

A Handbook to The Christadelphian Statement of Faith

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Preface

The record in Acts chapter 18 describes the experience of Apollos:

“... and he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, *and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly*” (Acts 18:26)

This example of Apollos demonstrates that it is quite possible to be zealous and bold in expounding the Word, yet be lacking in understanding. Apollos had the humility to stand corrected, and heeded the instruction of Aquila and Priscilla, and as a consequence, understood the Way “more perfectly.”

The present writer also had the need to have the Way of God expounded to him more perfectly. In 2002, he first published “*A Handbook to the Christadelphian Statement of Faith*.” His intention was to present and defend the Christadelphian position on particular First Principles, particularly the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the Atonement. However, it was later pointed out to him that whilst he was contending against errorists, he himself lacked an understanding of certain basic aspects, that the BASF plainly teaches. It is with a sense of gratitude that we have reviewed and republished this work, having corrected the errors that were formerly contained therein.

There are some basic errors on the Atonement commonly held amongst modern Christadelphians, which contradict the BASF and the understanding held by our earlier brethren – and the Scriptures themselves. These can be summarised in the table below:

19th Century Mainstream Christadelphian Beliefs on Sin and Sacrifice	21st Century Mainstream Christadelphian Beliefs on Sin and Sacrifice
Sin in the Bible is used in two senses Transgression and a physical principle	Sin in the Bible always refers to transgression or the propensity to sin (transgress)
Adam sinned and was cursed with a dying nature We die because we inherit the same nature	Adam sinned (transgressed) so he died We sin (transgress) so we die
The flesh IS “full of sin”	The flesh is NOT full of sin
In the Bible “the substance called man” is referred to as “sin”	In the Bible “the substance called man” is NOT referred to as “sin”

The Devil is “sin in the flesh” A physical evil principle in the flesh that makes us mortal as well as tempting us from within	The Devil is sin (transgression) Including the propensity or inclination to sin (transgress) in the mind
Jesus was “made sin” by being born with our nature For one to be “made sin” for others is to become flesh and blood.	Jesus was “made sin” When he was made a curse for us on the cross OR By being a sin offering ie. He was made sin on the cross not by his birth
The sacrifice of Jesus was “ the condemnation of sin the flesh, through the offering of the body of Jesus once for all” The offering of Jesus body was the laying down of his life. It was “a body” that was prepared for sacrifice, and not a “life.”	The sacrifice of Jesus was A. His sinless life – he gave up (sacrificed) his own will and desires , conquering sin in his life AND B. The sacrifice of his life by dying on the cross.
God Condemned Sin in the flesh	Jesus condemned sin, in the flesh
God did “declare His” own righteousness	Jesus declared God’s Righteousness
Jesus submitted to God’s righteous condemnation of sin in the flesh as our representative	Jesus paid the penalty due to sinners
God’s condemnation of sin in the flesh (completed in blood shed) was efficacious for atonement	Jesus righteous life rendered the blood efficacious for atonement
Jesus did abrogate the law of condemnation for himself and all who believe and obey him	Jesus did not need to offer for himself or for us on account of his/our nature
The Devil was destroyed “through” death ie. when he obtained the resurrection to life on the third day.	The Devil was destroyed at the point of Jesus’s death
Jesus gained the Victory over the Devil when he was raised to immortality	Jesus gained the Victory over the Devil in his life and at the point of his death on the cross
These beliefs were upheld in fellowship until the time of reunion in 1957	Although there may be members of the Central body today who do not believe all these things these beliefs are mainstream and accepted in Fellowship.

Some of these errors found their way into our earlier publications, and therefore must be corrected. Whilst we anticipate the criticism of our

adversaries, we believe that it is better to stand corrected than to continue with erroneous beliefs.

In addition to the above, there were aspects regarding the coming Kingdom of God that needed to be corrected. These included the acknowledgment that the Kingdom of God is essentially as the BASF has it: “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.” Our previous position was that the Kingdom over which Christ will reign will be a worldwide Kingdom, albeit with Jerusalem being its capital. However, as Brother Thomas demonstrates in *Elpis Israel*, and as the BASF plainly states, the Kingdom is itself Israel, albeit with the Empire of Christ extending globally. Brother Thomas taught that there will be both a Kingdom and an Empire as follows:

“A *kingdom* is the dominion of a king. An *empire* is also the dominion of a king, but with this difference: the kingdom proper, or “*the first dominion*”, **is restricted to a regally constituted territory**; while the empire, or secondary dominion, though belonging to the same king, extends over other peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues, than those of the royal domain. This is illustrated in the case of the British kingdoms and empire. The kingdoms are restricted to England and Scotland, which are by constitution regal territories; but the empire is a secondary dominion of the same united crowns, extending over Canada, Hindostan, and other parts of the globe, with all the nations, languages, and people, they contain.

There are various elements necessary to the constitution of a well-organized kingdom. In the first place, ***a kingdom must have a territory***. This is only saying, in other terms, that something must be somewhere. To maintain the opposite would be to contend that something is nowhere. A kingdom is not located in feeling, or in heart; though a belief of its future existence, a comprehension of its nature, or an attachment to it, may exist there. It must have a place, a locality, as well as a name.”

(John Thomas Elpis Israel. p. 221)

We therefore stand corrected, and present this revised copy before our readers. We trust that when compared with both the BASF and the Bible itself, this work will not be found wanting, and invite further comment from our readers.

Christopher Maddocks

It is of primary importance that we believe **the truth**, and not a substitute for it; for it is by **the truth** only we can be saved; “**the truth as it is in Jesus**”, neither more nor less, is that to which our attention is invited in the word. “**The truth**” is set forth in the law and the prophets; but we must add to these the apostolic testimony contained in the New Testament if we would comprehend it “as it is in Jesus”. The kingdom is the subject matter of “**the truth**”; but, “as it is in Jesus”, is **the truth** concerning him as the king and supreme pontiff of the dominion; and the things concerning his name, as taught in the doctrine of the apostles. As a whole, “**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; God hath joined them together, and no man need expect His favour who separates them, or abolishes the necessity of believing the things He has revealed for faith.

(John Thomas Elpis Israel, p. 188–189).

THE IMPORTANCE OF DEFINING TRUTH

One of the characteristics of the humanistic society in which we live, is that individuals possess so-called “human rights” - certain entitlements given to all of mankind, irrespective of status, nationality, or culture. And these inevitably include the “right” for all to believe in whatever system of worship they so desire - or none at all - according to the dictates of their own conscience, provided that by so doing they do not interfere with others who similarly exercise their “right”. So it is that to criticise the “faith” of another group is greatly frowned upon, and those who insist upon a particular set of ideas as being Absolute Truth, claiming that all other ideas are not Truth, are condemned outright as “arrogant”, lacking in love and humility.

The consequence of this “liberal” spirit of mutual acceptance, is that we are surrounded by a plethora of Churches and Denominations, each with their particular dogmas, styles, and practices, yet each becoming increasingly more tolerant of each other’s existence, and more “open-minded” about each other’s beliefs. So it is, that we it said that so long as love prevails, other differences of conviction are secondary - that therefore churches, and indeed all religious groups might ultimately join together despite their doctrinal differences, under the common love for mankind, and for God.

This spirit of tolerance and mutual respect for one another’s “views”, as a means of effecting and preserving a form of peaceful unity based on compromise, is becoming increasingly common - even amongst those who should know better. There are those who teach that we should be more open and loving towards those who bring in new ideas, or “different perspectives” on certain matters of doctrine or practice. Similarly, there are those who question the need for the BASF (the “Statement of the Doctrines forming the Christadelphian basis of Fellowship”), claiming it is “too restrictive”, and excludes those whose interpretations of Scripture may differ from ours. And who are we to say, “we are right, and they are wrong”? What arrogance for us to insist that everyone must accept our “views” in order to have Salvation! So it is, that those who insist on the importance of maintaining the old values of beliefs and practice are branded “extreme”, or “hardline”, being described as “unloving”, and “unChristlike”, or as one brother put it, not having the humility to accept that perhaps they are wrong. But what is the Divine Testimony? If we consider such to be “unChristlike”, let us consider in all humility what Christ himself taught!

In his prayer of John 17, the Lord speaks of the ideal unity of those who would be his followers: "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine ... keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are ... I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world ... sanctify them through thy truth: **thy word is truth**" (Jno 17:9,11,14,17). From these words, we are instructed that the disciples are able to "be one", because of their separation. "They are not of the world", rather they are "hated" by the world, for which their Lord, significantly, offered no prayer. By the very nature of things, there can be no amity between them and it, for "the friendship of the world is enmity with God ... whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (Jas 4:4). So it is then, that those who would have us accept and respect beliefs and ideals emanating from, and believed by "the world", unwittingly compromise a key element of the disciples' unity - their separation - and place themselves in a position of being enemies of God. Whilst they might speak much about unity and peace, it is a unity without union of mind and belief - a peace not founded upon the mutual appreciation and acceptance of the ways of Almighty God but based upon embracing worldly ideals. This "unity" is not a holy union of disciples with their Father and His Son, but a union with the vanities of the world - and this is not true unity, or true fellowship.

TRUTH AS A BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP

It is vital for us to appreciate that the Oneness in fellowship which true disciples experience and for which their Lord prayed, is something more than mere sociability, or "getting on" with each other - it is a oneness which mirrors that unity subsisting between the Son and his Father: "that they all may be one; **as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee**, that they also may be one **in us** ..." (verse 21). And by its very definition, this oneness can only be experienced by the forsaking of "the world": for "all that is in the world ... is not of the Father" (1Jno 2:16), rather being "enmity" with Him. This being so, the basis of separation is not merely determined by the whim of human philosophy, but by the Father Himself. It is the sanctifying power of His Word, understood, believed, and acted upon: "Sanctify them through thy truth: **Thy word is truth**".

There is then, such a thing as "Absolute Truth": the "Word" of the Most High God "is Truth". And anything which deviates from its teachings is therefore by definition, not "truth", but "false". Not "a different perspective", or "another viewpoint", but a blurred focus, leading to blindness. "To the law

and testimony: *if they speak not according to this word*, it is because there is no light in them” (Is 8:20) - and in the absence of light, no “viewpoint” can be obtained - nothing can be seen! Therefore teachers who “speak not according to this word”, which our Lord calls “truth”, are not simply presenting a “new perspective” - apostolically, being void of light they are “destitute of the Truth” (1Tim 6:5) and are, in the terms of Christ, “blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Mat 15:14). And this is the point - it is only the revealed light of Truth that saves. Those who teach things which cannot be seen in this light, can only stumble and lead their followers into the darkness of the grave.

The enlightening Word of Truth then, is the basis both for the disciple’s separation, and their fellowship. Ultimately, “our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1Jno 1:3). And this being so, any constraints or restrictions placed upon that fellowship, and to whom else it might be extended is, not of our making, but the Father’s. “Of *his own will* begat he us with the word of truth” (James 1:18) and of His own Will He has ordained that the light of His Glory seen shining through that Word (2Cor 4:4,6) defines the parameters of Fellowship. So, the Apostle declared, “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1Jno 1:7).

Walking together “in the light”, therefore, is the Scriptural definition of fellowship. This being so, those who are not “in the light”, having “no light in them” do not experience fellowship, even though they may consider themselves to be walking together in mutual acceptance of each other’s ideals. But likewise, those who suppose themselves to be “in the light”, if they do not walk together with others of like-mind are also excluded from the fellowship of God. “He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now” (1Jno 2:9). Belief, and practice, then are the essential elements of fellowship - to “receive with meekness” the word of salvation (Jas 1:21), but also to implement it, that we might learn to reflect that union which exists between the Father and Son, in walking and working together in the servitude of the Truth.

THE NARROW WAY THAT LEADS TO LIFE

The “way” along which enlightened believers walk together is styled by the Lord Jesus, the “narrow way”: “strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Mat 7:14). Christ’s

true disciples, being those who are heirs of the life to come, are comprised not of the swinish multitudes, wallowing in the mire (2 Pet 2:22) of their own philosophies and superstitions as they wander blindly and aimlessly along the broad way of death. Rather they are those who seek to walk within the “narrow” confines of the Truth, being sanctified by The Word, and looking steadfastly towards the glory which they might inherit. They do not have different “opinions” and “views” over fundamental doctrines, for they “walk” together in the shining brightness of the glorious Gospel, and “can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3).

It may be that the majority of men scorn the narrowness of “the way”, which contrasts greatly with their own liberal philosophies (2 Pet 2:19), condemning the travellers as “uncharitable”, and “exclusionist” - but the narrowness is not of our making, and the criticism is therefore unjustified. If it were the case that it was simply “our view” that certain beliefs are true, then there would be a case to answer, for why should “our view” of what is true be any better than the “views” of the next man? But that is far from being the case. We do not determine what is true or false, the Great Creator does, “thy word *is truth*”. Doubtless, if it had so pleased the Eternal Creator to give life to the ignorant many, He would have ordained a “broad” way, unregulated by the restrictiveness of doctrines and principles. But He has not chosen so to do, and our part is to accept His Word, and walk in His Way, for “his way is perfect: the Word of Yahweh is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him” (Ps 18:30).

THE NEED FOR THE TRUTH TO BE DEFINED

Despite the pantheon of names and denominations in the world’s Christendom then, there is but only one Word of “truth”, and only one “way” to life. This is so designed by the Creator of all mankind not to accommodate the ignorant masses, but to be “narrow”, so that only the few “sanctified” believers, who choose to separate themselves to become One with the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal 3:28), might walk along it in faith and fellowship. But how can the disciples’ unity and distinctiveness from “the world” be maintained? How can they ensure that new members - or even their own selves (Acts 20:30) do not import into the “apostles fellowship” worldly ideals, standards, and beliefs? It is evident that in order to provide the basis for separation, and fellowship, it is absolutely vital that there be a set of clearly defined beliefs and practices, to which all members must subscribe. It has been argued that for us to simply say that we believe the Bible is enough, for after all, it is that Word which is the basis of fellowship as we have seen. But this will just not do, for many of the religious groups around us say this also, yet upon

scrutiny, their beliefs and doctrines do not originate from the Oracles of God, but the conceits of the flesh. They do not hold or believe the Truth that saves, preferring rather to embrace and believe in the alleged Immortality of the Soul, the Personal Devil and the Doctrine of the Trinity – to name but a few of their superstitions. There is then, a need for true believers to define from the Word certain principles of Truth, which then form the basis of their fellowship - certain doctrines which the Scriptures reveal to be of fundamental importance. So, Brother Roberts wrote:

“It is necessary to have the truth defined. It is not enough for an applicant (for baptism or fellowship) to say he believes the Bible or the testimony of the apostles. Multitudes would profess belief in this form who we know are ignorant or unbelieving of the Truth and therefore unqualified for union with the brethren of Christ. The question for applicants is, do they believe what the Scriptures teach? To test this, the teaching requires definition. This definition agreed to forms the basis of fellowship among believers, whether expressed in spoken or written words” (The Ecclesial Guide).

In order to preserve the unity and fellowship of Christ’s true brethren, there must be a union of mind on the essential principles of God’s Truth - which it is incumbent upon them to define from the Word. It is interesting that this fact is implicitly recognized even by those who seek to widen the boundaries: the reason usually given for doing away with the Statement of our Faith (BASF) is that we are “too exclusive” and should be able to fellowship others who love God, yet whose interpretations of scripture differ from ours. So it is that they unwittingly recognize the role of such statements in preserving union of belief - in order to open the door to those of other beliefs, we would need to abandon, or rewrite our Statement of Faith.

THE BIRMINGHAM AMENDED STATEMENT OF FAITH

The essential principles of the “law and testimony” which form the basis of the fellowship of Christ’s servants in these last days are accurately and succinctly described by the Birmingham Ammended Statement of Faith (BASF). In the articles that follow, we shall examine the BASF, comparing it with the Word of Truth, and demonstrating how what it teaches are indeed fundamental doctrines of Scripture. But before we can do this, we must firstly recognise not simply the importance of having such a Statement, but also the authority it must have in the running of Ecclesias.

It is sometimes argued that whilst the BASF can be used as a set of general guidelines, because it is a humanly written document it should not be treated as being more important than any other human writing. So it is reasoned that

if an individual disagrees with a particular aspect of it, because it was produced by man, they are only disagreeing with man's words, and therefore their standing before God remains unaffected. Further, the BASF simply being a summary of what a particular religious group has agreed to accept as their views on what doctrines are true, or not true, rather than disfellowship one who cannot accept a particular part, we should show mercy, and humility, accepting that their viewpoint might be as valid as ours. That we should respect the deep love they have for God, and the great respect they might have from other brethren and sisters, and who are we to refuse to break bread with them? But this argument is one of the most dangerous sorts. It is very easy to accept on face value, for it fits in very comfortably with the philosophy of today's generation, of mutual acceptance and toleration - and it also contains certain elements of truth, which makes it seem all the more plausible. But those truths are mere half-truths, and the expression of them in this form smuggles in with them certain assumptions which are full falsehoods. For instance, it is true to say that the BASF was compiled by man, as it is not a Divinely Inspired Document. But it is not true to say that it is comprised of man's words, and is therefore man's opinion of what is true. Rather as we shall see shortly, it is solidly based on God's Words, and what God reveals as Truth.

To give one example: Clause 17 states "That the gospel consists of 'the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ'. - Acts 8:12; 19:8,10,20; 28:30,31". Now, the document as a whole is uninspired - but are these man's words? Only partly, for the majority of this clause is a direct quotation from Scripture - God's Words. And the references which follow give the scriptures from which this clause was derived. This is the pattern with each clause of the BASF - a statement is made, summarizing Scripture Teaching (although not always a specific quotation from one Bible passage), and appended to each clause are references to those passages from which the teaching was derived. This being the case, it is clearly wrong to regard the BASF as being nothing but a humanly contrived document. The concepts and principles it describes were not devised by man, but by God. And as we shall show, even the very wording used to define those principles is largely derived from Scripture. The real issue therefore, is not whether a particular individual agrees with the BASF as a man-made document, but whether or not they agree with the Divine Truths which that document describes, culled from the foundation of Scripture.

The BASF then, although not directly written by the Hand of God, as were the Holy Scriptures, is authoritative - absolutely so. It is not simply a summary of what a particular religious group has chosen to accept, rather it is in essence a summary of the first principles of belief and conduct as taught

in Scripture, which it is incumbent upon all who would be “brethren in Christ” (Col 1:2) to believe. Any who reject the BASF, in any aspect of its teaching, are therefore denying the fundamental teachings of Scripture enshrined within it. So, it speaks with authority - for the Revealed Word is its foundation, a fact which elevates it above the whim of human philosophy, giving it the position of being an authoritative statement of what the Eternal God would have us believe. And its role in these last days is vital, for as a Statement of Bible principles, it provides both a test for fellowship, and an important safeguard against the Truth-nullifying doctrines of the heathen.

Truth to be Received: The Foundation

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

In the previous article, we demonstrated the importance of the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith, and its vital role in defining, and maintaining the true faith amongst believers today. But as we noted, there are those who argue that our faith ought not rest upon documents of men’s devising, and therefore the BASF should not be regarded as being either authoritative, or a basis for fellowship. But we saw that it is strictly not true to regard the Statement of Faith as being simply the product of man - by definition, it is a statement of doctrines revealed by God in Scripture. The principles and concepts it describes originate not from man, but God, in His Inspired Word. It does therefore speak with authority, the authority of the Scriptures which contain the doctrines it teaches, which are listed after each clause.

In fact, from the very beginning, the BASF itself directs our attention to the Word of the Most High God as being the only authority in things Divine. The very first clause, headed, *“The Foundation”* states that the Bible “is the only source of knowledge concerning God and his purposes ... and that the same were wholly given by inspiration of God in the writers...”. The fact of Inspiration then, is “the foundation” of all that follows, all the other doctrines and principles the BASF describes. The Bible itself is the foundation, being

the “only” source of knowledge, and therefore the only authority for us to look to (Is 8:20).

This “foundation clause” featured in the Statement of Faith from 1886, following the claims of “partial inspiration”, when some sought to discredit certain parts of Scripture as being uninspired, the product of the thoughts of Man. 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 through inspiration. To deny this is to deny the foundation of our faith. 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 (as some, in fact do). But even in our day, there are those who, whilst professing to accept Inspiration, yet in words deny it, by presenting it in terms which are both unscriptural, and contrary to the believers’ Statement of Faith.

MODERN DAY “PARTIAL INSPIRATION” THEORY

For example, from time to time there is talk of a so called “human element” in inspiration. That is to say, the individuals involved in penning the words themselves needed to consider the circumstances which needed to be addressed and gave thought to the composition of what they were to produce. According to the logical outworking of this idea, Inspiration then comes in at the end, a mysterious editorial influence finishing off the work, so to speak, ensuring that the final product contained no serious mistakes. This can be illustrated in a common misconception of the four Gospel records. To explain why four similar accounts appear, it is said that each author wrote from their own perspective, each wishing to emphasize their own particular viewpoint - the person influencing the writings of Mark being “impetuous Peter”. So it is, that alleged “discrepancies” are dispensed with in this way: when a number of witnesses give account of particular events, there will always be differences, as they each recall different aspects of things. And when those who propound this theory are asked how it can be reconciled with the Bible’s claim of Inspiration, the usual answer given is that whilst the writers collated their information, and composed their accounts, God was overseeing it all, ensuring it be free from errors.

Yet this surely misses the point that each writer was Divinely “moved” to write God’s Words, from whatever “perspective” God, not man, chose. Luke informs us that he testified not through personal observation through fallible eyes and ears, but “having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first (Greek = from above)” (Luke 1:3). This is a point lost in the

translation: Luke, as with all Gospel writers obtained their understanding of “all things” which they wrote *“from above”* that is, from God. Any differences in the records then, are not discrepancies due to the inaccuracy of human witnesses, but were placed there by the Almighty Himself for our learning. The notion of the writers themselves composing the words of Scripture, from their own observations and research (even if being “guided” to do so correctly) has greater implications than is realized at first sight. It has the effect of demoting the Almighty God from being the Great Author of the Eternal Wisdom of Scripture, to being merely an Editor, tidying up the words of men. Truly, we might say that this is the modern equivalent of “partial inspiration” - a belief that, as Michael Ashton, the former editor of The Christadelphian Magazine puts it: “what appears on the pages of our Bibles is both the Word of God and the words of the human penmen - with many idiosyncrasies appropriate to his conditions and circumstances”. Unfortunately, he declined any further correspondence on the subject, or to provide examples of what were merely the “words of the human penmen”. But that need not curtail any examination of the matter as it is commonly presented - what saith the Word itself? Is it composed both by God and man, or is it wholly the Word of God? We follow then, our Statement of Faith’s direction, and appeal to Scripture itself to settle the matter:

THE BIBLE - WHOLLY WRITTEN BY GOD

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2Tim 3:16)

“No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation, for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2Pet 1:21).

We find then, that the Scriptures are emphatically clear. ***“All*** Scripture” is “of God”, coming “not ... by the will of man”, but “by inspiration”, by being “moved by the Holy Spirit” to pen the words we have before us. The “will” of no man was responsible for its contents, but rather the will of Almighty God, something which is demonstrated many times in Scripture. Consider for instance, the last words of David: “David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel said, ***the Spirit of Yahweh spake by me, and his word was in my tongue ...***” (2Sam 23:1,2). Here then, is a wonderful example of Inspiration, as uttered by the “sweet psalmist” himself. The words he spoke were not penned of his own volition, not by his own “will”,

but that of God, whose Spirit spoke by him, or “moved” him, as Peter has it. In simple terms, the Words of Yahweh were placed in his tongue, that he might utter them. This simple teaching is again strongly emphasised in the New Testament:

“David himself said *by the Holy Spirit*, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool” (Mark 12:36).

“Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which *the Holy Spirit by the mouth of David* spake before concerning Judas ...” (Acts 1:16).

“Lord, thou art God ... *who by the mouth of thy servant David* hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?” (Acts 4:24,25)

“Again, he limiteth a certain day, *saying in David*, Today, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts (Heb 4:7)

The Psalms of David then, are unquestionably and literally the Words of the Spirit of God, speaking by David’s mouth, the words being placed in his tongue. He did not compose the words: he did not choose to express them in a particular way, he did not add to or take away from them. The whole process was an operation of God.

THE TERM “INSPIRATION OF GOD”

This illustrates what it means for words to be given by “inspiration of God” (2Tim 3:16). The phrase in the Greek is one word: *theopneustos*, made up from *theo* usually rendered, “God”, and *pneu* meaning, “to breathe, to blow”. For a man to be “inspired” then, is to have the Words of God “breathed”, or “blown” through him by God’s Spirit. It is something the individual had no control over: “all Scripture” is wholly “God breathed”: the only “human element” is that the individuals whom God used as His instruments were the means by which those words were to be vocalized.

Against this, the fact that the Bible records many conversations from men who were uninspired is sometimes presented as evidence that men also have had a hand in the composition of Scripture.

But there is an elementary distinction to recognise in all literature, whether it be fact or fiction, the Inspired Word, or the product of man. With the exception of certain forms of expression, we must be careful to put a distinction between the narrator, and the characters in the story/account being narrated. The narrator chooses to present the story in a particular form, yet in the case of a factual account, the words of the characters involved are an accurate representation of what was said. So it is, that when we consider the case of Inspiration, the Great Narrator is the Lord God himself, who chooses to express facts and accounts according to His Eternal Wisdom, in the styles and methods He chooses. It may well be that the account He has composed is a record of unfaithful men speaking foolish words - but their uninspired, foolish words do not invalidate the Divine Authorship. Rather, the account is an accurate representation of what took place - from a Divine point of view, with particular facts being emphasised for our learning.

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST IN THE PROPHETS

The inspired recounting of uninspired conversations then, ought not lead us to assume that the “human penmen” recording those words did not speak God’s words - they did so perfectly. Indeed, these scribes would very often pen words which they themselves could not understand, the meaning of which even they would need to search out. So, Peter spoke of salvation in Christ “of which salvation the prophets have enquired and ***searched diligently***, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” (1Pet 1:10,11). Many of the prophets testified of the sufferings of Christ, but the Spirit through Peter informs us that they initially spoke their words without understanding them. It was the Spirit which breathed through them that spoke of the sufferings of our Lord (hence, it is described as “the Spirit of Christ”). And once those words had been given to them, the prophets themselves needed to “enquire”, and “search” what it was that the spirit was actually teaching - proof that they had no part in the composition thereof.

As evidence of the “human element”, the Psalms of David are sometimes cited. He was a shepherd, and many of the Psalms which came from his pen are written in terms reflective of a shepherd’s experiences - so it is argued, they are the product of his observations, he drew upon his experiences to produce the Psalms. But this misses the point, for as we have seen, the Spirit placed the words in his mouth. It is true that many of these Psalms certainly are based upon the life of David - and many of them are expressive of the depths of emotion he felt at certain significant events. Yet rather than to

lessen the case for absolute Divine Authorship, it is evidence of the Hand of God at work in both his life, and his words, to provide both examples and teachings for the benefit of others. It is a truth to be recognised that when the Lord chooses to express certain truths in certain terms, he does so by appropriate means. So, when He speaks in a shepherd's terms, the providentially guided life of a shepherd is used as a basis for those words - and that shepherd himself becomes the means by which they are spoken (how strange it would be to have a miner, or stonemason, for instance, to utter the words of Psalm 23)! And as David himself had to "search diligently" the meaning of what he wrote concerning the sufferings of Christ, the fact that they were expressed in terms common to his understanding and experience would enable him to perceive the meaning of his Psalms more readily, as he would recognise events in his life, and the feelings he experienced during them.

THE PROPHECIES OF BALAAM

In the book of Numbers, we are presented with the prophecies of Balaam, concerning which it could truly be said, they "came not by the will of man", but against the will of man - thereby giving an clear and simple illustration of the process of Inspiration. Numbers 22 describes how Balaam was hired by Balak the king of Moab to speak a curse against Israel (in the vain supposition that the Almighty would hearken to the cursing of men!): "He sent messengers therefore to Balaam ... saying ... Come now, therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me" (Num. 22:8). So it was, that Balaam accompanied the messengers with the sole intention of cursing, to obtain the promised reward. He was commanded by the Angel of Yahweh "Go with the men: but only the word that I shall speak to thee, that thou shalt speak (v 35). But, being greedy of the wages of unrighteousness (Jude 11, 2Pet 2:15), the "will" of this "man" was to speak other words - his own words of cursing. Here then, is an example of a man about to be inspired, yet who set himself to change those inspired words.

