this enemy within them. It troubled the apostle so much, that he exclaimed, ‘O, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death’, or, this mortal body? He thanked God that the Lord Jesus Christ would do it; that is, as he had himself been delivered from it, by God raising him from the dead by His Spirit.” (*Elpis Israel*, written in 1849).

include a brief analysis of this topic.<sup>44</sup>

His Synopsis has: The Devil, a fallen but immortal archangel, the enemy of mankind, and great antagonist of the Deity; some think he is mortal and to be finally destroyed.

And Robert Roberts had in 1868: That there is no such thing as a supernatural personal devil, the devil of Scripture being but a personification of sin in its several phases and manifestations among men.

### Introduction

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet 5:8).

“And the Devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Rev 20:10).

The Christadelphian “Statement of Faith” fully describes God, but does leave the possibility open of another type of evil “supreme being.” Many of the denominations around us have some such a belief, although this is often not emphasized these days. This false belief is based upon a very selective treatment of some passages in both the Old and New Testaments.

Sometimes the original words of the Bible text are left untranslated (“Mammon”, in Matt 6:24, is an Aramaic example of this). As for other words, “Satan” is an untranslated Hebrew word that means “adversary,” while

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<sup>44</sup> This whole topic is of course the subject of a large number of pamphlets, books, etc. The treatment we are using is largely based on the section in “*Bible Basics*”, although similar works can be found: for example, “*The Devil, the Great Deceiver*” by Peter Watkins (*The Christadelphian Magazine and Publishing Association*).

“Devil” is a translation of the Greek word *diabolos*, meaning a liar, an enemy or false accuser. If we are to believe that Satan and the Devil are some being outside of us, which is responsible for sin, then whenever we come across these words in the Bible, we have to make them refer to this evil person. The Biblical usage of these words shows that they can be used as ordinary adjectives, describing ordinary people. This fact makes it impossible to reason that the words Devil and Satan, as used in the Bible, do in themselves refer to a great wicked person or being outside of us.

## **The Word ‘Satan’ in the Bible**

The Bible records:

“The Lord stirred up an adversary (same Hebrew word elsewhere translated “Satan”) unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite” (1 Kgs 11:14).

“And God stirred up another adversary (another Satan)...Rezon...he was an adversary (a Satan) to Israel” (1 Kgs 11:23, 25).

This does not mean that God stirred up a supernatural person or an Angel to be a Satan/adversary to Solomon; He stirred up ordinary men. Matthew 16:22-23 provides another example. Peter had been trying to dissuade Jesus from going up to Jerusalem to die on the cross. Jesus turned and said unto Peter “Get thee behind me, Satan...thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.” Thus Peter was called a Satan. The record is crystal clear that Christ was not talking to an Angel or a monster when he spoke those words; he was talking to Peter.

The books of Samuel and Chronicles are parallel accounts of the same incidents, similarly to the way the four gospels are records of the same events but using different language. 2 Samuel 24:1 records: “The LORD...moved David against Israel” to make him take a census of Israel. The parallel

account in 1 Chronicles 21:1 says that “Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David” to take the census. In one passage God does the provoking, in the other Satan does it. The only conclusion is that God acted as a ‘Satan’ or adversary to David. He did the same to Job by bringing trials into his life, so that Job said about God: “With thy strong hand thou opposest thyself against me” (Job 30:21); “You are acting as a Satan against me”, was what Job was basically saying.

### The Word “Devil” in the Bible

And so it is with the word “Devil”. Jesus said, “Have not I chosen you twelve (disciples), and one of you is a Devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot...” (John 6:70-71). Judas was an ordinary, mortal man. He was not speaking of a personal being with horns, or a so-called “spirit being”. The word “Devil” here simply refers to a wicked man. Another example. “Even so must their wives be grave, not **slanderers**, sober, faithful in all things” (1 Tim 3:11). The wives of church elders were not to be “slanderers”; the original Greek word here is *diabolos*, which is the same word translated ‘Devil’ elsewhere. Similarly, Paul warns Titus that the aged women in the ecclesia should not be “false accusers” or “Devils” (Titus 2:3). And likewise he told Timothy (2 Tim 3:1,3) that “In the last days...men shall be...false accusers [Devils].” This does not mean that human beings will turn into superhuman beings, but that they will be increasingly wicked. It ought to be quite clear from all this that the words “Devil” and “Satan” do not refer to a fallen Angel or a sinful being outside of us.

### Sin, Satan and the Devil

The words “Satan” and “Devil” are used figuratively to describe the natural sinful tendencies within us. These are our main “Satan” or adversary. They are also personified, and as such they can be spoken of as “the Devil”— our enemy, a

slanderer of the truth. This is what our natural ‘man’ is like—the very Devil. The connection between the Devil and our evil desires, sin within us, is made explicit in several passages: “As the children [ourselves] are partakers of flesh and blood, he [Jesus] also himself likewise took part of the same; that through [his] death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil” (Heb 2:14). The Devil is here described as being responsible for death. But “the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23). Therefore, sin and the Devil must be parallel. “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed” (James 1:14). It is our evil desires that tempt us, leading us to sin and therefore to death. But “him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;” (Heb 2:14): this says that it is the Devil brings death. Contrast this with Romans 8:3: “God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh [that is, in our human nature] condemned sin in the flesh.” This shows that the Devil and the sinful tendencies that are naturally within human nature are effectively the same. It is vitally important to understand that Jesus was tempted just like us. Misunderstanding the doctrine of the Devil means that we cannot correctly appreciate the nature and work of Jesus. It was only because Jesus had our human nature — the “Devil” within him — that we can have the hope of salvation.

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15).

By overcoming the desires of his own nature, the Biblical Devil, Jesus was able to destroy the Devil on the cross. “He that committeth sin is of the Devil” (1 John 3:8), because sin is the result of giving way to our own natural, evil desires, which the Bible calls ‘the Devil’. “For this purpose the son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil” (1 John 3:8). If we are correct in saying that the Devil is our evil desires, then the works of our evil desires (i.e.,

what they result in) are our sins.

“He [Jesus] was manifested to take away our sins” (1 John 3:5). This confirms that “our sins” and “the works of the Devil” are the same. Acts 5:3 provides another example of this connection between the Devil and our sins. Peter says to Ananias: “Why hath Satan filled thine heart?” Then in verse four Peter says “Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart?” Conceiving something bad within our heart is the same as Satan filling our heart. If we ourselves conceive something (e.g., a sinful plan) then it begins inside us. If a woman conceives a child, it doesn’t exist outside of her; it begins inside her. Psalm 109:6 parallels a sinful person with a “Satan”: “Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand” (i.e., in power over him).

### Personification

However, you may reasonably reply: “But it does talk as if the Devil is a person!” That is quite correct; Hebrews 2:14 speaks of “him that hath the power of death, that is, the Devil.” But even a small amount of Bible reading shows that it often uses personification — speaking of an abstract idea as if it is a person.

- “Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars: She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table” (Prov 9:1-2).
- “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord: (Rom 6:23).

Here we have a woman called “Wisdom” building a house, and sin is a paymaster giving wages of death. Our Devil, the *diabolos*, often represents our evil desires. Yet you cannot have abstract diabolism; the evil desires that are in a man’s

heart cannot exist separately from a man; therefore “the Devil” is personified. Sin is often personified as a master: it is understandable, therefore, that the “Devil” is also personified, seeing that “the Devil” also refers to sin.

“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” (Matt 6:13 NET). This sinful part of our nature is personified as “the evil one” — the Biblical Devil. The same Greek phrase translated “evil one” here is translated as “wicked person” in 1 Corinthians 5:13, showing that when a person gives way to sin, his “evil one” ---he himself ---becomes an “evil one”, or a “Devil”.

### **“Devil” and “Satan” and the World Order**

These words, “Devil” and “Satan,” are also used to describe the wicked, sinful world order in which we live. The social, political and religious hierarchies of mankind can be spoken of in terms of “the Devil”. The Devil and Satan in the New Testament often refer to the political and social power of the Jewish or Roman systems:

- “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried” (Rev 2:10).
- “And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges; I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is” (Rev 2:12-13).

The first refers to the Roman authorities imprisoning believers. In the second we read of the church in Pergamos being situated where Satan’s seat, or throne, was — i.e., the place of governorship for a Roman colony in Pergamos, where there was also a group of believers. We cannot say that Satan himself, if he exists, personally had a throne in Pergamos.



Individual sin is defined as a transgression against God's law. But sin, when expressed collectively as a political and social force opposed to God, is a force more powerful than individuals. It is this collective power that is sometimes personified as a powerful being called "the Devil". In this sense Iran and other Islamic powers have called the United States, "the great Satan" — i.e., the great adversary to their cause, in political and religious terms. This is how the words "Devil" and "Satan" are often used in the Bible.

It is probably true to say that for this subject, more than any other, it is vital to base our understanding upon a balanced view of the whole Bible, rather than building massive doctrines on a few verses containing catch-phrases that appear to refer to the common beliefs concerning the Devil. The words Devil and Satan are words can be used as ordinary adjectives, or in some places they refer to the sin that is found within our own human nature.

## Conclusion

One of the foundations of Scriptures is that we have a choice to do good, or not to, of our own volition. We can choose to do God's will, or we can choose not to: "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8).

## Chapter Sixteen

### Church #12

*Doctrine to Be Rejected #12: That the Kingdom of God is “the church.”*

This can be stated in a positive way: The Kingdom of God is a divine political empire to be established on earth at the return of Jesus Christ.

#### History

This belief has been part of our Statement of Faith from its earliest times. John Thomas, in fact, included it in 1867 as part of his synopsis among the doctrines as Perverted by the Apostasy: “The Kingdom of God, the ‘Church’.”

Robert Roberts stated: “That the kingdom of God is not ‘the Church,’ or a region beyond the stars, but a system of things to be established under Christ on earth, in the Holy Land.”

This can be compared with the BASF clause 19: “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 (Dan 2:44; 7:13-14; Rev 11:15; Isa 32:1, 16; 2:3-4; 11:9-10).”

One Biblical passage clearly describes this kingdom:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall

go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD. (Isa. 2:2-5)

### **The Belief of Most of Christendom**

The belief that the term “The Kingdom of God” does refer primarily to the Present Church goes back around 1600 years. To quote a summary:

Early church writings talk about the Kingdom of God, yet its meaning wasn’t articulated fully until St. Augustine. Augustine (AD 354-430) was the first Catholic theologian to thoroughly define the Kingdom of God. In his book “City of God,” Augustine describes two kingdoms: The Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Man. For Augustine, the Kingdom of God on earth was the Catholic Church. Augustine also described the Kingdom of God as encompassing a heavenly element: those believers who had already passed away. The Kingdom of Man consisted of everyone outside the Church.<sup>45</sup>

This has been echoes in many more recent creeds:

1. The Heidelberg Catechism identifies the keys of the kingdom of heaven as the preaching of the gospel and Christian discipline by which believers are accepted of God in the fellowship of the congregation and by which unbelievers are excluded from the fellowship of God and excommunicated from the church. Thus this creed identifies the church as the kingdom. Thus

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<sup>45</sup> From <http://peopleof.oureyverydaylife.com/views-roman-catholics-kingdom-god-2441.html>: extracted 2016.

also, the Catechism teaches that the kingdom is spiritual. The same Reformed confession explains the second petition of the model prayer, about the coming of the kingdom, this way: “preserve and increase Thy church.”

2. The Belgic Confession establishes the identification of the church as the kingdom as Reformed orthodoxy when it declares Christ to be the king of the church: “This church hath been from the beginning of the world, and will be to the end thereof; which is evident from this, that Christ is an eternal King, which, without subjects, cannot be” (Art. 32).
3. The Westminster Confession of Faith is explicit: “The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel ... is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.” Significantly, the Confession immediately adds, “the house and family of God.” The phrase that is added is significant because it shows that the Confession has its eye on 1 Timothy 3, where the phrase is found.

## **The Threefold Meaning**

It is perhaps unfortunate that our Christadelphian Statements of Faith, such as the BASF, lack the acknowledgement that the term “Kingdom of God” (or “Heaven”) is used in several senses in the Bible, which sometimes force us on the defensive when discussing this. It has, unfortunately, also sometimes caused internal controversy, as some have pointed this out and have been assailed for so doing. This was particularly so in the 1970s, a time of some turmoil in our community in the UK. This caused Fred Pearce to contribute a valuable article on the subject, in which he commenced:

It is evident from our correspondence that there is some discussion at present about the meaning of “the kingdom of God (of heaven)” in the Scriptures. Some would

maintain that the expression refers only to the future Kingdom to be set up by Christ at his return to the earth; others would add to this an occasional reference to the person of Jesus Christ as the embodiment of divine, kingly power; and still others would say that, in addition to these senses, “the kingdom of God” in the New Testament sometimes refers to the sovereignty of God and of Christ over the saints during their probation.<sup>46</sup>

There had been wise words written by L.G. Sargent many years before when discussing the Sermon of the Mount:

“The Kingdom”, then, has a threefold meaning. First and last it is the future reign into which men may enter through judgment, and this must govern all secondary meanings. But it is also the power, authority, sovereignty, vested in the King; and in this sense the Kingdom was in their midst when he was among them, searching and testing them by their response to him. Further, the Kingdom is the message through which men become related to the future order. The use of “Kingdom” in this sense is something more than a metonymy, because the message is an operative power working among men to prepare the materials out of which the future Kingdom is to be formed; and the relation to the Kingdom of those who accept the message is more than a hope: it is a covenant. Because covenant and kingdom are inseparable for the people of God, the present possessive can be used even of the time of their probation: theirs’ is the Kingdom. The ground of their blessedness is their relation to God and His King.<sup>47</sup>

## Past Kingdom

There is of course also a further aspect to this topic, that of the Kingdom of Israel:

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<sup>46</sup> *The Christadelphian*, 1977, p 411

<sup>47</sup> *The Teaching of the Master*, LG Sargent, *Christadelphian Magazine and Publishing Association*, 1961

- “And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel” (Exod 19:6).
- “And the LORD said unto Samuel, hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them” (1 Sam 8:7).
- “And of all my sons (for the LORD hath given me many sons) he hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel” (1 Chron 28:5).

Of course, this Kingdom was taken away from the inhabitants because of their wickedness, and the prophets described the future glorious kingdom.

## **Present Possession**

To further quote from the article referred to above by Pearce concerning the third aspect:

In Romans 14 the Apostle Paul is insisting that the right way to “live unto the Lord” is not to demand that certain days must be observed, nor that certain foods or drink must be banned; for ‘the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit’ (v. 17, RV). Here “The kingdom of God” is directly identified with qualities of the mind, as in the Apostle’s description of ‘the fruit of the Spirit’, which begins: “love, joy, peace ...”, and of course righteousness is implied anyway. To come under the influence then, of the Spirit of God and the spirit of Christ (Rom 8:9), in place of ‘the spirit of the world’ and ‘the natural man’ (1 Cor 2:12, 14), is to come under “the kingdom of God”. That this is the right understanding is shown by the way Paul goes on: “For he that in these things serveth Christ

is acceptable to God” (v 18). To be “in the kingdom of God” in this sense is a matter of serving him in the right way, in the spirit and not in the flesh.

Even more striking is Paul’s description in his Letter to the Colossians of the change of status which had been granted to the believers. God has “made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: (he) hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col 1:12-13). Both the verbs are in the past tense, implying that their actions have already been accomplished. “To translate” here means to remove from one place to another, and what this involves for the saints is “redemption ... even the forgiveness of sins” and being “reconciled” to God (v. 14, 21). Abundant confirmation that this is what Paul means by the transferring of the saints “into the kingdom” of Christ is found in parallel passages like these:

Paul describes his commission to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles as “to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God” (Acts 26:18):

- “Ye were once darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light ...” (Eph 5:8).
- “Ye are ... a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that ye should shew forth the excellencies of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Pet 2:9 RV).
- “Ye turned from idols to serve the living and true God ...” (1 Thess 1:19).

To be “translated into the kingdom” of God’s Son then is to serve God, to be “in the light” (1 John 2:10) and so to walk as “children of light”, or, being “good seed,” as “children of the

kingdom” (Matt 13:38).

## **The Future Kingdom in the BASF**

Of course, we must emphasize the primacy of the Future Kingdom in this discussion. It is clear that this aspect dominates most of the Old and New Testaments, and it is rightly the focus of our preaching and is the larger part of our Statement of Faith: “The Things of the Kingdom.” As such, it compromises just about 25% of the statement.

As it says (clause XVII): 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” XX. — That for this purpose God will send Jesus Christ personally to the earth at the close of the times of the Gentiles

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

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 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

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

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-possessioners of the earth, and joint administrators of God’s authority among men in everything

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

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”

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

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

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

### **General Summary**

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14).

“The God of heaven shall set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (Dan 2:44).

## Chapter Seventeen

### Only Christ #13

*Doctrines to be Rejected #13: That the Gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ merely.*

This can be restated in a positive way: The gospel includes the covenants of promise granted to Abraham and David and involves the establishment of God's kingdom on earth.

“And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham” (Gal 3:8-9).

### History

There was no mention in the synopsis by John Thomas, but Robert Roberts had in 1868, in the section on “Fables to be refused:”

XXIV. — THREE-FACT GOSPEL. That the Gospel is not the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ merely, but the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. — (Acts 8:12; 28:30-31)

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 judgment, nor the restoration of Israel. Christianity hardly required adherence to particular standards, but the most depraved souls winged their way to heaven. *Elpis Israel*, and similar works, which followed it, represented the restatement of a Gospel that, though never altogether eclipsed, had been ignored by generations of theologians. To quote:

The Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia summarizes the gospel message this way:

The central truth of the gospel is that God has provided a way of salvation for men through the gift of His son to the world. He suffered as a sacrifice for sin, overcame death, and now offers a share in his triumph to all who will accept it. The gospel is good news because it is a gift of God, not something that must be earned by penance or by self-improvement.

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 recognized in a ‘like precious faith’ to that of the apostles. They believed and taught all these things. (*Elpis Israel*, Part II, chapter 1, page 189)

## **“Repent Ye and Believe the Gospel”**

It is difficult, of course, to summarize “The Gospel.” It encompasses almost the whole of God’s message, and occupies the largest parts of many of the books outlining our beliefs. We would note some inevitable overlap with the topic of the Kingdom, covered under #12.

We will, however, quote largely from a summary written by a former editor of *The Christadelphian*, Alfred Nichols, in the magazine:<sup>48</sup>

We are accustomed to the somewhat vague conceptions of the Gospel that are held outside our body, and to some current and radical ideas that “the Gospel teaches us that the death of God in Christ has freed men from the tyranny of a transcendent Power.” But are we sure that we know and understand all the implications of the Gospel ourselves?

Our Statement of Faith says that “the gospel consists of ‘the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ’.” So it does, but it means even more. The way the word is used in the Scriptures shows what a great divine conception it is, and how wide and deep are its implications.

The term Gospel (Gk. *euangelion*) originally denoted a reward for the bearer of good tidings; later the idea of reward disappeared and the word stood for the good news itself. This is the meaning of the New Testament word. But if it means “good news” — good news of what?

## **The Gospel of God**

Peter and Paul refer to “the gospel of God” for this is where the good news began: He is its source, its glory and its power. And it is, supremely, the good news that God is involved in the affairs of men to the extent that He has established a

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<sup>48</sup> *The Christadelphian*, 1970 p 385.

divine-human relationship of love and purpose.

Speaking of his attitude to bonds and afflictions, the Apostle Paul referred to this relationship thus: “None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24).

This gospel of grace was what the ministry of Paul was about, and his epistles abound in the word grace, for without it there would have been no savior nor the promise of God’s Kingdom on earth.

Grace is of the very nature of God: He revealed it to Moses who taught it to Israel; it was manifested by Jesus to the Apostles and the multitudes; and it was preached by the Apostles to the ecclesias. We should lack gratitude and feeling if we were not moved by all that the Apostle Paul wrote about this: not least of sinners “being justified freely by God’s grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom 3:24).

This is the heart of the Gospel message: the good news that the compassion, grace, and mercy of God overflowed in His sacrifice of love so that as Jesus declared: “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). It is through the loving, obedient sacrifice of Jesus that He is reconciling to Himself all who will believe in faith.

It is this Gospel of God, which has His grace at its center, that gives meaning and beauty to the life and death of Jesus and that gives purposive point to what God intends to do, through Jesus and the saints, in His Kingdom on earth.

The Father’s grace in mightily blessing us with His call, unworthy though we be, is a supreme reason for thanksgiving daily to be on our lips and in our hearts.

## The Gospel of Christ

Like Father, like Son: all the love that God revealed to Moses shortly before the revelation of the ritual of the Law, Jesus revealed in his reading from the prophecy of Isaiah in the synagogue incident at the outset of his ministry. Second only to the self-sacrificing love of the Father, is the sacrificial denial of self in life, and the sacrifice of life in death to which Jesus submitted himself. The good news that results from this is that his perfect obedience won him the power to unlock the grave for others.

Jesus himself preached this “Gospel” when he said: “Everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:40). And he triumphantly proclaimed the fact of his good news when he told John on Patmos: “...Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore; and have the keys of hell and of death” (Rev 1:17-18).

The Apostle Paul refers to the burial and resurrection of Jesus as “the gospel which I preached unto you,” and this accounts for his use of the term “the gospel of Christ,” which occurs in several of his letters. Thus “Gospel” covers the whole field of salvation: the promise of peace for the nations and glory for the saints.

What is of even greater importance for us now, is the assurance of this good news that God, the Father, is actively concerned, through Jesus, with our daily lives, and each second of time that ticks away is the guarantee that He never leaves nor forsakes us; and all this was made possible by the sacrifice of the Son who promised that as the Comforter (*paraklētos*) he too, would come alongside, or be with us.

There could hardly be better news for us and the world: or a greater gospel to preach to others.

## The Gospel of the Kingdom

Jesus "...came into Galilee, preaching the gospel 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).

There, he was referring not to the kingdom, which he will establish at his second coming, but to his own sovereignty as the Messiah-King. The primary sense of the Greek word *basileia* (translated kingdom) is sovereignty or kingly rule.

That is why Jesus emphasized that the Kingdom was "at hand" or "had come nigh." He expressed the same idea to the Pharisees on their asking him "when the kingdom of God should come" for he answered: "Behold the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21) or, as the Revised Version renders it: "is in the midst of you."

There is a parallel here with David whose throne Jesus is to inherit. David was anointed King long before he sat on the throne, and before he came to power, he began gathering loyal servants who would help him in his sovereign task. When Jesus told the chief priests and elders that "the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof," he was still speaking of a present sovereignty.

The chain of events that culminated in his death and resurrection led to the gathering of a sovereign host of servants who become "an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession" (1 Pet 2:9 ASV). That is why Paul, who wrote of Jesus being "set at God's right hand in the heavenly places" (Eph 1:20), could also write that God "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6). This is indeed a sovereign status, which we will deserve; but woe betide us if we prove traitors to our high calling!



A sovereign “nation” being prepared for the Lord who will sit as King needs a people and territory over which to rule, and it is for this consummation that Jesus and the saints wait. Jesus spoke of the time when he would “sit on his throne of glory” and told the disciples that they would “sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt 19:28).

Paul, probably taking his clue from the prophecy of Jesus, that when he sits on his throne of glory “before him shall be gathered all nations” (Matt 25:32), wrote that the saints shall judge the world.

A sovereign role in earthly princes demands a dedicated response to discipline and training. Our response to a much higher role should be not less, but rather more.