But we are told that just as the Spirit placed Divine Words upon David's tongue, "Yahweh ***put a word in Balaam's mouth***" (23:5,12), and it became physically impossible for Balaam to speak his own words - rather he was compelled to speak the Word which Yahweh had put in his mouth. By this means, man's cursing was changed into God's blessing, as the prophet himself spake: "How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? Or how shall I defy, whom Yahweh hath not defied? ... Must I not take heed to speak that which Yahweh ***hath put in my mouth?***" (23:8,12). Balaam made repeated attempts to speak curses against God's people, yet each time the Spirit overruled his natural desires, that the Blessings of God be uttered instead -

as in Chapter 25, where one of the most beautiful prophecies of all Scripture was given. So it was, that his prophecy came “not by the will of man”, but against man’s natural will, - and despite his utmost efforts to resist, Inspiration took place. God breathed His words through Balaam, who was powerless to influence them - for good or bad: “I cannot go beyond the commandment of Yahweh, to do either good or bad of mine own mind; but what Yahweh saith, that will I speak” (24:13). The only “human element” involved, was that the man Balaam was used as a tool to speak words which were composed solely by God.

“The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer 17:9), but the Word of Yahweh is very pure (Ps 119:140, 12:6). The reason that there can be no supposed human element in the composition of Scripture, is that the pure things of God cannot be tainted by the uncleanness of man. And so, Inspiration is simple to explain. Inspiration is the process by which Yahweh causes the words which proceed from His mouth to be made known upon earth. Holy men were used as tools in God’s hands, as a pen in the hand of the writer to either speak or write those words verbatim. They themselves had no influence over what was written either in its composition, or its style, being but the means by which the Almighty’s words were conveyed to man (thus experiencing a fellowship of a most intimate manner with their Lord, when willing). Inspiration, and the so called “human element” are therefore, mutually exclusive.

A FINAL POINT

There is another aspect to our “Foundation Clause”, which we ought to notice. It states that “the Bible ... is the only source of knowledge concerning God and his purposes presently extant or available in the earth”. Man cannot find out about God by searching (Cp. Job 11:7), only by Revelation (1 Cor. 2:10-16). And it has so pleased the Almighty to reveal Himself, His Ways and His Purposes to our age by a single medium - the written word. There are those who claim to have guidance by the Holy Spirit, who suppose that the Spirit will help us to understand the things of God - but the Bible’s claim is different. The only source of understanding is the Word of God. If we wish to learn of God’s Ways and become part of His Purposes, we must appeal to Scripture, digesting its contents, thus being mentally strengthened to walk in its light, so giving pleasure to its Author.

Bible study therefore, is not optional, something for the academics, as some correspondents suppose - it is compulsory for those who wish to learn to please God. “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that

needeth not be ashamed” is the apostolic injunction - the strong implication being, that if we do not study, we will not be “approved unto God”, and will need to be “ashamed”. Whatever form that study may take, whether it be through guidance by others in tapes/books etc., personal reflections, or examining deeper meanings with a concordance - the fact of inspiration gives us the reason why it is essential. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, *and is profitable* for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2Tim.3:17).

The Fact of Inspiration means that the Bible is able to impart profitable doctrine, reprove, correct, instruct, to perfect the man of God. No book of human composition, by the very nature of things can fulfil this function, for the natural product of the heart of man is sin in the sight of God. But the Inspired Word, when inwardly consumed is powerful: it is able to transform even the most unenlightened barbarian into a perfected man of God. We must, therefore stand in awe of its greatness, and exalted status, set even above the Name of God itself (Psalm 138:2), and following the example of the prophets through whom it came, “search diligently” in the spirit of a humble, reverential enquiry, that it might have its effect upon us, and be the power of God unto our Salvation.

Clause 1

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

Isa 40:13-25; 43:10-12; 44:6-8; 46:9,10; Job 38,39 and 40; Deut.6:4; Mark12:29-32;1Cor 8:4-6; Eph4:6; 1Tim2:5; Neh. 9:6; Job 26:13; Ps124:8; 146:6; 148:5; Is 40:26,27; Jer 10:12,13; 27:5; 32:17-19; 51:15; Acts 14:15; 17:24; 1Chron 29:11-14; Ps 62:11; 145:3; Is 26:4; 40:26; Job 9:4; 36:5; Ps 92:5; 104:24; 147:4-5; Is 28:29; Rom 16:27; 1Tim 1:17; 2Chron 16:9; Job 28:24; 34:21; Ps 33:13,14; 44:21; 94:9;139:7-12; Prov15:3; Jer 23:24; 32:19; Amos 9:2,3; Acts 17:27,28; Ps 123:1; 1Kings 8:30,39,43,49; Mat 6:9; 1Tim 6:15-16; 1:17.”

From describing the unique nature of the inspired words of Scripture, as being the “only source of knowledge concerning God and His purposes at present extant or available”, the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith next directs our attention more fully to the God which that Word describes. The order here is important. In the absence of Divine Revelation, man is utterly incapable of arriving at a correct understanding of the only True God (Job 11:7), for He dwells “in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see” (1Tim.6:16) - and His ways are infinitely higher than the ways of Man (Isa.55:9, 1Cor.2:14). It is true that Creation itself declares the immense power and greatness of a Creator (Rom.1:19,20), but it does not in itself enlighten man as to the nature, and purposes of that Creator. It does not give us a knowledge of the Love and Mercy of the Almighty, who has so Graciously Condescended to give His Only Begotten Son to be sacrificed upon the cross for our sins. It does not describe the wrath of God poured out upon those who willingly despise His Ways. And it tells us nothing of the outworking of His Purpose - concerning which we can have a part if we learn to please Him. But Revelation does tell us all this - and more. And it is only when we recognise the uniqueness of the written revelation from God to man, that we can learn more of its Author. By its very nature, it is the only revelation of such things currently available to us - and once we accept the truth of its Divine Origin, we are bound to accept the testimony of its Author concerning Himself.

The BASF identifies the Eternal Creator by way of reference to His past revelations to faithful men of old: “the only true God is He who was revealed to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob ... and to Moses at the burning bush (unconsumed) and at Sinai ...”. In this regard, it takes the lead of Scripture itself, which consistently identifies the Great Creator in similar terms, particularly with reference to the progenitors of Israel. So the Lord identified himself to Moses on the occasion so described: “I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Ex 3:6). Each of these men of faith, including Moses himself, all forsook the riches of sin to sojourn as strangers in the desert (Heb.11:9,24-26) desiring “a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city” (Heb.11:16). Because of their implicit faith and trust in Him, and because they forsook all to seek the glories of His Coming Kingdom, the Almighty has no compunction in designating Himself as being their God - despite the fact that they were but mortal, erring creatures.

Indeed, this great condescension on the part of the Almighty to continue His association with these men - even after their death - was used by Moses as evidence for the resurrection: “Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the

God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him” (Luke 20:37-38). Being called upon by God to assemble the elders of Israel together, Moses brought them to the bush (cp. Luke 30:37 with Ex. 3:16), and “shewed” them hope in deliverance by speaking of their God in such a manner. The fact that Yahweh was declared to be the God of those who were yet dead, spoke of the certainty of their future resurrection, for in His Purpose, “all live unto him”. And the fact of the Bush, engulfed in fire, yet preserved from destruction taught them of the Lord’s protection through persecution and oppression (cp. Isa. 43:2, Jer.30:11). So it was, that in identifying himself both to Moses and the People in such a manner, the Almighty taught them the faith of the Patriarchs - faith in resurrection (Rom. 4:17, Heb. 11:19) and hope of deliverance (Gen. 15:13,14).

MANY IDOLS, BUT ONE TRUE GOD

The position of Israel under the Egyptian yoke parallels our circumstance in several respects, and one of these is seen in the religious environment in which they sojourned. In Egypt, the people worshipped a multiplicity of gods (Josh 24:14, Ezek 20:7,8), and for Moses to have simply declared that “God” had sent him, would immediately have provoked the question, “Which one? What is his Name?” This situation was anticipated by Moses: “Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say unto me, What is his name? What shall I say unto them?” The answer was very specific; “Thus shalt thou say unto the Children of Israel, YAHWEH, God of your Fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you” (Ex 3:14). The God of covenant promise, the God of the Living had sent Moses to them. “Although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth - as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords” - yet for us there is “one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist” (1Cor 8:5,6 RSV). And that “one God” - the only true God - is set apart from all others by His Great Name (being expressive of His future Intentions), and by His being called the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Identification with the Fathers of Israel then, and the purpose which was being worked out through them, was a feature which distinguished the God of Israel, from the pagan vanities of Egypt.

In our day, the situation is no different. The semi-heathen religious systems around us profess to believe in a Creator (even if they deny the literality of the Creation Record). So do we. What then marks their god as being different to our Lord? They define their god to be a “mystery”, unknowable and

unknown, three in one, and one in three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, co-equal, and co-eternal. They do not believe in the God Who was revealed to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - He is not an unknown God to the believers (cp Acts 17:23,24), and is not to be “ignorantly worshipped”, but rather worshipped in recognition of His Character, and Purpose. It is our understanding of the purpose of Abraham’s God, as revealed in Scripture, which distinguishes us from them, and our God from their god. The question remains for us, therefore, as to how we identify our God to the idol-worshippers around us. Do we follow the manner of Scripture, in declaring to them our unbelief of the trinitarian idols, rather than professing allegiance to the God of Abraham, or do we seek to “conform” to the ways of the heathen, by saying we “go to church”, and that we simply “believe in God” – and that we only have a “different perspective” on things?

KNOWING “THE ONLY TRUE GOD”

In marked contrast to the idolaters around us, who themselves confess their trinitarian mythological deity to be an unknowable “mystery”, the Lord Jesus taught that a knowledge of the Only True God is a vital prerequisite to Salvation: “This is life eternal, *that they might know thee* the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). And again, John taught that to “know” the only True God requires an understanding of Him, and His Ways: “We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, *that we may know him* that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the True God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols...” (1 Jno. 5:20-21). To understand Scripture teaching concerning the God of Abraham then, is absolutely vital to our salvation, for in the Son of God such an understanding is given, that we might “know” Him, and through faith, and obedience, be granted Eternal Life.

THE LORD REVEALED TO ABRAHAM AND MOSES

In His Appearances to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Great Creator revealed Himself in terms of His Purpose. So it was, that from the time that Abraham obeyed His Voice when departing for the land of Canaan, the Lord spoke of His future intentions concerning him: “I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen.12:2,3). And again, when he was actually in the land, “Yahweh appeared unto him, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land” (Gen.12:7). And again, following his separation

from Lot, the Lord spake unto him: “lift up now thine eyes, and look up from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever” (Gen.13:15).

This then, is the prominent feature of Yahweh's appearances to Abraham; each were accompanied with further revelations of His Purposes both with Abraham himself, and also his Greater seed - even our Lord Jesus Christ (Gal.3:16). And from each of these revelations, we learn certain fundamental points about the God we serve. In making a promise of possessing a land for ever, the Lord implies the bestowal of Immortality - for otherwise the maximum time a man can possess something, is until the day of his death. And the fact that it was a land which was promised, demonstrates that the Lord's purpose is with the earth (as we shall see shortly): This will begin with the millennium, following which, the earth will be filled with an immortal family (see Isaiah 45:17-18). When bidden, Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac, “of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called; accounting that God was able to raise him up even, from the dead; from whence also, he received him in a figure”. (Heb. 11:18,19). So Abraham gained a knowledge of, and faith in, the resurrection of the coming seed. Truly it was, that “the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham... “ (Gal.3:8).

But despite the wonder of these glorious promises made to Abraham (who was called “the friend of God”), Moses experienced a unique relationship with His Maker, for of him alone is it testified that “Yahweh spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend” (Ex.34:11). Moses, it appears, was uniquely privileged to experience open discourse with Yahweh, as the Lord Himself declared to Aaron and Miriam in their time of rebellion, “Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I Yahweh will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of Yahweh shall he behold...” (Num.12:8). Moses then, beheld “the similitude of Yahweh” through His Angelic ambassador (cp.Acts 7:30,38), experiencing open communication with His Maker.

THE LIMITATIONS OF DIVINE REVELATION TO MOSES

The prominent feature of the Yahweh's manifestation to Moses, was the revelation of His virtues, or attributes. So Moses besought the Lord, “If I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee... I beseech thee, ***shew me thy glory***” (Ex.33:13,18). And the Divine response

to this is most instructive, not least because it illustrates the limitations of Revelation to men of old, and emphasises the fulness of revelation in Jesus Christ. Moses was not permitted to behold the full extent of Divine Glory: “thou **canst not see my face**: for there shall no man see me, and live... It shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: **but my face shall not be seen**” (Ex.33:22,23). Even Moses then, could not behold the Face of unrestrained Divine Glory, even through angelic manifestation. Mortal man cannot stand in the face of the fullness of the Glory of God and live. But what Moses did witness, was the declaration of the varied facets of Divine Character: “Yahweh passed by before him, and proclaimed, Yahweh, Yahweh El, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...” (Ex. 34:6,7).

The “glory” which Moses requested to see, was made manifest in the attributes declared before Him, expressive of the nature and character of the God of Abraham. Yet he could not actually see those Attributes - he heard them proclaimed. Moreover, he could not actually see the face of the Angel of Yahweh’s presence - it was hidden from him. And all this pointed forward to a future manifestation of God - even greater than this, when the Glory of God would be manifested in all its fulness, through a Son who bears the likeness of his Father.

The apostolic testimony, in contrasting the fading glory of the Mosaic Law (2Cor.3:7-16) with the glory made manifest in the Lord Jesus Christ, is that: “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, **to give the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ**” (2Cor.4:6). In the Lord Jesus Christ, as the greater Seed of Abraham, through whom all the promises are to be fulfilled, we can see the face of Glory, for we see “God manifest in the flesh” (1Tim.3:16). The fulness of Divine Character was revealed in a Son who perfectly mirrored his Father’s Image both physically and morally, whilst mankind generally only shows forth a physical image (as we shall shortly consider). Interestingly, although Moses was not permitted to see the face of Glory, when he was present at the Transfiguration of the Lord, it is testified of Christ that “his face did shine as the sun” (Mat.17:2) - so Moses, did eventually see a representation of the face of Glory hidden when in Sinai. So it was, that as a faithful Son, the Lord Jesus shared the likeness of His Father, to such an extent that he could say to Phillip, **“he that hath seen me hath seen the Father**, and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father” (Jno.14:9). All the glorious Attributes which were

declared to Moses, were to be seen in the Son; even as it is written, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten of the Father, **he hath declared him**” (Jno.1:18). And again: “...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” (Jno.1:14).

This then, is the Greatest Revelation of all - the Revelation of the Father in Jesus Christ. But in turn, the greater the revelation, the greater the responsibility of those who behold it. “We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding...” (1Jno. 5:20). And speaking of the word of understanding which proceeded from Him, by way of comparison with the ordinances of the Mosaic Law, the writer to the Hebrews exhorts: “if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect **so great salvation**; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him” (Heb. 2:2-3).

THE PERSON OF GOD

It is sometimes claimed that the Almighty Creator has no specific location. That He is “without form, body or parts”, and is therefore everywhere and in all places. This is a variant of Pantheism, and is flatly contradicted by the Bible. In his model prayer for his disciples to offer, the Master identified the Father as being “in heaven” - i.e. in a specific place: “Our Father **which art in heaven**, Hallowed be Thy Name” (Mat.6:9). Again, Paul describes that He “only hath immortality, **dwelling in the light** which no man can approach unto” (1.Tim.6:16). So God is not some abstract energy: he is a Person with a specific location in unapproachable light.

This is also the teaching of the Old Testament. For instance:

“thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; **I dwell in the high and holy place...**” (Isa.57:15).

And again, the Psalmist:

“The Lord looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men.
From **the place of his habitation** he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth” (Psa.33:13-14).

God is everywhere present by His Spirit (see Psalm 139:1-12), but He also has a “place of habitation” in “the high and holy place”. This is where the Lord Jesus Christ is, seated at His Right Hand (Heb.12:2). The Lord is “in

heaven” with his Father, and is also spirit (1Cor.15:45), yet having a physical body, as he demonstrated to Thomas. To be Spirit therefore, does not imply an insubstantial existence. The followers of Christ also hope to become “partakers of the divine nature” (2Pet.1:4). These are not to be ghostly immortal souls, but will rather be in the likeness of the Master, glorious physical “flesh and bone” (Lu.24:39), yet spiritual body. To understand this is important: we must seek after God with all due diligence (Heb.11:6), desiring only the Truth, whilst eschewing the theories of men.

THE LIKENESS OF GOD

The book of Genesis describes to us how that man was made after the Divine Image. So we read of the words of Yahweh to the Elohim:

“and God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness ...
So God created man ***in his own image, in the image of God*** created he him; male and female created he them” (Gen. 1:26, 27).

According to the Holy Writ then, man was made in the “image” and “likeness” of God. But notice the use of the singular term: “his own image” – that is the image of Yahweh Himself. The use of this, and in the Hebrew, the singular form of the verb “created” destroys the argument held by some that we are made in the image of the Angels, and not of the Great Creator himself. Another passage describes the way in which Yahweh revealed himself to Moses:

“With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and ***the similitude of Yahweh*** shall he behold ...” (Num. 12:8)

Yahweh then, has a “similitude” which Moses beheld. The Word “similitude” indicates a physical appearance, or form. It is used in this way in a number of passages, but just to quote a few:

“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any ***likeness*** of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth” (Exo. 20:4).

“Yahweh spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw ***no similitude***; only ye heard a voice” (Deut. 4:12).

Moses then, beheld the likeness of Yahweh – and even though it seems that he actually saw a particular Angel (since “no man has seen God at any time”– Jno. 1:18), that proves that the angels bear “the similitude of Yahweh” themselves.

It is sometimes thought that the “image and likeness” of Genesis chapter 1, cited above, is only a moral likeness. But again, the Hebrew word for “likeness” in Genesis 1 is used many times of a physical appearance in Scripture. To cite but 3 examples:

“And king Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, and saw an altar that was at Damascus: and king Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the *fashion* of the altar, and the pattern of it, according to all the workmanship thereof” (2 Kings 16:10).

“... under it was the *similitude* of oxen, which did compass it round about” (2 Chron.4:3)

“Also out of the midst thereof came the *likeness* of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the *likeness* of a man” (Eze. 1:5)

This latter passage is of particular interest, since defines the “likeness” that Ezekiel saw, as being “their appearance” – which is clearly a bodily form.

“GOD IS A SPIRIT”

Sometimes it is argued that according to Messiah, in his discourse with the woman of Samaria, God does not have a bodily form but is “a spirit”. So he states:

“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (Jno.4:24).

But what is meant by the word “Spirit”? Brother John Thomas addresses this point in his book *Phanerosis*:

“other children of the Old Man affirm that “God is immaterial;” by which they mean that He is not matter, or substance, or body; but an

inconceivable something they call “spirit”, an incorporeal, unsubstantial, immaterial spirit, which is as near to nothing as words can express. Nothing making all things out of nothing is the Old Man’s theology concerning God and the fountain of all things, reduced to its simplest terms.”

The notion of an abstract unsubstantial essence which is what the churches believe is “spirit” is not a Bible definition. Brother CC Walker demonstrates that:

“... The Bible does indeed speak about “spirits”, but these all have bodies. The angels a said to be God’s “ministering spirits”, but they are all bodily beings. Jacob wrestled with one, Abraham entertained three unawares, and very many other illustrations of their bodily reality could be given. Christ has now an immortal body, being equal to the angels in nature, and superior to them in rank. And the Bible conception of the Eternal Father himself is certainly that of a bodily Being. We know the prayer book says that God is “without body, parts, or passions,” but we cannot reconcile that with the apostolic word, as, for instance, James 3:9, “God, even the Father ... and men which are made after the similitude of God.” If God the Father be “without body, parts or passions,” there can be no similitude as is here said to exist.” (CC Walker, The Christadelphian page 348, 1907)

And to this, we might add that Messiah is a “quickenings spirit” (1Cor.15:45), but has a substantial and tangible body – as he demonstrated to Thomas when he invited him to touch him.

THE PERSON OF YAHWEH

Brother Thomas raises an interesting point, cited in The Christadelphian magazine for October 1869:

“Paul says that God is substance; and I presume that even the hirelings of the apostacy will admit that substance is “material.” ***The Son, says the apostle, is the exact representation, or “express image of his hypostasis,” which word in Heb.11:1, is rendered substance.***

The god of the Mother of Harlots, and of all the branches of her intoxicated family, is an immaterial fiction of their vain and fleshly imaginations—a fiction which they describe as “without body and without parts.” That which is immaterial is nothing. Hence the god of

European and American adoration is a nonentity; and his worshippers consequently Atheists.

... I teach that Jesus Christ, when upon earth, was Deity manifested in sinful flesh for the condemnation of sin, in the nature that sinned in Eden (Rom. 8:3); but that after he was “perfected, ” (Luke 13:32) or “justified in spirit” (1Tim.3:16), he became Deity manifested in glorified humanity, “who is over all God blessed for the aions.”— (Rom.9:5.)

According to the writer of the book of Hebrews, then, God has Substance, and his Son was the exact image of that Substance. Again, Brother Robert Roberts cites Brother Thomas in his book “Christendom Astray”:

“Dr Thomas, in a scrap written just before his death, and found among his papers afterwards, thus defines the foregoing scripturally-revealed conception of the Father, of whom are all things:

“Absolute power, from whose incorruptible substance, or hypostasis free spirit radiated, is before all existing things. This self-existing incorruptible substance is essentially spirit – spirit substance – a concentration and condensation into one body of all the attributes, intellectual, moral and physical of Omnipotence – all things are out of Deity (1 Cor. 8:6). All things being out of Deity, they were not made out of nothing. The sun, moon, and stars, together with all things pertaining to each, were made out of something, and that something was the radiant effluence of His substance, or free spirit, which pervades unbounded space. By free spirit, all created things are connected with the centre of the universe, which is light that no man can approach unto, so that not even a sparrow falls to the ground without the Father, who is not far from every one of us ...”

So then, we find that by contrast to the churches whose deity is an abstract nonentity, the God of the Bible is a Person, dwelling in a particular place, in light which is unapproachable to mortal man. The Lord Jesus Christ is currently “set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb.12:2) – which also implies a particular location and position.

We already saw that “this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ who thou hast sent” (Jno.17:3). Again, Jeremiah wrote: “...let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me...” (Jer.9:24). Do we know the only True God? Do we Understand and Know him? Can we say, with the Master: “we know what

we worship...” (Jno.4:22)? Let us forsake the imaginations of the flesh, and have faith in the revealed Person of Yahweh!

Clause 2

“That Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, begotten of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit, without the intervention of man, and afterwards anointed with the same spirit, without measure, at his baptism. - Mat 1:23, 1Tim 3:16, Acts 2:22-24, 36; Mat. 1:18-25; Lu.1:26-35; Gal 4:4, Is 7:14; Mat 3:16,17; Is 11:2; 42:1, 61:1, Jno 3:34; 7:16; 8:26-29; 14:10-24”

The BASF introduces us to “the Son of God”, or “Jesus of Nazareth”; descriptions applied to our Lord 19 times in Scripture, one of which being the title placed over the “tree” (Jno.19:19, Gal. 3:13), upon which he was crucified. Ironically in this regard, the word “Nazareth” is said by some, to be from the Hebrew *run netser*, translated “branch” in Isaiah 11:1: “There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a *branch* shall grow out of his roots”. The irony is, that the one who was to be the living “Branch” to continue the Davidic dynasty, was crucified on a dead tree.

Nazareth was a place held in low esteem, it being ordinarily supposed, from which, not “any good thing” could come (Jno. 1:46), but out of such a place emerged the Saviour of the World. The Lord Jesus, being the Son of God, through who Salvation might come. As the Branch of Yahweh, “made of a woman” (Gal. 4:4), he grew up out of the most unlikely of fleshly environments, as one scorned, and rejected by men: “he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form or comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him” (Isa. 53:2). Such was the fleshly perception of the Son whom the Lord God sent to be the redeemer of Israel, and Saviour of the World.

The BASF is very careful to emphasise the origin of our Lord as being divine - but also human. The designation “of Nazareth” is indicative of this latter aspect, but clearer still, is the description of the Christ as being “begotten of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit, without the intervention of man” (cp.Isa.7:14). This dual aspect of our Lord’s parentage was vital for the successful completion of the work which the Lord was sent to do (see Clause 9). He was begotten of God through the operations of the Holy Spirit upon a human mother - without the intervention of Man. Man has no part to glory

of in the provision of the Saviour. The whole process was a work of God: “not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth Mercy” upon whom he will (Rom. 9:16). “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1Tim. 1:15), that the original purpose of God with man might yet be fulfilled; and the fact of his Divine Begetting is the very means by which that end might be accomplished.

THE FIRST SON OF GOD - ADAM

The progenitor of the human race, Adam, was the first “son of God”, as he is so styled in our Lord’s genealogy: “...Adam, which was ***the son of God...***” (Luke 3:38). Although not being an “only begotten” son of a woman, as our Lord Jesus undoubtedly was, because God was his Maker giving him existence and life, Adam was regarded as the Creator’s Son. And just as in the natural state of affairs, sons very often reflect their father’s likeness (whether it be in terms of physical attributes, mental likeness, mannerisms, etc.), even so Adam, as a Son, was created to reflect the likeness of his Father: “So God created man ***In His own image, in the image of God created he him;*** male and female created he them” (Gen.1:27). But as we know only too well, and as is graphically illustrated in the world around us, Adam failed. When we consider the multitude of dying sinners - the sons of Adam - which currently populate the globe, we do not see the moral image of the God of Glory. Though men are physically made after the form of His likeness, yet morally speaking, we see an abundance of evil and iniquity which certainly does not give Him honour and glory. Death and corruption characterise this epoch of man’s self-rule, and will continue to do so, until the Lord Jesus descends to bestow immortality upon those who believe on him, who are “born of God” through faith and Baptism, and who therefore “overcome the world” (1Jno.5:4) through the victory of their Lord.

So it is, that the Scriptures testify that “all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1Jno.2:16,17). The basic root of the problem Christ came to solve, is sin in the flesh, which manifests itself in mortality and lust. Human nature is inherently evil; full of sin, and obnoxious to the Eternal Creator, who is “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity” (Hab. 1:13). After Adam transgressed, God cursed him (Gen. 3:17-19) with mortality; a physical condition which Paul calls “the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:2). Here he uses the word “Sin” here in a physical sense, for the law of man’s being under the curse. This not only produces sickness, aging and death, but lusts, and temptations to transgress - that nature is inherited by all Adam’s seed or descendants. So the Apostle

Paul testified of his own experience: “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) ***dwelleth no good thing***” (Rom.7:18), and again, in speaking of his acts of transgression, committed against his greater desire to serve the Lord: “it is no more I that do it, but ***sin that dwelleth in me***” And again, in repeating this fact: “Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but ***sin that dwelleth in me***” (Rom.7:17, 20).

So it is that in simple terms, the nature of the problem is the problem of our nature - and that which lies within it. Any solution to the problem must, of necessity involve both the condemnation and ultimately the removing of this indwelling “sin”, a defilement inherent to us all. The One who came as our representative, to redeem us from sin had to possess an identical nature to ourselves - he had to share our nature – and be a bearer of sin in his flesh, in order to gain the victory through sacrifice. And this, was the case in our Lord Jesus: “forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, ***he also himself likewise took part of the same***; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the diabolos” (Heb.2:14). The Lord Jesus, being “made of a woman” had “Sin”, within him “in the flesh” (Rom.8:3) which in the New Testament is personified by the term “the devil”. On the cross God condemned “sin in the flesh” and gave Christ the victory over it at his resurrection.

THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD - JESUS CHRIST

It was all of God’s provision “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). Note the emphasis here; what the Law could not do, God did. The whole work was a work of God. God “condemned sin in the flesh”, by sending his own son in flesh just like ours, that there the diabolos might be “destroyed” through the atoning principles of his death and resurrection. God did it, not the Lord Jesus alone. We often reflect upon the Sacrifice of the Son in offering himself up for the remission of our sins, yet we ought to be mindful also of the Sacrifice of the Father. “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Jno. 3:16). God gave - He sent His Son to die that we might have life. And he so strengthened His Son to perform the work which he came to do, even as it is written: “let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself” (Psa. 80:17). This dual origin of the Lord Jesus then, was an essential prerequisite for the condemnation of sin in the flesh, and the redemption of man. The fact that as the Antitype to Adam (cp. 1Cor. 15:45) he was the Son of God – literally - and this ensured that he was able to show forth his Father’s Moral Likeness, (which Adam

failed to do and disobeyed) and be “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:8). When at his baptism he receive the Holy Spirit without measure, he manifested The Father, and when glorified at his resurrection he became, "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb.1:3).

THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVEN WITHOUT MEASURE

As we have shown, the work of our Lord was not a work in which he was engaged alone. The Father was with him, and in him by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the BASF states that having been begotten by the Holy Spirit, the Lord “was afterwards anointed with the same spirit, without measure, at his baptism”. Isaiah testified of this, continuing his prophecy of the “Branch”:

“ ... and the spirit of Yahweh shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Yahweh; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of Yahweh: 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 ...” (Is 11:3,4, see also 41:1, 61:1).

So it was that in giving him “wisdom and understanding”, “counsel and might” and “knowledge”, the Spirit ensured that the One sent by God spoke His Word, and Performed His Works perfectly, for as the inspired commentary has it: “he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him” (Jno 3:34).

The bestowal of the Holy Spirit power upon an individual was not unique by any means. In Old Testament times, we find that Moses was given the Spirit in measure, which was taken and placed upon 70 elders, as recorded in Numbers 11:25: “Yahweh came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease”. Also, those entrusted with the task of constructing the Tabernacle received special blessing, by being give the Spirit in order that they might accomplish their work (Ex.28:3,31:3,35:31). And again, those whom the Lord selected to be his prophets similarly were endowed with the Spirit, that they might speak forth the words of Israel’s God perfectly - whether it be their will to do so or not (Num.24:2, 1Sam.10:10, cp.2Kings 2:9). But the essential difference is that whereas these faithful men of old

had a measure of Divine Power to enable them to perform the particular tasks required of them, the Lord Jesus was given it “without measure” at the commencement of His Ministry - so “that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself”(2 Cor. 5:19) . In this way “God was manifest in the flesh” of Christ (1 Tim. 3:16) by His Holy Spirit without limit.

But in addition to this, the bestowal of Spirit Power upon our Lord was itself a testimony of Divine approval, as can be seen from the circumstances of his Baptism: “Jesus, when he was baptised, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased” (Mat. 3:16,17). And this approval rested upon our Lord, even till the time of his work’s completion, and again at his resurrection and ascension to be enthroned at his Father’s right hand.

That this was so can be seen in the miracles he accomplished by the use of the Spirit, for these testified to his Messiahship and unique Divine Parentage. As the Lord Himself testified: “I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me” (Jno. 5:36). And again, in response to those sent by John to enquire “Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?” He said, “Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the poor have the Gospel preached unto them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me” (Mat. 11:4-6). Truly, as the BASF shows, Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, which fact was testified by the miracles he performed by the Spirit; even as the Apostle testified to the Jews who had him crucified: “Jesus of Nazareth” was “a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves know” (Acts 2:22).

RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD

But the greatest testimony to the Divine parentage of our Lord is seen in his resurrection. As Paul spake to the Romans, “Jesus Christ our Lord ... was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, ***by the resurrection from the dead***” (Rom. 1:3,4). So then, the Lord was “declared” to be the Son of the Most High both by the Spirit, and by his resurrection. Indeed this was the sign that he himself gave to those who tempted him, of the truthfulness of the words he spake “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (Jno.2:19) and this he spake concerning “the temple of his body” (Jno.2:21) in which the

Spirit of God resided. The fact of our Lord's resurrection is a testimony to the approval by the Father of His Son's work - and it provides an assurance to us that there is hope of life from the dead. There is a future day when judgements against sin will again be manifest, for God "hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, *in that he hath raised him from the dead*" (Acts 17:31).

THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF CHRIST'S PARENTAGE

The importance of this clause of the BASF is seen when we compare these things with some of the theories of the heathen around us. The standard dogma of the Churches, is the Trinity, a doctrine almost universally accepted by current "Christendom", (falsely so-called). The teaching here is that the Lord Jesus is God; that he existed before he was born, and that he only took human form by being born through Mary. Yet this denies both aspects of the origin of our Lord, who was both "Son of God" and "Son of Man" - literally so. And this in turn removes from Christ both qualifications which were so important for the work he came to do. The alternatives are no better. Some claim that Jesus was simply a supremely righteous man, and thus rob him of his Divine Begettal - the very means whereby he was able to overcome. Still others regard the Lord as a pre-existent being - not God Himself, but God's Son who existed before the creation of the world, and emerged from the womb of Mary in human form. But again, this robs him of the reality of being a man, experiencing like passions as ourselves. To our knowledge, the proper understanding which we have of the dual origin of the Lord Jesus is unique to Christadelphians. Let us then seek to understand more fully, and uphold the things the Scriptures reveal to be true, that in resisting the errors of the heathen we might hold fast to those vital truths which are unique to our faith.

Clause 3

"That the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth on the earth was necessitated by the position and state into which the human race had been brought by the circumstances connected with the first man. - 1Cor15:21,22; Rom 5:12-19; Gen 3:19; 2Cor 5:19-21"

When we consider the depraved condition of the world around us; we behold a scene of evil, violence and corruption which is very far removed from the Edenic paradise into which the first human pair were placed. And our

Statement of Faith speaks of this state of affairs in terms of two aspects; both “the position and state” into which the human race has been brought - that is to say, the position of mankind before the Creator, and the physical state of mortality which we labour under. And both aspects are said to be brought about “by the circumstances connected with the first man”.

This latter aspect - the physical state of the nature shared by all mankind - is perhaps more readily accepted amongst us than the first. Because of what Adam did, we are both mortal and sinful - by nature: “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned ... by one man’s offence death reigned by one” (Rom 5:12,17). And again, “as *in Adam all die*, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1Cor 15:22). So it was that when our first parents sinned; they received the sentence of death as their just deserts. The condition of their nature being made mortal; all who physically descend from them - and therefore partake of the physical substance of that nature - are also mortal, dying creatures. As Clause 5 of the BASF expresses it: “That Adam broke this (God’s) 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”. Or as Paul has it under inspiration, by one man’s offence, death reigns over all men, for it “passed upon” them, (or “into” them, as the Greek is rendered 573 times), through the actions of “one man”.

But we feel that it is not always as commonly recognised, that our “position” before God is also brought about by things to do with Adam - yet this is what the Statement of our Faith teaches. There is therefore, a need to dwell a little more on this aspect of things.

THE EXPULSION OF ADAM FROM THE GARDEN

In Genesis chapter 3, we read of the events subsequent to the offence of the first human pair, and we find that the introduction of sin brought about a radical change in the relationship between Adam and his Maker. “Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Yahweh Elohim amongst the trees of the garden” (Gen.3:8). The implication from the context of these verses, is that prior to their sin, both Adam and his wife experienced open fellowship with the Angelic representative of the Most High who walked in the garden with them. They dwelt in a paradise where the work was easy and pleasurable. They had all that could be needed for a comfortable and wholesome existence; a beautiful environment, plenty of natural food, dominion over the animals, and companionship with each other as mutually compatible beings. Yet through the beguiling sophistry expressed by one of

the beasts, whose thoughts and ideas were naturally unspiritual; they fell from such a position of grace. In the shame of their defiled conscience, the trees which had previously been a place of beauty and a source of nourishment, became a hiding place where they themselves sought to escape from the presence of Yahweh. Their sin had separated them from their God (cp. Is 59:2, Jude 19).

But it was a most wonderful provision of mercy on the part of their Maker and Father, that despite their shameful position, the Lord called Adam and his wife out from the shade of the trees to bring all things which had been done to the light. He invited them both to give confession for their actions (Gen. 3:9-13), and this being done, and the just sentence upon their offence being passed, He mercifully taught them a way of reconciliation. And finally, He reinforced this point that they had separated themselves from the unity of fellowship they had previously been privileged to experience with Him, for He “drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.” (Gen 3:24), thus preventing access to both the Tree of Life, and the paradise itself.

This may seem to some, a rather severe sentence, but the Serpent had grievously blasphemed God, effectively calling God a liar, and denying Him the right to be obeyed. Adam and Eve wilfully followed the Serpent's philosophy- hence the justified severity of God's judgement against them. Furthermore, there could be no return to the “the tree of life”- the opportunity to have the gift of immortality- without a representative of the Adamic race upholding “the righteousness of God.” This was promised in the coming of the “seed” of the woman; even the Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom. 3:25,26; Gen. 3:14,15).

ADAM - OUTSIDE OF THE GARDEN AND SEPARATED FROM GOD

As illustrated above, the **position** of Adam had changed in relation to the grace of God. The possibility of access to the tree of life to “eat, and live for ever” (Gen. 3:22) elevated to the Divine nature; was removed. “Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.” (v.23). As a consequence of the first trespass Adam's **state** was also changed from “very good” (Gen. 1:31) to the very bad state of mortality (Rom. 7:18,24). He was cursed with “sin in the flesh” (Rom 8:3) or *diabolos* (Heb. 2:14), - which inevitably gave rise to a manner of thinking out of harmony with the Almighty. Even though the first offence was covered, an enmity had risen between God and man. Sin in the flesh, as a law of man's being gave rise to further transgressions (Cp. Rom. 7:17)- and full

reconciliation can only be attained by the faithful, at the resurrection, when sin is finally removed from the flesh, by a physical change of nature when Christ comes again, “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body” (Phil.3:21).

This same breach in fellowship exists also between the Almighty and Adam’s progeny. The fallen condition of man is mortal and the disease of sin affects our relationship between us and our Maker. Not that we are held accountable, or guilty for the nature, it is our misfortune to bear. Rather the Lord, in his mercy has intervened to provide a hope of salvation: “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son” (Jno.3:16) out of love for the patient, yet hatred for the loathsome disease.

So it is, that as the BASF teaches, both our physical “state” and our “position” before our Maker is attributable to “the circumstances connected with the first man”. The bodies we have, being descended from him are mortal, dying bodies, physically containing within them “the law of sin and death”, which incites us to rebel against the laws and ways of God. And these circumstances “necessitated” “the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth” upon the earth, to provide hope for a hopeless world - to offer salvation and forgiveness to a world of dying sinners. But notice this - the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ is in itself directly linked by the inspired Apostle to the circumstances brought about by Adam:

“But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many” (Rom.5:15)

“If by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ” (Rom.5:17)

“by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive...they that are Christ’s...” (1Cor.15:22,23)

“as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (1Cor 15:49).

In our day, as with times past, there are those who question the literality of the Genesis account. It is postulated that the events described in Genesis 3 concerning the beguiling of Eve, and the fall of our first parents is symbolic. The Serpent, it is claimed stands as a figure, a personification of sin itself,

rather than being a literal animal. And as the Hebrew word for “Adam” is a term also used to describe mankind generally (cp.Gen.1:26,27;2:5), it is said that rather than being the real name of a specific individual, Adam simply stands as a figure of the human race. The logic of this would lead to the conclusion that the events described in Genesis 3, rather than being a literal account of Eve being beguiled by a serpent, then leading Adam to transgress also, would simply be a kind of parabolic story; speaking of the failure of Mankind generally, constantly being beguiled by sin to do that which is against the Will of their Maker.

But this logic, whilst appealing to some, is fatally flawed. Firstly, the account in Genesis does not read like a symbolic parable - simply reading it as it stands it appears as a literal record of what took place. It is incumbent therefore, upon those who read it symbolically to give proof that it should be so read - proof which is significantly lacking. But in addition to this, to deny the literality of the opening chapters of Genesis raises serious questions which cannot be otherwise addressed. For instance, if God did not create Adam from the dust of the ground, breathing into his nostrils the breath of life, as Scripture describes, how did man originate? More to the point, if there were no literal, serpent, an outside source of temptation, how do we account for the entrance of sin into the world? Are we to charge the Creator with making men with a built-in desire to disobey him? Though ridiculous, such would be the only alternative. And how do we account for the entrance of death into the world, if it was not, as the Apostle claims, by the offence of “one man”? How do we explain the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ, if it was not, as the Apostle claims, inextricably linked with the transgression of the first man of the Human race? These questions, and many more go unanswered, if we reject the literality of the inspired account which the Lord has provided us with. But to accept these things true, with child-like simplicity (Mat.18:3) gives fully comprehensive answers to all these questions, and many more.

We must therefore, accept the truth of the inspired word that these things were so, as described by our Maker: as Jesus said: “Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female”? When we have read and accepted the Bible, we see our true position before God, as fallen, sinful, dying creatures - inheriting all the effects of Adam’s offence, and worthy of only condemnation for our own sins. Then we can lament with the Apostle with understanding: “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”. And then can we rejoice with him with equal understanding: “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord ... There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus ...” (Rom.7:24-8:1).

Clause 4

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

Whereas the first four clauses of the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith establish the Scriptures to be the only true source of Divine Wisdom; and outline certain fundamental truths relating to the Eternal Creator and His Son Jesus of Nazareth, this clause brings us back to the condition and position of man prior to the Fall. In Genesis, the elementary principles of the nature of man, and the circumstances of the entry of sin into the world are described; and a correct understanding of these foundation principles is vital to understand the doctrinal edifice which Scripture builds upon them. Only when we understand the true nature of man, can we recognise our true position before God; and our dire need for salvation in Christ.

The Genesis record recounts the formation of man by God: “And Yahweh Elohim formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Gen 2:7). The formation of man from the beginning then, was as “a living soul”, formed from the clay (Job 33:6), and energised by the *ruach chayim*, or “breath of life”, imparted by the Almighty.

Those who believe the dogma of Egyptian and Greek mythology, later adopted by the paganised Church - the alleged “Immortality of the Soul” readily seize upon this expression “a living soul” with great delight, deducing it to provide support for their delusions. But it does no such thing; the Inspired record says, “a living soul”, not “an immortal soul”. Moreover; it also declares that all of the animal Creation are similarly “living souls”, or living creatures, as the same Hebrew words are translated: “And God created great whales, and every **living creature** that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good” (Gen.1:21); “And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind; and it was so” (Gen.1:24). It is evident therefore, from these verses, that the term “living soul”, or creature, is an “umbrella” term descriptive of all of the animal creation, given life by “the breath of the Almighty” (Job 33:4).

On this, Bro. Thomas comments:

“The phrase living creature is the exact synonym of living soul. The Hebrew words *nephesh chayiah* are the signs of the ideas expressed by Moses. *Nephesh* signifies creature, also life, soul, or breathing frame, from the verb to breathe: *chayiah* is of life - a noun from the verb to live. *Nephesh chayiah* is the genus which includes all species of living creatures; namely, *adam*, man; *beme*, beast of the field; *chitu*, wild beast; *remesh*, reptile; and *ouph*, fowl etc. In the common version of the scriptures, it is rendered living soul; so that under this form of expression the scriptures speak of “all flesh” which breathes in air, earth and sea.”

Again, in speaking of “the breath of life” which was imparted into the frame of Man, he writes:

“Quadrupeds and men, however, are not only “living souls” but they are vivified by the same breath and spirit. In proof of this, I remark first, that the phrase “breath of life” in the text of the common version is *neshemet chayim* in the Hebrew; and that, as *chayim* is in the plural, it should be rendered breath of lives. Secondly, this *neshemet chayim* is said to be in the inferior creatures as well as in man. Thus, God said, “I bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh wherein is *ruach chayim*, spirit of lives” (Gen 6:17). And in another place, “They went in to Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh in which is *ruach chayim*, spirit of lives”. “And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing, and every man; all in whose nostrils was *neshemet ruach chayim*, BREATH OF SPIRIT OF LIVES” (Gen 7:15,21,22).”

(*Elpis Israel*, p. 31-33 *fourteenth edition*).

A NATURAL, EARTHY BODY

It is abundantly clear then, that Genesis does not teach Immortal Soulism, but rather describes the life and breath of all flesh, created by the Eternal Lord of Heaven and Earth. In accordance with this, the Spirit through Paul equates the term “living soul” with a “natural”, “earthy” body, as distinct from an Immortal, spiritual body: “There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written: The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit ... The first man is of the earth, earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (1Cor.15:44-49).

From time to time, various questions are raised regarding the physical nature of Man before the fall, and various hypotheses are advanced to attempt to explain them. For instance, some ask: if Adam had not sinned and been cursed with mortality, nor undergone a transformation to immortality; would he have died at some point in the future whilst being “very good” in kind and condition?” (Clause 4), But in reality, this issue does not exist, as according to the Scriptures, this circumstance could never take place.

The Bible introduces the “very good” state to us (Gen.1:31) at the creation of Adam (Gen.1:27). The “very good” nature of Adam did not exist in a vacuum. It was brought into being along with the Tree of knowledge and the Tree of life, with the certainty that Adam would either disobey or obey, and thus either be cursed or be blessed. He would either eat the forbidden fruit and be sentenced to age and die (mortality) or (for obedience), be enabled to “put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever” (Gen.3:22). This fact renders the “very good” state as transitional only – the situation whereby neither scenario would take place could actually never happen.

God's tribunal where Adam was adjudged unworthy of immortality (Gen.3:11-19) was a prototype of the judgment seat of Christ; where everyone responsible will “receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” (2 Corinthians 5:10). If the faithful are to receive “in body”, the “good” bestowal of immortality, and the unfaithful the curse of death, then this could indicate that they appear at first in the transitional state (the “very good” nature) before Christ's Tribunal. After this, they will then be elevated to immortality or cursed with death. So again, we see the very good condition as existing only as a transitional state - hence it is futile to speculate as to what would have happened if it had been intended as a permanent state.

CLAUSE 5

“V- That Adam broke this law, and was adjudged unworthy of immortality, and sentenced to return to the ground from whence he was taken - a sentence which defiled and became a physical law of his being, and was transmitted to all his posterity. -Gen 3:15-19,22,23; 2Cor 1:9; Rom 7:24; 2Cor 5:2-4; Rom 7:18-23; Gal 5:16-17; Rom 6:12; 7:21; Jno 3:6; Rom 5:12; 1Cor 15:22; Ps 51:5; Job 14:4”

For one reason or another, this clause of our Statement of Faith has arguably been the object of more controversy than any other, in the history of Christadelphia. It presents to us certain key principles, vital doctrines for us to understand and accept in order to recognise both the extent of the problem of sin and death; and also the solution provided in Christ Jesus. It describes the great and catastrophic effect that Adam's offence had, both for himself, and for his progeny - and being an explicit definition of the effect of Adam's sin, it therefore has a direct bearing on the principles of the Atonement - the principles whereby those effects might ultimately be removed. An understanding of the problem goes hand in hand with an understanding of the solution, for if we misunderstand particular aspects of the problem, then we will need to modify our understanding of the solution to meet all the requirements of the case. And similarly, if we misunderstand the principles and purpose of the sacrifice of Christ, this affects our understanding of the problem it was designed to solve. So it is, that this clause has quite naturally fallen into controversy; for many, if not all the false doctrines which some have sought to introduce to the brotherhood have a bearing on the Atonement in some way or another - and therefore involve a misunderstanding of the underlying principles involved with it. Significantly, in the present writers' experience, every controversy he has encountered relating to this clause has, either directly, or indirectly been caused by those who seek to present a position on the Atonement which is different to the "traditional" Christadelphian teaching (and the clear Biblical teaching) which has remained such for over 170 years.

THE SENTENCE OF DEATH

The Genesis account describes the sentence pronounced against Adam, subsequent to his transgression of Divine Law:

"Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen 3:17-19).

In these words, we find that there are two aspects to the curse against Adam; the cursing of the ground, necessitating additional labour for man to eat bread; and the condemnation of Adam himself, necessitating his eventual death after a lifetime of toil and travail. It is this latter aspect which the BASF is concerned with, the fact that because of Adam's offence, he was condemned to return to the dust from whence he came.

There are those who claim that the consequence of Adam's sin is a kind of "legal condemnation" of eternal death, which passes to all his descendants and that therefore unless a believer has this "legal condemnation" removed by Baptism into Christ, he cannot/will not be raised by God to Judgment. According to this position of things, the Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus is seen as a kind of substitutionary affair, whereby he – as the innocent - suffers the legal penalty due to the guilty. He bears it instead of them, thus allowing them to go free. But apart from the inherent injustice of this concept (an innocent man being punished for the sins of the guilty) it is entirely foreign to Scripture. We do not read in the Genesis account of any kind of "legal condemnation", other than the simple declaration that as a consequence of breaking the Law of God, Adam would be condemned to dissolve into dust. That is, the process of Mortality would begin - with all that it entails and dying, Adam would surely die. This is the simple, easy to understand teaching of the Inspired Word.

Again, in the passage which we have often had occasion to cite in these articles, Romans Chapter 5, the Apostle describes how that sentence of death affects the progeny of Adam - not the imputation of a "legal" sentence in the sense of a piece of legislation which condemned Adam's seed for his sin - but the physical inheritance of the law of sin and death: "by one man sin entered into the world (of men and women - CAM) and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom 5:12). Here, the Greek for "upon" can also be rendered "into", as it is 573 times elsewhere. By the offence of one man, sin in the flesh entered into the "world" of men and women - so death also "passed into all men". This makes it clear that it is not so much the event of death being spoken of, rather it is the process of death, or "mortality", passing into all of Adam's seed by heredity. We inherit death, because being descended from Adam, we bodily partake of the physical substance of his nature - and that is a sinful, dying, nature. Death passes into all men as an inherent principle and process of decay, found in the nature of all Adam's progeny. This physical law of our being inevitably leads all to the grave. As the BASF expresses it, the sentence of death "became a physical law... and was transmitted to all his (Adam's) posterity".

THE INHERITANCE OF A SINFUL NATURE

There are those who reason that, because we die as a consequence of what Adam did, we are in some way being held accountable for his sin; we bear the punishment for it. But this is not the teaching of the Inspired Word. Sin in the flesh was judged against in the sacrifice of Christ. Not as an individual judgement, but a judgment of the racial condition. And because we physically partake of the substance of Adamic flesh by being descended from him, we also inherit sin in the flesh. So it is, that "the law of sin and death"

is the overriding law of our being. As the inspired Apostle spoke of his own experience: "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the *law of sin* which is *in my members*" (Rom 7:23). Again, he also speaks of Sin as something which resided in him: "if then I do that which I would not, I consent to unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but *sin that dwelleth in me*" (Rom 7:17).

Some of our critics claim that the term Sin can only be used in the sense of transgression, citing 1Jno.3:4 to "prove" their point. But if this is so, how are we to understand these inspired words of Paul? Did he have specific actual acts of transgression dwelling within him? Such would be absurd: Paul clearly uses the term Sin with reference to that which was within him which induced him and likewise all men to transgress - for "every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust" (James 1:4). Such is the nature of all mankind. We believe therefore, the simple, straightforward teaching of Scripture that within human nature there naturally "dwelleth no good thing" (Rom.7:18), but rather that which the Apostle describes as, the "law of sin and death" (Rom.8:2).

DEFILEMENT

The BASF also speaks of the sentence of death as being defiling: speaking of Adam it states that it is "a sentence which defiled and became a physical law of his being...". In what sense then, can it be said that death is defiling?

When God created man (Adam) to bear His image, (Gen. 1:27) it was intended that Man should be obedient and be elevated in due course to the Divine nature by being invited to eat of the Tree of Life (when in fruit). All this would have been to the glory of God. But Adam chose the curse of 'dying thou shalt die' (Gen. 2:17) by disobeying. His flesh was thus changed from a very good state (Gen. 1:31) to mortality with all its ills, lusts, disease, and death. Dead corrupting bodies are obnoxious to God and are defiled- so death is defiling.

The Creator placed Adam at the head of creation, and gave mankind "dominion...over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:28). The greatest honour was that "God created man in His own image" (Gen. 1:27). In bestowing His bodily form upon man, God held man responsible for honouring that form; hence we must not commit murder: "for in the image of God made He man." (Gen. 9:6). We are not even to curse men- for the same reason: That mankind "are made after the similitude of God" (Jas. 3:8-10)

Adam brought the defiling curse of mortality (and all its ills) upon his nature (and that of his offspring); when sentenced for rebelling against his Maker (Gen. 3:17-19). It was “a sentence which defiled and became a physical law of his being, and was transmitted to all his posterity” (Clause 5). This fallen state does not befit the image of God which we bear. We are naturally defiled and in need of purifying before God (Hebrews 9:23), and it must be by the Sacrifice of God’s providing. These are the simple Truths of Scripture, which we would do well to accept without the burden of controversy.

The last 3 clauses of the BASF which we have been considering outline the nature and extent of the problem of sin and death. They describe the things which necessitated the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ to provide a hope of redemption. They speak of both the origin of man himself, his condition before the fall, and the origin of “law of sin and death” which came into being by his offence. And as we said earlier, these principles form the foundation of our understanding of the Sacrifice of Christ. In many debates regarding the Atonement, various points are argued regarding the efficacy of that Sacrifice and the redeeming principles it manifested. However, it appears to be seldom recognised that the very foundation for all these things lay in the simplicity of the Genesis account, and Paul’s inspired commentary on it. When faced with any of the “alternative views” we are presented with concerning the Atonement; if we trace the reasoning back far enough, we invariably find that the root of the problem arises from a misconception of what took place, way back in Eden. But having understood these things, as outlined in Scripture and summarised in the BASF, we then find ourselves in a position to consider more fully the redeeming work of our Lord; and this we shall do, if the Lord will, in our subsequent studies.

Clause 6

“VI- That God, in His kindness, conceived a plan of restoration which, without setting aside His law of sin and death, should ultimately rescue the race from destruction, and people the earth with sinless immortals. Rev. 21:4; Jno 3:16; 2Tim 1:10; 1Jno 2:25; 2Tim 1:1; Tit 1:2; Rom 3:26; Jno 1:29”

In our previous studies, we examined in some detail the circumstances surrounding the Fall of man from a position of favour with his Creator: being a dying sinner, so his progeny are also dying sinners. But death is no respecter of persons: all, whether kings and princes, or babes in the womb (Job 3:13-16) will ultimately succumb to their inherent “law of sin and

death.” They will all be brought down to the dust from whence they came. And in this regard, unenlightened man is no better than “brute beasts” (Jude v10), as Solomon spake: “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 pre-eminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again” (Eccl.3:19,20).

As “natural brute beasts” (2 Pet. 2:12), being innately unable to rise any higher than their groveling instincts allow, men do not naturally seek to give glory to their Maker. On the contrary, having **followed** the wisdom of an animal - the serpent in Eden - Man was subsequently cursed with that way of thinking, naturally, entirely contrary to his Creator's will, styled apostolically, “the minding of the flesh” which is “enmity against God” (Romans 8:7). And from this time onwards, the natural inclination of all Adam's progeny has been to satisfy their bestial instincts - they are naturally unaware of any other way: “for what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God” (1Cor 2:11). The mind of The Spirit is revealed in our case, through the written word, but all who possess the natural spirit, mind or disposition of a man, have no inherent understanding beyond what their animal instinct determines. But for those who “have ears to hear”(Luke 8:8) the things of the Spirit of God - they become enlightened to things Divine, and begin to think and behave, in a manner more pleasing to their Maker.

WHY DO WE DIE?

As we have shown, the simple answer from Scripture, is that we are mortal, having a dying nature. So, we read:

“Let not sin therefore reign in ***your mortal body***” (Rom.6:12).

“... he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your ***mortal bodies*** by his Spirit that dwelleth in you” (Rom.8:11).

“... we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus's sake, that the life also of Jesus might be manifest in ***our mortal flesh***” (1Cor. 4:11).

We die then, because we have a “mortal body,” consisting of “mortal flesh”. But this pushes the question back one stage: why do we have a mortal body, and mortal flesh? Again, the answer from Scripture is simple: it is that we inherit it from our first father Adam:

“... by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned (Marg.Ref.)” (Rom.5:12).

The fitting sentence upon Adam was expressed thus:

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

This death sentence is inherited as a physical principle by all who are descended from Adam. As the Apostle Paul described:

“... the judgment was by one to condemnation ... by one man’s offence, death reigned by one ... therefore by the offence of one, judgement came upon all men to condemnation” (Rom. 5:16-19).

Bro Robert Roberts also spoke on this issue:

“The position of men was that they were under condemnation to die because of sin, and that not their own sin, in the first instance, but ancestral sin at the beginning. The forgiveness of personal offences is the prominent feature of the apostolic proclamation, because personal offences are the greater barrier. Nevertheless, ***men are mortal because of sin, quite independently of their own transgressions***” (The Law of Moses, p. 173).