### **The Gospel of Our Salvation**

Paul, writing to the Ephesians and the Colossians, wrote of another aspect of the Gospel: “The word of truth, the gospel of your salvation” (Eph 1:13). And as he shows in his letter to Titus, God, the Father, and Jesus, the Son, cannot be separated in their work of salvation. In his opening words he describes both of them as “Savior.” Thus, the gospel of salvation is the good news that both are totally involved in the salvation and life of those who believe. There could hardly be a better illustration of this participation in the affairs of the saints than that provided by Jesus in his parable of the lost sheep, which concluded with the promise that there would be “joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth” (Luke 15:7), thus linking the families of earth and heaven together.

Unless we are lacking in spiritual sense and faith, we want it this way. And when we are in trouble of any kind we plead in prayer through Jesus for the Father’s involvement in our problems, so that He can help us to solve them. But we are not so ready totally to involve ourselves with Him and His purposes, and we are generally reluctant to commit all the serious decisions of our lives to His judgments and will.

If we make demands upon God, He makes demands upon us: “This is the man to whom I will look, says the LORD, he that is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word” (Isa 66:2). The word “look” means that He will look at those who respond to His call with close attention.

The Gospel of the grace of God, which has such a wide application, includes the good news of the committal of men to the ministry of this grace, but it is here that we often fail greatly, because we so like to keep the course of our lives in our own hands. Jesus made clear that this does not satisfy his Father nor does it please him. He taught, and lived, denial of self: a complete and absolute denial, and Paul wrote that to “present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God” was no more than our “reasonable service” (Rom 12:1). This Gospel, in all its aspects, is a way of peace, and not of strife; it is a way of walking in fellowship or partnership with God, with Jesus, and with one another. It is a way that abhors the kind of “divisions” about which Paul wrote to the Corinthians: the formation of groups within an ecclesia — a practice that weakens the work of grace among its members. Above all it tarnishes the vision of a people being prepared for the All in All of the Father.

We have been privileged to receive a Gospel of such grace that nothing that we can do will ever make us merit its rewards, but at least we can continue to strive to “walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory” (1 Thess 2:12).

## Chapter Eighteen

### Christ and the Millennium #14

*Doctrines to be Rejected #14: That Christ will not come till the close of the thousand years.*

This can be restated in a positive way: Jesus Christ returns to establish the millennium, and will reign as king during that period.

#### History

This statement was added by Robert Roberts when he issued his *Ecclesial Guide* in 1883. It did not occur earlier, and it is interesting that it does seem a little redundant, as the “Truth To Be Received” includes:

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; Psa 102:16,21; 2Tim 4:1; Acts 1:9,11; Dan 7:13), and also

XXIV. — That at the appearing of Christ prior to the establishment of the Kingdom ...

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 (Rev 20:4-8; 12:15; Isa 65:20; Ezek 44:22,25; 1Cor 15:24,28).

It is at least possible that Robert Roberts added this clause because he had been in controversy with one David King, a

Campbellite who strongly believed in Postmillennialism, such as discussed below. We note that John Thomas, although originally a Campbellite, began to deeply study the Bible prophecies in the early 1840s in Illinois, USA and became fascinated by the views of William Miller, who predicted the physical return of Christ in 1844 (“The Great Disappointment”).

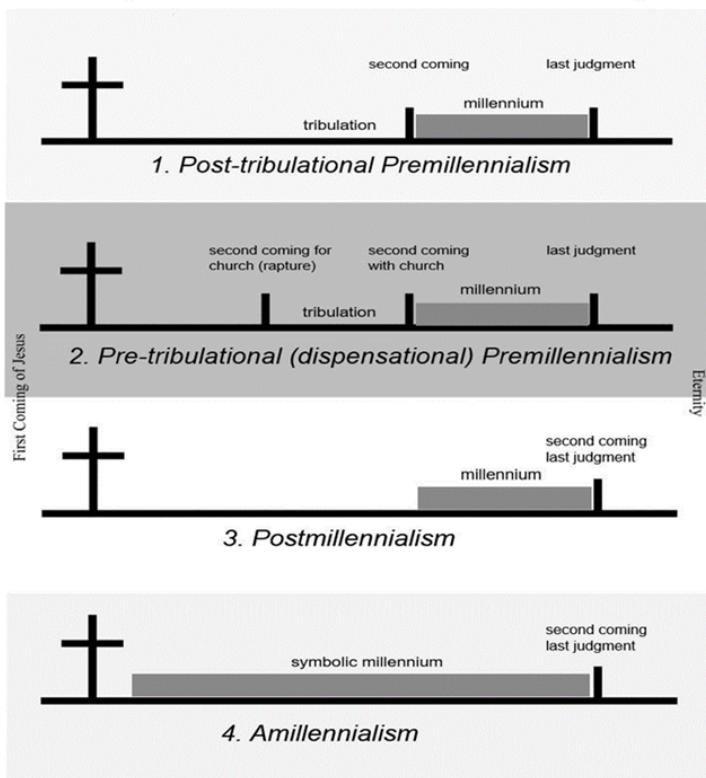
False doctrines that are promulgated:<sup>49</sup>

1. **Postmillennialism:** the belief that the church ushers in a 1,000-year period of peace after which Christ returns to claim His kingdom already set up by the church. In Christian end-times theology postmillennialism is an interpretation of Revelation 20 that sees Christ’s second coming as occurring after the “Millennium,” a Golden Age in which Christian ethics prosper. The term subsumes several similar views of the end times.

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<sup>49</sup> Much of this material can be found, in an expanded form, on Wikipedia. The diagram is from this site.

## Comparison of Christian millennial teachings



It holds that Jesus Christ establishes his kingdom on earth through his preaching and redemptive work in the 1st century and that he equips his church with the gospel, empowers her by the Spirit, and charges her with the Great Commission (Matt 28:19). Postmillennialism expects that eventually the vast majority of men living will be saved. Increasing gospel success will gradually produce a time in history prior to Christ's return in which faith, righteousness, peace, and prosperity will prevail in the affairs of men and of nations. After an extensive era of such conditions Jesus Christ will return visibly, bodily, and gloriously to end history with the general resurrection and the final judgment after which the

eternal order follows. Postmillennialism was a dominant theological belief among American Protestants who promoted reform movements in the 19th and 20th century, such as abolitionism and the Social Gospel.

Although some postmillennialists hold to a literal millennium of 1,000 years, other postmillennialists see the thousand years more as a figurative term for a long period of time.

Postmillennialism also teaches that the forces of Satan will gradually be defeated by the expansion of the Kingdom of God throughout history up until the second coming of Christ. Many postmillennialists also adopt some form of preterism, which holds that many of the end times prophecies in the Bible have already been fulfilled.

2. **Amillennialism** is a 2<sup>nd</sup> position that poses the 1,000-year reign is not a literal, fixed period of time, nor is it on earth, but it is symbolic of Christ's "complete" reign from heaven. It has a long history, being widely promulgated by St. Augustine in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, as the Christian religion became the official state religion and the beliefs began to differ strongly from those of the 1st century Christians. This belief holds:
  - ☐ That Jesus is presently reigning from heaven, seated at the right hand of God the Father,
  - ☐ That Jesus also is and will remain with the church until the end of the world, as he promised at the Ascension,
  - ☐ That at Pentecost, the millennium began (others believe it began after Christ's Ascension), as is shown by Peter using the prophecies of Joel, about the coming of the kingdom, to explain what was happening,
  - ☐ And that, therefore the Church and its spread of the good news is Christ's Kingdom and forever will be.

Amillennialism has been widely held in the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches, as well as in the Roman Catholic Church, which generally embraces an Augustinian eschatology and that has deemed that premillennialism “cannot safely be taught.” Amillennialism is also common among Protestant denominations such as the Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, many Messianic Jews, and Methodist churches. It represents the historical position of the Amish, Old Order Mennonite, and Conservative Mennonites (though among the more modern groups premillennialism has made inroads). It is common among groups arising from the 19th century American Restoration Movement, such as the Churches of Christ and similar groups, which are the direct descendants of the Campbellites of the 19th century. It also has a following amongst various Baptist denominations.

3. **Premillennialism.** Christadelphians and others are considered to believe in premillennialism, because Christ’s return precedes (hence, pre) his 1,000-year reign. We commonly cite such passages as:
  - “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all” (1 Cor 15:24-28).
  - “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his

mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years” (Rev 20:4-6).

## The Rapture?

Christadelphians disagree strongly with many modern proponents of premillennialism because they believe that the so-called “rapture” will take place before the tribulations that are predicted to occur before the return of Christ. As publicized by the *Left Behind* books and media, many believe that true believers will be carried away to meet Christ in the air, based almost entirely on Paul’s words:

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be **caught up** together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (1 Thess 4:16-17)

Of course, we all realize that “caught up” (*harpazo*) signifies to be snatched or plucked away, or conveyed quickly from one place to another, with no particular regard as to direction. For example:

- “And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord **caught away** Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:39).
- “He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf **snatches them** and scatters them” (John



8:12 ESV).

- “My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to **snatch them** out of the Father's hand” (John 10:29).

There is, however, no universal agreement among Christadelphians concerning what the clouds mean. The two most common explanations are:

1. “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught away (not “caught up”, here again the translators have put their idea over the Greek word *harpazō*) together with them in clouds (not, “in the clouds.” See Young's Literal Translation which reads, “caught away in clouds”), to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord”. Young gives the Greek word for “clouds” as “*nephele*,” meaning a small or thin cloud. From this it would appear we shall be taken away in small groups, and parties, similar to the many small clouds we often see in the sky.<sup>50</sup>
2. Paul does not say in the clouds, but simply, *en nephelais*, in clouds; instead therefore of “caught up in the clouds,” we read “hurried off in clouds:” so that clouds of saints, by almighty power, will be removed from the east, west, north, and south, where they have been resurrected, “for a meeting of the Lord” in the territory of his kingdom, the Holy Land—Luke 13:28, 29. To “an air,” such as this, the Saints are conducted in clouds, for a meeting of the Lord, that henceforth they may be with him thus for evermore.<sup>51</sup>

In terms of the illustration above, Christadelphians can be

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<sup>50</sup> *The Christadelphian*, 1941, p. 553.

<sup>51</sup> John Thomas, *Eureka*, Chapter 1, Section 4: 2. “He is coming in clouds”

termed to believe in post-tribulation premillennialism — that is, Christ will return to the earth to set up his kingdom after a time of tribulation, but before the millennium. Exactly what the imagery was as depicted by Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians will be revealed at that time.

## Chapter Nineteen

### Judgement only for Rewards #15

*Doctrines to be Rejected #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.*

This can be stated in a positive way: The Judgement seat of Christ is for the purpose of revealing the motives, actions and characteristics of all the responsible, and to prepare the righteous for the granting of immortality.

“But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgement seat of Christ” (Rom 14:10).

“For 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 Cor 5:10).

### History

The Statement by Robert Roberts in 1868 has the following:

That the judgement of the saints, at the tribunal of Christ, when he comes, is not a simple allotment of rewards, but a dividing of the faithful from the unfaithful, with reference to the question of life or death. (1Cor 4:5; 2Cor 5:10; Rom 2:5, 6, 16; Rom 8:13; Gal 6:8).

This was modified into its existing form in 1883.

John Thomas, in his “Synopsis of the One Faith” (1867), included the following positive statement: “*The Resurrection and judgement of the whole household of God (just and unjust).*”

There is also, of course, a related statement, #24, as modified in 1898:

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”.

Prior to 1898, it read:

That at the appearing of Christ prior to the establishment of the Kingdom, the responsible (faithful and unfaithful), dead and living of both classes, 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.”

This doctrine to be rejected is also closely associated with the doctrine to be rejected #17: “That the dead rise in an immortal state.” We will deal with the origin of this statement later. However, it must be pointed out that this rejection of “immortal emergence” materialized slowly over the period 1860-1867.

Notice the subtle difference between the clause 24 and the doctrine to be rejected. Clause 24 allows for the fact that when they who are resurrected are judged “according to their works,” they could still be granted eternal life, just not such a “good” reward. The doctrine to be rejected says clearly that those raised could be condemned to return to the grave (or condemned to death, if still alive at the return of Christ). Although clause 25 says “the unfaithful will be consigned to

shame and the second death,” it does not explicitly say this will be done at the judgement seat.

### False Beliefs

It appears that this clause was introduced to counter the prevalence of Calvinist views at the time. Those who held such views believed that God predestined some people to be saved. This choice by God to save some is held to be unconditional and not based on any characteristic or action on the part of the person chosen. Salvation from punishment for sin is to be given to all those who have faith in Christ, and who are predestined to so believe. Faith is not purely intellectual, but involves trust in God’s promise to save. There is not any other requirement for salvation: faith alone is sufficient. These sorts of believe render irrelevant any judgement seat.

### The Judgement Seat

The Bible talks about the Judgement Seat of Christ. It is also referred to as the *bema*, which appears in two places, although of course it is used elsewhere of the place of judging by Pilate and others:

- “But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the **judgement seat** of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (Rom 14:10-12).
- “For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For

we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life: Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For 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 Cor 5:1-10).

It is clear from the above passages that the purpose of the *bema* is an exhaustive evaluation of our lives. The Lord will come and “bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one’s praise will come from God.” (1 Cor 4:5). The passage reveals Paul’s emphasis on the judgement seat of Christ. Notice that Paul says each man’s praise will come to him from God. God gives rewards to the victors. He does not whip the losers. We know that He won’t condemn us for our sins at that point, because as Paul says: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1). Thus, the purpose of the judgement seat of Christ is to examine a Christian’s total life.

We will be recompensed for the deeds we have done, whether good or bad (2 Cor 5:10). The term used there refers to a summing up and estimation of the total pattern of a believer’s life. This overall focus should keep us from worrying over every stupid thing we’ve ever done, or thoughtless sin we have committed—it’s a time of reward.

## The fate of the wicked<sup>52</sup>

This is not the place to discuss exactly who will be raised to judgement: but it is clear that some will be raised, and appear to be judged by Jesus, who will be condemned.

- “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgement unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgement also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:22-29).

Within Christ, therefore, there is a life-giving power that can both bring life to those dead in sins so that they are no longer under sin’s reign, and can also revive those who are physically dead in the graves. The Jews in general believed in a judgement at the Last Day; Jesus is telling them that in view of this they should not marvel at a quickening and testing in this life—a quickening that comes from him to “whom he will.” Moreover, he tells them that it is at the summons of his

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<sup>52</sup> Much of this section is cited from a series of articles by L.G. Sargent on “The Judgement to Come”, *The Christadelphian*, 1968, p.8.

voice that those who are in the graves will “come forth,” some for life and some (as the NEB puts it) “for the sentence of doom.” They are distinguished as those who have “wrought” good or have “done” evil; the one expression points to a work of righteousness that produces fruit for God, the other to a practice or course of life, which is only destructive.

The natural reading of the verse is that they come forth at the same time, some to be directed one way, some the other, according to their lives during their probation. “Resurrection to life” is a comprehensive term for all that is involved in the course of resurrection when it leads to immortality, and resurrection to judgement covers all that is involved when the rising ends in condemnation and the execution of the sentence. This understanding of terms that embrace both the starting point and the end of a process is a legitimate one in Biblical use, and in the present case affords the only interpretation that is in harmony with teaching elsewhere in the New Testament. “Judgement” is a word of many meanings in Greek as in English; radically the New Testament term means a separating, a distinguishing, and from this it extends to the meanings of trial, decision, sentence, and even to the standard of decision as right or justice. It is used in the Greek version of the Old Testament for the Hebrew *mishpat*, which is usually rendered judgement, as illustrated by:

“Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgement, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous, But the way of the ungodly shall perish” (Psa 1:5).

The Lord’s words in John 5: 23-29 are almost a quotation of Daniel 12: 1-2:

“...And at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall



awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

To Daniel was given the assurance of resurrection to life:

“But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days” (verse 13).

In Daniel’s words, the judgement of the two classes cannot be separated in time—it is “at that time,” the time of the end, that all these things happen. So, too, in the words of Jesus it is artificial to differentiate between the two classes in point of time, and say that the one are judged at one time and the other at another. So too the parable of the “sheep” and “goats” in Matthew 25, however, figurative it may be in some respects, is only compatible with the separation of the two classes at the same time, the occasion when the Lord Jesus Christ shall sit in judgement.

### Lives Laid Bare

The words of Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:10 seem to echo the words of Jesus. They certainly offer the standard of interpretation for his saying in John 5:29. We are ambitious, says Paul, to be well pleasing to him; his word is *philotimeomai*, to love honor; and for this ambition for the approval of Christ he gives the reason that we must all be made manifest before the judgement seat of Christ. “Appear,” as KJV, is now too weak a term, and might be read as merely “putting in an appearance,” as though present in court. Paul had said in the first epistle that when the Lord comes, he will both “bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.” So, now he says that we must be made manifest “in order that each one may receive the things through the body according to what things he practised, either good or worthless.” In the words of the NEB, we shall “have our lives laid open.” There and then the inmost selves of each

one will be laid bare for the Judge to discriminate according to the quality of the life; and “he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth.”

The decisive character of the judgement, the finality of its outcome, is shown in many parables, and particularly in the parable of the two builders (Matt 7:24-27). The picture it gives is of a narrow wadi that will be turned into a raging torrent when winter rains pour down it and the winds are confined as in a funnel. The two builders come to it in summer sun when all is peaceful, and the valley bed is dry. The one is a prudent man who looks to the future—he builds on a rock foundation, so that when winds and rains batter it, it will stand firm. The other takes the easy way of building on a level bed of sand. With his house quickly finished, he looks with pitying superiority on the man who is toiling on the rock. But he lives only in the present. A future was in store when “the rain descended, and the floods came, and smote upon that house,” and it fell in utter ruin and the fragments were swept away in the flood.

The one is the man who hears the words of Jesus, and does them; the other is the man who hears, and does not. There could be no clearer picture of the responsibility and the opportunity that come with “hearing.” And the context established beyond question that the climax comes in “that day” when the Galilean who sat on the mount with his disciples will sit enthroned as judge.

The teaching of Jesus is as clear as words can make it that there is one way of life, and the only alternative to it is the loss of everything, even life itself:

“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and

## Doctrines to Be Rejected

few there be that find it” (Matt 7:13-14).

We should not look at the judgement seat of Christ as God judging our sins, but rather as God rewarding us for our lives. Yet, as the Bible says, we will have to give an account of ourselves.

## Chapter Twenty

### Judgement only for Faithful #16

*Doctrines to be Rejected #16: That the resurrection is confined to the faithful.*

This can be stated in a positive way: The resurrection will involve all who have known the Will of God, including those who have rejected that Will and those who have failed to uphold it in a faithful life:

- “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).
- “And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth” (John 9:39-41).
- “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin” (John 15:22).

The question is: how is this statement different from Clause 24, which states:

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” (2Cor 5:10; 2Tim 4:1; Rom 2:5,6,16; 14:10-12; 1Cor 4:5; Rev 11:18).

This will be covered later.

## History

John Thomas’ “synopsis” of 1867 has “The unjust (according to others) not subject to a resurrection.” Robert Robert’s Birmingham statement of 1868 has: “That the resurrection, at the appearing of Christ, is not confined to the faithful, but extends to all who have made a profession of his name, whether faithful or not” (Rom 14:10,12; 2 Tim. 4:1; Luke 14:15; Dan 12:2).

It remained the same in the various statements through at least 1879, but in 1883 with the introduction of *The Ecclesial Guide* it was shortened to its present form and the Bible references dropped. Roberts’ statement of 1868 could be seen to imply that one needed to make a profession of faith to be raised. This is incorrect, according to our understanding about responsibility, and it seems Roberts realized this error also.

It is interesting to note the original “Declaration” as published by Roberts in 1867 had:

XXXI. — That at the return of Jesus Christ from heaven, TO ESTABLISH HIS KINGDOM ON EARTH, he will, first of all, summon before him for judgment, ~~(the whole of his professing household)~~ *the whole of those who are responsible to his judgment.* Those that are dead he will cause to come forth from the dust, and assemble them with the living to his presence. Faithful and unfaithful will be mustered together before his judgment seat, for the

purpose of having it declared, after account rendered, who is worthy of being invested with immortality and promoted to the kingdom, and who is deserving of rejection, and re-consignment to corruption after punishment. (This precludes the idea created by a superficial reading of the apostolic testimony, that there is no judgment for the saints, and that the resurrection at the coming of Christ will be confined to the accepted, who, according to this theory, awake to instantaneous incorruption and immortality).

I note the words struck through and replaced by those in italics were as modified later, after the dispute that caused the modification to clause 24.

### **False doctrine**

It is false to claim that only church-age saints will appear at that judgment, Paul says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor 5:10). We also covered the whole topic of the judgement seat in the previous "doctrine to be rejected," #15, above.

Many, but 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.

### **Uncertain Details**

In his well-known article "True Principles and Uncertain Details,"<sup>53</sup> 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."

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<sup>53</sup> *The Christadelphian*, 1898, p. 182

**Uncertain Detail:** But when, in our age, are men in such circumstances? Who can tell but God alone? Some think it is enough if a man have a Bible. Some think that is not enough unless the Bible is explained to him (as in a lecture or book). Some think that is not enough unless the man have capacity to understand the explanation... What are we to do? Are we to insist upon a precise shade of opinion on a point which no judicious man be absolutely clear about? All we can be sure about is that when men are “without excuse” knowing the judgment of God (Rom 1:20, 52; 2:1); when they have “no cloak for their sin” like the men who saw the miracles of Christ, and yet both “saw and hated both him and his Father” (John 15:22,24), that they will come forth at the resurrection to receive punishment according to the righteous judgment of God. When men admit this, they admit enough for purposes of fellowship as regards this particular point. To insist on more than this is to go too far, and to inflict needless distress and cause unnecessary division.

Based on this exposition, it is impossible to say with certainty who will be raised. We simply have no certain information as to the degree of knowledge required. It is also impossible to define with certainty who will **not** be raised. The doctrine to be rejected #22 “That ‘heathens’, idiots, pagans, and very young children will be saved,” does attempt somewhat to define it. We will deal with this statement and its admitted problems in due course.

### Categories

It is, perhaps, easiest to consider the world’s inhabitants in four classes, as John Thomas did<sup>54</sup>:

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

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<sup>54</sup> Cited in this form in *The Christadelphian*, 1990, p127. Classes described in *Herald of the Kingdom*, 1854, p. 90

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, honor, incorruptibility, and life at the first resurrection as the first fruits 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."

## Differences from Clause 24

As is the case with several of the "doctrines to be rejected," this clause was, we believe, put into place to clarify exactly who will be raised to judgement. Together with clauses 15 (Judgement only for faithful) and 17 (That the dead rise in an immortal state: a much larger topic), it defines as precisely as we can who we might expect to see at the judgment seat—the last three categories as defined above. Hence, these three "doctrines to be rejected" amplify the clause 24, and are thereby a useful, in fact essential part of our statement of faith.



## Chapter Twenty-One

### Immortal Emergence #17

*Doctrines to be Rejected #17: That the dead rise in an immortal state.*

This can be stated in a positive way: The dead come from the grave in the same state as they entered it; they will remain mortal as they appear before the judgment seat.

#### History

John Thomas in his “Fables to be refused” of 1867 has: “The resurrected bodies of the righteous, spiritual, while the bodies of the rejected are fleshly bodies, in the judgment.” (Note this seems ungrammatical, but is as John Thomas wrote it.) It seems he included this because of his disputes with Benjamin Wilson, who promoted “Immortal Emergence,” as described below.