Again, he writes:

“My conception is this, that death became a physical law of Adam’s nature in consequence of Adam’s sin; that it became so by the power of the sentence of death operating physically upon him, as the sentence of life at the judgment seat will operate physically upon the bodies of the accepted, causing them to become incorruptible; that becoming a part of his being, it was therefore necessarily transmitted to all of Adam’s posterity who partook of that death-stricken being by physical descent, and became in them also a tendency to moral corruption; that therefore, as the whole mischief originated in sin, taking effect in the flesh, it could, by casual language, and on the principle of metonymy (putting cause for effect), be described as sin in the flesh: “sin that dwelleth in me”” (Preface to A Debate on Resurrectional Responsibility.

It is a common misconception that we die as a punishment for our personal committed sin. But this is oversimplifying the issue. It is true that accountable and unrepentant sinners will die as a consequence of their sins following rejection at Christ's Judgment Seat. But it is also true that before the time when this punishment shall be inflicted, men and women grow old and die regardless of their personal righteousness or otherwise - because they inherit a dying nature from Adam. If we all die as a punishment for committed sin, that implies a judgment has been made upon us already—yet that event is future, when Messiah returns. As it is testified, he “shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom” (2Tim..3:1).

There are a number of important questions to ask, if it be said that we die because we sin:

1. *Why do babies die, sometimes in the womb, who cannot either sin, or do good (Rom. 9:11)?*

Babies have committed no sin, yet they sometimes die anyway—they are not being punished for acts of sin. They die because they are “mortal flesh,” physically inheriting a condemned and dying nature.

2. *Why do those who sins are forgiven die like the rest of mankind?*

Our sins are forgiven for Christ's sake: they are cast behind Yahweh's back, as it were, to be mentioned no more: “I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake and will not remember thy sins” (Isa. 43:25, also Jer. 31:34). How can the holy ones of Yahweh be punished for their sins, when those sins have been forgiven, blotted out and forgotten? Their death is not a punishment for forgiven sins, but rather because they inherit “mortal flesh” by descent from a dying sinner.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF “THE LAW OF SIN AND DEATH”

In the imposition of “the law of sin and death” upon man therefore, vital principles were being taught, namely that Man is righteously fitted to die, he is powerless to save himself, and that therefore he is utterly reliant upon the grace of his Maker in extending an arm of salvation, if it so pleases Him, to lift man out of his helpless plight. And indeed, it does please Him so to do - but without compromising any of His principles there had to be the condemnation of sin in the flesh as a declaration and acceptance of His Righteousness which was denied at the Fall (Rom8:3, Rom. 3:25-26). So it is, that as our Statement of Faith has it, without setting aside His just and necessary law of sin and death, the Almighty has intervened out of His kindness and love to man, in providing His Only begotten son for salvation and the remission of our sins.

The Lord Jesus, as the Creator's Son meets all the requirements of the case. In him, by virtue of his Divine Paternity, was vested the strength (Psa.80:17) to perfectly obey his Father's requirements even unto the death of the cross (Phil.2:8). In his sacrificial death God condemned [judged against katakrino] sin in the flesh (Rom.8:3) and through his resurrection, the *diabolos* was destroyed (Heb.2:14). And by the victory of resurrection the very root of iniquity itself was overcome and destroyed. Indeed, these are the fundamental principles of redemption outlined by the Spirit through Paul:

“all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded...” (Rom.3:23-27).

The Lord Jesus Christ submitted to God's Declaration of Righteousness through his sacrifice. He succeeded (no others could), and so it is by aligning themselves with his victory through faith, baptism (a union with the principles involved with his sacrifice), and the thankful recognition of the Father's mercy, that others might be granted salvation also. And this, without compromising in any way God's “just and necessary law of sin and death” which still operates in all the sons of Adam. The way of salvation through the Lord Jesus provides a means for the Father to forgive - and yet be Just; His declaration of His Justness or Righteousness being suitable acknowledged; first by Christ and then by those in Christ. This forms the basis for believers also to be justified through faith.

So it is, that God has ordained a means whereby He should “rescue the race from destruction”, as the BASF has it - but also, and more importantly, a means whereby the earth might ultimately be peopled with sinless immortals at the end of the Millennium. Death is the Divinely appointed means of removing sinners from His Presence, but it is also through the death of His Son that the *diabolos*, or sin in the flesh also might be removed. The ungodly and the sinner shall pass away as the chaff in the summer threshing floor - even the very memory of them shall be eventually forgotten. And, following the Millennial age of glory all shall be Spirit, and the earth truly shall be filled with the Glory of Yahweh, for He shall then be “all and in all”. During the Millennial Age, the law of sin and death shall still exist within the mortals who remain, that those who refuse to submit might be removed, and those who hearken might depend on the grace of their God. But then cometh the end, when death, the last enemy itself shall cease, for it will no longer be

necessary. The remaining sinners and ungodly having been removed at the final judgement (Rev.20:13), the Law of Sin and Death will no longer be required to operate, for all who remain will be glorious, immortal, and sinless. That will be the final consummation of all things - when the Kingdom will be handed over to God Himself, and He shall reign supreme, there being no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither any more pain, for all these things shall have passed away (Rev.21:4), being replaced by an endless Olahm of Joy and gladness, righteousness and peace - when full union and fellowship shall subsist between the Creator and His Creation at last.

Clause 7

“VII.- That he inaugurated this plan by making promises to Adam, Abraham and David, and afterwards elaborated it in greater detail through the prophets.- Gen. 3:15; 22:18; Psa. 89:34-37; 33:5; Hos. 13:14; Isa. 25:7-9; 51:1-8; Jer. 23:5”

We have seen how that Adam fell short of the Grace and Gift of God-immortality from the “tree of life”. “Adam was not deceived” (1Tim.2:14); and had sufficient faith to know that God was right and the Serpent wrong ; but under trial, he failed and disobeyed. He thus denied the Righteousness of God; God’s right to be believed, obeyed and confessed. Yet we have seen that the Almighty determined to bring about His Purpose nevertheless, through a “plan” of His devising. Earlier, we saw how that this plan provides for the ultimate Glorification of the Father, and thereby the salvation of man - but without compromising in any way God's Righteousness, and His Righteous imposition of 'the law of sin and death'. But the details of how this was to be achieved were not revealed all at once - at least so far as the record of Genesis one to three is concerned. Rather, it so Pleased the Almighty to impart to man revelations by the Prophets, gradually unfolding further details of His Plan.

THE CURSE UPON THE SERPENT

The Law of Eden was a test of faith and obedience to Adam and Eve; The Law was simply stated to Adam on the sixth day of creation thus:

"And the Yahweh Elohim commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day

that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die (Heb. dying thou shalt die)” (Gen.2:16-17).

So Adam knew that if he disobeyed; the dying process would begin on that very day. They were created in the physical state which God had pronounced as being "very good" (Genesis 1:31) and so would not be tempted to disobey from within their nature. But they encountered an outside tempter: the serpent, one of the beasts "of the field which Yahweh Elohim had made" but which was more intelligent than the other beast, also which had the power of speech (Gen.3:1).

The first human pair were tempted by the prompting of the serpent – by the lie that it told – and so disobeyed the Divine command. As a consequence, the death sentence was given, as they were both:

"... 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."

Before this time, no saviour or redeemer had been required. To have pleased God, Adam would only have required to “believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (For “without faith it is impossible to please” God – Heb.11:6). If Adam had shown such faith, under trial, it would then have been provided for him to “put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever” (Gen. 3:22)

But now they needed a redeemer, the providing of which is indicated and made known in the curse upon the serpent, as follows:

“And Yahweh Elohim said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen.3:15).

In effect this included a promise to Adam (and Eve) of a saviour who would bring salvation through victory over that which the serpent came to represent; the cursed physical law of man's being - the fallen state; later referred to in scripture as mortality (1Cor.5:54-57), sin in the flesh (Rom.8:3); the law of sin and death (Rom.8:2) and the devil (Jno.8:44).

The curse upon the serpent of Genesis 3:15, alludes to the providing of a saviour who:

1. was to be born of Adam's race ("seed")
2. was to be raised by God, of the seed of a woman. ("her seed")
3. was to be sacrificed. (serpent "bruise his heel". Christ "bruise" it's "head")
4. was to rise from the dead in victory. (Christ's "bruise" healed-serpent's "bruise" fatal)
5. was thus to destroy the serpent/devil power of death. (Heb.2:14).

THE PROMISES TO ABRAHAM

Whilst the serpent's curse provided Adam with the first indication of One who would accomplish God's Plan of restoration, the promises made to Abraham comprise a more complete picture of the Gospel. Following Yahweh's promised sevenfold personal blessing (Gen.12:2,3) of Abraham, the father of the faithful obediently left Ur of the Chaldees, to go to the land of promise. And upon his entry at Shechem, "Yahweh appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto Yahweh, who appeared unto him" (Gen.12:7, cp 13:15-17). Note this point; the first specific promise made to man concerning the Lord Jesus, was tied to a gift of land, an inheritance which he and the promised seed should receive for ever.

The significance of this is expounded in Paul's inspired letter to the Galatians, where we have confirmation that the 'seed' who was the object of the 7 fold promise made to Abraham was indeed the Messiah: "and to thy seed, which is Christ" (Gal 3:16):

"the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the Law which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is not more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serveth the Law? It was added because of transgressions, ***till the seed should come*** to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator" (Gal 3:17-19).

There are those who claim that the promises were fulfilled in ancient times, when Israel, as Abraham's seed occupied the land, and that they have no future relevance. But such is not the testimony of the One who made the promise, even Yahweh Himself, who declares that His promises cannot be, and were not, so disannulled, or dispensed with by Israel's occupation in former times. Whilst the people did inhabit the land as Abraham was

promised (Cp. Neh. 9:8), they did so under the covenant of Sinai. "But God gave it to Abraham by promise". Israel have never dwelt in the land under the covenant of promise. The Law, we learn, was merely a temporary arrangement, "added because of transgressions" till the seed should come to whom the promise was made", and to be a "Schoolmaster" to teach them of that 'seed'. As the One who was the primary beneficiary of this inheritance, only when he came could the land be bestowed to them also - as a gift. For how can a promise be given in the absence of the one to whom it was primarily made?

"God gave it to Abraham by promise". Thus saith the Spirit, who "calleteth those things which be not as though they were" (Rom. 4:17), for as yet, neither the Seed, nor Abraham himself have actually received it. The Lord Jesus never owned any land in Israel - on the contrary, he himself said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Mat. 8:20). The patriarchs, and others of like faith "all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off..." (Heb. 11:13). Of necessity therefore, the Seed must return, and Abraham must be raised from the dead before God's promises can come true. Then, and not before, can it be possible for Abraham to take possession of the land "for ever" (Gen. 3:15), for only an immortalised man can possess anything for ever. Possession usually terminates with death; but under the terms of the Abrahamic promise, resurrection to Immortality must take place - and that being effected by the preeminent 'seed', as it is written " ... in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen.22:18). So the promised Seed - the Lord Jesus - must return to inherit the promises made to him.

This latter aspect of things, that the ultimate blessing would be made available to "all the nations" through the Promised Seed is itself highly relevant to our present considerations. The immediate context of the promise is that both Abraham, and his son Isaac, were both taught the principles of Sacrifice upon Mount Moriah. At that place, Isaac obediently yielded himself as a living sacrifice before his Father, who bound him, and offered him up before the Almighty upon an altar, built for the purpose. The hand of death being stayed by Angelic intervention, Isaac was not actually slain - yet the Apostolic commentary is that he was as good as dead upon that Altar of faith, and being unloosed and allowed to go free was typical of his being loosed from the bonds of death, being raised to newness of life: "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son ... accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; *from whence also he received him in a figure*" (Heb.11:17,19).

This then, is the background to the promised blessings to come through the greater seed of Abraham. These events foreshadowed the means by which Abraham might become the father of a multitude, and the means whereby believers of all nations which comprise that multitude might be blessed: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise.” (Galatians 3:28,29)

Because Abraham showed a willingness to sacrifice Isaac, God swore a promise to him:

“By myself have I sworn, saith Yahweh, for ***because thou hast done this thing***, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and ***thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies***; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice” (Gen 22:16-18).

Because of this symbolic sacrificial death and resurrection, such blessings would be granted, inasmuch as it prefigured the reality to be seen many years later in the sacrifice of Christ. Through being raised victorious over death, the Lord Jesus, it is testified, would “possess the gate of his enemies,” that is, have control over them; and their activities. Similarly, the Apostle spoke of his Millennial reign: “he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1Cor.15:26). Death then, is the greatest enemy of mankind - and therefore also of the One who came to save man from it. Death shall itself be destroyed by Christ at the last. But prior to its removal from the experience of the terrestrial inhabitants - in fulfilment of the promise to Abraham - the Lord shall have dominion over its entry, determining who may emerge, and who must remain in the grave. He will possess its gates, ensuring that it shall not prevail over the household of faith (cp Mat 16:18), even as the Lord himself testified, “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death” (Rev 1:18).

GOD'S PROMISE TO DAVID

Thus far then, we find a progression in the successive promises of God concerning Christ - the promised seed. Firstly, the bruising of the head of the serpent, by the seed of the woman (Gen.3:15) which was achieved in Christ through his sacrifice and resurrection. Secondly as the Seed of Abraham, Christ is promised as the One who must come in order that a promised inheritance might be given to the great Patriarch, and his descendants

(Gen.22:18; Gal.3:16,29). And involved with this, as we have seen, is the hope of resurrection. As having achieved the victory over Death, the Lord Jesus is able to determine who is permitted to escape through its gates. So we have firstly the victory of Christ over the power of death/the diabolos followed by the consequence of that victory - blessedness to the people from all nations who become heirs of the promise. And in the promises made to David, the Lord is depicted as a Royal Seed - who shall build the great palace/temple of the age to come, and be enthroned there as a great King.

2 Samuel 7 describes certain promises made to David, following the expression - and rejection - of his desire to build a house for the Ark to dwell in:

“... Yahweh telleth thee that he will make thee an house. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son ... And thine house and thy kingdom shall be **established for ever before thee**: thy throne shall be established for ever” (2 Sam 7:12-17).

That this promise speaks of the Lord Jesus, we can be left with no doubt, for it is cited in the New Testament by the Spirit as being illustrative of the greater prominence of Christ over the Angelic Host: “unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? ***And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?***” (Heb1:5). And like the promise to Abraham, this promise does not relate to the Lord - the Seed - alone, but to his father David also, in the assurance of resurrection to be with the Lord for ever: “thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever ***before thee...***”. Clearly, in order for David's house and Kingdom to be established for ever “before” him (which signifies his presence) - he must be there to see it. That is, he must be raised from the dead to experience it. And again, this is not simply an inference on our part for at the end of his life David refers back to the original covenant promise God made with him as follows:

“Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an **everlasting covenant**, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my **salvation**, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.” (2 Sam. 23:5)

Paul testified that Christ is a beneficiary of the promises made by God to David as follows:

“And as concerning that he raised him [Christ] up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you **the sure mercies of David.**” [that is the promises under consideration - 2 Sam.7]

By the Spirit, David directly prophesied of the resurrection of Christ, and Peter testifies of this central aspect of the oath: “being a prophet, and knowing the God had sworn with an oath unto him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would **raise up** Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.” (Acts 2:30-31).

God promised Abraham that his Seed would inherit a portion of land for ever. But to David, he promised that this land would form the Kingdom, over which the Seed would reign from the ancient Davidic seat of power. This was the testimony of Gabriel, in alluding to the oath made to David, “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God **shall give unto him the throne of his father David:** and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and **of his kingdom there shall be no end**” (Luke 1:32).

This then, is the great climax in the unfolding revelation of the promised Seed. First, the Woman's Seed, as the vanquisher of Sin. Then Abraham's Seed as obtaining an eternal inheritance in The Land of Promise. Then David's Seed as a King ruling over that inheritance, over a Kingdom which shall see no end, with a universal empire (Psa. 2:8). So it is, that in these promises, we have presented the rudiments of the Gospel - the “things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ” are all encapsulated in them.

And though in such a brief study, we have but given the barest outline of such wonderful promises, we need to understand how we can be the beneficiaries thereof. As Peter spoke of the knowledge of the Truth “wherein are given unto **us** exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2Pet.1:4).

The promises are given to **us**. Therefore, the enmity between the world of serpentine philosophy and the woman's seed, marks our enmity with, and separation from the corruption of the World. Being One with the Victor over sin, we become part of the Woman's seed having forsaken the natural family of our Father Adam, and having received the spirit of Adoption whereby the

Father of our Lord Jesus becomes our Father. And therefore the saints, as did Abraham and David, look forward to the Resurrection, that they might obtain the inheritance with the Greater seed; an inheritance which will be Israel restored as the Kingdom of God, ruling over a universal empire, with Christ himself at the head. Truly these are exceeding great and precious promises - to which we would do well to take heed.

Clause 8

“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 Cor15:45; 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 2:14,15; 9:26; Gal1:4; Heb 7:27; 5:3-7; 2:17; Rom 6:10; 6:9; Acts 13:34-37; Rev 1:18; Jno 5:21,22,26,27; 14:3; Rev 2:7; 3:21; Mat 25:21; Heb 5:9; Mk 16:16; Acts 13:38,39; Rom 3:22; Ps 2:6-9; Dan 7:13,14; Rev 11:15; Jer 23:5; Zech 14:9; Eph 1:9,10”

Most of the clauses of the BASF which we previously considered, have a direct bearing upon one or more facets of the Atoning work of God in Christ. But this clause - perhaps more than any other - succinctly expresses many vital truths concerning both the way in which the law of condemnation (brought into being by the curse placed upon Adam for his transgression) impacted upon, and was borne away by the Sacrifice of Christ. The word “condemnation” is repeatedly emphasised in its relation to our Lord: he was “raised up in the condemned line of Abraham and David”; he wore “their condemned nature”, and he abrogated “the law of condemnation” “by dying”. And notice the terms used; “by dying” he abrogated the law of condemnation *“for himself* and all who should believe and obey him”. It is this latter aspect of things which is so often denied today - that the Lord died first for himself, to remove the condemnation upon his own nature (which took place at his resurrection – which was when the law of condemnation was abrogated), in order that his offering could also be efficacious for those who believe and obey him.

The reasoning which we are presented with from time to time, is that because the Lord bore no guilt, or accountability for the nature with which he was born, he therefore did not need to die for himself. For example, consider the following; “But as he bore no moral accountability for his mortality, he did

not have to make an offering for the nature he received at birth” (Editorial, page 467 *The Christadelphian*, December 1993). But this is contrary to the BASF which explicitly states that precisely because of the nature he received at birth, Christ did need to offer “for himself”, to “abrogate” the “law of condemnation” inherently within it - in order that he might also save others. And more importantly, it is also contrary to the Oracles of God upon which the BASF is founded.

The inspired Word speaks of the Lord's offering up of himself by comparison with the Mosaic sacrificial system: “for such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, ***first for his own sins, and then for the peoples: for this he did once, when he offered up himself***” (Heb 7:27). The allusion here, is to the Day of Atonement when the High Priest would enter beyond the Vail once a year as the people's representative. The record in Leviticus describes how that before Aaron (or his successors) could do anything by way of atoning for the people's sins, he had to firstly offer for himself: “And Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, ***which is for himself***, and shall make an atonement ***for himself***, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering ***which is for himself ...***” (Lev 16:11). Notice the 3-fold emphasis; there can be no doubt that under the Mosaic system, for a High Priest to appear acceptably before the Presence of the Most High, he had to firstly offer for himself.

But the writer to the Hebrews informs us that he did this “for his own sins”. The High Priest under the Law was a transgressor - a sinner in his own right, and therefore in need of sanctification and forgiveness before he could appear acceptably before the Most High. From this, some deduce that there is therefore a difference in the antitype: because Christ never transgressed, he needed no such sanctification, and so his sacrifice was for one effect only, that is, for the people. So, it is claimed that “it is wrong to say that his offering was 'for himself, then for us'” (J Martin, *Saved By His Life*, p48). The Lord's moral personal sinlessness is a vital difference, without it his sacrifice itself could not have been acceptable – for sin in the flesh could not then be exclusively condemned. But that difference does not negate the Type, for the words of the Apostle are clear; that as the Aaronic High Priest would offer “first for his own sins, and then for the peoples” in the case of the Lord Jesus, he achieved both effects also: ***“this he did once, when he offered up himself”***. ***This*** he did - that is, in his single offering he offered for both himself and the people at the same time. But how is this so?

As we demonstrated earlier, the answer lies in the fact that although the Lord committed no transgression, he nevertheless possessed “the law of sin and death” or “sin in the flesh” (Rom.8:2-3). It is written that “every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed” (Jas.1:14). But though on occasion tempted, Christ resisted the temptation, and so the lust never conceived to bring forth sin.

And the Truth of Scripture is that he firstly needed to “abrogate” the “Law of condemnation” for himself. It had to be done in himself first, that it might ultimately be done also in others. He had to abrogate the law of condemnation in himself first in order to free others from it.

But how could such a situation be depicted in the Mosaic Law? The Law, whilst it condemned the action of sin, could never deal with the root cause. “What the law *could not do*... God sending his own son ... condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom 8:3). What the Law could not do, God did in Christ. And here we see a beautiful situation so often repeated in the Law of Moses - it fulfilled a necessary requirement of the current situation, yet was also a “shadow” of greater things to come in Christ.

The law being but a shadow, “not the very image” - Hebrews 10:1; of the greater things seen in Christ, both met the contemporary need for all the people - high priest included - and also foreshadowing the principles of the Atonement in Christ, where the efficacy of his offering was far “better”, dealing with the very root of all iniquity, even sin in the flesh itself.

As a final point in this regard - if there is still any doubt as to whether or not the Lord Jesus required personal cleansing, or sanctification in order to provide salvation for us, let us go to his own testimony, in his prayer concerning his disciples “for their sakes *I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth*” (Jno.17:19). As Bro Roberts so often expressed it, it was “for himself, that it might be for us”, as typified in the cleansing of the Altar under the Mosaic system.

“BY DYING”

The BASF is explicit in stating that it was by the death of Christ that the condemnation was removed; he “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”. There is, however a train of thought currently being promulgated which states that forgiveness and salvation comes through the mortal life of Christ, not his death. This concept, invariably styled “The Theory of Partial Atonement”, or the “Saved by his

life theory” (after the book of the same title by John Martin where the concept appears to have been reintroduced in these last days) essentially teaches that the death of Christ was a culminating act of obedience (which it undoubtedly was) - but nothing more. Denying that Sin is a fundamental “law” of the human condition (Rom.7:25), as well as an act committed, it is claimed that the only condemnation of Sin by Christ was the fact that he never transgressed. Further, since he never transgressed; and that there is allegedly no “sin in the flesh” in actuality, it is argued that Christ did not require to die for himself, to sanctify himself - the claim we have just examined.

A major flaw of this theory, is that in Scripture, emphasis is placed on the death and Resurrection of Christ as the means of Redemption, and not his mortal life. By his sacrificial death, sin in the flesh was condemned (*katakrino* = judged against), and therefore a means of reconciling man to God was established.

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized *into his death?*” (Rom 6:3)

“you, that were sometimes alienated ... Yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh *through death*, to present you holy and unblameable, and unreprouable ...” (Col.1:22)

“We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God *should taste death* for every man” (Heb.2:9)

“for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, *that by means of death*, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance” (Heb.9:15).

Proponents of the so-called “saved by his life” theory claim, that the efficacy of the Lord's offering lies only in his life of obedience - and when the above passages are brought to bear on the matter, the standard reply is that “his death includes his life”. Unfortunately, no passage of Scripture is ever advanced to show that death is, in fact, inclusive of life! Rather than to speak in ambiguous and inexplicable phrases, Scripture addresses the issues in crystal clarity. The Apostolic testimony is clear; reconciliation to the Father comes through the death of Christ: “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us ... If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Rom

5:10). And the 'life' spoken of here, is not the mortal life of the Lord as the advocates of the "saved by his life" theory suppose (yet give no evidence for), but as the context plainly demands, is the Immortal life of the risen Christ - the very means whereby we also might be made Immortal. As Paul declared elsewhere: "if Christ be not raised, your faith is in vain, ye are yet in your sins... ***But now is Christ risen from the dead***, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (1Cor.5:17,20 - see context).

So it is, that in Christ the "law of condemnation" was "abrogated" in himself, as it will be in his brethren. The word "abrogate" signifies, "repeal, annul, abolish" (Oxford Dictionary). A correspondent asks how it can be said that the Law of Condemnation was "repealed", yet be permitted to have it's full course in both Christ, and his brethren? If the law is repealed in our case, we ought never die! But the point is, that we are not speaking of a law in the sense of a written piece of legislation, but a fundamental principle of our physical being - in a not dissimilar way in which we refer to the known 'laws' of the universe - apparently immutable principles which govern the way physical elements and objects behave. The physical "law of condemnation" can be said to be "abrogated" in Christ, because whereas he was once under the dominion of death (Rom.6:9), he is no longer. He is not subject to the law of mortality any more - he is deathless; immortal. That law of condemnation has lost all power over him. And for his brethren also, they will be freed from it at his appearing - by the bestowal of Immortality, it will be repealed. Though they may once have succumbed to it, and though they will appear before the judgement throne as natural creatures once again - that law will disappear when, in a twinkling of an eye, this mortal shall put on immortality (1Cor.15:52).

Christ's sacrifice being accepted, he gained the victory over the devil, which has the power of death, at his resurrection to immortality. Christ now has the power to share his victory with his friends in the day of their resurrection, therefore they are no longer "subject to" the "bondage" of the "fear of death" (v15) sure in the hope that they will be delivered from out of death in that day. So in principle the power of the devil has been annulled, though for the present it still brings people to the grave.

It is a first principle that the Bible devil, or *diabolos* is that mortal aspect of the flesh of men, which has the power of death, and gives rise to committed sin. This physical principle of "sin in the flesh" (Rom.8:3) was condemned by God in Christ. It is said of Jesus, that by passing "through [Grk. *dia*] death, he might destroy him that had the power of death that is the Devil" (Heb.2:14). That is, that by acceptable atonement and his subsequent resurrection to immortality, (by God's Grace), the devil was destroyed in

him. This broke the power of death for himself and, in prospect for all those in Christ. For when Christ returns he is the one “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” (Phil.3:21)

So for the faithful, sin in the flesh will be abolished because of what took place in the sacrificial death and resurrection of Christ. This will be in the day of their resurrection. Being a physical law of our being, it can only be removed by a physical change. As Bro. Robert Roberts wrote: “Immortalisation is the physical cleansing” (The Christadelphian, Jan.1876). And as the Apostle expresses it:

“So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, *and this mortal shall have put on immortality*, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory” (1Cor.15:54).

This is so that: “mortality might be swallowed up of life” (2Cor.5:4). The death and resurrection of Messiah are both vital elements in the condemnation of sin in the flesh. Without the sacrificial death, sin in the flesh would remain un-condemned, and without the resurrection, there would be no victory. Until he was raised, Jesus was under the “dominion” of death, but being raised, death hath no longer any dominion over him—as it is written: “Christ being *raised from the dead* dieth no more: death hath *no more* dominion over him” (Rom.6:9). The power of death had the dominion over him until his resurrection. If Christ were not raised, then we of all men would be most miserable (1Cor.15:19), for there would be no hope of release from the bondage of death. But with his resurrection, there is a hope of victory over the devil, that sin will be removed from our flesh, when it is “swallowed up of life” – and being made after the physical nature of the risen Christ (Phil.3:21).

THE PERFECT OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

Brother Robert Roberts wrote on this point:

“Death is written in our present nature. It was written in Eden. It is the writing of God; no man can blot it out. God can, and will in the cases He chooses. He began the work at Nazareth in harmony with his own greatness. He sent forth His son in the death-written nature that in him it might be cleansed, redeemed, and perfected. “Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead” (1Cor.15:21).

How the resurrection came by man is told in the life and death of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. **It came by his obedience (Rom. 5:19), but obedience requiring death as the declaration of Jehovah's righteousness (Rom. 3:25), and the condemnation of sin in the flesh (Rom. 8:3).** Jesus died unto sin once (Rom. 6:10). It touched him through Adam: but though a sufferer from its effects, he was without sin himself (Heb. 4:15). Having died once, death has no more dominion over him (Rom. 6:9). "Through death, he destroyed that having the power of death, that is, the devil"—otherwise sin in the flesh (Heb.2:14). By him and by him alone can men attain to this victory, for it has been wrought in him and in him only as yet"

(Robert Roberts, The Visible Hand of God p.33)

So this then, is how Brother Roberts wants us to understand Clause 8. where it states: "Christ...was to obtain a title to **resurrection** by perfect obedience," Brother Roberts says: resurrection "...came by his obedience (Rom. 5:19), **but obedience requiring death as the declaration of Jehovah's righteousness (Rom. 3:25),** and the condemnation of sin in the flesh (Rom. 8:3)."