Robert Roberts in his statement of 1868<sup>55</sup> has: “That those thus rising are not in a glorified state, but appear before Christ in their natural body, to have it decided whether they are worthy of being clothed upon with immortality, or deserving of a return to corruption (2 Cor 5:10; Rom 8:11; 2 Cor 5:2; 1 Cor 15:53).” This was unchanged until it took its present form in 1883, when it was shortened and the Biblical

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<sup>55</sup> His original statement in his first (1864) issue of *The Ambassador* was somewhat ambiguous, but numerous articles over the next few years fully clarified his position.

references dropped.

There are two aspects of belief that we will discuss in the context of this statement:

1. The way the churches around us and their doctrine of an immortal soul implies that there is no true judgment.
2. The belief of the many of the “Restorationist Movement,”<sup>56</sup> from which John Thomas separated, who came to believe in “immortal emergence” based largely on 1 Corinthians 15:51-53: “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”

This latter area has, in fact, been the focus of consideration of this doctrine among Christadelphians. If you look up the term “Immortal emergence” on Wikipedia, the topic is almost entirely dealt with in the context of this controversy. In addition, when we did a search for this phrase, it turned up over 2,000 items with hits on one of the author’s hard disk, which is probably much higher than on Google search (600 sites). (Which illustrates how little of our knowledge is to be found on the Internet, by the way.)

## **Immortal Soul History**

The doctrine of the immortal soul caused much controversy in the early Catholic Church. Origen (AD 185-254) was the first person to attempt to organize Christian doctrine into a systematic theology. He was an admirer of Plato and believed

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<sup>56</sup> See Wikipedia for a description, the fact that Benjamin Wilson, above, was one the founders of the CGAF, see below.

in the immortality of the soul and that it would depart to an everlasting reward or everlasting punishment at death.

In Origen's *De Principiis* he wrote:

The soul, having a substance and life of its own, shall after its departure from the world, be rewarded according to its deserts, being destined to obtain either an inheritance of eternal life and blessedness, if its actions shall have procured this for it, or to be delivered up to eternal fire and punishments, if the guilt of its crimes shall have brought it down to this.... (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 4, 1995, p. 240)

Later Augustine (AD 354-430) tackled the problem of the immortality of the soul and death. For Augustine, death meant the destruction of the body, but the conscious soul would continue to live in either a blissful state with God or an agonizing state of separation from God.

## The Soul

The Hebrew word translated "soul" in the Old Testament is *nephesh*, which simply means "a breathing creature." Vine's *Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* defines *nephesh* as: "the essence of life, the act of breathing, taking breath...The problem with the English term 'soul' is that no actual equivalent of the term or the idea behind it is represented in the Hebrew language. The Hebrew system of thought does not include the combination or opposition of the 'body' and 'soul' which are really Greek and Latin in origin" (1985, p. 237-238)

The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible makes this comment on *nephesh*:

The word 'soul' in English, though it has to some extent naturalized the Hebrew idiom, frequently carries with it overtones, ultimately coming from philosophical Greek (Platonism) and from Orphism and Gnosticism which are absent in 'nephesh'. In the Old Testament it never means the immortal soul, but it is essentially the life principle, or

the living being, or the self as the subject of appetite, and emotion, occasionally of volition. (Vol. 4, 1962, "Soul,")

An often-cited passage:

"So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body" (1 Cor 15:42-44).

In the oldest texts of the New Testament, Paul insisted that the resurrection did not involve "flesh and blood" (1 Cor 15:50, cf. 1 Cor 1:29, Col 2:11), arguing that we instead will be resurrected with a spiritual (or *pneumatic*) body (1 Cor 15:44). As many scholars have pointed out, according to Paul, flesh is simply to play no part as we are made immortal. In the gospels, however, the resurrection, as exemplified by the resurrection of Jesus, is presented with an increasing emphasis on the resurrection of the flesh, from the empty tomb in Mark (Mark 16:2-7), to the women embracing the feet of the resurrected Jesus in Matthew (Matt 28:9).

## Nicene Creed and Early Christianity

Most Christian denominations profess the Nicene Creed, which affirms the "resurrection of the dead." Most English versions of the Nicene Creed in current use include the phrase: "We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come," and the centrality of this idea for Christian doctrine is stated in 1 Corinthians 15: 51-53 as cited above.

According to the Lutheran Church, on the last day all the dead will be resurrected. Their souls will then be reunited with the same bodies they had before dying. The bodies will then be changed, those of the wicked to a state of everlasting shame and torment, those of the righteous to an everlasting state of celestial glory.

## **Immortal Emergence in our community**

During the formative years of the beliefs of John Thomas, he became involved with many people with somewhat similar beliefs, with whom he was friends for a while but later disagreed. Some of these friends were influential in the development of communities with very similar beliefs, and whose history is entangled (and still is) with the Christadelphians.

As a result, this topic has called for an enormous amount of written material both during the formative years of our community and more recently during discussions with the Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith (CGAF)<sup>57</sup>, so here we can only summarize the evolution, conclusions, and the debates.

In fact, the bodily state of the righteous resurrected is one that has concerned both the Christadelphians and the CGAF for many years. Bound up as it is with the doctrine of what happens at the Judgment seat, the two positions can be summarized as:

1. Christadelphians hold that the concept of “mortal emergence” is desired to give adequate weight to the passages concerning the appearance of both just and unjust together at the judgment seat. They hold that both the just and unjust are raised in a state of at least potential mortality—immortality of the just is conferred at the judgment seat.
2. The historical view of the CGAF community was that the “just come forth at the resurrection invested with immortality.” However, the majority of their community today accepts the Christadelphian view.

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<sup>57</sup> Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith, a group of about 8 churches, with their largest church in Cleveland. They split off from a larger group with similar beliefs in 1921.

This “Doctrine to Be Rejected” is therefore meant to guard against those who would both deny judgment and also the important role that Christ will play in judging mankind. One of the key points is that our nature when we come out of the grave must be one in which we can receive either “eternal life” or “eternal death.” By definition, this means we can’t come out of the grave with a nature that prevents us from being rejected (i.e., one not subject to death). What is also clear is that our salvation cannot be changed or negotiated after we rise from the dead.

Consequently, our nature will not permit further sinning. Thus, we must be considered incorruptible, but not immortal. Exactly what “state” someone is raised for judgment has been a subject of discussion for many years. What can be said is if someone insists that the faithful dead are “raised immortal,” then this is neither Biblical nor practical. Ultimately, sticking to such phrasing would, in fact, elevate human wording above the Bible’s.

## **What Happens at Judgement<sup>58</sup>**

Just to remind ourselves, there are three closely related Doctrines to be Rejected:

1. That the tribunal of Christ, when he comes, is not for the judgment of saints, but merely to divide among them different degrees of reward.
2. That the resurrection is confined to the faithful.
3. That the dead rise in an immortal state.

To summarize, when Christ returns, he will first raise the dead, faithful and unfaithful.

- “And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a

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<sup>58</sup> Some of this is extracted from the Agora website, written by George Booker.

resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day” (Acts 24:15,21).

- “Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?” (Acts 26:8).
- “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive the things done through the body, according to that which he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Cor 5:10).

Then these will be brought to his Great Judgment along with the living responsible, faithful and unfaithful, where all will be judged together:

- “And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead” (Acts 10:42).
- “But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. For we must all appear before the judgment 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” (Rom 14:10-13).

One Scripture passage presents a significant problem. The Bible teaching that the dead do not rise in an immortal state

seems to be contradicted by the words of Paul to the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 15:52-53, as cited above.

However, in the same chapter, Paul is equating “resurrection” with the whole process (resurrection, judgment, and glorification) culminating in the Kingdom of God. That is (letting v 53 interpret v 52), “the dead shall be raised...to put on incorruption”! Paul’s own words elsewhere, as cited below, along with 2 Corinthians 5:10 above give the step-by-step details of this process, and should be studied alongside 1 Corinthians 15.

- “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” (Rom 2:6-8).
- “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God” (1 Cor 4:5).
- “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the



Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess 4:14-17).

- “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;” (2Tim 4:1).

There are other examples of the Bible speaking of “resurrection” as a finished work, with no indication of any judgment whatsoever or any rejection of the unworthy:

- “Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife... But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage” (Luke 20:33,35).
- “And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:29).
- “Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead” (Phil 3:8-11).
- “Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting

deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection” (Heb 11:35).

- “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years” (Rev 20:6).

It is possible to quote 1 Corinthians 15:53-54 in this connection without teaching false doctrine. But, to be consistent with other plainly essential teachings, the words “raised incorruptible” (1 Cor 15:52) would have to mean something like: “raised, then judged, and then glorified”—even if such process were almost instantaneous after the literal coming forth from the grave.

It should be said, moreover, that there is no real Bible proof for the length of time (no matter how long or how short) involved in the process of resurrection, judgment, and reward. But any theory that denies that a literal resurrection will be followed by a literal judgment is, by the earlier tests, plainly a false doctrine.

Finally, it must be noted that there is no conclusive Bible proof for any specific procedure of judgment. It cannot be proven as a first principle, for example, that every responsible person has, one by one, his or her own individual “trial.” Certain “judgment” verses indeed might be interpreted this way. Romans 14:10 and 2 Corinthians as cited above, but other “judgment” verses imply very much otherwise, namely:

- “So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matt 13:48-49).
- “Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall

be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left” (Matt 24:40-41).

- “And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:” (Matt 25:32).
- “I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left” (Luke 17:34-36).

But, once again, all these passages require a literal judgment—no matter how the details are arranged by Christ and his angels. And a judgement to separate the righteous from the unrighteous implies that at least some of those standing before the judgement seat will perish, and so cannot have been raised immortal.

But all will be revealed when Christ returns, when we can only pray that we might be raised and judged worthy of immortality in the future Kingdom.

## Chapter Twenty-Two

### Subject Nations are Immortal #18

*Doctrines to be Rejected #18: That the subject-nations of the thousand years are immortal.*

This can be stated in a positive way: Those who are still alive when Jesus comes will remain as mortal men and women, subject to the laws of Jesus Christ.

“There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed” (Isa 65:20).

It is interesting to consider: what is the difference between this statement and clause 26? This reads:

26. 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. (Rev 20:4-9; Rev 11:15; Isa 65:20; Ezek 37:22; Ezek 37:25; 1Cor 15:24-28).

Of course, the immediately preceding clause has in part “the faithful, invested with immortality, exalted to reign with Jesus as joint heirs of the kingdom,” so mortal and immortal will co-exist.

### History

The synopsis (1866) of John Thomas has no related clause, but Roberts’ statement of 1868 has under “fables to be

## Doctrines to Be Rejected

refused:”

XXVIII. — Immortal Nations in the Millennium: That the subject-nations of the thousand years are not immortal. — (Rev 20:6; Isa 65:20, 1Cor 15:24-29.)

This is essentially identical to the current clause, as in fact the clause E under “The Gospel analyzed” in “Truth to be Believed” is identical to the current clause 26.

We note the references cited in the 1868 are included in those cited in clause 26.

## Why Both Statements

Many of the “doctrines to be rejected” are related to the positive clauses. In fact, this is the case with all but ten of the current 35. But in most cases, these negative statements amplify the positive. It is not clear that this is the case with this particular doctrine: although it must be admitted there seems to have been some who had strange ideas in this area, especially regarding what would happen to the earth’s inhabitants. For example in Roberts’ mention of heresies he had contended with, he noted that some held: “...that the kingdom will not exist at all in the thousand years in the sense of a visible government of Christ, but that there will merely be a restored mortal Jewish theocracy.”<sup>59</sup>

## Mortal Beings in the Millennium

A typical description of the status of mortal beings in the Millennium is:

“The child shall die...”? Yes, there will still be death during the thousand years. Jesus and the saints will be immortal, but the rest of the earth's population will be mortal, dying creatures, even though their life expectancy will dramatically increase. The information given in the Bible about the thousand years describes a wonderful era of peace,

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<sup>59</sup> *The Christadelphian*, 1894, p. 434

safety, contentment and health when Jesus is King. But it is still not a time of complete perfection. Death, and therefore sin too, will still exist.<sup>60</sup>

And who are these mortal beings? They are not exactly defined in the Bible, but all the Old Testament prophecies dealing with the future kingdom seem to describe a situation where mortal beings exist. We can assume that those mortal beings will be those still alive after the last battles. We can also hope that our un-baptized friends, relatives and children will at least have the opportunity to accept Jesus as King and Lord, if they are alive when our Lord returns.

### **The continuing work of salvation<sup>61</sup>**

“God is longsuffering,” writes Peter, “not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:9) and “to the knowledge of the truth,” says Paul (1 Tim 2:4). God has pursued this aim through the ages of men’s dominion in the earth, always on the basis of understanding and faith. It is because this redemptive purpose is confronted by implacable human opposition, which threatens its total frustration, that the LORD God of heaven will take, as He has promised, decisive action. He will do it by re-imposing His authority over the whole human race in the person of His chosen king, Jesus the Son of David.

This will allow the process of redemption to continue among the mortal nations. Since God is still intent on encouraging the freely-given response of those who will listen, their attitude must be, as before, one of understanding and faith. This will distinguish them from the secretly rebellious, who will probably form the majority, for “let favour [i.e. grace] be

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<sup>60</sup> From “The Millennium”, *Christadelphian Magazine and Publishing Association*.

<sup>61</sup> Based largely on an article by Fred Pearce in *The Christadelphian*, 1994, p. 9

showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness” (Isa 26:10).

But this raises the interesting question: In an age when the promises of God have been fulfilled, when His kingdom has come, and the signs of His authority can be seen throughout the earth, where is the room for understanding and faith? How can it still be true that the blessed are “they that have not seen and yet have believed?” (John 20:29).

The answer to this question proves to be highly significant. What is it that the understanding mortal men and women in the kingdom “see” and “believe,” while the majority do not? It cannot be the promise of God’s kingdom, for that has come. It will be, one is sure, the promise of eternal life eventually. But above all, the truth that men have consistently rejected throughout the ages is the truth about themselves. Human nature will remain the same in the Millennium as it has always been—seeking its own satisfaction, pursuing its covetousness and defending its pride. The fact that human authority will be curbed does not mean that the basic instincts will be curbed as well, but only that the liberty to express them in power over others will be restricted.

## Chapter Twenty-Three

### The Law of Moses #19

*Doctrines to be Rejected #19. That the Law of Moses is binding on believers of the Gospel.*

This can be stated in a positive way: The Law being fulfilled in Jesus Christ, its demands are not binding upon Christ's disciples, as they are now subject to his commandments.

“...The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people” (Heb 8-10 NIV).

### History

John Thomas, in his “synopsis” of 1867, does not cover the Law of Moses, although he rejects the observance of Sabbath.

Robert Roberts in his “Fables to be Refused” of 1868 wrote what became two separate doctrines to be refused in 1883:

XXIX. —JUDAISM AND SABBATARIANISM.



That the Law of Moses is not binding in any of its enactments, except those retained in the letter by the apostles; and the observance of Sunday, as popularly enjoined, is unscriptural. — (Gal. 3:19-24; 5:1-4; Rom 6:14-15; 3:20-22; Acts 15: 23-29; Col 2:16-17; Rom 14:5-6; Gal 4:9-10.)

### **Fundamentals – Jesus completed the law**

Jesus being the perfect sacrifice for sin and the ideal High Priest who could truly gain forgiveness for us, the old system of animal sacrifices and high priests was done away with after his death. “The priesthood being changed [from the Levites to Christ], there is made of necessity a change also of the law” (Heb. 7:12). There are, however, several aspects of the Mosaic law have troubled some Christadelphians. In addition, some denominations, in particular the Seventh Day Adventists, believe in a continuation of many of the laws given to Moses.

### **Jesus and the Law of Moses**

Christ “has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry, but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life,” which he was given due to his perfect sacrifice (Heb 7:16 NIV). Therefore, “there is verily a disannulling of the former regulation because it was weak and useless. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope [through Christ] did” (Heb 7:18-19).

It is evident from this that the Law of Moses has been ended by the sacrifice of Christ. To trust in any form of human priesthood, obey the dietary restrictions, or to continue animal sacrifices implies we do not believe in the fullness of Jesus’ life work and sacrifice. Fundamentally, the Law of Moses was justification by works, whereas Paul tells us: “No man is justified by the law in the sight of God...for, The just shall live by faith” (Gal 3:11).

If we do observe the Law of Moses, we must attempt to keep all of it, because any failure would be fatal: “As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Gal 3:10). It is impossible for any human to fully keep it, especially as it became burdened by more and more restrictions by the time of Jesus, and ridden with countless loopholes.

Our salvation is due to God’s gift through Christ, rather than our personal works of obedience. “For 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” (Rom. 8:3). Thus “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us” (Gal 3:13).

By his death, Christ fulfilled the meaning of the Law of Moses, which was to bring the Israelites to God. In so doing, he rendered unnecessary “the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us [by our inability to fully keep the law], and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross...Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink [offerings], or in respect of a religious festival, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the reality is Christ” (Col 2:14-17). As a direct result, the specific commandments and prescriptions of the Old Covenant are rendered null and void, and replaced by the precepts of Christ, which are at the one-time more flexible, but also actually more difficult to comply.

Of course, many of the commandments of the law were repeated and enhanced by Jesus, including 9 of the 10 commandments (the Sabbath day observance excepted!). Many were commented on and amplified by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. For example, the third: “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain” (Exod 20:7). Jesus said: “Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt

perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne..." (Matt 5:33-34).

### **Seventh Day Adventists**

This denomination is the prime example of those who abide by some of the Law of Moses. Others include the Mormons. They believe in a greater continuation of laws such as the law given to Moses in the present day than do most other Christians.

The Adventist's founder was Ellen White. Her statements, indicate that the only aspects of the law that were nailed to the cross were those things that specifically pointed forward to his sacrifice (e.g., animal sacrifices). Hence the Law of God is "embodied in the Ten Commandments," which continue to be binding upon Christians.

The denomination therefore presents a "health message" that recommends vegetarianism and expects adherence to the kosher laws. They discourage members from consuming alcoholic beverages, tobacco, or illegal drugs. In addition, some Adventists avoid coffee, tea, cola, and other beverages containing caffeine.

### **Conclusion**

Modern society is much more knowledgeable about the dangers of some items that we ingest today than our predecessors of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, so we would agree that tobacco and excess consumption of alcohol is very unhealthy, along with all sorts of processed food. But regarding spiritual uncleanness, it is the words, the thoughts, that are dangerous, and the Law of Moses has been fulfilled in Christ, not in what we ingest.

## Chapter Twenty-Four

### Sunday #20

*Doctrines to be Rejected #20. That the observance of Sunday (as a Sabbath) is a matter of duty.*

This can be stated in a positive way: Although the “first day” (Sunday) is commonly used for remembrance of the Christ-covenant, there is no obligation to limit such observance to a Sunday. It is a matter of “as oft as we do so,” whatever the day:

- “And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come” (1 Cor 11:14-26).
- “One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind” (Rom 14:5).
- “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days” (Col 2:16).

## History

John Thomas, in his “synopsis” of 1867, does not cover the Law of Moses, but rejects the observance of Sabbath: in as “Perverted by the Apostasy: Sabbath observance required of Gentiles.”

Robert Roberts in his “Fables to be Refused” of 1868 wrote what became two separate doctrines to be refused in 1883:

### XXIX. — JUDAISM AND SABBATARIANISM.

That the Law of Moses is not binding in any of its enactments, except those retained in the letter by the apostles; and the observance of Sunday, as popularly enjoined, is unscriptural. — (Gal. 3:19-24; 5:1-4; Rom 6:14-15; 3:20-22; Acts 15: 23-29; Col 2:16-17; Rom 14:5-6; Gal 4:9-10.)

## Fundamentals

We can repeat the comments from the previous DTBR on “The Law of Moses” (#19): Jesus being the perfect sacrifice for sin and the ideal High Priest who could truly gain forgiveness for us, the old system of animal sacrifices and high priests was done away with after his death. “The priesthood being changed (from the Levites to Christ), there is made of necessity a change also of the law” (Heb. 7:12). There are, however, several aspects of the Mosaic law have troubled some Christadelphians. In addition, some denominations, in particular the Seventh Day Adventists, believe in a continuation of many of the laws given to Moses.

So we will consider two aspects:

1. Is the Observance of Sunday like the Jewish Sabbath, complete with a detailed set of regulations on what one must or must not do, in addition making it the only day we can observe the memorial feasts as described by Paul?
2. Should we observe the day of Saturday as the day on

which we remember our Lord, as do the Adventists?

## Origin of the false doctrine

On 3 March 321, Constantine I decreed that Sunday will be observed as the Roman day of rest:

Let all judges, inhabitants of the cities, and artificers, REST ON THE VENERABLE DAY OF THE SUN. But in the country, husbandmen may freely and lawfully apply to the business of agriculture; since it often happens that the sowing of corn and the planting of vines cannot be so advantageously performed on any other day.

Constantine's decree was most likely modeled on pagan sun worship, though it is probable that he also intended to benefit the church, which already met for worship on Sunday.

Chamber's Encyclopedia, 1882 ed., Vol. VIII, p. 401, "Sabbath," declares:

By none of the Fathers before the FOURTH CENTURY is it [the first day] identified with the Sabbath; nor is the duty of observing it grounded by them either on the FOURTH COMMANDMENT or on the precept or example of Christ or His apostles. UNQUESTIONABLY THE FIRST LAW, either ecclesiastical or civil, by which the Sabbatical observance of that day [Sunday] is known to have been ordained, is THE EDICT OF CONSTANTINE, 321 A.D., of which the following is a translation.

"The earliest recognition of the OBSERVANCE OF SUNDAY AS A LEGAL DUTY," admits the "Encyclopaedia Britannica," 11th ed., Vol. 26, p. 95, art. "Sunday IS A CONSTITUTION of Constantine in 321 A.D., enacting that all courts of justice, inhabitants of towns and workshops were to be AT REST ON SUNDAY (*venerabili die solis*), with an exception in favour of those engaged in agricultural labour."

Sunday Sabbatarianism became prevalent amongst both the continental and English Protestants. Most Catholics and Protestants would like to assume that the Sabbath law was

changed either by command or by example in the New Testament, but this is not true!

You will not find one single verse authorizing such a change from Saturday to Sunday, or any trace that the Sabbath Laws of the Old Testament were valid for Christians.

Until 1994, most commercial activity was prohibited in England, and in the United States, many areas have their own peculiar limits on what can be sold or when on a Sunday. However, like in Canada, most shops are open much of that day, and few restrict their activities to strictly religious observances. But we must give thanks that, by and large, we are free to worship on each first day of the week, and so can follow the pattern of those early Christians. Few have to work on Sundays, but for those who have to, they are encouraged to regularly remember their Lord. It is known for memorial services to be held on other days than Sunday, of course: many Bible schools hold their closing service on a Saturday, and often such a service is held with “shut-ins” during the week when a convenient time can be arranged.

### **The truth<sup>62</sup>**

- “He [Jesus] said to them, ‘The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: so the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath’ ” (Mark 2:27,28).
- “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight” (Acts 20:7)
- “Upon the first day of the week let every one

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<sup>62</sup> *The Christadelphian Magazine and Publishing Association* has a pamphlet “Sunday and the Sabbath: Bible Teaching About God's Day of Rest”

of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come" (1 Cor 16:2).