In other words, we are to understand the: "by perfect obedience" of Clause 8 as: "...by perfect obedience, and by dying", for only the Atoning Sacrifice could "abrogate the law of condemnation" in facilitating his resurrection- to Victory.

Yes, Christ's obedience meant also, obeying the Will of his Father in submitting to the crucifixion. Thus: "...he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."(Philippeans 2:8) and again: "Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first (covenant), that he may establish the second. By the which Will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb 10:9,10).

Only Christ could be the acceptable sacrifice for sin, because only in a man without transgression (1Pet. 2:21-23) could physical "sin in the flesh" be clearly, unambiguously, acceptably "condemned" or judged against. Only in this way could God's righteous judgement of the fallen state, be "declared" or demonstrated, for all to acknowledge who would be saved (Romans 8:3; 3:25)

This is most concisely expressed in 2 Corinthians 5:21:

“For He hath made him to be sin for us, who new no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Having obtained Grace through acceptable sacrifice, it was needful that the “body...prepared” of The Spirit (Heb.10:5) should be raised by the third day, so as to suffer not the “Holy one to see corruption”. (Psalm 16:10). For this reason the grave could not hold him (Acts 2:24).

And this is an aspect of things which it is so easy to neglect in all debates concerning the Atonement. Indeed, we have seen brethren grossly contradict this wondrous example by their very conduct in such debates. But whilst it is of great importance for us to try and comprehend the principles which were being worked out in our Lord's Sacrifice - we must never lose sight of the wonderful example which was laid down for us to follow, in both his life of holiness, and obedience in death. Hence the Apostles' exhortation: ***“Let this mind be in you,”*** which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought not equality with God something to be grasped; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name ...” (Phil.2:5-9). Indeed, let us do likewise.

Clause 9

“That it was this mission that necessitated the miraculous begetting of Christ of a human mother, enabling him to bear our condemnation, and, at the same time, to be a sinless bearer thereof, and, therefore, one who would rise after suffering the death required by the righteousness of God.- Mat 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-35; Gal 4:4; Is 7:14; Rom 1:3,4; 8:3, 2Cor 5:21; Heb 2:14-17; 4:15”.

As expressed by the BASF, the “mission” that the Lord Jesus Christ came to accomplish was that he should “by dying, abrogate the law of condemnation for himself and all who should believe and obey him”, and that having obtained “a title to resurrection by perfect obedience”, he might secure a way of salvation for his brethren (Clause 8). But Clause 9 (cited above) illustrates how that this mission required certain things in order to ensure it's success. It could not be accomplished without certain conditions being met, namely that Christ had to be a partaker of the condemnation which falls upon all men

- and yet remain sinless, that he might be a perfect (complete) offering. Hence the need for him to be born of a human mother - that he might inherit our physical condemnation, and the need for him to be born of God - that he might be strengthened to be a sinless bearer thereof. Both of these features required the miraculous means of his conception, that as the Seed of the woman, and of God, he would be “made strong” (Ps 80:15) to do his Father's Will in being obedient unto death.

Indeed, that was the central purpose of his 33 ½ year mortal life; it was a preparatory period for the eventual making of that great offering - that sacrificial death by crucifixion, required by the Righteousness of God” (Rom.3:25-26). It is clear then, that in order to appreciate both the mission of the Lord Jesus, and how it was successfully accomplished, we need a clear perception of both how through his human maternity he could “bear our condemnation”, and also why it was that the righteousness of God required even his death by crucifixion, as a sinless man, before the “law of condemnation” could be abrogated.

A FALSE DOCTRINE

As we mentioned in an earlier chapter, a popular idea amongst Christendom at large (and which has sadly been adopted even amongst some who should know better), is that all of humanity inherit a 'legal condemnation', whereby they are held accountable for Adam's transgression - they are condemned for this, as well as for their own sins which render them personally deserving of that condemnation. Under this heresy, this 'legal condemnation' also is said to have fallen upon Christ who was innocent. He, as a member of the human race, was condemned to death for the sins of another man - but because he was personally sinless he was wholly innocent, and unworthy of that condemnation. Therefore, an innocent man took the punishment due to another; he died as a substitute for the guilty - he suffered the punishment due to us, and instead of us.

But this claim is not in harmony with the revealed Righteousness of God, who will not remove the punishment due to a guilty man by placing it upon another who is innocent.

THE INHERITANCE OF CONDEMNATION

But there is a “condemnation” which pertains to all mankind, the Lord Jesus included:

“Therefore as by the *offence* of one judgment came upon all men to *condemnation*; even so by the *righteousness* of one, the free gift came upon all men unto *justification of life*” (Rom.5:18 KJV).

For “**righteousness of one**” some KJV Bible Margins offer, “**by one righteousness**”. This alternative rendering is supported by the original Greek words here as follows:

ἐνὸς **one** δικαίωματος **act of righteousness**

The word δικαίωματος (dikaionomatos) here in Romans 5:18 is in the singular and signifies ‘**one act of righteousness**’; this is further strengthened by the preceding word “ἐνὸς” (henos) meaning ‘one’. So the Greek is emphatic that “Justification of life” came by “**one act of righteousness**”.

The English Standard Version (and others) translates this verse as follows:

“Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so **one act of righteousness** leads to **justification** and life for all men”
(Rom. 5:18)

So to emphasise, here we read:

- “one trespass led to condemnation”
- “one act of righteousness leads to justification

Therefore justification unto life eternal comes because “one act of righteousness leads to justification” - one act, NOT many. So justification did not come by the many righteous acts that Jesus did in his mortal life, but by **One Act**. What was the “**one act of righteousness**”?

It is as Clause 9 states: “***the death*** required by ***the righteousness of God***” that is; the sacrifice of Christ- the crucifixion- whereby “God...condemned (judged against) sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:3) This was the “one act of righteousness” ordained and provided by The Father; which Act did “declare...His [God’s] righteousness that He [God] might be Just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom.3:26)

So we have considered Romans 5:18: “Therefore as by the ***offence*** of one judgment came upon all men ***to condemnation***; even so by the ***righteousness*** of one, [rather: “the ***one act of righteousness***”] the free gift came upon all men unto ***justification of life***”

The next verse continues:

“for as by one man's disobedience many were **made sinners**, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous” (Rom 5:19).

So we put the essence of vv18 and 19 together thus:

- “... by the *offence* of one judgment came upon all men to *condemnation...*” (vs 18)
- “... by one man's disobedience many were *made sinners...*” (vs 19)

Notice this; the two aspects go together, and are brought together by the Apostle. Condemnation comes upon all men for, or because, through one man's disobedience, many are “made sinners”. The key to understanding why we have a condemnation from Adam therefore, lies in understanding how it is that through what Adam did, we are “made sinners” in the sight of God.

BEING “MADE SINNERS”

The ‘literal’ Translations (with some others) tend to render *kathistemi* (*made*) as “constituted” as follows:

“for as through the disobedience of the one man, the many were *constituted* sinners: so also through the obedience of the One, will the many be *constituted* righteous.” (Literal Standard version)

“for as through the disobedience of the one man, the many were *constituted* sinners: so also through the obedience of the one, shall the many be *constituted* righteous.” (Young’s Literal translation)

“For as by one man's disobedience many were *constituted* sinful, so also by the obedience of one shall many be *constituted* just.” (Smith’s Literal translation)

“For as through the disobedience of the one man, the many were constituted sinners, so also through the obedience of the One, will the many be constituted righteous” (Literal Emphasis translation)

The disobedient “one” refers to Adam; and the obedient “one” is Christ. So through Adam we inherit the constitution of the first sinner (after he was cursed); but through and in Christ we can be constituted Righteous: Morally and physically (As Christ now is) in the day of the resurrection.

THE CONSTITUTION OF SIN

All who are born since Adam's offence, enter into conditions created by his sin. They are involuntarily born into *a constitution of sin*, for they have a "law of sin" residing in them: "sin in the flesh". They become appointed as members, or citizens of that system by virtue of being born into it - and indeed by sharing it's dominating principles of physical and moral corruption in the very fabric of their being.

Just as one born into the constitutional arrangement of Britain is called British; even so one who is born into the constitutional arrangement of Sin is called a Sinner. And just as one can voluntarily forsake the system of Britain to become, say, a citizen of America, and become to all intents and purposes an American, even so we, through the work of Christ, might forsake the constitution of Sin, and become part of the constitution of Righteousness - that is, heirs of the Kingdom to come. Indeed, this is the comparison drawn by Bro Thomas in *Elpis Israel*, (p 129), to which we can only briefly allude for lack of space, and to which we heartily commend the reader.

Bro Thomas also wrote concerning the matter:

"Upon this principle, he that is born of sinful flesh is a sinner; as he that is born of English parents is an English child. Such a sinner is an heir of all that is derivable from sin" (*Elpis Israel*, p130).

"The Apostle says, "By Adam's disobedience the many were made sinners": that is, they were endowed with a nature like his, which had become unclean, as the result of disobedience; and by the constitution of the economy into which they were introduced by the will of the flesh, they were constituted sinners before they were able to discern between right and wrong".

"Thus men are sinners in a twofold sense; first, by natural birth; and next by transgression. In the former sense, it is manifest that they could not help themselves" (*Elpis Israel*, p 131).

And again:

"There are two states or kingdoms in God's arrangements, which are distinguished by constitution. These are the Kingdom of Satan and the Kingdom of God. The citizens of the former are all sinners; the heirs of the latter are saints. Men cannot be born heirs by the will of the flesh; for natural birth confers no right to God's kingdom. Men must be born sinners before they can become saints; even as one must be

born a foreigner before he can be an adopted citizen of the States ... Children are born sinners or unclean, because they are born of sinful flesh; and “that which is born of the flesh is flesh”, or sin. This is a misfortune, not a crime. They did not will to be born sinners. They have no choice in the case ...” (Elpis Israel p.129).

In effect we are born with the constitution of the first sinner after he was cursed.

THE REASON FOR CONDEMNATION

Having considered these things, we return to the reason for our physical inheritance of condemnation. Through Adam's offence, condemnation came upon all men, by virtue of fleshly descent alone, mankind possessing a nature which has as the fundamental law of it's existence, “the law of sin and death”.

The Apostle Paul in Romans 7 and 8 (amongst other places), uses the word “sin” as a noun rather than as a verb; using it as the name of the physical condition of human nature in the fallen state. Adam’s act of sin brought this curse upon him and all his descendants, so its apt for Paul to name this state as Sin (in a physical sense). He shows that this state applies to all mankind, including the Lord Jesus, calling it “sin in the flesh”; which renders our natures physically, “sinful flesh” (Rom. 8:3). Our flesh, bodies, persons, need a saviour, a deliverer from this mortal, sinful state. Christ himself, as the representative of the believers, is the firstfruits of his own saving sacrifice; as it is written: 1Corinthians 15:22,23:

“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.”

WHY SHOULD A RIGHTEOUS MAN DIE?

We may wonder why “sin in the flesh” was “condemned” (Judged against) so severely, requiring crucifixion (Romans 8:3). It is because according to “the Righteousness of God” our physically sinful state does not befit the physical image of God which we bear. In the beginning, the Creator made man the head of creation and so bestowed upon Adam the honour and glory of His own image (Gen. 1:26, 27; Gen. 9:6; 1Cor. 11:7; Jas. 3:9). But for disobedience, Adam suffered “a sentence which defiled and became a physical law of his being, and was transmitted to all his posterity” (Clause 5) This fallen state, “sinful flesh”, also tempts us from within, in “the lust of

the flesh” (1John 2:16). But all these impediments can be atoned for if we fellowship the death, burial, and victorious resurrection of Christ

This is the point of the sacrifice of Christ. It was an identification by the Son with the Father's righteous condemnation of Sin. He recognised sin for what it really was - and where it really was - dwelling in him. He recognised that as part of a sinful constitution of things, it was righteously condemned by the Father in the death of the cross.

And so, he willingly offered his body to a such a death, that the Divine condemnation upon sin in the flesh could be endorsed, enforced and declared Just: “Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done” was the Master's prayer, as the time of his offering drew nigh. He willingly made his own will - that natural disposition prompted by the flesh - subservient to that of his Father.

A BASIS FOR FORGIVENESS

By so condemning sin through sacrifice (Rom.8:3), God Declared (and established) His own Righteousness which forms the basis of our forgiveness. This is the testimony of Paul speaking of the Lord, “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, ***to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins*** that are past through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom.3:25, 26).

And in this, we see that the principles of Sacrifice, and of Atonement are not merely precepts to be recognised and believed - they are principles to be enacted in life. In his Sacrifice - and indeed, in his life which went before, the Lord established a pattern for us to follow. Indeed, our very salvation requires us to follow it; for He was redeemed from his own cursed nature by submitting to the declaration of His Father's Righteousness - and if we likewise wish to be redeemed, we must therefore become identified with that declaration.

In Baptism, we identify ourselves in a very graphic way, with the condemnation of Sin in Christ. We openly declare that we are worthy to die, and in effect put to death the “old man” of the flesh “that the body of sin might be destroyed,” or “made powerless” as the words can be translated (Rom 6:6). But we also identify ourselves with the Father's Righteousness as declared in Christ, for in recognising our righteous condemnation before God, we resolve to do His will, and not our own. In Baptism, we declare the utter unprofitableness of the flesh, and seek instead, to walk after the ways of the Spirit.

Because the sacrificial death of Christ, was a declaration of God's Righteousness, the Father Himself is "Just and the Justifier of him which believeth". That is, in the way of reconciliation He has appointed; none of his Righteous principles are violated or compromised - rather, all are plainly made manifest. He is shown to be Just in every point. But also, he is the Justifier of those that believe - for they have aligned themselves with the principles of the Atonement, as seen in Christ. They seek to do as he did, and acknowledge the Righteousness of God. They find forgiveness in the Father's Sight, and live in the hope of being partakers of the Divine Nature; even as their Redeemer is (2 Pet 1:4).

Clause 10

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

We have given abundant proof in our earlier studies to illustrate how our Lord Jesus - though he were the Son of the Most High - nevertheless wore our "condemned nature", enabling him to bear away that which was being condemned in it– the diabolos. But in being "of like nature with mortal man", the Lord inevitably experienced throughout his life the pains and sorrows common to all of Adam's posterity. Truly he was "touched with the feeling of our infirmities", for he, (as do we) travailed with a body under the dominion of death (Rom.6:9), and was therefore a sufferer of all the effects of Sin –though he were personally "without spot", holy and blameless. There was however, a difference, due to his personal holiness, and the nature of the work he was sent to do. He experienced the weakness and fragility of the flesh more than other men in the sufferings he endured, in the doing of his Father's Will.

That this is indeed so, is made plain by the Apostle's testimony concerning our Lord's crucifixion, for speaking of that great victory over Sin, he wrote: "though he were crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak with him (marg), but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you" (2Cor.13:4). Our Lord then, was crucified

“through weakness”. But wherein lay this “weakness”? It was not through want of Divine power, for he himself declared that he had twelve legions of Angels at his disposal, should he ask for them (Mat.26:53). Neither was it weakness of mind, as Duncan Heaster would have us believe, claiming that he suffered “intellectual failure,” a “wavering in purpose”, for “he even doubted if he really was the Messiah” (*Beyond Bible Basics*, p 631, 636). Nay, such assertions are but the absurd rumination's of the flesh – any one of those options would make Christ a sinner, rendering him unsuited to be the perfect Sacrifice to take away the sin of the world. Only in a sinless man could the human condition- “sin in the flesh”- be unambiguously and acceptably “condemned” (judged against) so making atonement.

In this place, the “weakness” referred to, is the “weakness” associated with being crucified; something which the Apostle contrasts with the “Power of God,” which effected his resurrection, and by which he now lives in an Immortal state. It is plainly evident therefore, that the “weakness” our Lord experienced, was the hereditary weakness of the flesh, which rendered him prone to suffering and even death, as opposed to “the power of his Resurrection” and Immortality, (Phil. 3:10) to suffer no more.

But the time of our Lord's “weakness” was not restricted to that brief period of suffering at the hands of Jew and Gentile combined. Being “made of a woman”, the BASF teaches how “in the days of his flesh,” he suffered “from all the effects that came by Adam's transgression”, that is, an entire lifetime of travail under a cursed constitution, or order of things, experiencing hunger (Mat.4:2), tiredness (Jno.4:6), grief (Jno.11:35), and suffering (Heb.5:8). Truly he was, as the prophet depicts him, “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isa.53:3). Life afforded him no comforts, for he shunned the pleasures of sin that he might do the Will of his Father.

Naturally speaking, there was “no beauty that we should desire him” (Isa.53:2); on the contrary, every line on his face bare testimony to the anguish he endured constantly in his lifelong warfare against the flesh. And to such an extent, that though he was in his early thirties, his enemies took him to be nearer to fifty (Jno.8:57), having aged through the afflictions which he suffered. The Spirit of Christ in David spoke of the life of Christ accordingly: “my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing” (Psa.31:10), and again: “I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me. I am gone like the shadow when it declineth: I am tossed up and down as the locust. My knees are weak through fasting; and my flesh faileth of fatness” (Psa.109:22-24).

Whilst we quite rightly focus upon the sufferings of our Master at the time of his great sacrifice, let us never forget the lifetime of sufferings that went before it. After all, it is his mortal life of faithfulness in the face of constant adversity, that presents such a glorious example of obedience to his brethren: “...when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps...” (1Pet.2:20,21).

THE MEMORY OF SUFFERING

This bearing of the infirmities common to all men, was crucial for the performance of our Lord's role as a High Priest, for as the Spirit taught the Hebrews, a priest cannot be compassionate to others, unless he has experienced the nature of their sufferings for himself: “every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; *for that* he himself also is compassed with infirmity” (Heb.5:1,2), and our Lord himself is no exception to this, for he himself was indeed “touched with the feeling of our infirmities”, as we are taught in the preceding chapter (Heb.4:15). But a point that arises from these things, is that it is the memory, the knowledge of the experiences of suffering that enables our Lord to be a faithful and merciful high priest for us. Bro Roberts explained it thus:

“He is now the corporealisation of life-spirit as it exists in the Deity. But this change from what he was “in the days of his flesh” has not obliterated a single line of his human recollections. This is evident from Paul's words in reference to his priestly function: “We have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Heb 4:15). This can only be on the principle that Jesus retains a memory of the infirmity with which he himself was encompassed in the day of his flesh career upon earth” (Christendom Astray, page 94).

The experiences of our Lord thus give us a most interesting insight into what Immortality will be like for the saints. Though the former things will be greatly surpassed by the wonders of the Kingdom Age, we are not to suppose that all cognisance of past events; will be erased from the minds of the faithful. On the contrary, the sufferings they had to endure will remain in their minds, that by way of contrasting one against the other, they will truly recognise that those afflictions were as nothing by comparison with the exceeding great weight of glory which will then be theirs.

GOD MANIFEST IN THE FLESH

The sufferings our Lord endured must be borne in mind at all times, if we are to truly recognise all that it meant for him to be “God manifest in the flesh”, as the Apostle declares he was (1Tim.3:16). He was Immanuel, God with us, the Son who perfectly mirrored the image of His Father (Jno.14:9): in spite of the human travail he experienced in common with his brethren. He was, as it were, God made manifest in power: for despite his many sorrows, he overcame and now sits enthroned in Victory at the Father's Right Hand.

The expression: “God manifest in the flesh” is taken by some to be a dark and obscure statement, difficult to understand. But it ought not be so. The sense is akin to the other expression that he was “the word made flesh”. He was the embodiment and fulfilment of the Word that went before him: From his presentation to the world at his baptism, he said: “then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God” (Heb.10:7). He was both the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom.8:3), and the image of Almighty God (Jno.14:9). He thus represented God to man, and man to God, in that he came in sinful flesh (Rom.8:3).

The real irony, is that it was the very afflictions which the Lord bore as a descendant of Adam, which moulded and shaped him to be wholly obedient. “though he were a Son, yet ***learned*** he obedience by the things which he suffered” (Heb.5:8). But, Christ was not innately 'programmed' to obey. It took a lifetime of affliction, suffering and learning for the Son to be sufficiently prepared, that he might undergo that greatest test of obedience, even his death upon the cross. Here then, is truly a wonderful example for those who would be his brethren. The way to Divine Glory is not an easy road, but a path of affliction. Those who would attain the victory with Christ ought not therefore seek to avoid the necessary sufferings the Father brings upon us, but rather seek to face them after his example, that so suffering with him, they might also reign with him.

Clause 11

“That the message he delivered from God to his kinsmen, the Jews, was a call to repentance from every evil work, the assertion of his divine sonship and Jewish kingship; and the proclamation of the glad tidings that God would restore their kingdom through him, and accomplish all things written in the prophets.—Mark 1:15; Mat 4:17;

5:20-48; Jno 10:36; 9:35; 11:27; 19:21; 1:49; Mat 27:11-42; Jno 10:24,25; Mat 19:28; 21:42,43; 23:38,39; 25:14-46; Luke 4:43; 13:27-30; 19:11-27; 22:28-30; Mat 5:17; Luke 24:44”

Having considered the sacrificial work of the Lord Jesus in our previous studies, we turn now to consider the message preached by the Master himself to those he came to save. And the first point to recognise here is that the message he delivered was not of his own composition but was “from God”. As John proclaimed: “he whom God hath sent *speaketh the words of God*: for God giveth not the spirit by measure unto him” (Jno. 3:33,34). Christ himself gave the same testimony: “my doctrine *is not mine*, but his that sent me” (Jno. 7:16) and again: “*I have not spoken of myself*; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, *even as the Father said unto me, so I speak*” (Jno. 12:49,50).

So it was, that as the Yahweh’s Word made flesh (Jno.1:14), the Lord Jesus was the voice of the spirit (Jno.3:8) sounding forth living words, that whosoever gave heed to what he taught, might repent and prepare for the coming Kingdom. Here is the underlying principle of all that the Master spake; his words were Divine, and carried an authority quite unlike that of the scribes (Mark 1:22) - and that authority remains to our day.

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

The inspired record relates to us the commencement of our Master’s preaching in Galilee, after the imprisonment of John: “after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:14).

Notice that here, the Gospel taught by the Spirit through Christ, was “the gospel of the kingdom of God”, whereas that which the Apostles later preached also included “the things concerning the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts. 8:12). The Mystery “which was kept secret since the world began” (Rom. 16:25) concerning the sufferings of Christ, had not yet been revealed. Certain events had to be transacted first; namely the lifting up of the Son of Man (Jno. 8:28) upon the accursed tree, and his resurrection from the darkness of death. Only then would the things concerning his Name, and the way of salvation through faith in him be generally made known, but prior to this, even the disciples did not comprehend how that the Master must first

suffer before his entrance into glory (Luke 14:25) - though they ought to have done from his own teaching concerning these things.

But the fact of the disciples 'lack of knowledge concerning their Master's future sufferings is most instructive concerning their preaching activities. Their whole emphasis was on the coming Kingdom, and the consequent need for repentance in order to be citizens thereof, and not the coming crucifixion which they did not understand (cp. Mark 8:33). How greatly this contrasts with the preaching of so-called 'christians 'today! How often have we seen those shallow tracts making the claim that all that is required is for us to accept that "Jesus died for you", and "open your hearts for him to enter in"? They call this "The Gospel," yet nothing is taught concerning the reality of the Coming Kingdom – and still less concerning the need to repent, and turn from wicked works. Yet it is these very things that the disciples taught with their Master! But Christ does not dwell in the hearts of the unenlightened, only in those who "by faith" (Eph.3:17); accept the testimonies concerning him, and his future work in restoring the Kingdom to Israel. The world at large is desperately ignorant of the things pertaining to the future age, and so in contrast to the example of the One they profess to follow, it's missionaries and preachers do not preach anything concerning it; they prefer rather to preach a mere shallow sentiment which can bring salvation to no-one. Yea, we might even go as far as to say that the Jesus they say died for them is not the Jesus of the Bible, for their Jesus is part of a Triune Godhead; a pre-existent trinity of beings, which find existence only in the imaginations of the deceived.

THE CALL TO REPENTANCE

The Master himself taught the Pharisees: "they that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mat.9:13). So the calling of Christ was not directed to those who considered themselves to be already righteous, but for sinners to repent of their wrongdoing, and seek first the coming kingdom. Only through repentance and faith can forgiveness and life be granted; that is Yahweh's Way, as the Lord taught the Jews: "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3,5).

This also is an aspect of the Master's teaching, which contrasts greatly to the spirit of our age of mutual respect and toleration. "Accept people as they are" is the maxim of the day; to be seen to "criticise" "judge" or "condemn" the behaviour, or personal habits of another is most frowned upon; and to proclaim to those around us that their behaviour is unacceptable to their

Creator, to the extent that He requires them to Repent is considered to be arrogant in the extreme! Who are we, in an age of “equal rights” to criticise another man’s lifestyle?! Nay, the real question, is Who are we to ignore the Creator’s call to repentance: “at the times of ignorance God winked at; but now **commandeth all men everywhere** to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness ...” (Acts 17:31, 31).

This was the message of Paul to the great philosophers at Athens. Rather than to engage in endless debates and theological reasonings which they would no doubt delight in (as do the philosophers of our day), he confronted them with the stark facts: The Creator commands all men everywhere to repent. Those who do not repent will die without hope. If, having heard that command, they reject it and go their own way, they will be rejected at the judgement seat of Christ. That is the ‘bottom line’, so to speak. The call to repentance is no mild plea – it is a Command of the Living Creator and Sustainer of All Things.

And again, this is a fundamental aspect of things, which is so often removed from modern preaching – even by those who ought to know better. “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, **but rather reprove them**” (Eph.5:11) is the Apostolic command. This is ignored by men of our day who delight in embracing the dark speculations of church folly, and who teach toleration for the immoral behaviour of the ungodly. The call to repent from wicked works gets hardly a mention in the preaching efforts of our day; the emphasis is on presenting a non-doctrinal, non-confrontational, all-embracing pseudo-Christianity, which appears to accept almost all men as they are. Such is the hollow shell, which passes for Truth in the degenerate society in which we sojourn, deprived of any virtue, sustenance, or life.

THE SONSHIP AND KINGSHIP OF CHRIST

The fact of Christ’s heavenly paternity, was something which the Jews found particularly difficult to grasp, as is repeatedly emphasised in the Gospel recorded through John. Chapter 8 of his spirit-breathed account describes how the Master appealed to the Law, to confirm the legitimacy of his witness:

“It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that beareth witness of Myself, and the Father that sent Me beareth witness of me. Then said they unto him, “Where is thy Father?” Jesus answered, “Ye neither know Me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known My Father also” (Jno.8:17-19).

They had no conception of the Master's Divine Origin; knowing neither him, neither his Father. Neither do the divines of our day; professing to know him, they deny him in both word and deed. Falsely claiming him to be a pre-existent deity, part of a Triune godhead, they know neither him, nor his Father as revealed in him.

But, as in our day, the Jew's lack of knowledge of these matters was solely due to their refusal to accept the facts. They preferred rather to charge the Messiah with blasphemy, rather than to accept his authority as of the only begotten Son.

Again, he rebuked their folly by appealing to the Law which they professed to live by: "Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are Gods? If he called them Gods to whom the word of God came, (and the scripture cannot be broken;) say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, 'Thou blasphemest; 'because I said, 'I am the Son of God?'" (Jno.10:34-36).

Yet, they persisted in seeking to set the Mosaic Law against Christ, by pressing this spurious charge of blasphemy: "We have a law, and by our Law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God" (Jno.19:7 cp.Mat.26:63-65; Lev.24:16), they responded to Pilate, who protested to them the Master's faultlessness. Again, even when he was impaled for them, as the national sin offering to give them redemption - if they would only hear - they continued in this vain, mocking his claimed Paternity:

"If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God, let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said 'I am the Son of God.'" (Mat.27:39-43).

At the time of his sufferings, the Master was thus despised for his claims to be both the Son of the Most High, and also the King of Israel. "We have no king but Caesar", they cried to Pilate (Jno.19:15, cp.Hos.10:3). Indeed, this was their initial charge against him: "we found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a king" (Luke 23:2). Notice this; 2 falsehoods, leading up to a 3rd charge which contained Truth, this truth being their real objection before Pilate, the others brought in to give added weight. So it was, that in this charge the Jews rejected their Messiah, saying "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Mat.19:14).