Jesus declared that God provided the Sabbath to confer benefits on anyone who was oppressed—it was “made for man.” How could the Pharisees have witnessed the great works Jesus did, healing the sick and bringing relief to the poor and hungry, and not appreciate that the real essence of the Sabbath could be seen in his devotion to His Father's will, and in his concern for his fellow men?

So, not only did Jesus fulfill the law of Moses, as we have seen, but he declared the true purpose of the Jewish Sabbath, to show forth the glory of our God, and we reflect this when, as did the early Church, we remember our Lord once per week.

It is clear that the practice of the Early Church was to gather on the first day of the week (which began Saturday evening, about 6 pm) to have a meal and, as part of it, to remember their absent Lord. But there was no hint that that was the only day of the week on which this was to be performed, or that the prescriptions in the Jewish law forbidding work etc. were to be followed. To quote:<sup>63</sup>

The Sabbath was made for man; it was no mere law to restrict man's activity, but rather a well proven principle which safe-guarded his health and that of his servants and stock; it also, unexpectedly, gave him a greater yield from his labors!

Although there is no connection between the Sabbath and our Sunday, the true disciple will be thankful for the system which enables him to have a complete break from his earthly labor and to apply this God-given principle to his own life. For many of us Sunday makes special demands upon our energies and becomes as long a

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<sup>63</sup> “Remember The Sabbath Day To Keep It Holy” By Cyril Tennant (*The Christadelphian*, 1977, p. 264.)



## Doctrines to Be Rejected

working day as any other, but the secret is this: it provides a complete break from those things which captivate our minds. It provides a discipline which controls ambition, greed and covetousness, thus giving the disciple much needed balance to life.

- ☐ Like Israel, we can also, whilst enjoying the blessings of a day of rest, think upon the foundations of our own new life:
- ☐ We shall remember God as the Creator of all things and the Founder of the principle of rest;
- ☐ That He delivered us from the slavery of self and sanctified us through the death of His Son,
- ☐ Whom He raised again from the dead on the first day of the week.

A word of warning may be necessary; there is no place for a punctilious or perfunctory keeping of the day we now call Sunday. Unless the principles involved and explained in Scripture give body and life to our day of rest, we may just as well allow the worries of the other six days to spill over into that day as do those whose lives are captivated by worldly things but who excuse themselves by feeling they are shouldering their responsibilities! When the great Sabbath arrives, one of its many blessings will be that it will be completely free from all connection with the previous “six days”, and that is a good example to set ourselves on the day in which we remember the death of our Lord and Savior.

## Seventh day Adventists

This group of believers sprang out of the same group of “Restorationists” in the 19th century American mid-west as the Christadelphians. Following their founder, Ellen White, they claim that Christians should keep the seventh-day Sabbath. They are right in saying that the Sabbath was instituted on the seventh day, and not the first, but their insistence that true believers in Christ should still keep it ignores the New Testament evidence. The Apostle Paul, who

wrote under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, specifically stated that keeping the Sabbath was turning back “to the weak and beggarly elements” from which Christ's sacrifice had freed them (Gal 4:9). In addition, Adventists claim that the Sabbath was instituted and kept in Eden, although there is no Biblical evidence of a Sabbath command before the Law of Moses was given.

Given the clarity of the New Testament position on the Law of Moses, it is difficult to see how they maintain their position. It is worth noting that the conference described in Acts 15 advised the Gentiles to be considerate of some Jewish dietary scruples, but made no mention of the Sabbath question.

“He [Jesus] said to them, ‘The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: so the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath’ ” (Mark 2:27,28).

## Chapter Twenty-Five

### Baby Sprinkling #21

*Doctrines to be Rejected #21. That baby-sprinkling is a doctrine of Scripture.*

This can be state in a positive way: Baptism is only valid when performed upon individuals upon a confession of understanding the complete Will of God.

Baptism is the outward manifestation of an inner conviction:

- “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16).
- “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12).

### History

John Thomas in his “Synopsis” of 1867 has under “As perverted by the Apostacy”: “Face-Sprinkling in Infancy, a means of salvation.”

Robert Roberts’ Statement of 1868, in his Fables to be Refused, #30: Baby “Baptism” and Infant Salvation. That baby sprinkling is a farce, and baby salvation an impossibility. (Mark 16:16; Acts 8:12; Heb 11:6; Eph. 4:17-18). We note it was changed slightly in subsequent editions:

the one of 1877 has “That baby sprinkling is an invention of man, and infant salvation a doctrine opposed to Scripture,” with the same references.

His *Ecclesial Guide* of 1883 changed it to its present form.

We might note that John Thomas objected to this practice almost immediately upon his arrival in the USA, condemning it in his first issue of the *Apostolic Advocate* in May of 1834, p. 41:

Nothing can be inferred from the baptism (immersion) of Christian families in favor of “infant baptism” (sprinkling.) Only two households are mentioned, and only one is said to be baptized (immersed ;) that one is said to addict themselves to the ministry of the saints. Let the ministry mean what it may, it signifies something of which infants were incapable.

## **History of baptism by sprinkling versus immersion**

Scriptures clearly tell us that Jesus was immersed not sprinkled by John the Baptist (see Matt 3:13-17). Scripturally, baptism is immersion, a symbol of being buried and then resurrected; the washing away of our sins and our rebirth, and is a symbol of obedience.

The Roman Catholic Church admits baptism by immersion was practiced till 1311 AD:

- “Baptism took place by immersion in ancient times.” (*New Interpretation of the Mass*, p. 120).
- “Catholics admit that immersion brings out more fully the meaning of the sacrament, and that for twelve centuries it was the common practice.” (*Question Box*, p. 240).
- “Baptism used to be given by placing the person to be baptized completely in the water: it was done in this way in the Catholic Church for 1200 years.” (*Adult Catechism*, pp. 56-57).

- “The church at one time practiced immersion. This was up to the thirteenth century. The Council of Ravenna, in 1311, changed the form from immersion to pouring.” (*Our Faith and the Facts*, p. 399).

Most Christian religions teach that water is essential to Baptism, but when it comes to the manner in which the water should be used, there is controversy—should it be done by immersion, pouring or sprinkling? In the Roman Catholic Church, most believers are baptized by pouring (also known as infusion). At the same time, Catholics know that immersion (also known as dunking) and sprinkling are valid ways of baptizing.

Some Protestant and Evangelical Churches reject all forms of baptism other than immersion, and they claim that most Catholics are not validly baptized. According to these Protestant and Evangelical Churches, the rite of baptism was always by immersion until the Council of Ravenna in AD 1311, when the Catholic Church proclaimed: “Baptism is to be administered by trine immersion or aspersion [i.e., sprinkling].”

Was the rite of baptism always by immersion prior to AD 1311?

To find the answer to this question, we turn to the *Didache*, a Syrian liturgical manual that was written around AD 70 (others say AD 120-160), reportedly widely circulated among the churches in the first few centuries of Christianity. These are perhaps the earliest Christian writings outside of the New Testament. Although these writings are not considered inspired, they still bear witness to the sacramental practice of the Christians in the apostolic age. The first historical reference to a departure from immersion is in this document. It sanctions pouring water upon the head as an emergency measure only. The first defense of sprinkling was offered by Cyprian (AD 200-258), a writer in Carthage, who allowed sprinkling as a substitute for immersion, but only when

“necessity compels,” as in the case of acute sickness (Epistle lxxv).

## **New Testament Practice**

Biblical baptism involves belief, repentance, dying to sin as symbolized by burial (immersion) in water, rising to a new life of serving God, as symbolized by coming up out of the water.

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin” (Rom 6:3-6).

Sprinkling does not follow the pattern laid down for us in Scripture. Other passages that indicate baptism refers to immersion in water not sprinkling:

“John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized” (John 3:23).

Notice that water was plentiful—a necessity for immersion, but not for sprinkling. Now consider the case of the Ethiopian eunuch:

“And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:38-39).

Again, immersion, not sprinkling occurs. Baptism is for those who understand and believe the Gospel and have the capacity to repent of their sins, symbolically die to serving sin and live to serving God. It is a decision people have to make for themselves. It is meaningless for a parent or someone else to baptize an infant who has no idea about what is happening. Consider the following Scripture: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matt 28:19-20).

### **Should we baptize babies?**

Unfortunately, the Christian Church continues to be sharply divided over this important question. Those who answer “yes” (e.g., Lutherans, Catholics, Episcopalians, and Methodists) claim Biblical support for their position, largely based upon inference, for example, the Philippian Jailor was baptized with his household (Acts 16:33). They assert that Christ commanded infant baptism, quoting “suffer little children to come unto me (Mark 10:14). Of course, neither case demonstrates infant baptism. On the other hand, those who answer “no” (e.g., Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists, and many “Bible” or “evangelical,” or “non-denominational” churches) say the Bible is on their side. They assert that nowhere is such a thing commanded. They hold that at best it is useless and at worst harmful. It is their practice to re-baptize adults who were baptized as babies.

### **Conclusion**

The rite of infant baptism was not known or practiced in Apostolic times. It was only introduced when the church began to become a dominant in the community, and was introduced as a means of ensuring entry into that community. Thus it only became widespread in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. Infant baptism was not practiced in Scripture and is meaningless.

## Chapter Twenty-Six

### Salvation of Heathens, Children, etc. #22

*Doctrines to be Rejected #22. That heathens, idiots, pagans, and very young children will be saved.*

This can be stated in a positive way: Salvation is based upon a reasonable and logical understanding of the Truth; those who are foreign to the gospel, who lack the capacity to perceive its responsibilities; or who are unable to comprehend, are outside the sphere of salvation according to the Bible.

It must be stressed that this language was created in much earlier times, and some of its language has become unacceptable to many. Also see the notes at the end.

“But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women”  
(Acts 8:12).

We would note there are three very distinct aspects to any discussion of this particular statement:

1. The false doctrines associated with it.
2. At the present time, the word “idiots”, when applied to people with intellectual challenges, is offensive.
3. The somewhat harsh statement about the fate of those who die too young.



## History

John Thomas in his “Synopsis” of 1867 has under “As perverted by the Apostacy”: “Infants and Idiots saved, whether sprinkled or not.”

Robert Roberts’ Statement of 1868, in his Fables to be Refused, #31: Resurrection of heathens, Idiots, Babes:

That “heathens,” idiots, pagans, and very young children, will never see the light of resurrection, but pass away as though they had not been, the resurrection being restricted to those who are responsible to the divine law. (Job 3:13-22; 10:18,19; 14:10-12; Isa 26:13-14; Jer 2:39,57; Prov 21:16; Rom 2:12; Psa 49:6-20; John 3:19; 12:48; 15:22-24.)

This remained the same in all the annual versions available. It was changed to its current form in 1883 with the issuance of *The Ecclesial Guide*.

## False doctrine

There was, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when these statements were developed, a strong belief in “original sin.” This sent some infants to hell and some to heaven. As John Thomas put it:

The apprehension of the damnation of their [the infants’] “immortal souls” on account of “original sin”, has given rise to the Romish conceit of the regeneration of infants by the Holy Spirit in the scattering of a few drops of water upon the face, and the use of a certain form of words.<sup>64</sup>

There is, of course, also the recognition for the requirement of some form of understanding before baptism is administered. It is by understanding and obedience to God’s wishes, that the way is laid down for us to obtain redemption and the hope of salvation and eternal life.

So, this doctrine to be rejected denies:

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<sup>64</sup> *Elpis Israel* by John Thomas, 1924 edition, p 30

1. By implication, the doctrine of original sin, which is the death of the soul itself. According to Catholic tradition, a child can only be freed from “hell” by infant baptism.
2. The doctrine of universal salvation, the salvation of all mankind.

For example, for item (2), The Christian Universalist Association affirms the following in their Statement of Faith:

We believe in the full and final triumph of the grace of God over the powers of sin and death: that the mercy and forgiveness of God are victorious; that this victory of redemption is revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus; and that, therefore, no human being will be condemned or allowed to suffer pain and separation forever.

We believe in universal salvation, the idea that there is no such thing as eternal hell or annihilation because God has planned the universe to produce a positive outcome for all people of all times.

One must agree that some hopeful prophecies in the Bible point to a future time of restoration and renewal: “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming” (1 Cor 15:22-23). The key here is the phrase “In Christ,” those who are to be made alive are those who are (or who have been) “In Christ.”

It is our responsibility to preach the fundamental doctrines to those who are in a position to understand and respond. This excludes those who are of an age who cannot appreciate the message, and those who are mentally unable to understand. As far as the latter is concerned, it is unfortunate that the KJV has “comfort the feebleminded” in 1 Thessalonians 5:14, as the term really means “discouraged,” presumably those who were disappointed that Christ had not returned. But who has the capability to understand is not easy to define. There are

many who have been baptized who are not in the mainstream of the population, who need help in their everyday life, but who have been sincere and valuable brethren and sisters.

It should be pointed out that Roberts, in his wisdom, changed this statement in 1883 to its current form. It now denies that such *will* be saved: the emphasis is on the “will.” It makes no statement that they will not be saved. Most consider it is not our place to make that statement.

For those outside our reach, or not yet within reach because of their age, it is not our place to judge about condemnation or acceptance. However, as we are insistently taught in scripture, the Father is a God of mercy and grace. It is surely right to avail ourselves of, and allow others, the comfort and consolation of knowing and believing this. Which of us would seek to define the limits of His grace or to confine the extent of His mercy? Which of us would feel competent to analyze the balance of grace and truth of which the Lord is full, or to demand justice as we see it? For beloved relatives who never knew the full Truth, for children who die before maturity, for apparently unbelieving partners who have died, for those who are not of “sound mind,” it is surely right to leave them in the hands of the Almighty and take courage and consolation that the Lord God is gracious. We cannot say they have no hope. Neither can we say they will be saved. It is not our position to do either. Fortunately, our opinions do not affect them; they are in the hand of God.<sup>65</sup>

It is certainly not helpful for a member of our community to remark, when told a relative of yours had died in their teens without being baptized “then you will not see them in the Kingdom, of course,” or making similar comments when a young child has died.

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<sup>65</sup> This paragraph from *The Christadelphian*, 2005, p 84.

## The words used

Objection is quite often made to some of the words used in this statement. In particular, the word “idiot” is objected to, as are, to a lesser extent, the words “heathens” and “pagans.” It must be recognized that the words “idiots” and “pagans” were first used by John Thomas, who, it must be admitted, was writing in a time when vigorous language was the rule, not the exception. The term was used in the 19<sup>th</sup> century for those with a very severe mental deficiency: a step below imbecile, having a mental age below three. The meaning of the term has evolved to the present day, where it is now considered to be offensive when applied to people with intellectual challenges.

The general consensus is, despite the change in usage of “idiot” in particular, to replace the wording of these clauses with other terms could well give rise to other, different problems. While the English language does change, the original words in the Bible do not, and it is that message we fallible humans try to convey. If we are challenged, or wish to use alternate words in public addresses or elsewhere, there is nothing to stop us. In 2009, the editor of the *Christadelphian* at the time suggested:

...we reject the teaching: ‘that a person who is not able physically or mentally to understand the Gospel message will be saved.’ It should be noted that this wording does not restrict the Father’s power to save whomsoever He chooses.<sup>66</sup>

It must be noted that the BASF does not have to be used by any particular Central ecclesia, as has been pointed out many times. Rather, a typical statement used, at least in North America is:

This ecclesia meets on the basis of the doctrines and precepts of the Scriptures as conveniently summarized in

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<sup>66</sup> *The Christadelphian*, 2009, p 445

## Doctrines to Be Rejected

the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith (BASF).

Thus, if this statement troubles an ecclesia, it can easily be replaced by the phrasing above.

And it must also be stressed that many Christadelphians have been baptized despite having severe mental disabilities. They are capable of understanding our Christian message and worshipping our Lord.

## Chapter Twenty-Seven

### Salvation without the Gospel #23

*Doctrines to be Rejected #23. That man can be saved by morality or sincerity, without the Gospel.*

This can be stated in a positive way: Morality and sincerity must be accompanied by an acknowledgement of the gospel for salvation.

“At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly” (Acts 10:1-2).

“He [Peter] will bring you [Cornelius] a message through which you and all your household will be saved” (Acts 11:14).

The Statement of Faith #XVI is also applicable: “That the way to obtain this salvation is to believe the gospel they preached...”

### History

John Thomas, in his “synopsis” of 1867, has, under “as perverted by the apostacy”:

“The one faith not necessary to salvation; any faith, with morality, being saving.”

Robert Roberts, in his “Fables to be Refused” of 1868 wrote:

XXXII — SALVATION WITHOUT THE GOSPEL.

That salvation is impossible without a belief of the gospel, however “moral” a man’s life may be. (Gal 2:16; Acts 4:12; Rom. 3:23-26; Acts 10:1-2 in connection with 11:14).

This was unchanged until 1883, when it assumed its present form in *The Ecclesial Guide*.

## Comments

It seems that both Thomas and Roberts were concerned with the necessity of a belief in the full gospel, including a belief in the promises to Abraham, and the resurrection and judgement at the return of Christ. The thought of a purely moral life being even remotely considered by anyone as being sufficient for the hope of salvation probably never occurred to them. They were thus focused on the necessity of the belief in the gospel as they outlined in their positive statements, along with baptism and a continuance of a Christ-like life. It seems to have been a reaction to Calvinism as discussed below.

## False Doctrine

The fundamental related “false doctrine” we come across these days is the “once saved always saved” belief prevalent among many evangelicals, popularized by some organizations and denominations. This says that believing Jesus Christ is the Son of God and our Savior is all that is required for salvation, and we can never lose that salvation. According to that doctrine, we are saved by belief in Christ alone, and as a result, it is not necessary to repent, and good works do not necessarily result from being saved. This doctrine has tremendous popular appeal because it teaches that we can be assured of our salvation without the obligation to change our sinful ways. This is the belief that “without the gospel” is primarily aimed. Also, sometimes known as “the persistence of the saints,” it is one of the principle beliefs introduced by

John Calvin (1509-1564)—it was unknown before his day.

### **Once saved always saved<sup>67</sup>**

The Bible never says that salvation is guaranteed. Immortal life is only given at the judgement when Jesus Christ returns to those found worthy. Simply attending a church and saying that we “accept Jesus as our personal savior” (a popular phrase, but one not found in the Bible) will, sadly, not guarantee our salvation.



John Calvin: attributed to Holstein

The Bible teaches that even after we are baptized there is no guarantee of salvation.

We are told that we must strive to enter into the Kingdom (Luke 13:23-24), and that not everyone who seeks eternal life will find it (Matt 1:13). Christ will reject even some who are confident of their own salvation because they did not do the will of God (Matt 1:21-23). Christ tells us that observing his commandments is part of our Christian walk (Matt 28:19-20), and seeking to obey them is required for our salvation (1 Tim 4:16, Heb 5:9).

Many Christians sincerely believe that they know the day and hour they were “saved,” and yet time and time again such

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<sup>67</sup> Adapted from “Salvation” by James and Deb Flint (Printland Publishers.) Also see section on “Saved” (Eternal Security)” in *Wrested Scriptures* by Ron Abel.



overconfidence so easily leads them to make mistakes: “Therefore let him who thinks he stands be careful in case he should fall” (1 Cor 10:12).

The Bible clearly teaches that:

- ☐ Eternal life is not a present possession of believers.
- ☐ Salvation is given to those who have accepted Christ AND have ‘overcome’ the trials they experience throughout their lives.
- ☐ Salvation is ultimately a future experience.
- ☐ Eternal life is to be given at the “last day.”

The Apostle Paul, although confident of his salvation, recognized that he could be disqualified from the race to receive the incorruptible crown of life:

“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize?... But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Cor 9:24,27).

It is also clear he understood that his salvation was not guaranteed: “Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me” (Phil 3:12 NIV). Paul also tells the Gentile believers in Rome that they must “continue” in God’s kindness otherwise they would be cut off as many of the Jews were: “Behold then the goodness and severity of God; on those who fell severity, but to you goodness — if you continue in his goodness—otherwise you will be cut off” (Rom 11:21-22).

God requires us to struggle against our selfish human natures and remain obedient to Him. Overcoming temptation is not easy and it requires great effort and perseverance combined with sincere prayer and a constant reading of the Bible. Paul described this struggle as a “war” within himself. There was a

battle between doing good and doing evil and often when he wanted to do good, he found himself doing evil.

The confusion surrounding salvation revolves around the uses of the word “saved.” When we come to the Bible, we find clear examples of the word “saved” being used in a number of different ways. There are three distinct uses of the word “saved” in Scripture. Care in their use is required to avoid misleading conclusions:

1. “Saved” in the past tense referring to the sacrificial work of Christ or when the believer connects him or herself with that sacrifice at baptism (see 2 Tim 1:9 and Titus 3:5 for example).
2. “Saved” in the present tense (continuous tense in the Greek, more accurately “being saved”). The following quotations indicate that salvation is a continuing process throughout the entire life of the believer (see Acts 2:47, 1 Cor 1:18, 1 Cor 15:2 and 2 Cor 2:15).
3. “Saved” in the future tense and ultimate sense (see Matt 10:22, 1 Cor 3:15, 5:5 and 1 Tim 4:16).

## **Re-Baptism**

One of the problems that arise when instructing potential members is that some object to being baptized by Christadelphians if they have undergone baptism by another denomination. This does present difficulties, and the normal practice is to hope that anyone previously immersed will recognize if they were ignorant of the full Gospel message beforehand, and then request baptism. This topic will be covered more fully under #31, Knowledge Necessary.

## **The true “good news”**

There are five essential steps laid out in the Bible to obtain salvation: to be “saved” in the ultimate sense, they embody

the Good News of the Kingdom of God available to all to follow them.

### 1. Humble ourselves - to accept Grace

The first step is to humble ourselves because there is nothing we can do, or have done, that makes us deserve this wonderful gift of eternal life. We have all sinned and deserve death. Eternal life is a gift we cannot earn, we can never expect it as something that is rightfully ours.

### 2. Have faith in God and the Gospel

God will only save us by His grace if we have faith: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Eph 2:8). Not only must we believe that God exists and will reward us, but we must also believe in the good news about the Kingdom of God and Jesus Christ. This message was at the very center of Paul’s preaching: “Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 28:31).

Belief in the gospel was required before a person was baptized: “But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12).

It is also important to have a correct belief about God and Jesus, His son. We are told that true worshippers will worship God in truth: “Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks” (John 4:23).

We are also told that our eternal life depends on knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ: “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3).

### 3. Repent

After hearing the truth about God, Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God, we must repent. Paul tells us: “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out” (Acts 3:19).

Repent means, “to change one’s mind for the better.” Therefore, we must change the way we think and turn to God. Our whole life must be focused in the right direction as we prepare to make a lifelong commitment to serve God and walk in the footsteps of Christ.

### 4. Be baptized

Although baptism may seem a simple and unimportant thing to do, it has great meaning and significance. We must take the time to understand the meaning of baptism and realize how important it is. Baptism is an essential step and not an optional extra. We are told clearly that belief must be followed by baptism: “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16).

### 5. Live a Life of Obedience

Once we are baptized, we must obey the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ and tell others about the wonderful hope of salvation: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt 28:19-20).

In a letter to Timothy we read the following advice: “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them. Because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Tim 4:16).

## Chapter Twenty-Eight

### That the Gospel alone will Save #24

*Doctrines to be Rejected #24: “That the Gospel alone will save, without the obedience of Christ’s commandments.*

This can be stated in a positive way: Obedience to the commandments is a responsibility required of all believers; salvation will be determined upon the application of faith and obedience.

#### History

John Thomas wrote of no such “perversion.”