THE COMING ISRAELITISH KINGDOM

The appearance of the Master in the land of Judah, was in direct fulfilment of so many things testified in the prophets. The Scriptures that the Jews professed to know every jot and tittle of, plainly spoke of the Lord Jesus who came to fulfil those parts pertaining to his mortal travail, and sufferings upon the accursed tree (cp.Luke 18:31, Mark 9:12,14:21). But those same Scriptures also depict the Christ as exercising dominion over an Israelitish Kingdom restored, a fundamental truth which is lost on so many today.

Even before his birth, Gabriel, in alluding to a number of Old Testament prophecies spoke of this: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32,33, cp.Isa.9:6,7).

And the Christ himself, being the One who shall establish that kingdom, gave testimony to the 12 disciples that they also would reign over the tribes of Jacob under him: "Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Mat 19:28, cp Psa 122:4). He presented himself as the King of the restored Kingdom, even to the extent of determining the system of administration, and those who would reign with him (cp.also Luke19:12-27). And as if to make the identification of Old Testament passages with him inescapable, he even enacted those passages before the eyes of all:

"When they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me ... All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy king cometh unto thee, meek and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass." (Mat.21:1-5).

Indeed, the multitude who saw these happenings recognised what the Master was doing, and acted their part, citing Old Testament Scriptures in recognition of their fulfilment:

"The multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest" (Mat.21:9; Psa.118:25,26).

But the Christ also presented himself as being the Judge with the authority to cast out those who stumbled at his sayings, and refused to subject themselves to him. Thus, he spake - again citing prophetic utterances of old: “The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner ... whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder” (Luke 19:17,18). The Pharisees knew what class of men the Master was describing—and recognised their part in his words. “And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on Him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them” (v19).

In these things then, we see the Master’s own testimony concerning himself—and the people’s response to it. By contrast to the spirit of those falsely professing to be his disciples of our day, he testified against the world, that it’s deeds were evil. And rather than to accept his authority as both King, and Son of God, those same people who professed recognition of his Divine character, crying (“Hosanna in the highest”) rejected him, se-seeking to extinguish his Light, by rejecting him, and desiring a murderer to be released to them instead (Acts 3:14). Such is the fickleness of the fleshly mind. Yet the promises of the Father stand sure, and so the Master will return, to exercise dominion over his people, and over all the earth—for the Father has decreed it to be (Psalm 2).

Clause 12

“That for delivering this message, he was put to death by the Jews and Romans, who were, however, but instruments in the hands of God, for the doing of that which He had determined before to be done, viz., the condemnation of sin in the flesh, through the offering of the body of Jesus once for all, as a propitiation to declare the righteousness of God, as a basis for the remission of sins. All who approach God through this crucified, but risen, representative of Adam’s disobedient race, are forgiven. Therefore, by a figure, his blood cleanseth from sin. – Lu. 19:47; 20:1-16; John 11:45-53; Acts 10:38,39; 13:26-29; 4:27,28; Rom 8:3; Heb 10:10; Acts 13:38; 1Jno 1:7; Jno 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1Pet 3:18; 2:24; Heb 9:14; 7:27; 9:26-28; Gal 1:4; Rom 3:25; 15:8; Gal 3:21,22; 2:21; 4:4,5; Heb 9:15; Luke 22:20; 24:26, 46, 47; Mat 26:28”

Although earlier clauses of the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith considered in some detail the principles of the Sacrifice of Christ, this section returns to that theme in order to affirm other vital principles exhibited in the practical outworking of the Atonement. As we saw in the last study, it was

the Master's claim to be both the Son of the Most High, and the coming Messiah who would possess and occupy David's Throne that so incensed the Jews to the extent that they sought to put him to death. But it is vital to recognise that the crucifixion of Christ was not merely a murderous act of evil men as is sometimes claimed. It was something foreordained by the Father, and those men - though acting under fleshly motives in their rejection of Divine things - were but instruments by which the Father's purpose would be worked out.

This is the plain testimony of Scripture:

"Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: him, being delivered *by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:22,23).

"of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, but Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do *whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before* to be done" (Acts 4:27,28).

So it was, that both the Jews and Romans became united together in seeking to destroy Yahweh's Anointed – yet both were unwittingly the Father's agents in performing that which he had "determined before to be done".

BRUISING THE SERPENT'S HEAD

This determination of the Father was expressed immediately consequent to the introduction of sin into the world, when it was predicted that the woman's future seed would have his walk in life temporarily interrupted as he fatally bruised the serpent's head:

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

The principle here is that only by the bruising of the serpent's head could man be finally delivered from the law of sin and death. Here was the Father's purpose stated from the beginning: that Sin would be overcome through the Sacrifice of Christ. As Paul expressed it, "God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom 8:3).

And notice, the One giving the condemnation here is the Father Himself “God ... condemned sin in the flesh” of his son. Those wicked hands that delivered the Master up to be crucified, though motivated by jealousy and hatred, were but the agents through whom the Father’s Purpose might be executed. Indeed, these men were themselves the serpent’s seed, dominated by the serpentine mind of rebellion, as the Master himself declared: “ye are of your father *the diabolos*, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it” (Jno.8:44). That was the disposition of the serpent’s seed who were at enmity with the woman’s seed: having murderous lusts, abiding not in the truth, and speaking lies of their own. They dutifully, yet unconsciously enacted their part; their own fleshly lusts being used of the Father for the furtherance of His Purpose to give an arm of salvation to those who would take hold of it.

THE CONDEMNATION OF SIN

Previously, we briefly considered how Christadelphia is currently being presented with a new doctrine – or rather a resurgence of an old doctrine in a modified form – known as, the Saved by His Life theory, after the book where the doctrine was set forth, or latterly The Theory of Partial Atonement. The notion here, is that ‘flesh and blood’ does not in itself require a sacrificial cleansing (hence the idea of ‘partial – ’for sins only, not nature), and that the condemnation of sin was in the mortal life of the Master, not his sacrificial death. We saw how Bro Robert Roberts was confronted with the same notion, and rejected it, saying “Some would explain it as meaning the moral condemnation of sin by Christ during his life. ***This cannot be the meaning*** in view of the statement with which it is conjoined that, what was done was “what the law could not do.” The law condemned sin so thoroughly in the moral sense that it is called “the ministration of condemnation” (*The Law of Moses RR*). And the clause of the BASF under our present consideration affirms the same truth, defining how it was that sin in the flesh was condemned: “...the condemnation of sin in the flesh, ***through the offering of the body of Jesus*** once for all, as a propitiation to declare the righteousness of God as a basis for the remission of sins” (see Rom.8:3). The new theory then, is specifically opposed to the statement forming the basis of Christadelphian fellowship (Although it has been pointed out that it is really not a new theory at all, but the resurgence of an old error which was preached long ago).

A DECLARATION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Sin, therefore was condemned in the flesh “through the offering of the body of Jesus.” As we have shown above, Christ put away sin by the sacrifice of himself (cp. Heb. 9:26). But associated with this condemnation of sin, is the declaration of the Father’s righteousness; in the Divine Scheme of things, these two principles are the pivotal points of the Atonement. All wrong doctrines we have been presented with on the matter deny either the one or the other. The *Saved By His Life* Theory in effect denies the condemnation of Sin in the flesh of Christ. The Substitution theory, held by many Churches, denies the declaration of God’s Righteousness – the errant principle here is the fallacy that Christ died instead of us. The figure of an innocent man taking the place of the guilty about to be hanged, is a favourite image of the apostasy. But in this idea, where is the declaration of God’s righteousness? A guilty man is left to go free – an innocent man is punished instead of him – surely that would be a declaration of unrighteousness! But the Truth as revealed in Scripture is very plain indeed, as Bro Roberts described it:

“It would not be righteous to put to death one on whom death had no claims. It would not be kindness to say to us, “I will let you go free if that man will die?” The kindness, wisdom, and righteousness of God are all obscured by any idea of that sort; but the Scriptural idea is a masterpiece, a triumph of divine wisdom. God says now: “If you will recognise your position, repent, and come under that man’s wing, I will receive you back to favour and forgive you. My righteousness has been declared in him; I have crowned him with everlasting days; because he loved righteousness and hated iniquity, and was obedient unto death, I have crowned him with life eternal. It is in him for you if you will submit and believe in him and put on his name, which is a confession that you have no name of your own that will stand. Obey his commandments, and I will receive you and forgive you for his sake, and ye shall be my sons and daughters.” This is a splendid issue of kindness and wisdom” (The Blood of Christ).

There is no wisdom, or kindness in the theories of men which render void the extension of Divine kindness and love in the provision of Christ, as a sacrificial Lamb to take away our sins. Though it is those who are so bold as to resist those theories who are branded the troublemakers and sowers of discord, the reality is very different in the Divine estimation. Those who stand by and watch the wolves (cp Acts 20:29) devour the flock demonstrate no real love or concern for their brethren and sisters welfare. How can it be loving to grant the wolves free reign to do as they please amongst the flock of God? Those who profess love and extend fellowship towards those who

preach another Christ love the wolf more than the flock being destroyed! But those who desire to follow the example of the Great Shepherd (Jno.10:11-13) will come out from among them and be separate – it is not necessary to fellowship the wolves in order to oppose them!

Romans 3:25 speaks of the Lord: “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation though faith in his blood, *to declare his righteousness* for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God...”. In Christ therefore, God’s righteous condemnation of sin in the flesh was demonstrated, His honour was upheld, and our sins are forgiven.

CHRIST OUR REPRESENTATIVE ON THE CROSS

The BASF continues to describe the means whereby believers might be reconciled to the Most High through Christ Crucified thus: “All who approach God through this crucified, but risen representative of Adam’s disobedient race, are forgiven. Therefore, by a figure, his blood cleanseth from sin”.

Having been raised from the bonds of death, the Great High Priest passed through the heavens (Heb.4:14), to appear in the Most Holy Place, even the Dwelling place of the Eternal Spirit Himself - for us, to be our representative there: “Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Heb.9:24). Just as Aaron appeared once yearly in the Symbolic Holy of Holies to represent the people before the Most High (Lev.6), even so Christ appears in the presence of God for us. He appears in the presence of the Almighty as a representative of those who were under the constitution of Sin, yet who seek forgiveness and reconciliation. And as the Almighty beholds the people’s representative, he sees One who is free from sin, having put it away by the sacrifice of himself (Heb.9:26) - One who is now holy and undefiled, having been separated from sinners (Heb.7:26). And in that One, He beholds only righteousness, the righteousness of Christ, which is in fact His Own righteousness, as declared by Him, and beholds not the sins of the people whom Christ represents. He is able to be a representative, for he was one of us, having laboured under the dominion of death (Rom.6:9), partaking of the infirmities of our nature. Yet he is able to appear before the Father on our behalf, because he overcame, and can stand before Him free from sin. The way of salvation for us then, must involve an identification with that holy man; as Bro Roberts said, we must “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” (The Law of Moses, p.74). Only then can we be reconciled to

the Most High and have boldness to approach the Throne of Grace (Heb.4:16, cp.Rom 5:2) in the hope of Eternal life.

Clause 13

“That on the third day, God raised him from the dead, and exalted him to the heavens as priestly mediator between God and man, in the process of gathering from among them a people who should be saved by the belief and obedience of the Truth (1Cor15:4; Acts10:40;13:30-27;2:24-27)”

The means of Redemption having been provided through the shed blood of the Slain Lamb, it is the Father’s expressed purpose to gather out from among men a people to show forth the praises of His Name. James showed this following Simeon’s discourse to the believers at Jerusalem: “Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name...” (Acts 15:14). But what were actually the words of Simeon in which such a declaration was set forth? This is what he said:

“Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us...” (Acts 15:7,8).

From this, we find that this visitation of God to the Gentiles was via the preaching of Simon Peter, and commenced with the conversion of Cornelius. The Father selected Peter for that purpose, making “choice” among all the disciples, that he should be the one through whom the word of the Gospel would be brought to the Gentiles. Notice this, however; his mission differed to that of modern-day self-appointed evangelists, who compass sea and land to proselytise the world - it was not to convert the world - rather it was to be a Divinely appointed means of selection; to “take out of them a people for his name”. The entire process was one of Divine selection, from the preacher who was chosen to convey the word of the gospel, to the people who were taken out of the masses for the Father’s purposes.

But the BASF states that it was “in the process of” accomplishing this work - a work which is not yet complete - that the Messiah was “exalted to the heavens as a priestly mediator.” That is to say, his present position as both Priest and Mediator is part of the means whereby the selection of peoples for

the Father's Name might be accomplished. We need then, to consider both of these roles in order to see how it is so.

MEDIATORSHIP

Within the pages of Scripture, we find that the roles of priest and mediator, although related - and intimately so - are nevertheless distinct from each other. This was plainly shown under the Law of Moses, the Divinely appointed "Schoolmaster" (Gal.3:24) leading to Christ. Here, a different personage was selected to perform each role; Aaron, and his descendants through Eleazar were to be priests, whereas Moses alone was to be mediator. Moses could not take on Aaron's role as priest, and in turn, Aaron could not take on Moses' role as Mediator - as will become evident, they are two distinct offices, yet both come together in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is both priest and mediator.

Another significant detail is that there were many priests, for each could not continue perpetually "by reason of death" (Heb.7:23), and were therefore continually replaced - but there was only one mediator, the man Moses (Gal.3:19). He had no successor in that capacity; although Joshua was appointed to succeed him in the role of Captain of the people, thus foreshadowing the Lord Jesus (Heb.2:10) in leading them to inherit the promised land. But he was not a mediator, as becomes apparent upon a consideration of how the Scriptures define the role of Mediatorship. The Apostle declared concerning the Law:

"it was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels *in the hand of a mediator*" (Gal 3:19).

The Mediator then, was the One in whose hands the Law was placed, that it might be relayed to the people. And historically, this was Moses; the law was given to him through Angelic hands and then by his hand it was brought to the multitudes. So, Moses, in his mediatorial capacity, stood between God and man as the channel of communication through whom the ways of the Most High, and his requirements of His People were made known.

Accordingly, Moses spake of himself, in recounting the events at Sinai to do with the giving of the Old Covenant:

"Yahweh our Elohim made a covenant with us in Horeb. Yahweh made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day. Yahweh talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire, (I stood between Yahweh and

you at that time, to shew you the word of Yahweh: for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount)” (Deut.5:2-5).

Moses stood between Yahweh and the People, as the Mediator of the Torah, conveying His Word to His People, that a covenant might be made with them on His terms. This is why there was no successor appointed to be a Mediator after Moses, until the appearance of the Lord Jesus; there was only one Law given, there was only one Covenant given and therefore there would be no requirement for a further Mediator - there would have been nothing for him to mediate. Until Christ, that is, through whom the New Covenant is brought to us, for just as Moses stood between Yahweh and the People, so it is said of the Master:

“There is one God, and ***one mediator*** between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all” (1 Tim.2:5).

Christ then, like Moses, is a mediator between God and men. The order is important here: in their capacity as Mediator, neither Moses, or Christ were stood between Man and God but between God and men. They each brought a covenant from Him to the people - that of Christ being greater, hence he is apostolically styled the “mediator of a better covenant.”

“now hath He obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also He is ***the mediator of a better covenant***, which was established on better promises” (Heb 8:6)

“for this cause, he is ***the mediator of the new testament***, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance” (Heb.9:15)

“Ye are come unto Mount Sion ... and to Jesus ***the mediator of the New Covenant***, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel” (Heb 11:24).

The Role of Mediator then, was to receive a Covenant from Yahweh, and to bring that Covenant to the people of Yahweh, seen firstly in Moses, and secondly in the Greater than Moses, through whose sprinkled blood the New Covenant has come to us.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST

Whereas the Mediatorial Role is to stand between God and Man, the Priestly function is the reverse; to stand between Man and God, as can be seen in the

example of Aaron and his successors, who represented the Nation before Yahweh once yearly on the Day of Atonement. The Lord Jesus Christ performs both functions, hence, he is a priestly mediator, as the BASF styles him.

The Spirit to the Hebrews describes the functions of a priest thus:

“Every High Priest, taken from among men, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity” (Heb. 5:1,2).

The Lord Jesus, being “touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Heb.4:15) can therefore be a merciful High Priest, having compassion and offering a Greater Sacrifice; even himself, for the sins of those he came to deliver.

But the Spirit continues, demonstrating the superiority of Christ’s priesthood, over the ancient Aaronic order:

“no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made a high priest; but he that said unto him, “Thou art my son, today have I begotten thee.” As He saith also in another place, “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec”” (Heb.5:4-6).

Christ then, is not simply a High Priest, but the **“Great High Priest”** (Heb.4:13), a priest of a greater order; a King-Priest after the Order of Melchisedec. Moreover, whereas the Levitical order required a continual succession of priests, “by reason of death”, Christ is “a priest for ever” after the Melchisedec order:

“this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them ... the word of the Oath maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore” (Heb.7:25-28).

As our Great High Priest, Christ appears in the Presence of the Eternal El “for us” (Heb.9:24), and as such is the means whereby we can “come to God”. He represents us before the Father, and enables us therefore to “come

boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb.4:16).

A MEANS OF GATHERING

Returning to the BASF; we saw how it teaches that Christ was raised, and exalted to the heavens “as priestly mediator between God and man, *in the process of gathering* from among them a people who should be saved by the belief and obedience of the truth.” The priesthood/mediatorship of Christ provides the means whereby such a gathering of peoples may take place: men are drawn to the Father by being united in identification with Christ. He, as Mediator, has instituted a “better” covenant than that of Old, even a covenant which gives life to those who desire a justification through faith. And as Priest, having received that Covenant by his hand, we can draw nigh the throne of Grace through him, presenting all our petitions and praises in His Name before the Father. But notice this - it is not every man who might so draw near to the Father, only those who become part of the Household of Christ; those who are united in him, who believe and obey the Truth. Only these benefit from the intercession of the Great High Priest, and this we shall proceed to examine in our next study.

Clause 14

“That he is a priest over his own household only, and does not intercede for the world, or for professors who are abandoned to disobedience. That he makes intercession for his erring brethren, if they confess and forsake their sins. (Luke 24:51; Eph. 1:20; Acts 5:31; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 8:1; Acts 15:14; 13:39; Heb. 4:14-15; Jno. 17:9; Heb. 10:26; 1 Jno. 2:1; Prov. 28:13)

It is written by the Spirit through John that:

“If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” (1 Jno. 2:15-16).

The love of the Father then, according to the testimony of Scripture, is not found in those who are lovers of this world. To love this world, and to love the Father, are two mutually incompatible things: by very definition of what each is, it is impossible to have both. One who has love for the Father can

have no love for the things that the Father hates – for if he does, that love found within him is not a love of Yahweh; but a love for the pleasures of this life. And this being the case, it is evident that the Lord Jesus Christ in whom the love of the Father was made manifest (1Jno.4:9) had no love for the world; and the world had no love for him. On the contrary, it hated him because he testified of it that it's deeds were evil (Jno.7:7). Those evil deeds were “not of the father”, that is, not of the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, but were of another father – *the diabolos*: ***“Ye are of your father the diabolos,*** and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the Truth, because there is no Truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it” (Jno.8:44). There are then, two “fathers”, and two families. Father Diabolos, and his sons who do his lusts, and the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, with His sons who do His Will. And there is no amity between the two; only animosity arising from the pursuit of incompatible interests: “they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom.8:5-8).

The Spirit of Yahweh speaking first through His Son, and then through His Apostles, could not be clearer in the teaching that there is a definite and fixed line of demarcation between these two groupings of mankind. The Seed of the Serpent, and the Seed of the Woman; the Carnal Minded and the Spirit Minded; the sons of the Diabolos, and the sons of Yahweh. The earth is presently inhabited by two distinct families of men whose interests, aspirations and modes of conduct are indeed worlds apart. The fleshly minded belong to “the world” which neither Christ or his disciples have any love for. But the Spirit minded belong to another, future, world; the world that the Father so loved that He gave His only begotten Son for; the world of those who aspire to everlasting life through belief in him (Jno.3:16). These two families of men belong to two incompatible worlds: one a present reality of evil, sin, and wickedness, apostolically styled “this present evil world” (Gal.1:4), and the other, “the world to come” (Heb.2:5;6:5; Mark 10:30; Luke 18:30), a future reality concerning which “the god of this world” hath blinded the minds of those who believe not (2Cor.4:4). This is a world which is soon to replace the present world which “passeth away,” being a new kosmos, or order of things, to be established by Yahweh’s Anointed at the appointed time.

Despite the claims of some, it is both a righteous and divine principle that Christ does not have favourable regard for both “worlds”. He does not intercede for them both; but only for those who forsake this present evil world, to seek the age of righteousness to come; the time when He will reign as king. “I pray *not for this world*, but for those whom thou hast given me; for they are thine” (Jno.17:9) This is the Master’s own testimony. We know that the whole world lieth in darkness; and the Master does not pray for those who are of the night; but those who, having been enlightened by the shining forth of the Gospel glory through his face (2Cor.4:6) are of their Father, Yahweh, and the doers of His desire.

In keeping with this, the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith (BASF), which forms the basis of Christadelphian fellowship, states that:

“he is a priest over his own household *only*, and does not intercede for the world, or for professors who are abandoned to disobedience.”

Christ is not a priest for the world, any more than Aaron was. Aaron and his successors made atonement for sins yearly – but for Israel only, and not for any other people. The High Priest did not make intercession for the Amalekites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, or any other people, but those who were part of the “Israel of God”. And following this same pattern, the Master Jesus, as a Great High Priest makes intercession only for those who have been taken out to be a people for the Name of Yahweh (Acts 15:14). He does not intercede for the unenlightened masses of mankind, but only for those who have been drawn by the Father.

The truth of the matter is that the priestly intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ is no indiscriminate affair, but is a privilege of the highest order, only available to those who have the humility to approach the Father on His Own Terms. The Apostle was quite correct when under Spirit guidance he wrote, “if we sin wilfully after that we have received a knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries (Heb.10:26-27).

The intercession of Christ is only available to those who have faith in Christ:

“Without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. (Heb.11:6)

“being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by him also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom.5:2).

Examples of such testimonies could be multiplied. It is by faith that we enter into the grace of God; standing in a position of being able to approach unto, and have peace with our God, through the priestly office of our Lord Jesus Christ. In order to come unto God through him, belief is necessary, for without faith it is not possible to please Him, and He does not countenance petitions from those with whom He is not pleased – as witnessed by His dealings with Israel, referred to earlier. The position we have before the Father is a most great and precious privilege indeed:

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” (1Jno.3:1).

CLAUSE 15

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

Having departed from the face of the earth to enter into the Holy Place made without hands (Heb. 9:24) - even heaven itself - the Lord Jesus Christ did not leave himself without witness to the things that had taken place during the time of his sojourn there. Rather, he sent forth Apostles endued with Spirit power to proclaim his Name as the only name through which salvation might be obtained. Accordingly, we read that Peter, being filled with the Holy Spirit declared to the Elders and Rulers of Israel: “This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, ***whereby we must be saved***” (Acts 4:11,12). Here Peter (*Petros, a stone*) describes the setting up of a stone by Yahweh; a stone rejected by the Israelitish builders who were more concerned with constructing their own edifice of traditions and truth-nullifying ordinances, than building up the things pertaining to the Household of faith. Christ proved to be most unsuitable for their purposes; there was no place he could fit into the house of their building, for like the ecumenical ‘house’ being raised up by the clergy of our day; it was an edifice founded upon principles of iniquity and doctrines of deceit. The rule that governs membership of the papal-led building club of our day, as in the case of Israel of old; is peace, to have no strife between those of differing beliefs; but for all to put aside their

differences, and pursue peace for the common good - even if it means the denial of the Righteousness of Yahweh. By this means, so it is supposed, peace among nations might be achieved. But to this class of men, the warnings of the prophets sound out loud and clear:

“Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace, and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar; say unto them that daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it ...

Therefore thus saith Adonai Yahweh, I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones in my fury to consume it. So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof: and ye shall know that I am Yahweh. Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered mortar, and will say unto you, The wall is no more, neither they that daubed it ... which see visions of peace for her ... and there is no peace, saith Adonai Yahweh” (Ezek. 13:10-16).

This is the end of a house not built upon a Rock of the doing of the commandments of Christ (cp. Mat.7:24-27); great will be the ruin of it. Indeed, in our day there is a whole city of houses being raised up on the sandy foundation of moveable doctrine and immoral practices, described Apocalyptically to John as “Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.” This is the Papal city-tower, being raised up after the manner of Babel of old, yet whose ruin shall be great. True, it may be that the daubing of such a house with “untempered mortar,” or “whitewash,” gives it an appearance of beauty (cp. Mat. 23:27,28), but those who look beyond the outward appearance of things, the structure is a mere sepulchre of dead men’s bones. Though they have a Name, or reputation for being alive; inwardly they are spiritually dead (Rev.3:1).

Those who are educated in Divine Wisdom will recognise that the fall of such a building is certain, and the ruin thereof truly will be great. That is why Christ’s brethren maintain a marked separateness from the Harlot’s house, refusing to be seduced into it. They “remove their way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house” (Prov.5:8), for to do otherwise is certain death. It is a house of iniquity, and just as the Judaistic builders of the 1st Century themselves recognised that the Ways of Christ just do not fit

into what they want to build, even so those ways will not fit their modern counterparts.

The faithful will find themselves despised and rejected of men, even as their Master was - or if they do not; if they find themselves to be of the right dimensions to fit into an edifice of wickedness, then that proves that they are unsuitable material for the House that Christ is building, of which he is the Chief Cornerstone. There is only one name under heaven whereby men must be saved, which is the name born by Christ; the Name of Yahweh, a tower which righteous men run into, and find safety (Prov.18:10). Those who labour with the Babel-builders of the present age, desiring to make a name for themselves (Gen.11:4) instead, will in due course find their purpose confounded, with their house being left unto them desolate.

THE THREE SENDINGS

Although the BASF, in describing how Christ 'sent forth apostles 'it is clearly speaking of the sending forth, after the resurrection and ascension of the Master. It is important to note that there were actually 2 other 'sendings, ' during Christ's mortal ministry. Matthew describes the first:

"These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but ***go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*** And as ye go, preach, saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons: freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat..." (Mat.10:5-9).

On this occasion, the sending was to the House of Israel; particularly to the 'lost sheep, 'those who had lost their way by being misled by their shepherds. The second sending involving seventy others who shared in that work (Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1), was for the proclamation of a like message. But there is a notable difference between what was being preached then, and what was preached after the ascension of Christ. The message before, was not "the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ," as this came later, but the things concerning the Kingdom of God only: that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand". The things concerning the Name of Jesus Christ were things that the Apostles were not capable of preaching at that time, for as yet, the mystery had not been revealed to them; they did not know those things. This, we may learn from the words of Christ to them after his resurrection: "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets

have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:25). Before hearing the Master’s exposition at this time, the apostles did not perceive that Christ ought to have suffered first, and then enter into glory. So, the things concerning the crucifixion formed no part of their preaching - they could not preach what they did not know themselves.

But later on, the message went forth to the ends of the earth that salvation can be obtained by no other means than belief in the Name of the Yahoshua the Messiah.

There is another detail which it would be negligent to pass over, in considering the 3-fold preaching mission of the Apostles. That is, each was accompanied by the bestowal of the Holy Spirit. “he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease” (Mat.10:1). But as this power was given on each occasion, it follows that it was also withdrawn on each occasion. Why should the Apostles have had to wait at Jerusalem for the outpouring of Spirit as narrated in Acts 2, if they still had this power? The answer is simple; the Spirit was given to accomplish particular things, and when they had been performed, there not being any longer a need for that power to be retained, it was withdrawn. Judas, being one of the twelve, had also been given this power - yet his case illustrates that possession of the Holy Spirit did not affect the moral character of the man: he was the traitor of our Lord

There are those today who claim that to possess the Holy Spirit is essential for salvation. They claim that unless some mystical ‘help ’is granted to a believer by the Spirit, they cannot be obedient, and that they cannot belong to Christ. There may be an element of truth in this wrong idea: there is a certain class of men who cannot be helped by the power of the Word, for their stony hearts are impervious to it’s influence - and it may well be that they cannot obey the Gospel, unless their free-will, and natural obstinacy would be removed by miraculous means. But that is not the manner in which the Father has chosen to operate; He requires men to have the humility to accept and believe in the Name borne by His Son. And then, there is no doubt about their standing before Him - they strive to obey out of free will, rather than miraculous compulsion, and of this class it is testified that they “must be saved”.