Robert Roberts has no such “Fable to be refused” in his various “Statements of the One Faith” from 1868 on prior to its inclusion in his 1883. However, he first issued his “Pocket Epitome Of The Commandments Of Christ” in June of 1882. In 1883, in the first edition of his *Ecclesial Guide*, Roberts included in his “System of Rules” #2—That we accept and profess the doctrines and precepts of Christ, as taught in the apostolic writings, and defined in the annexed Statement of Faith and Epitome of the Commandments of Christ.<sup>68</sup>

It is of note that one current North American Unamended

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<sup>68</sup> It might be noted that our current “statement of faith” has the same “commandments, but in the 1883 edition, the first 20 (of 53) are categorized as “Commandments difficult to obey”, and the rest as “Not easy but less difficult”. There is also a separate list, containing 100 commandments.

Statement of faith has a modified version of this DTBR: #24: “That the Gospel alone will save, **without baptism and the continued** obedience of Christ’s commandments.” It is not known when this change was made. Thomas Williams makes no mention of it when he proposes his modified “Birmingham Statement of Faith” in the *Advocate* for 1909, p. 315, nor when he comments on the Chicago Ecclesia’s changes in 1897. (*Advocate*, 1897, p 311).

## Comments

We dealt with an associated error, “Once saved always saved” in #13, when we considered this previous Doctrine to be Rejected. It emphasizes the necessity of actions (works), as well as faith (in the Gospel). The requirement for “works” is, of course, a little surprising at first sight, as Jesus spent so much time and effort condemning the Pharisees for their rigid adherence to their interpretation of the Law:

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone” (Matt 23:23).

Note, however, Jesus does not say to ignore the Law: he says, “*not to leave the other undone.*” It is balance he seek—a balance so that a true follower of Christ strives to adhere to the precepts of Christ, but also have true Christian judgement, mercy, and faith.

It must, however, be stressed that the commandments of Christ are not a set of rules to be blindly followed, but a collection of the words of Jesus and the apostles, guiding us in our walk to the Kingdom. Some items to consider in this light include:

1.—Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you (Matt 5:44).

26.—Let Christ dwell in your heart by faith (Eph 3:17).

27.—Esteem Christ more highly than all earthly things: yea, than your own life (Luke 14:26).

53.—Give no occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully (1 Tim 5:14).

## Faith and Works<sup>69</sup>

It is sometimes thought that faith and works are opposites; that faith is the quality of believing and has nothing to do with behavior. Indeed, some critics of the Bible and Bible students are apt to point to the letter of James and the writings of Paul, and say that they are teaching different ideas. Paul writes: “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the Law” (Rom 3:28), and James “But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” (James 2:20). On the face of it, it does seem that here is proof that these parts of the Bible could not have been written by men who agreed; that the Holy Spirit did not function in one or other of them. If this is true, what are we to believe? Was Paul right? or James? Can we still trust the Bible? It is a first principle amongst us that the Bible is wholly inspired and infallible, and that it is capable of guiding us into all truth. Let us, therefore, examine faith and works. We will learn that they go hand in hand, that the writers of the New Testament agreed and that they were moved by the same Holy Spirit to write these things for our learning and instruction in righteousness.

The great premise of the Scripture, “The just shall live by his faith” (Hab 2:4), links faith with a way of life, as well as with the hope of eternal life:

□ “But that no man is justified by the law in the

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<sup>69</sup> Bro Neville Smart has two nice articles covering this topic in *The Christadelphian*, 1953, Pp. 239, 263. This section is not an extract, however.

sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith” (Gal 3:11)

- “Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him” (Heb 10:38).

When this verse in Habakkuk is picked up by Paul, he stresses that we can only be justified (or counted righteous) in God’s sight by faith, and not by the works of the law. Our “works” condemn us, but by faith we are counted righteous through the grace of God. The same verse quoted by the apostle in Galatians 3:11 is also used to stress the power of faith in contrast to works of the law.

However, in Hebrews 10:38 the emphasis is different. The Hebrews were in danger of slipping back from the truth and the apostle is reminding them of their earlier commitment: “Call to remembrance the former days”, he says, and, “Cast not away therefore your confidence.” He then quotes Habakkuk 2 as an exhortation whose force is in the ideas of living by faith: Hebrews 11. “The Faith Chapter,” can then be seen as a development of this thought.

We are used to thinking of Hebrews 11 as the chapter of “faith,” but the key word in this chapter is not “faith” but the word “by.” The evidence for this is that Hebrews 11 is a chapter of works and not of beliefs. It shows us what God’s servants did by faith. **By** faith Abraham left Ur, sojourned in the land of promise, and offered up Isaac. **By** faith Sarah conceived Isaac. Theirs was a living faith, a faith by which they lived their lives. The Apostle James describes it as showing faith by works: “Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works” (James 2:18). A profession of beliefs without a consistent way of life will only serve to condemn us as hypocrites. Without Abraham’s works, in particular the offering up of Isaac, there was no evidence that his belief was anything more than an



intellectual conception. A living faith inevitably works out into actions: “Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect” (James 2:22).

James summarizes the point in this way, “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:26). This analogy is peculiarly appropriate in the case of Abraham. His body was “as good as dead,” says Hebrews 11, and Paul says that Abraham “considered not his own body now dead” (Rom 4:19). Is James playing upon this idea? The “spirit” that brought his body to life, enabling him to be first the father of Isaac and subsequently the father of many nations, was the obedience of faith.

## Conclusion

Here then, is a powerful exhortation. Faith that believes that God exists, that He has made promises centered in Abraham and Jesus, that He will establish a kingdom and bless all nations must be improved upon by putting it into works of faith.

There are two kinds of work that our faith can perform acceptably. The kind that Paul refers to: walking in love, being constrained to do so by the love of Christ, which can be named as love, joy, peace, etc., which is the spirit of the Law. As Jesus also puts it: To love the Lord thy God and thy neighbor as thyself is the fulfilling of the Law. This is exemplified by following the commandments of Christ. The other kind, equally important, is the simple yet profound acts that show by our decisions and actions we firmly believe that God is working out His purpose in us, as He was with Abraham. These kinds of works of faith usually come at critical times in our lives, when we have to make decisions. They will come between our natural sympathies and our duty toward God.

## Chapter Twenty-Nine

### Possession of the Spirit of God #25<sup>70</sup>

*Doctrines to be Rejected #25: “That a man cannot believe without possessing the Spirit of God.”*

This can be stated in a positive way: The “Spirit of God” identifies a direct, miraculous influence from God in a person’s life, and this is not required for a true belief in The Truth.

This should be combined with the positive in the Statement of Faith:

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 recognized as his friends except those who do what he has commanded.

### History

There is no mention of this topic, either by John Thomas or Robert Roberts, until it appears in Roberts’ *Ecclesial Guide* in 1883. It is true, however, that this topic was much discussed in the period up to 1883, with a comprehensive essay in *The Christadelphian* entitled “The Possession of the Holy Spirit: Would it be a Guarantee of Salvation?”<sup>71</sup> To

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<sup>70</sup> Some of the same aspects are also covered under #6, Holy Spirit.

<sup>71</sup> *The Christadelphian*, 1883 p. 497. No author cited

quote the opening paragraphs as below, it is clear the situation is the same in the nineteenth century as it is today, with many denominations claiming possession of something which, in our day, is difficult to claim lacking any evidence of the open gifts of the early church.

- “There are many in the present day who believe in the possession of the Holy Spirit, and that it is necessary for salvation. They rejoice in it as a kind of assurance or guarantee of their salvation. When requested for proof of this assumption, none can be given, but the person declares that the proof lies within — to themselves in the heart — a conviction that cannot be shaken.”
- “The national church of this country professes to have it. In its prayer book at the part relating to the ordination of a bishop, it is written ‘Receive ye the Holy Ghost...by the imposition of our hands,’ but what difference there is in the individual, it is rather difficult to discern — and the gift of ‘discerning of spirits’ would be a valuable ecclesiastical possession.”
- “A right conclusion can alone be arrived at by going to the only source of knowledge. Our investigation will have particular reference to the moral and spiritual character of those who have been the media of the spirit’s manifestation, and to notice what influence it had upon them as concerning their salvation.”

## False Doctrine

The existence of the special gifts of the Holy Spirit in the 1<sup>st</sup> century Church cannot be denied: these are listed by Paul as:

“For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit to another

the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues . . .” (1 Cor 12:8-10)

By the means of these gifts, members of each congregation or ecclesia were helped to exercise the functions of instruction, correction, exhortation and public witness of the group. No one had all of the gifts, and the gifted members were therefore made dependent on one another for the total work. None of the gifts provided for one member to pass on gifts to other members. Usually, only the apostles were able to do this:

“When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. (Acts 8:14-17 NIV)

We do not know precisely when the operation of the specific gifts ceased to happen, but it was probably sometime after the death of the last surviving apostle. That they would so cease is provided for in the words of the Spirit by Paul: “Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away” (1 Cor 13:8).

From time to time throughout the following centuries there have been groups claiming that once again the gifts were available to men. In modern times the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements have made such claims. Speaking with tongues, known as glossolalia, is the gift that exceeds all others in claims of this kind. Rarely is it claimed as an ability to speak foreign languages in the manner of the apostles. It is not used as a principal means for preaching the Gospel as

they see it, and this is contrary to the direct instruction and practice laid down in Scripture:

“In the law it is written, with men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not” (1 Cor 14:21-22).

Instead it is said that those concerned are given ecstatic utterance, which they do not themselves understand but have to depend on others to provide the interpretation. This seems to be, again, contrary to this gift as observed in the early Church, for Paul says:

“Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful” (1 Cor 14:13-14).

Hence the words uttered were not nonsense, but simply in a language unknown to the listeners, and hence Paul discourages this practice in general. Indeed, there is no evidence whatsoever that the modern phenomenon is in any way related to the gift of tongues as described in the New Testament. Nor is it unique to “Christian” groups. The same occurrences are to be found amongst members of eastern religions, as well as within the Mormon movement.

Similar considerations arise about the supposed “gift of healing.” Healings wrought by the apostles were never carried out at “healing meetings.” There was no religious service, no emotional fervor produced by hymn-singing and preaching, but instead direct and positive healing in the open, on the spot, for all to see; or in private by an apostle. These miracles followed the pattern of the healings of the Lord Jesus Christ. For the most part, the Lord healed by a touch or by the spoken word and the results were evident.

Similarly, the early Church had the gift of prophesy (although

it seems to have been used more for forth-telling than fore-telling). Few claim such a gift today, nor the direct working of miracles.

So today, although we lack any of these specific gifts of the Holy Spirit, we can use the Bible to communicate the true message of the early Church, and rest assured in the ongoing power of God through his spirit in the world today.

## **The Holy Spirit in our community**

None in the Christadelphian community would claim to have the specific gifts of the Holy Spirit. None would claim that the Holy Spirit speaks to the heart and mind of the believer today, giving a genuine revelation of the will and purpose of God. And some in our community disbelieve not only all claims to possess the Spirit's gifts, but also to be subject to the Spirit's guidance or help. In fact, some have concluded that the only safe course is to claim the sole sufficiency of the Bible, without acknowledging any power from above which could, as they would put it, come between the believer and his unrestricted reliance on the written Word of God. These would then claim that the Holy Spirit simply does not now operate otherwise than through his Word. The believer has his Bible, and needs nothing else to enable him to secure the blessing at his Lord's return.

This latter view (we might call in "the spirit word view") does not seem to fully correspond to many passages in the New Testament, nor the teaching of the pioneers. In the 1970's, there was much dispute between this view and those who held a slightly more nuanced view: this was really initiated by AD Norris, in his "The Holy Spirit and the believer today." To quote:

[There] would be those who, while recognizing that the Bible is the only court of appeal at which doctrine, instruction, and moral precepts are to be established, hold that the Bible itself promises help from God's Holy Spirit

## Doctrines to Be Rejected

to the believer in living his life, meeting his temptations, and working out his salvation. These would regard the evidently miraculous gifts as past, at least for the time being, and would add that they are in any case irrelevant to salvation. But they would say that to deny God's power and will to work in the life of every believer in every age by His Spirit could lead to the assertion that man can save himself if only he knows enough. It would lie within the believer's power, having understood what God has revealed, to live his life in the light of that knowledge alone, and bring it to a successful issue. Such a view, they would claim, is entirely out of accord with the Bible's own revelation of the mediation of the risen Christ and the facts of Christian worship.

On the other hand, the pamphlet "The Spirit" by Aleck Crawford goes into great detail to defend the view that:

God's power, however, is still active in the ministering Spirits who are sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. In addition to this we, of course, have the complete revelation of God revealed by His Spirit. This is the only source of revelation today. If we read and obey this, then it will produce understanding, repentance, faith and the hope of salvation.

This dispute was strongest in Australia, and in 2003 the Association of Christadelphian Ecclesias there developed motion regarding the operation of the Holy Spirit. It said in part:

Almighty God is powerful and His Spirit or power sustains creation (Acts 17:28). We may be confident that God exercises His power in answering our prayers, or in influencing our lives, the affairs of nations or natural phenomena, but often He does so in ways that are beyond our ability to understand fully (Isa 55:8-11). We have some guidance in the Bible, but must avoid prescribing limits or defining ways in relation to the activities of God when there is no Scriptural warrant for so doing. Our limitations also mean that we cannot claim with certainty whether God has intervened miraculously in any specific

event in the lives of individuals, the affairs of nations or natural phenomena, other than when Scripture explicitly says that this is so (e.g. the parting of the Red Sea; the return of the Jews to Israel).

The motion was carried overwhelmingly.

To say one “has the spirit of God” with absolute conviction is to assert a claim beyond the bounds of the information given to us. To deny its possibility also seems similarly impossible to assert. So, we must conclude with a quote from Len Richardson:

It is a strange anomaly to me that we have such argumentation going on in our community about it. There are brethren who believe that the Spirit of God is given to those who believe, and others who stoutly deny it and say that it ceased at the end of the first century. But one is able to observe very little difference, if any at all, between the one and the other in the lives they live and the kind of people they are. They do the same kind of things, they have the same love of the Scriptures, and the same desire to interpret the mind of Christ into their lives. I do not see outstanding differences between this man, on the one hand, who says he has got the spirit, and this man on the other hand, who says he has not.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> See *The Tidings*, November 2017, p. 527



## Chapter Thirty

### Salvation is Unconditional #26

*Doctrines to be Rejected #26: That men are predestined to salvation unconditionally.*

This can be stated in a positive way: While salvation to eternal life does depend on calling and God's Grace, but it still requires a response by believers in studying the Bible, belief, and obedience to the commandments of Christ.

#### History

Neither John Thomas, nor Robert Roberts prior to 1883, include this directly in their classical statements. However, J.J. Andrew in an interesting article "Calvinism and the Bible doctrine of predestination" published in 1871<sup>73</sup> dealt with the problem at some length. Roberts listed a similar problem in his list of "Damnable Heresies" of 1868: "Some of them say that 'all men will be saved,' not omitting Judas; others, only 'the elect' of the Calvin type."<sup>74</sup>

#### Comments

This doctrine is the last of four associated doctrines to be rejected:

23. — That man can be saved by morality or sincerity,

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<sup>73</sup> *The Christadelphian*, 1871, p. 376

<sup>74</sup> *The Christadelphian*, 1868, p. 26

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.

This doctrine to be rejected, then, has two aspects. First it rejects the idea, as promoted by some in Paul's time, that the act of baptism forgave, not only past sins, but any future transgressions, an idea that has become to be known as "once saved always saved," which we discussed under #23 — "That man can be saved by morality or sincerity, without the Gospel".

It also rejects that some are predestined and chosen by God to be endowed by the Spirit to "receive" His word, since they themselves lack the power to do right, even when they read the word. The other consequence of this false belief is that you can never be saved if you are not chosen by God.

We will consider the role of grace and predestination in the Christian's life, and the tension between predestination and free will.

## **False doctrines about predestination**

Predestination is the Divine foreordaining (as opposed to or foreknowledge) of all that will happen; especially, in Christianity, about who will be saved, and who not. It is sometimes known as the doctrine of prevenient grace, (prevenient—coming before) and has been particularly associated with the teachings of John Calvin. Within Christendom, there is considerable disagreement about God's role in setting ultimate destinies. Christians who, in error, follow teachers such as Wesley or Calvin generally believe that God alone decides the eternal destinations of each person without regard to man's choices, so that their future actions or

beliefs follow according to God's choice irrespective of their own actions and beliefs.

Augustine of Hippo's early writings affirm that God's predestinating grace is granted on the basis of his foreknowledge of the human desire to pursue salvation, although this changed after the year 396. His later position affirmed the necessity of God granting grace for the desire for salvation to be awakened.

Traditionally, the Eastern Orthodox Church has never adopted the Augustinian view of predestination, and formed a doctrine of predestination by another historical route, sometimes called Semi-Pelagianism in the West. The Western Church, including the Catholic and Protestant denominations, are predominantly Augustinian in some form, especially as interpreted by Gregory the Great and the Second Council of Orange.

In Catholic doctrine, the accepted understanding of predestination most predominantly follows the interpretation of Thomas Aquinas:

Now there is no distinction between what flows from free will, and what is of predestination...that which flows from free-will is also of predestination...Thus we might say that God pre-ordained to give glory on account of merit, and that He pre-ordained to give grace to merit glory. It is impossible that the whole of the effect of predestination in general should have any cause as coming from us; because whatsoever is in man disposing him towards salvation, is all included under the effect of predestination; even the preparation for grace. (*Summa Theologica*, Part 1)

The only important branch of Western Christianity that continues to hold to a double predestination interpretation of Augustinianism, is within the Calvinist branch of the Protestant Reformation. Expressed sympathetically, the Calvinist doctrine is that God has mercy or withholds it, with a particular consciousness of who are to be the recipients of mercy in Christ. Particular persons are chosen, out of the total

number of human beings, who will be rescued from enslavement to sin and the fear of death, and from punishment due to sin, to dwell forever in His presence.

Those who are being saved are assured through the gifts of faith, the sacraments, and communion with God through prayer and increase of good works, that their reconciliation with Him through Christ is settled by the sovereign determination of God's will. God also has particular consciousness of those who are passed over by His selection, who are without excuse for their rebellion against Him, and will be judged for their sins.

### **The truth about free will**

God dignifies us with free will, the power to make decisions of our own rather than having God or fate predetermine what we do. Consider what the Bible teaches: Unlike animals, which act mainly on instinct, we resemble our Creator in our capacity to display such qualities as love and justice.

The Bible encourages us to “choose life...by listening to [God's] voice,” that is, by choosing to obey his commands (Deut 30:19, 20). This offer would be meaningless, even cruel, if we lacked free will. God warmly appeals to us: “O if only you would actually pay attention to my commandments! Then your peace would become just like a river” (Isa 48:18).

Let us now look at one Bible example of this principle at work in the lives of Jacob and Esau: “For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her [Rebekah], the elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” (Rom 9:11-13).

At first sight, it looks as though Esau never had a chance—he was doomed from the start. However, Paul goes on to say:

“What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with

God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy” (Rom 9:14-16).

Paul is not saying merely, “God can do as he likes, and who are we to question it?” God can do as He likes, true enough. But, says Paul, He is not **unjust** in what He does. What careful selection must be made, then, of the man who will be the important link in the chain of God’s purpose, based on the covenant to Abraham and Isaac! He must be, as his ancestors were, a God-fearing man; he must allow God to mold him to His will; he must be a man of such faith that he will be content to wait for the fulfilment of the promise, and not abandon his hope half-way through. Only God could know which of the twins about to be born would take this responsibility. Each had free will—one chose to put himself in God’s hands, even though he was guilty of acts of deceit. Esau could have accepted that Jacob was the one chosen by God, but did not. He could have followed God, but he did not. And so, Jacob had to leave home and fend for himself far away, although Esau was blessed by Isaac and prospered in his own time.

Our success or failure is not determined by fate, but by a combination of the grace of God, our acceptance of His call, and our own attempts to follow His way and not our own.

## **Chapter Thirty-One**

### **Sin in the Flesh #27**

*Doctrines to be Rejected #27: There is no sin in the flesh.*

This can be stated in a positive way: The flesh is hereditarily related to sin, caused by the transgression of Adam, the effects of which have passed upon all men, including the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **Introduction**

This is an area that has caused controversy almost since the genesis of the Christadelphian movement, and is still causing disputes today. What exactly is “sin in the flesh?” How is it related to our nature and the nature of Christ? Is it something that relates to the sacrifice of Christ, or not. We can in this chapter only deal with the origin of this DTBR and Robert Roberts’ intent with regards to including it.

#### **History**

There is no such statement in any of the statements of faith prior to *The Ecclesial Guide* of 1883, where it was first introduced. However, there is little doubt that it was introduced to counter the errors of Edward Turney, who in 1873 proposed that Jesus Christ had a “Free Life,” i.e., that he could not (not merely did not) sin, and that he had no need of a sacrifice for himself. This was strongly countered by Robert Roberts, who emphasized the Jesus shared our nature and our

tendency to sin (although he did not sin). As a result of this dispute, he altered his statement of faith of 1868 in several ways, but the section most directly related to this topic is shown in the table below, which compares the statements of 1868 (before the controversy) with those of 1877 and 1883 (the latter being the current one).

1868	1877	Current (1883 one)
That Adam broke this law and was adjudged unworthy of immortality, and sentenced to return to the ground from whence he was taken, in which sentence all mankind are involved, as the propagation of Adam's being.	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 carried into execution by the implantation of a physical law of decay, which works out dissolution and death, <i>and while a man is yet alive, gives him, where it is left to its uncontrolled operation, a tendency in the direction of sin. This is the law of sin in the members, spoken of by Paul<sup>d</sup>, which the new law established by the truth brings into subjection. In Adam's sentence, all mankind are involved, in consequence of their</i>	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

	<i>being physically derived from his physically - affected and unclean being<sup>5</sup>.</i>	
<p>The references given are below:</p> <p><b>4:</b> Gal 5:16-17, Rom 6:12, 7:21. <b>5:</b> John 3:6, Rom 55:19, 1Cor 15:22, Psa 51:5, Job 14:4.</p>		

The section highlighted is not in the current statement of faith, but does appear to be the basis of this doctrine to be rejected.

## False Doctrines

### “Original Sin”

The primary false doctrine that this addresses is that of Turney, and many exponents of similar false doctrines in the checkered history of our community. It also does cover the Catholic doctrine of *Original Sin*.

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom 5:12).

This verse and its context is at the center of many controversies, like the doctrine of Original Sin, which states that we are tainted with Adam’s sin, which needs to be atoned for, as well as our own personal transgressions.

“Clean Flesh”,<sup>75</sup> “Free life” and “Sin in the Flesh”

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<sup>75</sup> The term “Clean Flesh” was not used in the controversy of 1873. Turney never uses it in his Lamp magazine, and we cannot find it in any of his writings. It was first used as a description of an erroneous view of the atonement, in association with the views of John Bell, editor of the Australian Shield Magazine.



It is clear that this set of terms is associated with the doctrine explicitly denied by this DTBR if you read “The Slain Lamb,” a lecture that Robert Roberts wrote the night after the lecture delivered by Turney on July 28th, 1873.

In it Roberts wrote:

Here suggests itself the question with regard to **sin in the flesh**, which I will enter fully at a subsequent part of the lecture. I will endeavor to make manifest the most unscriptural, the most carnal, and the most untrue and mischievous character of the new philosophy, with which it is now attempted to inoculate the brethren, on the subject of “the flesh.”

What ground is there for the contradictory proposition that Jesus wore the nature of David, which was mortal, but was not himself mortal? There is no proof. A sign is gratuitously set up in the chart, and it is said “There is Christ free.”

Adam was driven out of Eden because of disobedience. He was therefore thrown back upon himself, so to speak, and he soon found in himself and his progeny how weak and evil a thing the flesh is, for his first son was a murderer. And because disobedience or sin, was the cause of his expulsion, and that sin was the result of the desires of the flesh, and because all the desires that are natural to the flesh organization are because of native ignorance, in directions forbidden, there is no exaggeration, no high figure in talking of **sin in the flesh**. It is Paul’s figure. He speaks of “sin that dwelleth in me,” and as he defines me to be ‘my flesh,’ sin that dwelleth in me is “**sin in the flesh**” — a metonym for those impulses which are native to the flesh, while knowledge of God and of duty is not native to the flesh.

This lecture was intended to deny the explicit claim the Jesus was not mortal in the sense we are. That he died for us, but did not need to do so. In other words, he had a “free life.”

There is no doubt that Turney believed Jesus had a free life. The fundamental view Turney held was that Jesus was

conceived by the action directly of God, and hence was not “son of man” but “son of God.” So, what did Turney mean by “Jesus had a free life.”

To quote from Turney’s “Sacrifice of Christ,” 1873:

And so I hold they were forfeited once by that one act, and if Jesus had been born under the curse of the old law, His life would necessarily have been lost also and however perfect His probation might be, I affirm that the former debt must first be paid by the shedding of blood for Him before He could help us. His own blood could no more redeem Him, in such a case, than our blood could redeem us. But I maintain this, that by the Almighty endowing Him with “**Free life**” he began by that means to lay help upon one mighty to save, and perfected that help by the addition of supernatural help that is —Eternal Life.

By this, Turney means that, unlike Adam, Jesus did not need to shed blood on his own account—he had no “sin in the flesh” of his own, so he did not need his own sacrifice to redeem himself.

It is also clear if you read what Turney wrote, that he claims he held views about “sin in the flesh” that were very close to those of Roberts, who wrote:

He (Paul) speaks of “sin that dwelleth in me,” and as he defines me to be “my flesh,” sin that dwelleth in me is “sin in the flesh”—a metonym for those impulses which are native to the flesh, while knowledge of God and of duty is not native to the flesh.

However, of course, Turney denies Jesus had any particle of sin in himself, so in that sense he denies “Sin in the Flesh,” although he does not deny its existence in anyone else.

## Concluding Note

To describe the changing views of John Thomas, Robert Roberts, and others such as succeeding editors of *The Christadelphian* is outside the scope of this chapter.

However, George Booker presented an extended treatment of the passage in Romans 8:3 about “Sin in the flesh” (KJV) in *The Tidings* (February 2018). So, much that is written about regarding this topic in our literature consists of quotations from other writers, often out of context. And as should be remembered a biblical study should be the basis upon which we understand scripture.

## Chapter Thirty-Two

### Josephism #28

*Doctrines to be Rejected #28: That Joseph was the actual father of Jesus.*

This can be stated in a positive way: In the lineage of Jesus, Joseph was his guardian; God, through His Spirit acting on his mother the Virgin Mary, was his Father.

“And the angel answered her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God’ ” (Luke 1:35 ESV).

This is not a topic that has troubled the community much since the 1880’s, so we will not give a great deal of focus to the positive. However, the account of Charles Dealtry, who promoted this false belief to the Christadelphians, is quite fascinating, so we include a brief history of him as a sort of an appendix.

#### History

This is probably another example of a clause added to cover a specific problem. Although John Thomas refers to “Josephism” in 1864, in the context this was referring to the view of Benjamin Wilson. Otherwise, it was not a problem until Charles Dealtry proclaimed this view of the paternity of Jesus in 1866. This DTBR was not in any of the statements of faith of Roberts from 1868 on. It was added in 1883 by

Robert Roberts in his first edition of his *Ecclesial Guide*, but why he waited we do not know.

## **False Teaching**

This can be defined as follows: That the actual physical father of Jesus is Joseph, thus Jesus is not truly son of God. The arguments of Dealty can be summarized as:

1. None of the apostles postulated the doctrine of the virgin birth; it had to be deduced. If it had been true, it would have been central and, thus, explicit.
2. Isaiah 7 was not literally predictive of Christ in every respect — for example, he was never called ‘Immanuel’.
3. On some occasions in the New Testament, the sonship of Jesus from Joseph was mentioned.
4. Joseph’s registry of Jesus directly implied he was Jesus’ father.
5. ‘Born of a woman’ was a Hebraism and did not imply a miraculous birth.
6. Jesus’ life as the Son of God was recorded as beginning with his baptism—for example, the temptations of Jesus, who was ‘tempted in all things like ourselves, though without sin’, took place after the immersion, not the physical birth.
7. The authenticity of the early chapters of Matthew and Luke, the only New Testament passages from which the virgin birth could be established, need scrutinizing.
8. Old Testament predictions of the virgin birth were nonexistent.

## **The truth about the birth of Jesus**

The counter-arguments of Roberts can be summarized as:

1. Jesus was unique amongst Bible prophets and seers; Dealtry's view had him as no different from many another holy man.
2. When, in the New Testament, Jesus was occasionally referred to as the son of Joseph, this was in citation of the historical fact that people of his generation believed that that was the case, rather than in Biblical corroboration of the fact that Jesus was the adopted son of Joseph.
3. Old Testament predictions of the virgin birth are sparse, but extant.
4. The vast majority of early manuscripts contain the first chapters of Matthew and Luke, and so 'the question to be decided is, were the chapters in question fraudulently excluded from the few copies, or fraudulently introduced into the many?'
5. 'If Christ was a mere man, how is it that he was sinless?' Though Jesus needed, in part, to be of sinful flesh, 'a mere product of Adamic procreation...would have been a sinner.'
6. Some New Testament passages clearly imply that Jesus was the Son of God before his baptism—for example, 'though he were a son, yet learned be obedience by the things which he suffered' (Heb 5:8).
7. Matthew's Gospel may not have been written in Hebrew; or may have been originally in Hebrew and later translated into Greek — thereby providing the Textus Receptus with an authentic Hebrew term like 'Immanuel' translated for the reader. Similarly, there was no evidence of Jesus's being known as 'Wonderful, Counsellor...' et cetera, but this did not debar him from fulfilling Isaiah 9.

8. Joseph's registry of Jesus's birth may have been simply to satisfy legal requirements rather than being about the child's biological origin.
9. Dealtry had asserted that Roberts's views were merely *prima facie* allegations rather than proofs. By this yardstick, said Roberts, 'Mr. Dealtry also...alleges...he does nothing more.'
10. The disciple Philip's statement that "Jesus of Nazareth" was "the son of Joseph" could be understood to be a legalistic, rather than a biological comment.
11. If man could be justified 'by doing what God has commanded to be done', and if Christ's merit was as an exemplar, a 'mere man', then 'Christ's first advent was merely an incident, and not a necessity, or a vital means of salvation.'

### **Dealtry and his interactions with Robert Roberts**

Charles Dealtry (1812-1891) was a fascinating individual. Born to a wealthy family in Lincolnshire, England, he married one Frances Whitelegge in March 1833, and went to the USA sometime after, leaving behind a child, Thomas, born in 1834. By 1842 he had been converted to Adventism by George Storrs, who appears in the histories of both the Christadelphians and the Jehovah's Witnesses. He briefly preached for the Adventists in the USA before returning to England in 1843, where he became very prominent as an Adventist preacher.

He went to Nova Scotia around 1847, and appears to have left his wife behind, for there he "marries" one Sarah Halliday and has a son by her, Charles W. He was an "annihilationist," in that he did not believe in an immortal soul. He was a popular preacher there, forming his own congregation. This did not last long, for he fled to France in around 1848. It is

recorded that John Thomas baptized him, but where and when this happened is not known.

He next surfaces in census records in 1861 in the Isle of Wight (off the south coast of England), reunited with his first wife and their

son. Soon after this, in 1866, he is recorded as converting many to the Christadelphian faith in Whitby, on the north-east coast of England. However, this almost immediately led to suspicions about what he believed about the birth of Christ, and Roberts dispatched Shuttleworth, from Halifax, to investigate. He did, and this resulted in a note from Roberts attacking Dealtry (now Mr., not Bro.) for his views on the paternity of Jesus. For the next two years, there is much correspondence in *The Christadelphian* between the two, before Roberts terminated the interchanges in late 1868. Thus Dealtry, to all intents, disappeared from Robert's magazine. But, not apparently entirely from the Christadelphian community.

Unfortunately, it appears that Dealtry was not convinced of the error of his ways by Roberts. There was a magazine that was started in 1888 in Canada, called *The Nazarene Messenger*, in which Dealtry and his attempts to "convert" Christadelphians were heavily covered. Dealtry meanwhile had moved to Cheltenham, about 95 miles Northwest of London. There he lectured and emerged a "Humanitarian Christadelphian ecclesia," and there are many other accounts of individual Christadelphians being persuaded of his views, and thereby being disfellowshipped. In Toronto and Niagara, Canada and Cardiff, Wales there are claimed to be ex-Christadelphian groups, but no name is used. And we know the magazine was published through 1901.

## THE NAZARENE MESSENGER.

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"A ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes."  
 "Behold I send my messenger before thy face."  
 "Ye seek Jesus the Nazarene, he is risen." This same Jesus "shall so  
 come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

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Vol. 1. Listowel, Ontario, Canada, February, 1888. No. 1.

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PUBLISHED BY  
THE HUMANITARIAN CHRISTADELPHIAN ECCLESIA,  
ST. GEORGE'S PLACE, CHELTENHAM.

But by the turn of the twentieth century, all traces seem to have disappeared, and Josephism troubled the community no more.

## Chapter Thirty-Three

### Earth Destroyed #29

*Doctrines to be Rejected #29: That the earth will be destroyed.*

This can be stated in a positive way: The earth has been created for the LORD's glory, and will never be destroyed.

“But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace” (Psa 37:11, Matt 5:5)

“But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD” (Num 14:21).

### History

This was changed in 1886 from that which Robert Roberts wrote in 1883, which rejected that the earth will be burned up. There was no similar statement prior to that, but it was implied in Roberts' Statement of 1868, which included as XXIIa: “That the righteous will not ascend to kingdoms beyond the skies at death, or at any other time, but will inherit the earth forever”. Compare this with the current #10: “That the righteous will ascend to the kingdoms beyond the skies when they die”. (John Thomas had a similar phrase in his “Synopsis” of 1867: “The kingdom, a state of bliss above the stars.”)

### False Doctrine

This False doctrine can be defined as follows: that the future Kingdom will be in Heaven, not on earth. This is based on several passages, some indicating that the future paradise is heavenly, which were dealt with when we considered the

DTBR #10: That the righteous will ascend to the kingdoms beyond the skies when they die:

- ☐ Revelation reference to paradise is heavenly and provides no evidence that Luke 23 refers to earth
- ☐ As the paradise of God is in heaven and Jesus specifically states that the man on the cross will be “with him” it follows that this would be in heaven
- ☐ Jews and Muslims generally believe paradise to be heavenly
- ☐ It is sometimes described as the abode of the righteous when they die until the end of this present world

In addition, both the Old and New Testaments seem to indicate that the earth will end, which is the basis of the false doctrine covered here:

- ☐ “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Pet 3:10).
- ☐ “Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed” (Psa 102:25-26).
- ☐ “Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished” (Isa 51:6).

- “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matt 24:35).
- “And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment” (Heb 1:10-12).

## The Truth

It is crystal clear from countless passages that the Lord Jesus, when he returns, will rule over the nations on earth, which will be restored. This restoration will require changes, so it is not surprising that in some sense the “earth” will be destroyed, just as it was symbolically by the flood, as Peter says: “Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished” (2 Pet 3:6: see Gen 6:13). In addition:

1. The literal earth will not be destroyed. This is shown by Isaiah 65, which Peter quotes from “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind... And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them” (Isa 65:17, 21). The continued existence of the earth is required to fulfill this prophecy.
2. Three “destructions” of the earth are described in the Bible: One past, and two yet to come.
  - The first destruction came with the Flood described in Genesis: Peter described the world as perishing: “Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished” (2 Pet 3:6).
  - Next, a destruction will come at the return of Christ: “But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly

men” (2 Pet 3:7). As we have said, He will restore all things.

- The third destruction is described in a vision seen by John: “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea” (Rev 21:1). This takes place at the end of the Millennium. God will be all in all.

The return of Christ is a literal event, necessary for the consummation of all things, and is foretold by Daniel:

“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” (Dan 7: 13-14). This is referred to by Jesus in the Olivet Prophecy: “Then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory” (Matt 24:30); and by John: “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him” (Rev 1:7).



## Heavens and earth

The “heavens” and “earth” (2 Pet 3:10,12) is figurative for a constitution or order on the earth. This is also shown by Peter’s quotation from Isaiah 65:17; “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind”. Since the new heavens and earth is the creation of “Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy” in which “they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain” (Isa 65:18,25), the heavens and earth,

which are destroyed, must be prior ruling systems on the earth that are removed for the establishment of the new rulership by Jesus and the saints.

In addition, the burning up of the earth is an Old

Testament expression for the destruction of a wicked order, but not the literal earth. Consider the following:



1. "... my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy" (Zeph 3:8). The prophet continues, however, to tell of the day when the people would speak a pure language and "from beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering" (Zeph 3:9-10).
2. "And the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire" (Micah 1:4). The prophet continues, however, to speak about the day when the law of the LORD would go forth from Zion and Jerusalem. (Micah 4:1-2).

## **Chapter Thirty-Four**

### **Baptism Necessary #30**

*Doctrines to be Rejected #30: That baptism is not necessary to salvation.*

This can be stated in a positive way: Baptism establishes a covenant relationship with God and His son, and is an act of obedience required for salvation.

“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

The statement of Faith #16 also applicable, which says:

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 recognized as his friends except those who do what he has commanded.

### **History**

The importance and necessity for baptism was the first doctrine in which John Thomas differed from his mentor, Thomas Campbell, in 1834, so it is not surprising it has been a feature of all doctrinal statements since this. His Synopsis of 1867 has, among his “Fables to be Refused:” “Baptism (immersion) may be practiced, but is not essential to salvation.” This first printed statement by Robert Roberts in

1868 has: XXXIII — SALVATION WITHOUT BAPTISM.  
That salvation is impossible without baptism.

This DTBR is current as first published in 1883.

## **False Doctrine**

False doctrine defined as follows:

- ☐ Baptism is not necessary for salvation, we are justified by faith.
- ☐ “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1); “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8).
- ☐ Baptism is only a ceremony where one person performs a religious rite on another person, but, as we are saved by faith alone, anything else we do, including ceremonies, will not help.

In addition, some hold that John 3:5 “Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God”, is not referring to water baptism.

## **Baptism as essential**

There are many steps and requirements for a believer to have the hope of salvation when Jesus returns, both on the part of our Heavenly Father and as required of ourselves. As clause 16 summarizes:

- ☐ 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 recognized as His friends except those who do what He has commanded.



This is of course only a summary: one can add,

- Calling by God, as the clause 24 notes.
- Repentance (“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” Acts 2:38).
- Faith, of which belief is a part, but which requires actions, as well as assent.
- And of course we must all acknowledge the grace of God, for it is by His grace we are saved, not by our works.

By this it is clear that those who take a single verse, without studying the true message of the Gospel, can come to quite erroneous conclusions, to their eternal regret. For Jesus said: “He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe [and be baptized] will be condemned” (Mark 16:16).

As to John 3:5 noted above, no modern scholar with any knowledge of contemporary Jewish traditions at the time of Christ would doubt that by the “water” Jesus was referring to the Jewish rite of immersion in water in a *Mikveh* as discussed briefly below.

And of course, Christadelphians are fond of pointing out that the English word “baptism” is derived indirectly through Latin from the neuter Greek concept noun *baptisma* (Greek “washing-ism”). The New Testament Greek word for baptize is derived from the masculine Greek noun *baptismos*, a term both for ritual washing in Greek language texts of Hellenistic Judaism during the Second Temple period and used for the dipping of a garment. Both of course illustrate that the rite of baptism implies the use of complete immersion. The sprinkling of infants has no relationship, as we discussed in covering infant baptism.

## **Jewish practice in the time of Jesus**

In Leviticus, God instructs Jews to cleanse themselves from ritual impurities, contracted through such acts as touching a corpse or leper, and such washing primarily fulfilled the legal requirements of ritual purity so that Jews could sacrifice at the Temple. By the time of Jesus, this was usually done in a *Mikveh*, which means a pool where water has gathered. In his days, a *Mikveh* was essential in any Synagogue and were part of the temple. Immersion was not for physical cleaning; that would be done beforehand. And immersion was conducted for various occasions:

- ☐ Women after childbirth or menstruation
- ☐ A bride before her wedding
- ☐ Priests before divine service
- ☐ Men on the eve of Yom Kippur
- ☐ For converts to Judaism
- ☐ In preparation of a dead person for burial

## Chapter Thirty-Five

### Knowledge Necessary #31

*Doctrines to be Rejected #31: That a knowledge of the truth is not necessary to make baptism valid.*

This can be stated in a positive way: Baptism is only valid upon a knowledge of God's revealed will and purpose, and an open declaration and confession thereof.

“But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women”  
(Acts 8:12).

### History

This topic was a very early concern of John Thomas. In 1834 he wrote “That the subjects of any baptism not predicated upon the good confession, does not entitle to the spiritual blessings consequent on the *“one Baptism.”*”<sup>76</sup> This was so clearly assumed that actually John Thomas made no reference to this doctrine in his Synopsis of 1867 under “Fables to be refused.” However, Robert Roberts in 1868 wrote:

XXXIV — THE VALUE OF BAPTISM IN A STATE OF IGNORANCE. That baptism is of no avail in the absence of an understanding and belief of “the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.”

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<sup>76</sup> *The Apostolic Advocate* (Vol. 1, 1834, p. 128).

His *Ecclesial Guide* of 1883 has the current version.

## False Doctrine

It is common in revival meetings to call those present at his missions to come forward and be “Saved.” As we discussed under the necessity for baptism in a previous DTBR, this type of stress on one small aspect of the process of salvation is invalid. Knowledge of the Truth must inevitably precede baptism for the baptism to be valid.

Paul seems to address a similar theme:

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?... But they have not all obeyed the gospel... So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom 10:13-17).

Clearly, Paul is saying that faith, as informed by hearing the word of God is essential for salvation—as is baptism.

It is interesting to consider the conversion accounts in Acts: in every case, a baptism was performed, and it was preceded by an acknowledgement of belief.

Examples of Conversion in Acts				
Preaching	Believed	Repented	Confessed	Baptized
Pentecost Acts 2.14-41	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Samaritans Acts 8.5-13	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Eunuch Acts 8.35-39	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Saul Acts 9.17-18	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cornelius Acts 10.34-48	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lydia Acts 16.13-15	Yes			Yes
The Jailer Acts 16.30-34	Yes	Yes		Yes

It seems impossible to argue that, for a valid baptism to occur, it must not be preceded by belief, as informed by

“hearing by the word of God.” In the case of the believers in Acts, of course, in most cases they were already aware of most of the gospel message—it was the advent of the true Messiah, Jesus, that was proclaimed and accepted. They were not troubled by all the false doctrines that are pronounced these days by the other religions that surround us, and which can so confuse belief.

### **A valid baptism**

In the normal course of events in the Christadelphian community, membership requires an expression of knowledge, followed by baptism. Of course, we are firstly, as our name says “brethren (or sisters) in Christ,” not just of an ecclesia or even of the larger fellowship of believers.

However, for convenience, it is customary for a person, who is clearly is old enough and capable of comprehending the Truth<sup>77</sup>, and who is desiring to be baptized, to ask for the help of an ecclesia. They are then interviewed by ecclesial representatives to ascertain that, both in knowledge of what he (or she) is confessing, and in attitude of mind, they are, so far as human judgment can properly determine, a fit person for baptism and fellowship. If this procedure is followed, after a good confession of faith, the individual is baptized by the ecclesia, welcomed into fellowship, and this happy event is often announced to the wider community in the magazines.

This forms the normal pattern, and would in the eyes of the community, and we hope, our Lord and our God, constitute a valid baptism. There are, however, a number of times when situations arise where this process cannot be easily followed.

1. An individual has discovered the Truth, but is remote from any ecclesia and cannot easily be reached by, or

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<sup>77</sup> We are using “The Truth” here as shorthand for what the Christadelphian community considers as essential knowledge for salvation.

travel to, an ecclesial representative.

With modern technology, it is quite easy to conduct a video interview—this situation does arise occasionally. Of course, as the example of John Thomas shows, immersion does require help, but the assistant does not need to say anything. The individual can assent to baptism themselves.

1. Is already a member of another Christadelphian (or associated) community, but not in the Central (Amended) fellowship.

It is very rare in practice for such a person to be re-baptized. The almost invariable procedure is for an interview (which actually some ecclesias do upon transfer anyway). This situation was addressed during the reunions in the 1950s, and re-baptism upon change of fellowship had not been practiced for 50 years then, and has been very rare since.

It is also normal, at least in the USA, for a similar procedure to apply in the case of members of the CGAF (Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith).

2. An Individual has already been baptized, and has recently discovered that his beliefs when he was baptized seem to be identical to the beliefs of the Christadelphians.

This depends on the ecclesia that the individual contacts. It happens infrequently, but in general the prior baptism can be, and has been accepted. This situation can be troublesome—there are ecclesias, for example, who acknowledge the individual had sufficient knowledge, but still insist on re-baptism, but the situation is very rare.

3. An individual decides that he was ignorant of certain key elements of Bible knowledge, and wants to be re-baptized.

This situation is rare as well. It must be admitted both John Thomas and Robert Roberts felt they had to be re-baptized

upon coming to a fuller knowledge of the revealed message of the Bible, but such a practice is today virtually unknown. As John Carter wrote in 1959:

It [rebaptism] could only be contemplated if the baptism was plainly defective either because of a serious lack of understanding of the one Gospel, or a manifestly unworthy frame of mind. Re-immersion would repudiate the previous baptism, and where there was a true if simple belief in the Gospel and even the flicker of a genuine will to obey, re-immersion is not to be thought of.<sup>78</sup>

4. On joining an ecclesia, an individual discovers their baptismal interview differs widely from the one he underwent. They do not even refer to the Statement of Faith (e.g., the BASF) in it.

Ecclesias vary widely in their practice during instruction and the baptismal interview. Many ecclesias have their own format, and their own statement of faith (while acknowledging the truth of the BASF). Many who are baptized have never heard of the BASF, but are nevertheless accepted as member of our community world-wide. Such is the nature of ecclesial autonomy, and the common practice among Christadelphian ecclesias world-wide.

All is in the hands of our Lord, when we answer for our beliefs and our conduct at the Judgment Seat.

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<sup>78</sup> *The Christadelphian*, 1959, p. 360.

## Chapter Thirty-Six

### Refuse Meats #32

*Doctrines to be Rejected #32: That some meats are to be refused on the score of uncleanness.*

This can be stated in a positive way: No foods are forbidden on the grounds of divine law or ceremonial defilement; such decisions are a matter of personal conscience, not to be imposed on others.