CLAUSE 16

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

In emphasising the vital importance of steadfastly adhering to the Gospel as taught by Christ and his Apostles, the Spirit through Paul exhorted the believers at Galatia: “Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed, as we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8,9).

Here are words and concepts which are positively condemned by the humanistic ideals of our age. In an age of ‘free speech’ and liberal thinking, the notion that people should be pronounced “accursed” for expressing their “views” and “opinions” and teaching their own ‘interpretation’ of things, is seen as an outrageous suggestion; a violation of the human ‘rights’ of those in question. Such is the perversity of the human mind, that man might, with impunity, teach other principles and still claim to be teaching the Gospel that saves whilst those who protest that because what they teach is different to the Gospel, and that those teachings cannot save, are scorned and disregarded as mere “extremists” out to un-lovingly criticise the opinions of others. Even those who ought to know better speak of the doctrines of these ‘accursed’ persons as being “different views,” the people themselves merely having “chosen a different spiritual pathway.” But such is not the way of the Most High. Yahweh will not be mocked. Such false professors, despite the following and admiration they attract are leaders not into life and liberty (cp.2Pet.2:19), but death, and the bonds of the grave.

The Lord Jesus Christ did not speak of the ‘views’ of those who resisted the gospel he preached - how can blind people have a ‘view’ of anything? “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa.8:20), and if there be no light, there can be no sight - and no ‘view’ of anything. The Master described the class of men in whom no light dwells, by way of asking a question: “Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the pit?” (Luke 6:39). It is a simple truth, and a fundamental principle of Scripture that those who cannot

see their way to accept the Light of the Glorious Gospel of Christ cannot lead others into any other place, but the pit, and the darkness of *sheol*.

This is a truth emphasised in the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith. The way to obtain the salvation spoken of by the Apostles, “is to believe ***the gospel they preached...***”. Belief in any other gospel will not do; for no other gospel can save. “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel” (Gal.1:6) was the admonishment of the apostle to those who were being led astray by blind teachers of dark things. There are those who severely frown upon Christ’s brethren who obey the injunction to “earnestly contend for the faith” (Jude3). They say that we should do “positive things instead,” that we “should be helping others, not condemning them.” They say we are most “arrogant” for daring to criticise another, highly esteemed man’s ‘views’!

“DOING POSITIVE THINGS”

But such do not appreciate either the high calling to which obedient hearers of the Gospel have been called, nor the responsibility that such a calling brings. It is the Truth of the Gospel that saves, but the folly of man leads only to the grave. The “views” of men are unstable and uncertain, whereas the certainty of the Scriptures gives hope. It is written that “the way of the fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth to counsel is wise” (Prov 12:15). Of what use is the “view” of such a person, pronounced to be a ‘fool’ by the Spirit? Is a wise counsellor unjust for correcting such a man’s foolish ‘view? ’Again, it is written that “there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is death” (Prov.14:12). Is it not a good and positive thing to demonstrate from the Word to such a man that his way is in fact, not right, and that if he pursues it he will go to the grave without hope? How can a brother of the Lord Jesus stand idly by, and watch a blind man walking into a pit, with blind people being led along behind him, all thinking that their ‘way’ is the right ‘way’? Surely he would want to cry out and warn of the danger? Is it not a “positive” thing to do, to utter such a cry?

Apparently not, if our detractors be believed. Apparently, it is more ‘positive’ to look the other way (cp.Luke 10:31,32), to frown upon such uncouth and unloving people shouting out in such a manner, and to attend instead to quietly arranging the flowers for the meeting, to bake the cakes for the ‘interested friends’ at the seminars, and to talk about their ‘views’ with them, taking care not to mention anything that smacks of ‘doctrine,’ lest the visitors be offended and no longer enjoy their tea and biscuits!

We cannot agree. Just as the beginning of Wisdom is the fear of Yahweh (Prov.1:9), even so the beginning of a man's salvation begins with belief in the "Gospel of God" (1Thess.2:2,8,9) as taught by the apostles of Jesus Christ. And in order to understand the Gospel to be believed, the 'interested friend' must be fed, not with a hollow shell with no nutritional value; but the nourishing and life-giving principles, or doctrines of Truth that form the very heart of that Gospel. Many will not hear, it is true - such has always been the case, and their response will demonstrate how interested the so-called 'interested friend' actually is - but the fact provides no excuse for Christ's brethren to serve up empty husks instead of meat in due season. And if there is any love for those who have obeyed that way, yet who appear to be stumbling for obscurity of sight, brethren with integrity will cry out with all their might against that class of Gospel-perversers whom the spirit through Paul declares are worthy to "be accursed", that their followers may have the scales removed from their eyes, 'see' the folly of departing from the precepts of the Truth, and be saved from falling into the abyss. We would submit that there is no more positive work that can be done, than that of plucking others from the fire (Jude 23) and saving them with fear; for such a work is commended by the Masters own brother in the flesh: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (Jas.5:19,20).

TAKING ON THE NAME AND SERVICE OF CHRIST

It is a fact taught by Scripture that in order to be granted the salvation taught by the Apostles, a person who believes the Gospel they taught must obey it. That is, they must be baptised. Hence, the Lord Jesus taught that "he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mar.16:16). But the BASF is most explicit in each aspect of the matter. Baptism is not the infant-sprinkling as taught by those in the darkest of blindness, but is being "immersed in water". But being "immersed in water" is not an end in itself, rather it is the means whereby a person may "take on the name and service of Christ" (which again excludes infant-sprinkling where the sprinkled child has no understanding about the name and service of Christ). It is but the beginning of a new life of holiness - and a life of holiness it must indeed be in order to gain acceptance before the Throne of the Almighty (Rom.6:19;2Cor.7:1). Baptism does not in itself secure salvation, but it is an introduction to Christ in whose service the baptised believer must continue. There are those who feel that Baptism is into "the Church", and those who should know better who feel that it is "into the Christadelphian's". But the Scriptures do not so speak. True, without

Baptism a man cannot be truly called part of Christ's ecclesia, or assembly of "called out" ones; but that is because that assembly constitutes the Body of Christ into whom a believer is baptised, not because the believer is merely baptised into a group of men. It is far more than being merely some rite of entry to a congregation of believers; - it is entry into the Name and Service of Christ.

THE NAME OF YAHWEH

As cited above, it is written in the Proverbs that "the Name of Yahweh is a strong tower; the righteous run into it, and is safe" (Prov.18:10). To enter into the Name of the Father then, is to enter a place of safety. It is to enter into a strong tower which is impregnable, being able to easily withstand the very worst that the enemy can bring against it. This tower is founded upon the Rock of Peter's confession that Jesus is indeed the Son of the Living God (Mat.18:6), and even the gates of hell cannot prevail against it, for Jesus Christ has "the keys of hell and of death," and is able therefore to unloose the bonds of those held captive in the grave, that others may share in his victory. But he will only do so upon certain conditions; one of those conditions being that the hearers of the Gospel which the Apostles preached become baptised, for it is through baptism that a believer enters into the Father's Name - which is also his Name, and the Name in which all the operations of the Father are performed. Accordingly, he commanded his disciples to "go therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them *into* the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Mat.28:19). Notice here; there is one name not three; the Name of the Father, which is also the name of the Son (cp.Psa.72:17), and of the Holy Spirit, and it is into that Name that those who are 'taught' enter into through baptism.

Following Baptism, it is necessary for the obedient hearer of the Word to continue in all things commanded by the Christ. The BASF declares that only this class are recognised as Christ's friends, despite the commonly held woolly and nebulous notion that "Jesus loves you - whoever you are," because it is a plain truth taught by Christ himself: "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends *if ye do whatsoever I command you*" (Jno.15:12-15, cp.14:21). There is no greater love than for a man to lay down his life for his loved ones - his friends. But his 'friends' are not the worldly down-and-outs who have no regard for his ways, as some would have us believe, in their exhortations to us to devote time and energies in catering for the needs of such; nay, his friends are those who belong to a particular category of men - the class who

do his commandments. Those who do not his commandments, by his own terms of definition, are not the friends of Christ, and are not therefore among the number for whom he died. Here is the simple testimony as taught by the Master himself, which was repeated by his Apostle who brought this commandment to the attention of the brethren: “by this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (1Jno.5:2,3). And again, “hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected” (1Jno.2:3-5).

Here then, are the vital prerequisites of Salvation, as required by the Prince of Life himself. Belief, Baptism, and a faithful walk according to the precepts of Christ are all indispensable requirements. A man may believe that it is not so; that his way is right, and may even teach such to others. But his ‘view ’will do him no good at the last, for none of such are recognised by Christ as his friends. To such, the Master will say, “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Mat.7:23). But for those who are partakers of his death, having passed through the baptismal grave as he commanded, and who continue steadfastly in the performance of those things which he has ordained; of these “he is not ashamed to call them his brethren” (Heb.2:11), and as the Captain of their Salvation, he shall lead them into glory.

CLAUSE 17

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

CLAUSE 18

“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.”

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; Is 32:1,17; 2:2-4; 11:9,10.

This clause provides an overview of certain particulars which are elaborated on in the next few clauses. As we shall see, the kingdom of God is to be none other than the kingdom of Israel restored (see Clause 21). The Great King thereof will wage war upon, and overthrow all other kingdoms, subjugating them under his dominion.

In describing the Acts of the Master’s Apostles, the Spirit recounts for our learning both “the things” that Phillip preached, and the response of the people to them: “When they believed Phillip, preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women” (Acts 8:12; see also Acts 28:31).

Here, the matter is plainly set before us; Baptism follows a belief in certain “things,” which “things” are described as falling into two categories - the “things concerning the Kingdom of God”, and also the “things” concerning “the name of Jesus Christ.” These “things” collectively form the elementary principles of the Gospel that saves (Rom 1:16), for they together speak of the mode of Salvation through faith in Messiah, Immortal life in the Kingdom Age, and the means whereby these things might be accomplished. These then, were the “things” uttered by the Apostles when they taught the Gospel and are therefore “things” to be believed prior to Baptism.

We would do well to reflect upon that fact. If we might so say, when presented in these terms, the “things concerning the kingdom of God” actually form half of the Gospel! Is that something reflected in the preferred method of preaching utilised by some, a method involving the minimal use and mention of Doctrine? In both lecture and seminar, the current trend appears to be to emphasise man’s problems, the evils of this present world, and to present the Kingdom as almost nothing other than a wise and divine solution to those problems. Yet this is no more than a useful side-effect in the Divine Scheme of things. The Deity is not so much concerned with solving the problems that man brings upon himself, as establishing an order of things where, it might be proclaimed by the innumerable company of the Redeemed, “Holy, Holy, Holy is Yahweh Tzavaoth; the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isa.6:3). That is the overarching Divine Purpose; He formed the earth “to be inhabited” (Isa.45:18), ultimately with a Divine Family

(Eph.3:15) who shew forth his Image and Glory, having been redeemed to the Deity by the shed blood of the Lamb (Apoc.5:9,10), to give Him Glory and Honour, being a New Creation formed for His Pleasure (Apoc.4:11, cp.Col.1:16), and the magnification of His Name (Psa.40:16).

The return of Yahweh's Anointed to the earth for the purposes of reigning as King then, is not merely to resolve human difficulties. It is a necessary part of subduing the World, that the haughtiness of man having been cut down, Yahweh only will be exalted in that day (Isa.2:11,12). In actual fact, for many, in the day when Yahweh shall arise to "shake terribly the earth", their problems shall be far from resolved, for it is written that "the day of Yahweh of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up ... in that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats, to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of ragged rocks, for fear of Yahweh, and for the glory of His Majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth" (Isa.2:12,20-22). The coming "day of the Lord" will not be intended to be a beneficent act of goodness towards sinful men, to make life easier and more pleasing for them. Rather, Scripture describes it as "the day of Yahweh's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion" (Isa.34:8). It is a time when Jacob shall be delivered from the hand of the enemy, and when those who despise the ways of the coming king shall perish, for it is testified that he shall "be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2Thess.1:7).

That is not, of course, to suggest that it will not be a time of blessedness for those who survive the terrible judgments to come. Rather, it is to show that the focus of the matter is often wrong: the coming Kingdom is not for man's benefit, so much as for the accomplishment of Yahweh's good pleasure. Human habit is to place emphasis upon man, and not Yahweh, for things to be done for man's good, rather than Yahweh's pleasure. But such a view is seen to be a distorted, unfocussed picture when compared with the clarity of revelation. The Scriptures in many places speak of a day of consolation, and a time of great joy to come. The day of vengeance is also to be a day of release to the oppressed of Zion, for the King shall himself declare:

"The spirit of Adonai Yahweh is upon me; because Yahweh hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of Yahweh, and the day of vengeance of our

Elohim; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of Yahweh, that he might be glorified” (Isa.61:1-3).

As well as being a time of judicially inflicted evil therefore (cp.Isa.45:7), it will also be a time of good, and prosperity for Zion - but that Yahweh “might be glorified”.

In this passage of Isaiah, we find the matter presented in perfect balance and true focus. The coming day will involve both divinely inflicted evil, and divinely provided good - but for the ultimate aim that Yahweh be glorified. He will be magnified by His judgments upon the nations, (cp.Ezek.38:23), and blessedness to His People. Either way, He will be magnified, and held in esteem by all that remain.

A LITERAL EMPIRE

It must be plain and obvious to all but those whose hearts and minds have been closed by sectarian thinking and humanistic philosophy, that the above passages all require that the Kingdom is a literal political entity to be established upon earth. That the kingdom shall commence with the appearance of Abraham’s Greater seed upon the earth, in whom all nations shall be blessed (Gal.3:8). That it cannot be now said that “the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ,” (Rev.11:15), neither can it be, until “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 these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever” (Dan.2:44). But it is with much heaviness of heart that we look at the writings of men purporting to be Christ’s brethren that claim otherwise.

A booklet recently came into our possession, produced some years ago by the Bible Mission, entitled Preparing for Baptism, and asserting “This is a Christadelphian booklet, it gives you true Bible teaching.” How sorrowful it is that this “official” publication teaches grave error on a number of topics, including the notion the Kingdom is now in existence. The question and answer is given:

“Is it true that the Kingdom of God means the Lord Jesus ruling in our hearts now?

ANSWER: *Yes, this is true*, but it is not the whole truth. We must show that Jesus Christ is our king by permitting him to rule in our hearts, but the Kingdom of God means much more besides this ...”

The publication proceeds to briefly outline a future kingdom upon earth, true, but it provides a definition of the Kingdom in bold print above, asserting that “the Kingdom of God means the Lord Jesus ruling in our hearts now”. Although it acknowledges a literal kingdom, first and foremost, it claims that the Kingdom of God is a present reality in the hearts of men. It therefore teaches a dangerous mix of truth and error.

So then, according to some, “the believer has clearly already entered into the kingdom...” But how does that compare with the Holy Writ? How can people pray, “Thy Kingdom Come” (Mat.6:10) if they believe that they are already in the Kingdom? Surely, the Disciples, having been educated for a 40 day period of the things concerning the Kingdom by the Master himself (Acts 1:3) would have understood themselves to be in that kingdom, if it were true? Yet they asked, “Lord, Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (v6), demonstrating their belief that the Kingdom was something yet to come, and would be Israel Restored. We shall consider the nature of this Kingdom in future articles, but the notion of a present kingdom in men’s hearts is not a new idea, for Bro Roberts contended against it 150 years ago, in his work *Christendom Astray*:

“Jesus taught his disciples to pray, “Thy kingdom come”. It is not yet come. If it were, the kingdom of men would not be in existence, for “the kingdoms of this world” are to cease when the kingdom of God comes. They are to become His; and the prophets show us that when this comes to pass the governments of this world will no longer be in the hands of unauthorised, ambitious, erring kings and rulers. When the kingdom of God comes, it will displace and overthrow every power in the world, and visibly establish God’s power on the earth, by the hand of Christ and his saints”

And again, in addressing whether or not Christ is now reigning as King in the believer’s hearts:

“Christ is not king of his own people. Of them he says, “I call you not servants, but friends”. They are his brethren, “joint heirs with Christ” (Rom.8:17), destined to reign with him a thousand years (Rev.8:17). They are not his subjects, but aggregately his bride, “the Lamb’s wife” - signifying the closest communion and identity of relational interest.”

Christ's brethren, therefore, are not his subjects, but those who are to share the rule with him. They are accounted to be his friends, who will be seated with him in royal authority and power in the Age of come. They will be given to sit with him in his throne, even as he is presently sat with the Father in His throne (Rev.3:21).

It is a command that believers are to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Mat.6:33). But what if a man seeks after a kingdom which does not exist? A present kingdom which the Father has not established? Can he expect to enter into a future political kingdom that he does not believe in? Can he reign in that kingdom when he believes himself to be a subject, and not a king or priest (Rev.5:10)? Those who are wise will rather seek first the Kingdom spoken of, and preached by Christ and his Apostles.

Clause 20

"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; Ps 102:16, 21; 2 Tim 4:1; Acts 1:9,11; Dan 7:13"

Having described how "the things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 8:12) are the things to do with a literal, future polity yet to replace the kingdoms of men upon the earth (Rev.11:15; Dan.2:44), the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith next directs our attention to the One charged with the work of bringing these things about. The Lord Jesus Christ "personally" will be sent by the Father, at the time appointed (Hab.2:3), to execute the judgements written, and to set up the Kingdom foreordained from the foundation of the world. The Apostles recognised that for the Kingdom to come, it cannot be established until its king comes first – even though the appointed time had not been revealed to them. Accordingly, as we saw in our last article, they enquired after a forty-day period of instruction of such matters: "Lord, wilt *thou* at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). It is the Lord Jesus Christ who is to bring the Kingdom, which, as we shall see in our next article, is to be the ancient Israelitish polity restored.

There are those who believe that the Master's promised return is not to be a literal, physical, personal descent to the earth; but rather that his coming will be in some 'spiritual 'sense of an indwelling in men's hearts. Similarly the Kingdom, it is thought, is not a literal one, but a 'spiritual 'kingdom, where Christ reigns in men's hearts – we considered this latter dogma in our last

article. But those who hold such ideas manifestly do not understand either the nature of the coming Kingdom - or what it is to be 'spiritual' either for that matter.

Men sometimes use the word 'spiritual' as a term of distinction for a thing that is not actual, tangible or real. They 'spiritualise' a thing in making it not real; thus the return of Christ becomes not a real and actual return of Christ, but a 'spiritual' (not real) one, with him, in some unknown way dwelling in men's hearts. And the Kingdom becomes not a real kingdom, with a real king, ruling over a real territory, but a 'spiritual' (not real) kingdom - which in fact, is no kingdom at all, for it exists only in the abstract feelings and emotions of men's hearts, finding no tangible counterpart in the actual world. But those who search the Scriptures daily to see whether these things are so, will quickly discover that the Bible does not use the word in such a way. For something to be "spiritual" in Bible terms is for it to be related to things of the spirit of God, rather than the flesh (1.Cor.9:11), or a thing teaching a particular principle of the spirit (1Cor.10:4). It does not use the term as distinct from literal and real. On the contrary, it teaches in plain and unequivocal terms, the literal, and personal descent of Christ from heaven, for the purpose of establishing a new order of things upon the earth.

A PROMISE GIVEN BY ANGELIC MESSENGERS

Accordingly the angels that communed with the Apostles at the time of the ascent of the Christ to the right hand of His Father gave this promise: "this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). Here is language as plain and unequivocal as any man could desire; How will Christ come? As actually and literally as he departed. The risen Christ who ascended to the Right Hand of the Throne of the Most High, was no mere abstraction, but was the prince of life, able to demonstrate to those who disbelieved the marks of the crucifixion he endured on his hands and his feet - even to the extent of inviting any who doubted to touch, and hold as proof of his corporeal existence in the land of the living (Lu.24:39, cp Mat.28:9). So it is, the marks of his sacrifice remain as tokens of his identity - and evidence that he indeed overcame the world. They have, as it were, become badges of honour, emblematic of the victory of Christ over the *diabolos* itself. It is then, this Christ who is to come; not an invisible spirit, but a corporeal immortalised man, who shall descend from Heaven in like manner as he ascended. And with this, the apostles who witnessed the event agree:

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the

Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the Heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:19-21).

“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 ...” (1Thes.4:16).

“At the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” (Acts 17:30).

“To you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe” (2Thess.1:7-10).

THE COMING JUDGMENTS

The last two passages indicate that the Lord Jesus shall come for the purposes of judgement. Proof that the judge is indeed he, is his being raised from the dead, which fact is itself an assurance that the Father’s purpose will stand sure, and that men will indeed experience His Judgements at the hands of His son. But he shall not come purely for judgement, for he shall also come “to be glorified in his saints.” So it will be, that whilst those who obey not the gospel being plainly presented to them shall be removed from his presence with age-lasting destruction, there will be others who eat and drink before him (Luke 14:15,22:16,30), in admiration of his person.

THE BRETHREN OF CHRIST - PRINCES IN THE AGE TO COME

In fact, it must be so. Those who will have been confessed by the Master, to be his brethren (Heb.2:11-13) shall live and reign with him. They will share in the power of his glory, sharing the ancient Davidic seat of power restored (cp.Rev.3:21), and shall sing a joyful song to the Lamb who was slain for the remission of their sins: “...thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and

hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth” (Rev.5:9-10).

Indeed, we find that Christ’s brethren themselves have a pre-eminent role to play in bringing the nations into subjection before the Great King. The Psalmist describes the time of their glorified singing:

“Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of El be in their mouth, ***and a two edged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written:*** This honour have all his saints. Praise ye Yahweh” (Psa. 149:5-9).

The saints of the Most High then, will themselves be involved in bringing the world into subjection to Christ. They shall execute “the judgment written” - which proves that they are not to bring the world into subjection by preaching alone as some think. Rather, as the great company of the immortalised believers, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, they shall go forth with him to subdue the nations, to overthrow the kingdoms of men, and to establish the rule of Christ over them.

These are things that cannot be ‘spiritualised’. They are real events which shall really take place. The Lord Jesus shall descend from heaven literally, and really. He shall be glorified in his brethren, who shall be immortalised with him, literally and in reality. And together, they shall go forth against the kingdoms of men as a crushing stone-power (Dan.2:44), to restore the kingdom of Israel upon the earth (see next clause) a literal and real kingdom that shall not be left to others, but shall endure for ever.

CLAUSE 21

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.—Mic 4:6-8; Am 9:11,15; Eze 37:21,22; Jer 23:3-8; Gen 13:14-17; Heb 11:8,9; Gal 3:16; Lev 26:42; Mic 7:20.

The Scriptures of Truth record how following the expression of King David’s desire to construct a House for the Most High, Yahweh instead gave him an exceeding great and precious promise, that He would build David a house:

“Furthermore, I tell thee that Yahweh will build thee a house. And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build me an house, and I will stablish his throne for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son: and I will not take my mercy away from him as I took it from him that was before thee: but I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom for ever: and his throne shall be established for evermore” (1Chron.17:10-14).

From the words of this promise, we may deduce the following:

- After David’s death, one of his descendants would be “raised up,”
- That “seed” would be the Son of Yahweh, who would therefore be his Father,
- The kingdom of his seed would be established,
- His throne will endure “for ever,”
- The mercy of Yahweh would not be taken away from him, as it was from Saul (for disobedience),
- He would be “settled” in Yahweh’s house, and in Yahweh’s kingdom

These promises plainly speak of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was “made of the seed of David according to the flesh” (Rom.1:3). This is proved by the New Testament application of the promise, where these very words are used to emphasise the greatness of Yahweh’s Christ: “Unto which of the Angels said He at any time, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, ***I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a son?***” (Heb1:5). Moreover, David himself recognised that the promised raising up of his seed, was in fact speaking of the raising up from the dead which the Master experienced:

“Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne, he seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hades, neither his flesh did see corruption” (Acts 2:30,31; cp.Psa.16:10).

The promises conveyed to David through Nathan the prophet then, relate to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the kingdom of which it speaks is therefore his kingdom - where he, as the promised Seed, shall sit upon David’s throne. Even so the Angel also promised to Mary: “the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for

ever (Luke 1:32). His kingdom therefore, “will be the kingdom of Israel restored”, as described by the BASF and Acts 1:6.

SOLOMON - FORESHADOWING THE REIGN OF CHRIST

That this is so, is further confirmed when we consider the affairs of David's kingdom under Solomon, his immediate son. Though the words given through Nathan the prophet clearly relate to Yahweh's only begotten Son, nevertheless we find that on a later occasion the Father also made other promises concerning Solomon - which in many respects are similar. The context and circumstances of this second oath are not revealed to us, but David made reference to them at the enthronement of his son (note: Solomon was enthroned whilst David was still alive, whereas the earlier promise related to a seed being raised up after he slept in the dust of the ground with his fathers):

“David said to Solomon, My son, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of Yahweh my Elohim: but the word of Yahweh came unto me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build a house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight. Behold, a son shall be born unto thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about; for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. He shall build an house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever” (1 Chron.22:7-10).

Note how similar these words are, to those which we have already considered. The promise was “he shall be my son, and I will be his father” - Solomon was to be adopted as Yahweh's son. “He shall build an house for my name”: Solomon was to construct a Temple, even as it was promised that the Christ would. Yet there are also differences that demonstrate how it is a different oath that David is referring to. For instance, Solomon is directly named prior to his birth in this place, showing that these words specifically refer to him. But it is also important to note the similarity between Solomon's reign and that of Messiah, for it is so striking that there can be no doubt that Messiah's kingdom is to be the ancient Israelitish polity restored.

The terms used in this place, are drawn upon in Isaiah's prophecy concerning Yahweh's Only Begotten son:

“unto us a son is born, unto us a son is given ... his name shall be called ... prince of peace ... upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it ... “ (Isa.9:6).

- Also, the characteristics of Solomon’s reign are strongly echoed in the many promises of Israel’s restored kingdom. Some of these are listed below:
- Solomon appointed 12 officers over all Israel (1 Kings 4:7). Even so, Messiah has appointed 12 apostles to rule with him (Luke 22:30).
- Wisdom was in Solomon to do judgment (1 Kings 3:28). Even so it will be with Messiah (Is 11:2-4).
- Judah and Israel were many, “as the sand of the sea” for multitude. This echoes the promise made to Abraham (Gen 22:17).
- Solomon reigned “from the river ... unto the border of Egypt” (1Kings 4:21) as will Messiah (Ps 72:8).
- The kings of the Earth, and men “of all people” went to Jerusalem to hear Solomon’s wisdom (1Kings 4:34; Eccl 12:9). Even so, all nations shall flow to Zion to learn the righteousness of Yahweh (Is 2:2-3).
- They also brought gifts (1 Kings 4:21, 2Chron 9:24). Even as they shall before Messiah (Ps 72:10,11 ; Zech 14:13-16).

There can be no doubt therefore, that the coming kingdom of Messiah is indeed the Kingdom restored to Israel (Acts 1:6), albeit upon a much greater scale.

The BASF shows that not only is the kingdom to be a restoration of a similar polity of old, founded and established upon similar principles and arrangements, it is also to occupy the same territory: ***“in the territory it formerly occupied***, viz., the land bequeathed for an everlasting possession to Abraham and his seed (the Christ) by covenant”. The reference to Abraham here is most important, for the promise made to David which we have considered, was but a re-iteration (albeit from a different aspect of things) of promises which had previously been made to Abraham, concerning the same “seed”, the coming Messiah (Gal.3:16).

YAHWEH'S PROMISES TO ABRAHAM

Although these promises were made on numerous occasions, the most pertinent to our present considerations are recorded in Genesis chapter 15. In this place, the word of Yahweh came to Abraham saying, "I am Yahweh that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. And he said, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" Whereupon Yahweh made a covenant with Abraham. Various beasts and birds were taken, slain, and laid out after a sacrificial manner. "And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp, that passed through those pieces. In the same day, Yahweh made a covenant with Abraham, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites".

This then, is the territory of the kingdom promised to Abraham's seed: the territory of Messiah's kingdom, which shall form the "first dominion" of a world-wide empire. But notice several interesting features here: in reply to Abraham's question "whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it," the promise was made that "unto thy seed have I given this land". The giving of the land to Abraham's seed then, was itself an assurance that Abraham would himself inherit the land.

A FULFILMENT IN THE DAYS OF SOLOMON?