### History

In the *Herald of the Kingdom* for 1860, John Thomas wrote:

Being temperate in all things, and having too much regard for the truth to dilute it with human folly, we hold ourselves aloof from Total Abstinence, Anti-porkism, Anti-tobaccoism, Vegetarianism, Watercurism, Abolitionism, Anti-leavenedbreadism, De-coction-of-raisinism, and the thousand-and-one other branches of Crotchitarianism, in the deep and gloomy recesses of which the little giants of the flesh imbed the truth.<sup>79</sup>

In this, John Thomas was attacking Benjamin Wilson and his followers, who refused pork because they attempted to follow the dietary restrictions in the Law of Moses.

DTBR's #32-35 were all added in 1886, when *The Ecclesial Guide* was re-issued, and references added to the "Truth to be Received." The authors suspect that Robert Roberts added

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<sup>79</sup> *Herald of the Kingdom*, 1860 p. 248



this because of some controversy on the eating of pork, as reflected in some recent correspondence in *The Christadelphian*. There was much in succeeding years as well.

### False Doctrine

It has been felt by many that the keeping of the dietary restrictions in the Law of Moses was intended for the health of the nation of Israel, and should be an example for us. (We covered this in some detail when considering DTBR #19 “That the law of Moses is binding on believers of the Gospel”.<sup>80</sup>) We also briefly did consider this topic of meats in that chapter.

To quote from a discussion of this in 1901:

The partaking of pork, blood, alcohol, the attending of oratorios, etc., concerning the legality of all these matters, brethren have shown scruples. If we are in the company of such, and bring pressure to bear to induce them to indulge in those things, then we infringe, for “he that doubteth is damned if he eat.” This view is confirmed by the apostolic command that there is to be no judging in this matter — neither on the one side nor the other. What we have to remember is that all things which are lawful are not expedient. We are required to think of this, and for the brethren’s sake to make sacrifices, endure self-denials, to do nothing which will endanger the salvation of those for whom Christ died.<sup>81</sup>

So, is it appropriate to let the conscience of one person (or many) dictate the conduct of others in the ecclesia?

There are some who hold that the dietary practices laid out in the Law of Moses were to ensure that the Israelites would suffer from “none of these diseases” (Exod 15:26) of the Egyptians. However, it is clear in the context that Moses is

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<sup>80</sup> See Chapter 23

<sup>81</sup> *The Christadelphian*, 1901 p. 278.

here referring specifically to the plagues that God inflicted upon the Egyptians.

## **Meats in The Law of Moses**

Paul spends a great deal of time discussing the problem of meat offered to idols in his letter to the Romans, but that situation hardly applies today. He seems to be addressing a different situation in his letter to Timothy, probably written some years later:

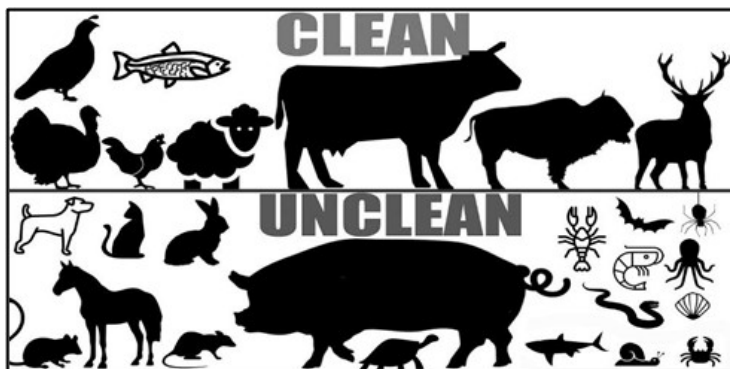
“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith... Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer” (1 Tim 4:1-5).

It is clear from this that some were “commanding to abstain from meats,” and that Paul had no problem with such prohibitions; he might allow for individual conscience, but not for imposing this conscience on others. It would seem that Paul would not agree with the brother writing in 1901. It would seem unlikely we would imperil the salvation of a brother by ordering pork in a restaurant in his presence, although we might avoid serving him such a meat knowing his views—as we would avoid serving beef to a known vegetarian.

So, what about the Law of Moses? And what about the prohibition on eating blood in Acts 15:28?

Despite the recognition of the demise of the Law of Moses, there is still a significant number of the community that do not eat some of the foods prescribed by the Law of Moses. One of the authors can personally remember many refusing to eat black pudding, quite a local delicacy, one of the ingredients being pork blood. In considerable detail Leviticus

11 gave rules by which permitted foods might be discriminated from those designated “unclean.” Those beasts which chew the cud and part the hoof were permissible. Fish with both fins and scales were clean. So, also were various kinds of locust. But, in general, all other creatures were proscribed from the diet of an Israelite. And another exclusion was blood: *“I will set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people”* (Lev 17:10). So, what was the reason for these dietary rules?



It is conventional in many circles to regard the prohibitions as based in hygiene, because the animals regarded as unclean are carriers of disease. Pork can be a source of trichinosis. The coney and hare are carriers of tularemia. Fish without fins and scales tend to burrow into the mud and become sources of dangerous bacteria, as do the birds of prey which feed on carrion. And it is quite possible, indeed, that by divine inspiration the diet practices involved by these restrictions helped keep the people of Israel healthy. Of course, almost all these problems are resolved by cooking. And certainly the Old Testament, and the New, give no hint of this. And why, if the health of the nation was of prime importance, are not poisonous plants classed as unclean?

It is clear that the main purpose of the dietary laws was that of separation. “I am the LORD your God. Set yourselves apart. Be holy, because I am holy. Do not make yourselves

“unclean” by eating any creatures that move around on the ground” (Lev 11:44 NIV). And it must be admitted that this has been highly effective, down to our days. The “Kosher” dietary laws still mark a dramatic distinction between the lives of orthodox Jews and Gentiles. Jews buy foods in the main from different stores, eat in different restaurants, and rarely eat with Gentiles. Even though these laws and the rest of the Law of Moses failed in their purpose to establish a “Holy” nation, they did make a separate nation, which surely preserved the nation so they were able to return to their own land, as the LORD predicted.

### **Application today**

Jesus, of course, knew both the reason for the dietary laws and their failure. He said “Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them. (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)” (Mark 7:15,19b NIV). We defile the food, it is not the food that defiles us. Even so, even such a staunch disciple as Peter had to be told again, and so he supported Paul in his mission to the Gentiles, and his attempts to ensure that Jews and Gentiles could proceed in a united social, as well as spiritual fellowship, not divided by dietary rules. And, although the council at Jerusalem retained several dietary prohibitions, they were for the sake of Jewish converts. After about AD 60 or so, few Jews were converted, and Paul could be so strong in his letter to Timothy.

As a final note, some argue that the prohibition on eating blood long predates the Law of Moses, with its purpose of separation. “But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it” (Gen 9:4 NIV). However, the reason for this (with its associated prohibition on eating blood) is clearly explained in the Law, for it says “I have given it (the blood) to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls” (Lev 17:11). Thus with the cessation of the necessity for animal sacrifice with the death of Christ, the old prohibition on eating blood

## Doctrines to Be Rejected

passed away.

Most of the prohibitions in Acts 15:29 (for offered to Idols, blood, etc.) were necessary at the time to reduce the tension between Jews and Gentiles in the Church. Paul later declared these unnecessary as few Jews remained in the Church.

All food is clean, and can be consumed without any spiritual or religious considerations—only that we are to regard ourselves as the temple of God, so we treat it with the care and consideration God desires.

## Chapter Thirty-Seven

### British Israelites #33

*Doctrines to be Rejected #33: That the English are the ten tribes of Israel, whose prosperity is a fulfilment of the promises made concerning Ephraim.*

This can be stated in a positive way: The ten tribes comprise part of the Jewish people in dispersion. The English people do not form part of natural Israel.

“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from the islands of the sea ... and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel and the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth” (Isa 11:11-12).

### History

This false doctrine was very common in England in the nineteenth century, and Robert Roberts debated with Edward Hine over three nights, April 21-23, 1879 at Exeter Hall, London. The debate, later published, covered 150 pages and probably about 75,000 words, and one lecture was also published as a pamphlet “Anglo-Israelism Refuted.” Thus it was not surprising that it was included in 1883 in Roberts *Ecclesial Guide*, but not before.

## False Doctrine

British Israelism (also called Anglo-Israelism) is a doctrine based on the hypothesis that people of Western European descent, particularly those in Great Britain, are the direct lineal descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. To give an example of the arguments put forward by Herbert Armstrong, founder of the Worldwide Church of God (which split into multiple groups after his death):

And Joseph said unto his father, not so, my father: for this [Manasseh] is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head. And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations. And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh. (Gen 48:18-20)

The argument is that Ephraim was called “great,” and because Great Britain is called Great, therefore Great Britain is Ephraim! Also, Manasseh must have a place in the picture, so the United States is Manasseh. Of course, in the passage it is said Manasseh would be greater than Ephraim, which destroys the whole foundation of the false doctrine, and was actually based upon the simple observation that for a brief period in time, Great Britain ruled over most of the world.

The central tenets of British Israelism have been refuted by evidence from modern genetic, linguistic, archaeological and philological research. The doctrine continues however, to have a significant number of supporters.

Briefly, its history really begins in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when *The Rights of the Kingdom* was published in 1649 by John Sadler (1615–74). However, it was only in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, during a religious climate of Millenarianism, that British Israelism became a distinct ideology, based on the preaching



Edward Hine (1825-1891)

and writings of two men, Richard Brothers (1757–1824) and John Wilson (1799–1870). Then, in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Edward Hine and Edward Wheeler Bird developed the ideas further. As stated earlier, It was Hine that Robert Roberts debated.

Hine departed England for the United States in 1884, where he promoted the idea that Americans were the lost tribe of Manasseh, whereas England was the lost tribe of Ephraim.

Due to the expansive nature of the British Empire, believers in British Israelism spread worldwide.

With the demise of the British Empire after WWI, its prevalence greatly declined. However, it was revived by Herbert Armstrong, and was one the central beliefs of his denomination, which numbered over 150,000 before disintegration. Its magazine *Plain Truth* had a peak circulation of 8 million, and a wide readership among Christadelphians with its focus on prophecy about the return of Christ.



## United States in Bible Prophecy

(Plain Truth Nov 1940)

### What Has Gone Before:

**WHERE** is the United States mentioned in Bible prophecy? The fact is, more is foretold of our people than any other race! But in prophecy, modern nations usually are called by the names of ancient ancestors from which they have sprung.

Centuries ago the wealth, power, and national greatness which has become ours since 1800 was promised by the Almighty to Abraham for his descendants. Few have noticed that the promises to Abraham were TWO-fold in nature—material promises of RACE as well as spiritual promises of GRACE.

The Birthright included ownership of the promised LAND. In passing the birthright on to the two sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, the aged Jacob (Israel) said, "Let my name (ISRAEL) be named on them . . . and let them grow into a multitude." (Gen. 48:18). They, not Judah, were given the NAME, "House of ISRAEL." Together they were to grow into a multitude, but eventually their descendants were to separate, Manasseh then to become the world's greatest single nation, Ephraim's descendants a still greater company, or commonwealth, of nations. (Gen. 48:19). Thus Ephraim became the Birthright holder. Included in the vast national and material blessings promised was possession of the "gates" of their enemy nations.

## Chapter Thirty-Eight

### Marriage #34

*Doctrines to be Rejected #34: That marriage with an unbeliever is lawful.*

This can be stated in a positive way: Marriage with the unbeliever is forbidden by the law of Christ.

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?” (2 Cor 6:14-15).

### History

John Thomas was asked this question in 1866, and wrote:

There is another question proposed, namely, “Does a believer commit sin in marrying an unbeliever?” What is sin? Paul says, “It is the transgression of law;” but it is also written, that “where there is no law there is no transgression.” Paul delivers a judgment which he thinks would be approved by the Deity; and no doubt it would. But he does not lay it down as a law. He says, a widow is at liberty to marry “only in the Lord;” but he does not threaten her with any penalty if she did not take his advice. And, as Paul prescribed no punishment, I see no reason why you should be more stringent than the apostle. Offer your advice as he did; show the possible evils that might

## Doctrines to Be Rejected

come upon her in so marrying, if she take your advice, it is well; if not, so much the worse for her, perhaps; yet, you have done what you considered right; more than this should be left for the Lord's adjudication when he comes.<sup>82</sup>

So, marriage with an unbeliever, although undesirable, was not unlawful. However, by 1878, when this topic was next addressed seriously, in a long article on the subject it was concluded:

We [will] pass a resolution among ourselves to the effect that Paul having commanded to 'marry only in the Lord,' and to be 'not unequally yoked with unbelievers,' we deem marriage with an alien to be an offence against Christ, and that any brother or sister so offending or denying the truth in relation thereto is, in our judgment, unworthy of fellowship.<sup>83</sup>

So, it was not surprising that Robert Roberts added this DTBR in 1883. He also added a long section to his *Ecclesial Guide*, #45, saying, in part:

But what is to be done in the case of an unmarried brother or sister who violates the apostolic law by marrying one not a believer (by which, of course, we are to understand, an obedient believer—one baptized into the faith of the Gospel)? This is a difficult point to decide. Some are for taking no notice: others for withdrawing from the fellowship of the offender. Both courses are open to objection. 'Taking no notice' is to wink at the breach of the law of Christ, and implicate ourselves therein: a breach which gradually leads to other breaches until there is, in most cases, a complete falling away from the truth. On the other hand, the marriage cannot be undone; and to refuse to have anything further to do with the offender is to say that he has committed an unpardonable sin. Should we be

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<sup>82</sup> The Christadelphian, 1866, p. 94

<sup>83</sup> *The Christadelphian*, 1878, p. 509-514. Written by a "Fellow Watcher", almost certainly Robert Roberts.

justified in taking this ground?

If he defends his act as a Scriptural one, and contend for indiscriminate right of marriage on the part of believers with unbelievers, there would doubtless be no alternative but withdrawal, for we may not make ourselves responsible (by fellowship) for doctrines or maxims that are in opposition to the law of God. But suppose there is a recognition of the Scriptural law in the case, and an admission of wrong, extenuated by necessity of marriage, and inability to find a sister, or some such plea, should we be justified in forever refusing such an offender, as if he were a habitual drunkard or a thief? There must be some middle ground in such a case.

### **The basis for this Doctrine**

Marriage establishes the most intimate fellowship between the subjects thereof; if, therefore, it would be wrong for a Christian to yoke himself with someone that could easily take him/her away from the Truth. Robert Roberts addressed this topic himself in 1891, saying that there was a general impression to the effect that the objection to marriage with the unbeliever was founded on the expression of Paul's that widows were at liberty to marry again "only in the Lord."

"The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord" (1 Cor 7:39).

Paul's expression taken in its context was certainly a strong indication, but the objection to mixed marriages stood on a much broader ground. It was involved in the broad principle that the consecration required by Christ at the hands of his people was so complete as to exclude friendship with the present world. It was put negatively, as well as positively.

"Ye are not of the world." "Come out from among them."

"The friendship of the world is enmity with God." Of course, such restrictions were not absolute, as sometimes practiced by denominations such as the Amish and the Exclusive Brethren.

As Paul says:

“I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people, not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world... What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside?” (1 Cor 5:9-10, 12 NIV)

This prohibition is emphasized by Paul in a passage often applied to marriage:

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.” (2 Cor 6:14-17)

The context indicates that the believers at Corinth had associated themselves with some of the ceremonies in the idolatrous temples; hence the questions, “What concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?” Also, the command, “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing.” The injunction about unequal yoking originated in improper religious association, for it refers to two passages in the Law: that of cross breeding: “Do not mate different kinds of animals” (Deut 19:19), and the joining together in labor of different animals “Do not plow with an ox and a donkey yoked together” (Deut 22:10).

But this passage does lay down a principle that is applicable to other circumstances. And what yoking is there, after union

with Christ, which takes precedence of the marriage yoke? Every other yoke can be severed, but marriage can only be terminated by the cause specified in Matthew 5:32, or by death. God promises to dwell in a believer, but not in an unbeliever. The basis for the fulfilment of the promise is, "Be ye separate" and "Touch not the unclean." How, then, can God dwell in a believer who contaminates himself by becoming "one flesh" with an unbeliever? And how can an ecclesia that practically condones such a defilement receive the Divine blessing?

The mind of God has in all generations of mankind been expressed adversely to intermarriage with unbelievers. In the Old Testament, this was a recurring problem:

Moreover, in those days I saw men of Judah who had married women from Ashdod, Ammon and Moab. Half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod or the language of one of the other peoples, and did not know how to speak the language of Judah. I rebuked them and called curses down on them. I beat some of the men and pulled out their hair. I made them take an oath in God's name and said: "You are not to give your daughters in marriage to their sons, nor are you to take their daughters in marriage for your sons or for yourselves. Was it not because of marriages like these that Solomon king of Israel sinned? Among the many nations there was no king like him. He was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel, but even he was led into sin by foreign women. Must we hear now that you too are doing all this terrible wickedness and are being unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women? (Neh 13:23-27 NIV)

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 practice, this means a member of an ecclesia who marries

an unbeliever is going against the teaching the scripture. As in any case where a member does something that is clearly against scriptures and our understanding of them, it is up to the ecclesia to prayerfully consider the specific situation and take the most appropriate step(s) to ensure that error doesn't enter into the ecclesia, and to help the member and all the flocks walk in righteousness. The *Ecclesial Guide* is a suitable help in this regard.

And it must be stressed that discouragement of marriage with unbelievers is borne out by statistics of what commonly happens in such cases. There are many cases where the unbelieving partner became convinced of the Truth, and the marriage and the family became a vital part of the ecclesia. However, in general such marriages tend to be difficult, with many ending in divorce, and many such believers leave the brotherhood.

### **Other considerations**

There are two related subjects:

#### **Divorce**

Divorce was almost unknown among Christadelphians in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, so no specific guidance was encapsulated for us. (For example, it is not mentioned in *The Ecclesial Guide*). As its occurrence has proliferated among society, and entered into our community, it is not surprising we have wrestled with the subject. Especially among some of the minority fellowships, it has been a cause for dissension and division. The majority of the Central (Amended) ecclesias have tolerated it to some extent. The Birmingham ecclesia in its heyday in 1950 recommended:

Where divorce, or re-marriage by a divorced person, or marriage with a divorced person, occurs, an interview should be sought, and withdrawal or other ecclesial action determined in the light of all the facts and of the principles referred to in earlier paragraphs.

In dealing with all offenders, we must remember that our aim should be, not only to admonish and rebuke, but also to restore... To achieve the right balance in these matters in the spirit of our Lord's teaching, calls for prayerful and persistent effort and humility of mind.<sup>84</sup>

It must be recognized that some ecclesias have different procedures, some including prohibition of remarriage of a divorced member, and some prohibiting any membership of any divorced person.

### **Dating “outsiders”**

There is little harm in making friends of the opposite sex outside our community. And sometimes, in areas of North America, there are few opportunities to meet those who share your faith. What is a believer to do then when he or she finds an attractive companion, who is of interest romantically, but who is not a member of our community?

Their much literature dealing with this subject, but to quote one source: “The best advice I have seen for this situation is: ‘the introduction of one’s spiritual interest in the faith should be made at the start of a friendship, and its overwhelming importance for you should be emphasized. The danger of friendships outside the Faith is that one’s hope of the Kingdom may not be revealed until one is emotionally deeply involved.’<sup>85</sup>

“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph 5:31-32).

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<sup>84</sup> *The Christadelphian*, 1950, p. 213.

<sup>85</sup> From “Bible Guidelines for a Happy Marriage” by John Bilello and *The New Life* by John Marshall.



## Chapter Thirty-Nine

### Armed forces, Debts, etc. #35

*Doctrines to be Rejected #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.*

This can be stated in a positive way: That because “our Kingdom is not of this world,” we should have no part in the government or enforcement apparatus of our society, so we do not serve in the armed forces or civilian police, take no part in politics, and do not go to law to recover debts:

- ☐ “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:16).
- ☐ “Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence” (John 18:36).
- ☐ “Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?... why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?” (1 Cor:6:1,7).

### History

This DTBR really covers 4 topics:

1. Military service

2. Acting as a civilian enforcer of the law
3. Voting, and being a politician i.e. and elected official in government
4. Going to law against another, particularly to recover financial items

All were first introduced as a DTBR in 1886, but all were well established by then as a view of the Christadelphian community.

The first, opposition to Military service, was part of our community's belief from the start, as John Thomas was very clear on the subject. He chose the very name of our community in 1864 because of the requirement for a name in connection with conscientious objection, but from his initial thoughts on the subject in 1835<sup>86</sup> he was consistently opposed to brethren serving in the armed forces. And this has been a characteristic of the Christadelphians ever since, especially after clarification of exactly what this entailed during World War I.

Serving as a Police Constable was discouraged in a long article in 1872<sup>87</sup>, although a brother being converted while holding such a position could retain it. Dispute over this around 1917 was a partial cause of the Berean split, and so this acceptance was disallowed in 1919 and the words added "or as Police Constables" in 1919<sup>88</sup> (which action did not prevent the split).

Shunning involvement in politics was also part of John Thomas' world view at least by 1860<sup>89</sup>. There was a long article emphasizing this published in 1873 in the *The*

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<sup>86</sup> *Apostolic Advocate*, (Vol. 2, 1835) p. 108

<sup>87</sup> *The Christadelphian*, 1872, p. 530

<sup>88</sup> *The Christadelphian*, 1919 p. 559

<sup>89</sup> *Herald of the Kingdom*, 1860 p. 138.

*Christadelphian*.<sup>90</sup>

The topic of “recover debts by legal coercion” really did not appear to trouble the brethren before 1872, when the topic of going to law against a non-member was raised.<sup>91</sup> Based on the passage above in 1 Corinthians 6, suing another brother was never in question, but there was some debate in the pages of *The Christadelphian* before Robert Roberts came out against such actions, and added this clause, as we have said, in 1886.

We will deal with each topic in turn.

## **Military Service**

### **The early Christian attitude to War.**

In the early Christian Church followers of the Christ refused to take up arms. In as much as Jesus’ teachings ruled out as illicit all use of violence and injury against others, it was clearly implied that participation in war was illegitimate. The early Christians took Jesus at his word, and understood his inculcations of gentleness and non-resistance in their literal sense. They closely identified their religion with peace and they strongly condemned war for the bloodshed which it involved.

However, after the Roman Empire officially embraced Christianity under Constantine around 450 AD, the Just War theology was developed to reconcile warfare with Christian belief. After Theodosius I made Christianity an official religion of the Empire, this position slowly developed into the official position of the Western Church. In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, there was a further shift of opinion in the Latin-Christian tradition with the crusades, strengthening the idea and acceptability of Holy War. Objectors became a minority, although some theologians see the loss of a pacifist position

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<sup>90</sup> *The Christadelphian*, 1873, p 312.

<sup>91</sup> *The Christadelphian*, 1872, p 491.

as a great failing of the Church.

## **The USA**

In the United States, conscientious objection was permitted from the country's founding, although regulation was left to individual states prior to the introduction of conscription during the civil war. Exceptions were still called out. It is of interest that in the list of denominations officially recognized as being conscientious objectors by the Confederate Congress records of 1863 appears the “Nazerenes,” the name for the Christadelphians in the South at the time.<sup>92</sup> Although John Thomas prepared a petition to the United States congress seeking recognition of the position of his newly named denomination, this was never presented. This had meant that when Christadelphians are sought to serve in the armed forces, they have to appeal individually—the resultant hardships of such brethren are quite well documented.<sup>93</sup>

## **Non-combatant service**

The reasons for refusing to perform military service are varied. Many conscientious objectors cite religious reasons:

Unitarian Universalists object to war in their sixth principle “The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all.”

Members of the Historic Peace Churches such as Quakers, Mennonites, Amish, Old Order Mennonite, Conservative Mennonites and Church of the Brethren object to war from the conviction that Christian life is incompatible with military action, because Jesus enjoins his followers to love their enemies and to refuse violence. However, only a minority of Quakers have taken this position in the two world wars.

Since the American Civil War, Seventh-day Adventists were

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<sup>92</sup> There is an existing record of five “Nazarenes” being granted exemption in the Civil War.

<sup>93</sup> See “Within the Camps” by Peter Hemingray (Tidings.org)

known as non-combatants, and had done work in hospitals or to give medical care..., and the church has upheld the non-combative position.

The attitude of Christadelphians to non-combatant service was unclear before WWI. Certainly in the Civil War many “Christadelphians” served in uniform— John Thomas’ son-in-law, Benjamin Lasius, was one such. In Great Britain during the run-up to conscription in 1916, the position of C.C. Walker, editor of *The Christadelphian*, towards non-combatant service was unclear. The relevant clause in their draft petition of 1914 was: “That the conscientious objection of your petitioners does not extend to strictly non-combatant branches of National Service, but only to those which involve the bearing of arms or resort to force.”<sup>94</sup> This apparent position was rejected by Frank Jannaway and the large majority of Christadelphians, so total exemption was sought, and achieved. He essentially took over the role of leader of the Christadelphian community in their successful objection to serving in the armed forces in any capacity.

C.C. Walker later claimed he was misunderstood:

Some objection was taken to this [petition] by those who read into it what was not there. As a matter of fact all our conscientious objectors rendered service in “strictly non-combatant branches of National Service.” This clause 7 has been referred to by F. G. Jannaway in one of his recent essays as “famous”. [This] may perhaps be admitted in view of recent dust clouds.<sup>95</sup>

It is of interest that around 1,800 Christadelphians obtained absolute exemption, this being around 45% of all such, and ten times the next largest denomination.<sup>96</sup>

The basis for the Christadelphian position is primarily that of

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<sup>94</sup> *The Christadelphian*, 1914, p. 422.

<sup>95</sup> *The Christadelphian*, 1923, p. 507.

<sup>96</sup> See *The Christadelphian*, April 1919, p. 165, an article by Peter Hemingray

separation from “the world,” and “You cannot serve two masters.” It is based on this that we take no part in politics, and serving in any armed forces requires stating allegiance to the country. The associated commandments for non-violence are a minor factor, otherwise we would permit non-combatant service, as do the Adventists and Quakers. (These two factors are covered in “The Christian and War,” the most common of our pamphlets on the topic: there are many more.)

### **Reasons for our stand**

To emphasize the fact of “our kingdom is not of this world,” an oath of allegiance is a requirement to serve in the military and police forces

Example, the U.S. state of Michigan State trooper’s oath is: “All MIVDF members take an oath of allegiance to the United States of America and the State of Michigan to obey the orders of the Governor of the State of Michigan, and the officers appointed over them.” What are the implications of this?

- ☐ Christ is no longer our commander and chief
- ☐ We could be ordered to act in a manner inconsistent with Christ’s commandments

“But above all things, my brothers, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yes be yes; and your no, no; lest you fall into condemnation” (James 5:12).

What do Christ’s Commandments (which are also part of our Statement of Faith) instruct us:

- ☐ 2. Resist not evil: if a man smite thee on one cheek, turn to him the other also (Matt 5:39,40).
- ☐ 5. Agree with your adversary quickly, submitting even to wrong for the sake of peace (Matthew 5:25; 1 Corinthians 6:7).

## Doctrines to Be Rejected

- ☐ 8. Recompense to no man evil for evil: overcome evil with good (Romans 12:17).
- ☐ 10. Render not evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing (1 Peter 3:9).
- ☐ 12. Grudge not; judge not; complain not; condemn not (James 5:9; Matthew 7:1).
- ☐ 15. Be not conformed to this world: love not the world (Romans 12:2; 1 John 2:15).

What does the Bible say about our citizenship? James Robinson wrote on this topic:

Even though we Christadelphians may live in the United States, or Canada, or Great Britain, we're not actually citizens of those worldly nations. We're citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven.

...By being baptized, you are symbolically saying that you have died to your old life, and are born again into a new one, where you will follow Jesus Christ, rather than your own fleshly desires. In other words, you're giving up your previous citizenship in the world, and becoming a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven. A baptized Christadelphian is no longer primarily a citizen of any worldly kingdom; he's firstly a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven.

However, there's an issue. The Kingdom of Heaven is still in heaven, and we're on earth. The kingdom that we're living in is not our true home. As Hebrews 11 points out, we Christians, and in fact, all the faithful throughout time, have lived as "strangers and pilgrims on the earth", since we're citizens of a heavenly country, not an earthly one.

But, what does that mean? Well, if you were a Canadian citizen, but happened to be living in the United States for an indefinite period of time, we'd call you a "permanent resident," or a "green carder". If you look up "Permanent Residency" on Wikipedia, you'll find out that permanent residents are people who live in a country, and can work in country, and in many ways have all the rights of a citizen

of the country, except for the following:

- They may not vote
- They may not stand for public office
- They may not apply for public sector employment<sup>97</sup>
- They may not apply for employment involving national security
- They do not have access to their country's consular protection

So, a permanent resident is just like a citizen, except they can't vote, they can't be politicians, they can't be policemen, and they can't be soldiers. Oh, and in case you haven't ever gotten one, any jury summons you get will have a variety of boxes you need to check to determine your eligibility. And the very first one will almost always be "I am a citizen of the United States of America". So a permanent resident can't be a juror either. In other words, being a permanent resident of a country is an awful lot like being a Christadelphian".<sup>98</sup>

## Police Constables

### The background

It is doubtful if this phrase would have been added but for a dispute in 1917 about the way the Birmingham Temperance Hall ecclesia dealt with two of their members who were opposed to some who joined the police force in lieu of military service. They were removed from ecclesial office, but not dis-fellowshipped. A minority within the Birmingham ecclesia, led by Viner Hall, and they were ultimately supported by the large London Clapham Ecclesia, including Frank Jannaway. Ultimately, the Berean movement was

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<sup>97</sup> It should be stressed that the suggestion of avoiding public sector employment does not find wide acceptance among Christadelphians. Many have risen to senior positions in the civil service in the UK and elsewhere.

<sup>98</sup> *The Tidings*, Special Issue p. 355 by James Robinson.



formed in Great Britain. (The Bereans in North America separated over quite a different problem, that of A.D. Strickler's view of the nature of Christ and C.C. Walker's reluctance to declare him out of fellowship.)

It is hard to know, at this distance in time, quite why the Clapham ecclesia was so determined to interfere in an internal dispute in the Birmingham ecclesia, why the minority felt so strongly about the affair that they withdrew, and why subsequent attempts on all sides to heal the rift failed. Both sides issued numerous pamphlets, and there seems little to achieve by listing all the claims and counter claims.

So, the words "or of Police Constables" were added at the time<sup>99</sup>, but all later attempts to heal the breach were unsuccessful—all sides never disputed the inadvisably of becoming a Police Constable, just that two brethren were reluctant to make it a question of fellowship at the time. (The Berean breach in North America was healed in 1952, and the Bereans in the UK almost all became part of the Dawn Fellowship.)

### **The reasons why**

The basis of the objection to serving as a Police Constable (or any other police force) is essentially the same as that for military service.

To quote the words of C.C. Walker:

On the one hand brethren are refusing the office of special constable when required by the magistrates to take it, and being penalized for the refusal; and on the other hand, brethren are voluntarily accepting the office of special constable... Although the cases on either hand are few, the situation is there and must be faced... As regards the law of Christ concerning violence there is practically no difference between the to. A brother might as well be in

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<sup>99</sup> Per *The Christadelphian*, 1919, p. 559, the words were added to clause 35 in October, 1917.

the army as be a special constable.<sup>100</sup>

## Voting

Our attitude to voting, whether it be for national or local elections, or indeed for taking part in political petitions, is, like or attitude to serving in the army, governed by our attitude to citizenship, as we discussed above. It might perhaps be mentioned that many members are employed in the public sector, but the attitude of our community to voting and serving in an elected position goes back to John Thomas, who objected to any involvement in politics, and of course Robert Roberts, who declared voting as taking part in politics, thus said it was not allowable.

In most countries it is easy to avoid voting, but in some countries it is, at least nominally, compulsory. In Australia it has been compulsory for over 100 years. Members regularly get letters, asking them to explain why they did not vote, and a typical response has been: “I am a member of the Christadelphian Brotherhood and a tenet of our beliefs is that we do not take part in political elections.”

Although nominal fines are specified in the statutes, it seems unlikely that any Christadelphian has ever been fined.

## Recover debts by legal coercion

This topic, of the ones covered in this article, has caused by far the least discussion. It is, however, not a simple topic to cover. It is in fact often misunderstood. Some take the passage in 1 Corinthians to prohibit going to law in any circumstances. This application has caused many problems. Indeed many circumstances force one to appear in court, and to use the legal system is essential in some locales if you merely want to buy a house, and many brethren have been

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<sup>100</sup> *The Christadelphian*, 1917, p. 437

asked to appear as witnesses in court cases.

I will quote from a wise article on this by J. Balchin

Consider the question of “going to law.” Who among us has not heard a brother or sister build a tortuous argument on Paul’s injunction? Perhaps you have done it yourself. I have. In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul takes the Corinthians to task for going to the civil courts to secure redress for wrongs caused by other brethren. He asks, how is it that they do not deem themselves competent to settle such disputes if they are destined ultimately to be the justices of the world’s peace?

That is a paraphrase of verses 1–6. Yet how often has this chapter, and particularly the first verse, been quoted to justify denying to brethren all the processes of the civil law?

Our Authorized Version perhaps encourages the misunderstanding: “Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?” The Revised Standard Version removes these obscurities: “When one of you has a grievance against a brother, does he dare to go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints?”

At once it is clear that the Apostle deals only with those matters that the Ecclesia is competent to resolve. Yet this text has been used to regulate entirely different and external matters. For example, the misapplication of this text is its use to deny to the brethren the right to insure their houses against burglary or their cars for any purpose. Insurance policies often specify that the insured must assist the insurers to recover from third-parties or others, through the courts if necessary, the cost of damage or loss falling on the insurers. But the text deals with disputes between brethren!

The question of “going to law” cannot be left there, however. If Paul had concluded his discussion at verse 6, we might have inferred that brethren can hold court on disputes within their competence to settle and can refer to

civil courts matters outside their competence. But Paul did not end his discussion there. He goes on in verses 7–8 to state the principles which underlay his previous injunctions. What he leaves to last is, in fact, of first importance. Here we find the kernel of the matter: “To have lawsuits at all with one another is defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? But you yourselves wrong and defraud, and that even your own brethren.”

Now people embark on lawsuits to vindicate their name or rights, or to secure privileges or compensations. To do so they must win their case. To lose it is to fail. But Paul says that the result either way is defeat. It is defeat because they are trying to win, and to try to win in this context is unchristian. They may have been wronged or defrauded; but that gave the Christian no right to sue at law. The world would think that there were grounds enough; but the matter must be viewed with the eyes of the Christ who, when he was reviled, did not revile in return, when he suffered did not threaten, but trusted to him who judges justly (1Pet 2:22–23). So the Corinthians were at fault on two counts. The first was that they were wronging and defrauding men, even brethren. The second was that, instead of suffering the wrong done to them, they sought to be avenged. However they might attempt to justify their going to law, their “righteousness” was in fact “unrighteousness”. And the Apostle adds this warning: “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?” (verse 9).<sup>101</sup>

The fundamental principle is thus seen to be that of non-retaliation. It governs relations between brethren and it also governs the brethren’s relations with other persons. On that principle any going to law spells failure for a man in Christ. Whether the going to law is to recover damages, to rebut a libel for the sake of honor, to secure a divorce for unfaithfulness or desertion and thereby to be compensated,

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<sup>101</sup> *The Christadelphian*, 1960 p. 358

vindicated or revenged—it is a confession of failure.

Based on this exposition, the use of the legal system in many circumstances is quite permissible for Christadelphians. And it must be said that one can observe quite a number of Christadelphians in Great Britain are lawyers, although few, if any, seem to specialize in court cases (which is in any case restricted there mostly to barristers).

And even in the case of suing to recover debts, this can present considerable difficulties, as was pointed out in *The Christadelphian* in 1988:

And what of the brother who finds that because he is suffering himself to be defrauded, his business is being ruined, his family are going in need, he is unable properly to remunerate his employees, or he has to impose greater burdens on his good customers to cover the loss incurred by those who refuse to pay? What recourse has he to the provisions of the state in these circumstances?

Purely because of the complexity of many of these circumstances, it is impossible to give categoric answers to such questions. But in every one of them it is important that the principle should be upheld that we are prepared to suffer to be defrauded, and no action whatsoever should be taken that can be considered retributive.<sup>102</sup>

The principle is clear: the application is sometimes difficult. We must give thanks if we are never faced with such a circumstance.

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<sup>102</sup> *The Christadelphian*, 1988 p. 391

## **Chapter Forty**

### **Appendix 1: Doctrines to be Rejected of 1883:**

Doctrines to be Rejected.

1. That God is three persons.
2. That the Son of God was co-eternal with the Father.
3. That Christ was born with a “free life.”
4. That Christ’s nature was immaculate.
5. That Christ was of a different nature from other men.
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 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.

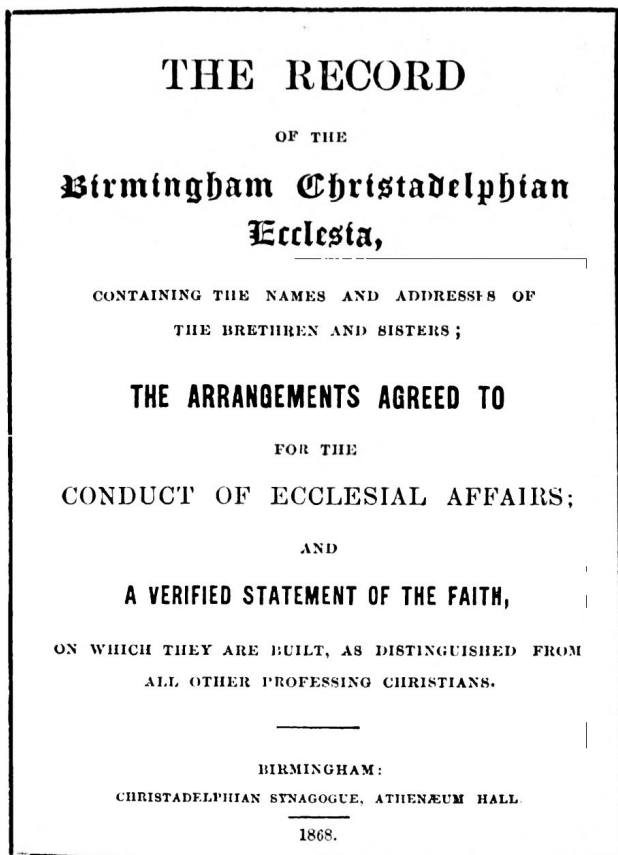
15. That the tribunal of Christ, when he comes, is not for the judgment of saints, but merely to divide among them different degrees of reward.
16. That the resurrection is confined to the faithful.
17. That the dead rise in an immortal state.
18. That the subject-nations of the thousand years are immortal.
19. That the law of Moses is binding.
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 pre-destined 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 burned up.
30. That baptism is not necessary to salvation.

That a knowledge of the truth is not necessary to make baptism valid.

## Chapter Forty-One

### Appendix 2: Fables to be refused of 1868

Taken from the “record” as shown—note Biblical references.





Forasmuch as it is common in our day to profess faith in Christ, without understanding the truth concerning him, and while holding beliefs that entirely make it void, we deem it necessary to supplement the declaration of our faith in its positive features, with a definition of our position in relation to the heresies now current in the world, in the garb of truth; and for the preservation of the truth from the corrupting influence of the fables of the apostacy, and also in order the more effectually to try every spirit making profession of the faith, we ask of every person claiming our fellowship, an assent to our statements on this head, as well as an endorsement of our profession of positive faith.

*XVII.—THE TRINITY.*

That God is not three but ONE, out of whom are all things—even the Spirit and the Son.—(1 Cor. viii, 6; Eph. Iv, 6.)

*XVIII.—THE “ETERNAL SONSHIP” OF CHRIST.*

That Jesus was not co-eternal and co-equal with the Father, but was created of the Father, by operation of Holy Spirit upon Mary: a mortal man, partaker of flesh and blood, having no pre-existence, made in all respects like unto his brethren; yet, through the moral and intellectual energy derived from his paternity, without sin.—(Luke i, 35; Matt. i, 20; Rom. viii, 3; Heb. ii, 14, 17, iv, 15.)

*XIX.—THE THIRD PERSON IN THE GODHEAD.”*

That the Holy Spirit is not a person, but the vehicular effluence of the Father, filling all space, and forming the medium and instrument of all divine operations.—(Job xxvi, 13 ; xxxiii, 4; Psa. civ, 30; Neh. ix, 30.)

*XX.—THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.*

That the immortality of the soul is a pagan fiction, subversive of the first law of the Deity’s moral government, viz., that the wages of sin is death.—(Gen. iii, 19; Psalms lxxxix, 48 ; xxx, 3; lxxxvi, 13; Job xxxiii, 22; Rom. v, 12; vi, 23; 1 Tim. vi,

16.)

*XXI.—THE THEORY OF DISEMBODIED EXISTENCE.*

That there is no existence in death, conscious and unconscious, and that the popular belief in heaven and hell is a delusion.—(Psa. vi, 5; Eccl. ix, 5, 6, 10; Psa. xlv, 3, 4; Isaiah xxxviii, 18, 19; Job iii, 13, 22.) Therefore

a. —That the wicked will not suffer eternal torture, but will be engulfed in total destruction after resurrection.— (Psa. xxxvii, 10, 20, 34; Job xx, 5-8; 1 Thess. i. 9, 10; Psa. cxlv, 20; civ, 35; lxxiii, 27; Job xxi, 30; Prov. xiii, 30.)

b. —That the righteous will not ascend to kingdoms beyond the skies at death, or at any other time, but will inherit the earth forever.—(Prov. x, 50; xi. 31; Matt, v, 5; Psa. xxxvii, 9, 22 ; Rev. v, 9 ; Dan. vii, 27.)

*XXII.—SUPERNATURAL PERSONAL DEVIL.*

That there is no such thing as a supernatural personal devil, the devil of Scripture being but a personification of sin in its several phases and manifestations among men.— (Heb. ii, 14; Acts v, 3-9; Matt, xvi, 23; Rev. ii, 10, 12, 13; John, vi, 70; Rev. xii, 3. 17.)

*XXIII.—ECCLESIASTICAL AND SKY KINGDOMS.*

That the kingdom of God is not “the church,” or a region beyond the stars, but a system of things to be established under Christ on earth, in the Holy Land.— (Dan ii, 44; vii, 13 ; Jer. xxiii, 5 , Luke i, 32, 33 ; Amos ix, 11; Ezek. xxxvii, 21, 22.)

*XXIV. —THREE-FACT GOSPEL.*

That the Gospel is not the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ merely, but “the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.”—(Acts viii, 12 ; xxviii, 30, 31.)

*XXV.—NO JUDGMENT AT THE COMING OF CHRIST.*

That the judgment of the saints, at the tribunal of Christ, when he comes, is not a simple allotment of rewards, but a dividing of the faithful from the unfaithful, with reference to the question of life or death.—(1 Cor. iv, 5 ; 2 Cor. v, 10; Rom. ii, 5, 6, 16; Rom. viii, 13; Gal. vi, 8.)

*XXVI.—THE “FIRST RESURRECTION.”*

That the resurrection, at the appearing of Christ, is not confined to the faithful, but extends to all who have made a profession of his name, whether faithful or not. —(Rom. xiv, 10, 12; 2 Tim. iv, 1; Luke xix, 15; Dan. xii, 2.)

*XXVII.—IMMORTAL RESURRECTION.*

That those thus rising are not in a glorified state, but appear before Christ in their natural body, to have it decided whether they are worthy of being clothed upon with immortality, or deserving of a return to corruption.— (2 Cor. v, 10; Rom. viii, 11; 2 Cor. v, 2; 1 Cor. xv, 53.)

*XXVIII.—IMMORTAL NATIONS IN THE MILLENNIUM.*

That the subject-nations of the thousand years are not immortal.—(Rev. xx, 6; Is. lxv, 20; 1 Cor. xv, 24-29.)

*XXIX.—JUDAISM AND SABBATARIANISM.*

That the law of Moses is not binding in any of its enactments, except those retained in the letter by the apostles; and the observance of Sunday, as popularly enjoined, is unscriptural.—(Gal. iii, 19-24; v, 1-4; Rom. vi, 14, 15; iii, 20-22; Acts xv, 23-29; Col. ii, 16, 17; Rom. xiv, 5, 6; Gal. iv, 9, 10.)

*XXX.—BABY “BAPTISM” AND INFANT SALVATION.*

That baby sprinkling is a farce, and baby salvation an impossibility.—(Mark xvi, 16; Acts viii, 12; Heb xi, 6; Eph. iv, 17, 18.)

*XXXI.—RESURRECTION OF HEATHENS, IDIOTS, BABES, &C.*

That “heathens,” idiots, pagans, and very young children, will never see the light of resurrection, but pass away as though they had not been, the resurrection being restricted to those who are responsible to the divine law.—(Job iii, 13-22 ; x, 18,19; xiv, 10-12; Is. xxvi, 13-14; Jer. ii, 39, 57; Prov. xxi, 16; Rom. ii, 12; Psal. xlix, 6-20; John iii, 19; xii, 48; xv, 22-24.)

*XXXII.—SALVATION WITHOUT THE GOSPEL.*

That salvation is impossible without a belief of the gospel, however “moral” a man’s life may be.—(Gal. ii, 16; Acts iv, 12; Rom. iii, 23-26 ; Acts x, 1,2; in connection with xi, 14.)

*XXXIII.—SALVATION WITHOUT BAPTISM.*

That salvation is impossible without baptism.—(Gal. iii, 27 ; 1 Peter iii, 21; Rom. vi, 3-5.)

*XXXIV.—THE VALUE OF BAPTISM IN A STATE OF IGNORANCE.*

That baptism is of no avail in the absence of an understanding and belief of “the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.”—(Acts six, 3-5; viii, 12; Mark xvi, 16.)

That the foregoing facts, doctrines, and principles constitute the whole counsel of God, declared by the apostles, for enlightenment unto salvation, and form the only basis of saving faith for Jews and Gentiles in the present dispensation.

The significance and importance of our Statement of Faith is undoubted. Our community is largely bound together by the Biblical Principles that are to be found in the Bible, of which the BASF is regarded as a true account. It is not necessarily the only true account: many ecclesias have adopted their own "Statement of Faith", but all acknowledge the validity of the BASF. In areas of dispute, we tend to strongly emphasize a few phrases or sections. Many of these phrases are to be found in these doctrines to be rejected, for example:

- That the dead rise in an immortal state
- That we are at liberty to serve in the army, or as police constables
- That marriage with an unbeliever is lawful

These and many more were added to clarify the position of the community in times of dispute. And in fact, many of these additional doctrines help clarify the doctrines held by our community in several areas that are still to this day the subject of internal controversy, although often overlooked, ignored, or explained away.

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