There are those who claim that this promise was altogether fulfilled in Solomon's day for, as we have already seen, his dominion is said to have stretched "from the river ... unto the border of Egypt" (1Kin 4:21), a clear allusion to the dominion promised to Abraham's seed. A passage from Nehemiah is also brought to bear, where this man of faith speaks in prayer to the Heavenly Father of Abraham, concerning the covenant made "to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, ***and hast performed thy words ...***" (Neh.9:6,8). These words, we are told, "prove" that the covenant made with Abraham was fulfilled in the days of Solomon - the words were performed.

We shall consider this passage in a moment, but firstly we should note that the claims made do not agree with the Apostle Paul, who declared that the promise to the Greater Seed of Abraham was not negated by any preliminary

fulfilment under the covenant of Sinai. It is true that land was promised to Abraham's seed, and that his natural seed dwelt in that land. So, at one level, the promise had a fulfilment. However, Israel during the reigns of David, Solomon and their successors were never given the land by the promise of eternal life: rather they received it according to the covenant of Sinai. And even whilst dwelling there by Law, King David himself recognised that they were "strangers ... and sojourners, as were all our fathers", rather than citizens dwelling there by the promise of eternal inheritance.

Here is the difference, Israel dwelt in the land according to Law, but both Abraham and his Seed were given the land by promise. So the Apostle declares concerning "the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, *cannot disannul*, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made ..." (Gal 3:17-19).

ISRAEL IN THE LAND

Israel's habitation of the Land under Law cannot disannul the covenant made with Abraham that his seed would later inhabit and possess the land by promise "for ever". That promise still therefore holds true, and is yet to be fulfilled. True it is, that in the law, there was a partial fulfilment as Abraham's natural seed did dwell in the land.

There was a fundamental reason why Israel simply could not have inherited the land under the terms of the Abrahamic promise. For, as the Apostle informs us, those promises were primarily made to a specific seed. If a man makes a promise to give land to a particular man, but permits others to dwell in that land before it is given, does that therefore mean that the promise has been fulfilled? By no means. Even so, although Israel dwelt in the land, they did not inherit it by promise, for they could not until the One to whom the promise was made himself took possession. They dwelt there under the law, which was added because of transgressions till the seed should come to whom the promise was made. Until he came, and until he received his inheritance, no other man could. Not even Abraham himself, for we saw that his assurance of possessing the land was the promise that the Messiah would first. And Messiah has not yet possessed even a square foot of the land, for even when he did come, he had nowhere to lay his head (Luke 9:58). The promise then, is yet to be fulfilled. As David was promised, the Seed had to

be “raised up” from the dead, after which he would sit upon the royal throne ruling over that land, over the twelve tribes of Jacob’s sons.

THE EXALTED POSITION OF ISRAEL

That the kingdom will comprise the same land previously inhabited by Israel is without doubt in Scripture - and is so described in the BASF. It is the kingdom restored to Israel (Acts 1:6), and its seat of power is the Throne of Yahweh, after the pattern of David and Solomon’s rule (1Kings 29:23). But the verses cited above also tell us something of the peoples over whom Messiah will reign. “all nations shall serve him” implies that the nations maintain their own distinct identity, yet subject to Christ and the Saints. Again, Isaiah 2 describes how “all nations” will flow to the house of Yahweh in Jerusalem—which proves that the people outside of the promised land will maintain their national identity.

Daniel chapter 7 describes how the beast-nations will lose their dominions to Christ—with the exception of the fourth-beast empire, which will be totally destroyed:

“ ... I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time” (Dan.7:11-12).

The beasts, then, maintain their national identity, and are permitted to live under the dominion of the Christ. Hence, the kingdom will be Israel restored, with the separate nations continuing to exist outside of it—under the rule of the Lord as a worldwide empire. The situation is that of a kingdom, and an empire: the Kingdom is Israel, and the Empire is the rule of Christ extended over the nations.

A WORLDWIDE DOMINION

Although the actual land promised to Abraham and his seed is a specific area in the Middle East, from the border of Egypt to the river Euphrates (Gen.15:18), we are not to suppose that the dominion of the coming king shall be restricted to that area. Enshrined within the promises made to Abraham was the prospect of world dominion: “the promise that he should be *the heir of the world*, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith” (Rom 4:13). The promise was, then, that he should be the heir of the world - but where in Genesis is that

promise found? There is no place where these words were used of Abraham. The answer lies within the fact that although a certain portion of land was promised to him and his seed for a possession, that land will be the centre of a worldwide dominion. There are many passages which describe Jerusalem's role as the centre of such an empire: the following are but a few examples:

“the mountain of Yahweh'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 ... out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem ...” (Is 2:2-3).

“Mine house shall be called a house of Prayer for all people” (Is 56:7)

“Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion...be wise now therefore ye kings: be instructed ye judges of the earth. Serve Yahweh with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little” (Ps 2:6, 10-12).

“all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him...” (Psa.72:11).

Here then is the promise; a world-wide dominion with Yahweh's Messiah enthroned upon the ancient, David seat of power restored, with Israel being the place of future world rule. This is the day we yearn for, that sharing the faith of Abraham, we may be privileged to live and rule with him and his Seed in that great day (Gal.3:29).

Clause 22

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. - Isa 11:12; Jer. 31:10; Zec. 8:7,8; Eze. 36:34,36; Isa. 51:3; 60:15; 62:4; Jer. 3:17; Mic. 4:7,8; Joel 3:17; Isa. 24:23.

It has become fashionable in most modern religious circles to discount the Jews from having any further purpose in the plan of the Creator. Interest in them is almost purely a historical one, with their emergence from Egypt and establishment as a nation in their own land being a familiar story taught to

many. However, Scripture shows that Yahweh has a future purpose with this nation – indeed, a purpose that lies at the very core of the Gospel message. For as we have seen, it is Israel Restored that will be the Kingdom of God, that will rule over a worldwide empire, with all nations subject to it.

There were those way back in Old Testament times who voiced the same opinions as modern theologians:

“Considerest thou not what this people have spoken, saying, The two families that Yahweh hath chosen, *he hath cast them off?* Thus they have despised my people, that they should be no more a nation before them.”

Wherefore the answer came to them:

“Thus saith Yahweh; if my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth: then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy upon them” (Jer. 33:24-26).

Here are plain statements that cannot be controverted by any but the wilfully ignorant. Israel will be granted the mercy of Yahweh, even the “sure mercies of David,” an aion-lasting covenant that they will be restored to the land with Messiah the Great Prince bearing rule over them (Isa. 55:3, Lu. 1:32-33).

THE TESTIMONY OF THE PROPHETS

Contrary to popular opinion then, “God hath not cast away his people which he hath foreknew” (Rom. 11:2), for He has a great Purpose with them still. The prophets are consistent in declaring the future regathering of Israel as being the great national hope:

“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, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth” (Isa. 11:2).

“Hear the word of Yahweh, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep

him as a shepherd doth his flock. For Yahweh hath ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he” (Jer.30:11)

“I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land” (Eze.36:24).

“I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them: and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof: they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall not more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith Yahweh thy Elohim” (Amos 9:14-15)

“Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem Yahweh hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thy enemy: the king of Israel, even Yahweh is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more ... behold at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame” (Zeph. 3:14-15).

There can be no doubt in the light of these testimonies, that the scattered tribes of Israel’s sons shall be regathered to their land and have dominion over their enemies. They will be elevated in glory, having fame and praise throughout the earth, as their King Messiah shall be found dwelling in their very midst.

A GREATER RESTORATION

The restoration we see depicted in these testimonies is far greater than the temporary and partial regathering of Jews in the land, seen at present. The BASF was written before the present day restoration, and speaks of more glorious days yet future. True, Jews currently occupy the land promised to their fathers – and in so doing, they fulfil an important part of Bible Prophecy (cp. Ezek. 38:8; Joel 3:1), but they still reside there in unbelief. A veil is still cast over their understanding (2 Cor. 4:14-15), and they do not believe the things testified in the Oracles of God concerning Jesus of Nazareth whom they took and by wicked hands, and slew upon the accursed tree.

Even though within the last 70 years or so, we have seen the Jews returning back to their Land, they are not yet ready to submit to their King – they still reject the Messiahship of the Lord Jesus, and do not accept the things testified concerning Him in the Oracles of God. And in addition to these faithless sons of Jacob, there are still many more of them resident in foreign

lands, who also refuse to bow before their Lord. There is then, a need for a dual conversion – for all 12 tribes, both inside and also outside the land to have the veil currently cast over their understanding to be removed (2 Cor. 3:14-17), that they might turn to the Lord in recognition of His Saving Power.

THE JEWS IN THE LAND

As regards to the Jews resident in the Land at the epoch of our Lord's Return, the Divinely selected means of causing them to turn back to Him, as in the days of old (cp. Deut.28:49), is to afflict them at the hands of a foreign invader. The prophetic testimony is that by the hand of his angelic ministers, the Lord will gather the armies of many nation against Jerusalem, to afflict them for "all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land" (Ezek.39:26). Thus, Zechariah was "moved" by the Spirit to proclaim: "Behold, the day of Yahweh cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle: and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled: and half of the city shall go forth into captivity ..." (Zech. 14:2).

This "day of Yahweh" is styled by Jeremiah, the "day of Jacob's trouble" which shall be great, so that none is like it" (Jer. 30:7; Cp. Dan. 12:1), and it is in that unique "day" that Isaiah testifies the Lord shall remove "the filth of the daughters of Zion ... by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning" (Isa. 4:4).

It is clear then, that there will be great suffering and sorrow, as the disobedient sons of Jacob are chastised for their iniquities, and brought to a situation of desperation and utter helplessness, that they might learn to trust in a Strength far greater than their own. And in the midst of such affliction, there will be heard the voice of bitter crying; Rachel weeping for her children (Jer.31:15), once again her tears running as a river day and night (Lam.2:18), and as the enemy shall open the mouth against her: "they hiss and gnash the teeth: they say, We have swallowed her up: certainly this is the day that we looked for; we have found, we have seen it" (Lam.2:16). Women shall be raped, houses pillaged (Zech.14:2), sons taken as slaves (Joel 3:3-6), the survivors of half the city shall go into captivity and "a great spoil" shall be taken, and divided in the midst of the land.

In that day, Jerusalem truly shall become a furnace of affliction (Ezek.22:18-22), in order that the people might be refined as silver and gold in the heat of the fire, and finally look to their God for deliverance.

“and it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith Yahweh, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call upon my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, Yahweh is my God” (Zech.13:8-9).

In the depths of sorrow, and on the brink of annihilation, the survivors, “an afflicted and poor people” (Zeph.3:12) shall cry unto their God, in confession of their uncleanness:

“We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags: and we all do fade as a leaf: and our iniquities, like the wind have taken us away. And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us because of our iniquities” (Isa.64:6-7).

This will truly be a turning point in the history of the world – the final repentance of Israel, in order that the work of reconstructing their kingdom can begin. From that day forward, Israel shall trust in Yahweh their God, Who shall turn and fight against their enemies. Following their confession of sins, and recognition of their utter dependence upon the mercies of the God of their Fathers, they shall cry for deliverance:

“Be not wroth very sore, O Yahweh, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people. Thy holy cities are a wilderness. Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation ... Wilt thou restrain thyself for these things O Yahweh? Wilt thou hold thy peace and afflict us very sore?” (Isa.64:9-12).

And Yahweh shall indeed hear the cry of His People – He shall answer swiftly with the outpouring of His Grace (Zech.12:10), and contend with those nations which so bitterly oppressed His people: “He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry: when he shall hear it, he will answer thee” (Isa.30:19, Cp. Ps.50:15), for “then shall Yahweh go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle” (Zech.14:3). The hostile armies and their leader will be destroyed:

“And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood: and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire and brimstone. Thus will I sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes

of many nations, and they shall know that I am YAHWEH” (Eze.38:22-23).

This then, briefly describes the circumstances of the repentance of the Jews in the Land.

THE REPENTANCE OF ISRAEL IN DISPERSION

The re-gathering of the 10 tribes forms the object of many prophecies in Scripture as we shall see later, but it is evident that in order for this to occur, their repentance shall come first. Moses, after speaking of the blessings and cursing’s to come upon the people prophesied of this:

“And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations wither Yahweh thy Elohim hath driven thee, and shalt return unto Yahweh thy Elohim, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; that then Yahweh thy Elohim will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither Yahweh thy Elohim hath scattered thee” (Deut.30:1-5).

Moses thus taught that whilst in the lands of dispersion, Israel shall return to their God, obeying His Voice, “according to all that I command thee, this day” that is, the day in which he taught them the Law prior to their entry into the land. It would appear from this, that whilst in the lands of their dispersion, the people are to be brought under an amended Law, prior to their resettlement in the Land, to discipline them and to teach them the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal.3:19, 24).

AFFLICTION IN THE WILDERNESS

The Scriptures indicate that many of the returning exiles shall be compelled to leave their host countries because of persecution. Just as the inhabitants of Jerusalem are to experience great affliction at the hands of the confederacy described in the 38th chapter of Ezekiel, so their brethren, resident in “their enemies” lands (Ezek.39:27) are to groan under great travail and distress:-”behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts” (Ezek.37:11), as they shall become a “curse among the heathen” (Zech.8:13). And even having left those countries, the people shall not find peace in the nations they will need to pass through to reach the Promised Land. Rather, they shall be subjected to a purging:

“I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out from the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there will I plead with you face to face ... And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am Yahweh” (Eze.20:34-38).

From these words, it is evident that as they seek to return to their homeland, the Jews shall experience many terrible atrocities, as anti-semitic feelings are aroused, probably by the leading countries of the campaign against Jerusalem. The scene of these events is to be “the wilderness of the peoples” – it is in this place that the rebels (those who desire to escape the persecution in their own lands, and experience the blessings of Zion, yet who refuse to accept Yahweh’s terms of deliverance) shall be removed. And it is here also, that the remnant shall be brought into “the bond of the covenant” – that is, the “new covenant” (Jer.31:31), having been taught of it, through the Mosaic schoolmaster (Gal.3:24).

We have been unable to find in the Divine Testimony precise details of the route which the returning sons of Jacob shall follow in their journey, and so it is difficult for us to define with certainty the exact location of this “wilderness of the peoples” – if, indeed, it is referring to a specific place. There is a clue, however, in the apocalyptic visions shown to John. He beheld a European “wilderness” (Rev.17:3), inhabited by the harlot mother of Christendom, the Catholic system, seated upon a multi-headed beast. This beast, we learn from verses 9-13 is a Roman political animal, comprised of 10 kings over which the Papacy exerts its influence – in short, the Roman Catholic Europe as it will exist at the Epoch of the Lord’s Return. And of these 10 kings, we read: “They shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of Lords, and King of Kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful” (Verse 14). These words serve to place the “wilderness” beheld by John in the time period under our present consideration – at the epoch of the destruction of the Kingdoms of men, and their replacement by the reconstructed Kingdom of Israel.

This Apocalyptic wilderness then, is the arena inhabited by the papal driven European political creature (see Eureka by Bro John Thomas for further evidence for this). It speaks of the European land which, although in many ways is materially a fruitful place, is due to it’s lack of spiritual nourishment,

an inhospitable barren desert in the Divine Estimation. And it is quite possible therefore that it is this area of the globe that Ezekiel styles the “wilderness of the peoples”, the places in Europe through which the returning exiles will pass on their journey homeward – the place which has been the scene of some of the most bitter campaigns of hate against God’s people in past ages.

DIVINE DELIVERANCE ASSURED

But be that as it may, it is clear that in this wilderness, having been “purged” of the “rebels”, the refined remnant shall find grace in the sight of their God: “Thus saith Yahweh, the people who were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness, even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest” (Jer.31:2 – see the whole chapter. It may be thought that these words relate to Israel’s deliverance from Egypt, but in that event, it was not just a remnant, but the whole nation which was saved. See also Hos.1:14).

These people have a promise of Divine protection: “when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee: and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned: nether shall the flame kindle upon thee” (Isa.43:2, see Psa.66:12) and so it will be, that having entered into the New Covenant, just as the Lord shall deliver the Gogian confederacy into the hand of those in the land, so He will be with His People in contending against their enemies outside. And just as Judah will have a part in executing judgements against their oppressors under the auspices of their Redeemer (Isa. 59:20), even so Israel will execute the Lord’s judgments upon those countries which seek their destruction. Accordingly, we read of the proclamation of Yahweh: “Thou art my battle axe and weapons of war: for with thee will I destroy kingdoms: and with thee will I break in pieces the chariot and his rider ...” (Jer. 51:21). And again, in speaking of Yahweh’s “weapons of war”: “when I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece ... and Yahweh shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightening: and the Lord Yahweh shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south. Yahweh Tzvaoth shall defend them; and they shall devour...” (Zech.9:13-15).

In that day the sons of Jacob shall fight victoriously against their enemies, in the preliminary work of subduing the nations under the reign of their King. As it is written:

“the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among

the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver. Thine hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off” (Mal.5:8-9).

So it will be, that Israel shall prosper, being victorious over their oppressors, in preparation for that time prophesied so many years earlier, when of Jerusalem it says “the sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet: and they shall call thee, the City of Yahweh, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel ... I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations” (Isa. 60:15).

CLAUSE 23

“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. - Dan 12:3; Luke 13:28; Rev.11:18; 1Thess.4:15-17; Jno.5:28,29; 6:39,40; Luke 14:14; Mat 25:34,46.”

When Messiah returns in power and great glory to restore the kingdom to Israel, and reign over all the earth from the holy hill of Zion, he will not exercise dominion alone. The Scriptures reveal that his immortalised brethren shall reign with him in glory, subduing all the earth to the righteous precepts of the Most High. In that Age, the Lamb shall be known as “Lord of Lords, and King of Kings” (Rev.17:14,19:16); titles which imply other Lords and other Kings over which he is chief. These are his brethren, immortalised and glorified, who sing praises unto the One who redeemed them with his shed blood: “Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth” (Rev.5:10).

These are they who have overcome, to whom it will be granted to sit with Christ in his throne, even as he overcame and is set down with his Father in His throne (3:21) - in other words, to share the restored Davidic seat of power with him. Comprising “the meek”, during the days of their mortal weakness, this multitude shall “inherit the earth” (Mat.5:5, Rom.4:13) with their Lord, and exercise dominion thereupon with him, as it is written; “a king shall

reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgement” (Isa.32:1 - see also 1:25).

THE 12 THRONES OVER ISRAEL

As an innumerable number of “kings and priests” requires a similarly innumerable number of nations over which they might rule, if one “king” reigns over one nation, it is evident that this will not be the Divine order. Rather, there will be a hierarchical organisation of their dominion. The 12 apostles (with the exception of Judas, being replaced by Matthias, - Acts 1:26), it is revealed, shall have a most exalted position, each reigning over a tribe of Israel’s sons: “Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Mat.19:28). These twelve then, shall execute the office of Divine Judges over each tribal canton, acting immediately under the authority of the Lord Jesus. The Psalmist likewise spoke of their thrones: “Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together: whither the tribes go up, the tribes of Yahweh, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of Yahweh. ***For there are set thrones of judgement, the thrones of the house of David***” (Psa.122:3-5). So it will be, that arrangements will be made within Jerusalem itself for Israelites to appear before their respective judge, according to the tribe of their origin, and receive justice at the hands of one of the Lord’s apostles.

But under these 12, there will also be other judges, entrusted with the role of instructing the people the ways of God. Speaking of the priests in Jerusalem, the Lord informed Ezekiel: “they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. And in controversy they shall stand in judgement; and they shall judge it according to my judgements...” (Eze.44:23,24). That these priestly judges are the immortal saints is made clear in the words of Paul to the Corinthian ecclesia, in his rebuke for their failings to judge righteously in their mortal days: “Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints ***shall judge the world?*** And if the world be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?” (1Cor.6:1,2). So it is that the saints shall also be involved with the dispensing of justice in the Millennial Age, something which we must prepare for now, in our relations to each other.

JUSTICE DISPENSED THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

But notice, the apostle declared that the saints will be involved with the dispensing of justice for “the world”, not just in Israel. Thus, we may suppose that just as in Israel, there will be thrones placed for judgement and teaching, this same pattern will be replicated in centres throughout the earth, with immortal saints (subject to the Lord and his apostles), judging other nations. A possible indication of how these judges might be appointed; both in the nations and Israel, under the exalted 12, is in the Lord’s parable of the pounds. When considering the responses of those to whom he had given varying amounts, he speaks of the blessing conferred on the fruitful: “Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, be thou also over five cities” (Luke 19:16-19). Immortal saints then, will be appointed to dispense justice over varying numbers of cities, comparable to their degree of fruitfulness in the days of their probation, quite possibly with the saints over 5 cities, being subject to those over 10 cities, and so on. Indeed, after the pattern of previous ages, there does appear to be grounds for the suggestion that above these city judges, there will be other saints appointed over each nation, to oversee national affairs, (see for example Ex 18:13-26, Num.11:16,17 and compare Deut.32:8, Gen 10).

The quality of judgement thus dispensed shall be of the highest standard and infallible, for the Great King “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: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked” (Isa.11:3,4), and those who reign with him, “shall be like him” (1Jno.3:2). In contrast to previous times, when the poor and needy, the widows and fatherless (those who lacked both the resources, and the guidance of father or husband to instruct them), were dealt with hardly, suffering oppression and injustice at the hands of wicked rulers who favoured the wealthy, their cause shall be determined righteously. Indeed, their King is himself One who “became poor” (2Cor.8:9), that through his poverty, and unjust execution at the hands of the wicked, we might be made rich. “He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight” (Ps.72:12-14).

Again, the Psalmist speaks of those future days, when Yahweh will be king in the earth; "Yahweh is king for ever and ever: the heathen are perished out of his land. Yahweh, thou has heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt cause thine ear to hear: To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the men of the earth may no more oppress" (Psa.10:16-18).

WILL THERE BE PERSONAL TUTORS?

But in order to keep the statutes and ways of the Israel's God, people will need to be taught those ways, and that task will likely be another role of the divine judges, the saints. This appears to be suggested by Isaiah. In speaking of the teachers of Israel, the Lord promised: "And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: And thine ears shall hear a word behind (Heb."after") thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left" (Isa.30:20,21). This is how the prophets of old were spoken to and advised through the spirit, and this is also how the Jews will be communicated with as required - for they will all have the Holy Spirit, as promised in the following quotations:

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Eze. 37:26,27)

"When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there. Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God." (Eze. 39:27-29)

This is also prophesied by Joel, and although there was a signal application to the day of Pentecost, it is clear that the complete fulfilling is to be when Israel is restored:

"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:" (Joel 2:28)

This was said to Israel – hence the “all flesh” is that of the Jews, as stated: “Your sons and Your daughters shall prophecy”.

This is to be one of many blessings which will make the Jews “the head” of the nations, and the Gentiles “the tail”.- a complete reversal of rolls to the downtreading of the Jews for the past 2,500 years.(Deut.28:13)

Perhaps each saint will be allotted inspired Jews to act as officials in assisting them in their administrations - even The Brides sons; of which we read: “In place of your fathers shall be your sons; you will make them princes in all the earth” (Psa. 45:16 ESV).

THE SEED OF ABRAHAM

The BASF makes a most interesting use of one of the promises made to Abraham, saying that the immortal saints will be, “with Christ as their head, the collective ‘seed of Abraham’, in whom all nations will be blessed...”. The allusion is to Genesis chapter 22:

“... thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed ...” (Gen.22:17,18).

Here, the “seed” can be readily seen to be the Master, Jesus Christ, for Paul declares, citing another of the promises, “...and to thy seed, which is Christ.” However, the BASF applies this promise not to Christ alone, but to the multitudinous body of which he is head (Col.1:18).

The saints become part of the Seed of Abraham through faith and baptism:

“for as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ ... and if ye be Christ’s, ***then are ye Abraham’s seed***, and heirs according to the promise.” (Gal.3:27-29).

All nations are to be blessed in Abraham’s seed - all nations therefore are to be blessed in the Master, Jesus Christ and his brethren who are collectively that seed.

This is a most exhilarating prospect; It will be through us, under the auspices of Christ himself, that the world will be subdued to the dictates of the Almighty, and ruled according to his precepts. We are, if we remain faithful, the future world rulers. We shall live and reign with the Son of the Almighty over all of the earth. How then, do we conduct ourselves in the present dispensation? Do we walk soberly, recognising the high calling to which we have been called? Do we maintain a separation from the sinful kingdoms of

men, pledging our allegiance solely to the King and Kingdom to come? We can only answer these questions individually, but one thing is certain; there is a glorious future in store for those who “seek first” “the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness” in this dispensation.

Clause 24

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

When Messiah is revealed from Heaven, one of the first things to take place will be the judgement of the House of God. It is testified that he “shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom” (2Tim.4:1), which itself implies the resurrection of the dead in order that they might stand before him for that purpose. They will be summoned out of their graves, and be gathered together with the living to appear before the Judgement Seat of Christ, that they might give account of themselves before the Lord of all the earth. As the Apostle wrote:

“ ... 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 everyone of us shall give account of himself to God***” (Rom.14:10-12)

And again:

“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” (2Cor.5:10)

There are those who believe that the dead will be raised immortal; and that the judgement - if it takes place at all - will simply be for the bestowal of varying degrees of rewards upon the faithful. But this last passage cited above disproves any such notion, for some who appear before the Judgement Seat of Christ will be judged according to them having done “bad”. According to a man’s work, so will it be done unto him, both good and bad.

Those who have done “good” will be rewarded with immortality, and for those who have done bad, they shall receive the wages of sin, which is death.

Messiah’s Judgement seat then, will be where men are called upon to give account of themselves, and be rewarded according to their deeds. There it shall be determined who will be granted glory, honour and immortality, and who will reap shame and aion-lasting contempt. There, the faithful shall be separated from the wicked, as wheat from the chaff (Mat.3:12), and be granted immortality that they might live and reign with their Master.

THE AMENDMENT

This particular clause of the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith has been the object of considerable controversy, for it is this clause that contains the alteration that made the Birmingham Statement of Faith amended. The original wording was as follows:

“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 to his judgment seat “to be judged according to their works”; “and receive in body according to what they have done, whether it be good or bad”.

The current clause (with the amendment in italics) reads:

“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”.

It will be observed that in the original statement, “the responsible” (that is, those who will be held accountable to judgement) were not defined. The Amendment, made in 1898, was the insertion of the words in parenthesis defining who the responsible are: “namely those who know the revealed will of God, and have been called upon to submit to it”. The change in wording was not intended to be a change in belief, but rather a clarification of a matter that hitherto had not been adequately expressed. Bro Roberts was emphatic that rather than being the insertion of something new, the amendment was an affirmation of what had always been taught, but not specifically defined in the existing Statement. This omission had permitted the development of a problem whereby some taught that unless a person had been baptised, they

would not be held accountable by the Almighty for their actions in knowingly rejecting the Truth. This controversy (which was but a symptom of a greater problem, namely a misconception of the atoning work of Messiah), grew to become a major threat to the body, and there was a need for the Statement to be amended to reflect the true position on the matter. Those who rejected the Amendment placed themselves out of fellowship, and became known as the Unamended group, which still exists (mostly in America) today. The Amendment defined what the Christadelphian position of the matter had always been, and has established, the minimum requirements for fellowship on the point.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

But the question is sometimes raised, Why make a definition of who will be responsible to judgement a matter of fellowship? Why should the judgement or otherwise of enlightened rejectors of the Truth be a cause of division?

The answer is readily seen when we appreciate that the Bible's doctrine of judgement is one of the first principles of the Gospel:

“... in the day when God ***shall judge*** the secrets of men by Jesus Christ ***according to my gospel***” (Rom 2:16)

“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, ***and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgement***. And this will we do, if God permit” (Heb 6:1-3).

“... 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).

From these citations, we learn that the Apostle was under a divine command to preach that Messiah is ordained of the Father to be the judge of the living and the dead. It was according to his gospel, that the secrets of men shall be judged - and if we preach the same Gospel as Paul, it will be according to ours also. Although in our age, to speak of coming judgements is most unfashionable, (and will inevitably bring the derision and scorn of many), nevertheless it is a fundamental Truth that in order for Yahweh's kingdom of righteousness to be established, judgements must take place. Indeed it is in accordance with His justice that a certain class of men shall be held accountable for their deeds. Faithful preachers of Paul's Gospel will not shun from declaring this important truth as part of their preaching.

THE RESPONSIBLE DEFINED

The oracles of God are clear that not all men will be called upon to give account of themselves to Messiah. There is a class of men who shall not be raised from the dead for any purpose, let alone to appear before the Judgement seat of Christ. So the angel implied to Daniel: ***“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). Notice, many shall be raised, not all.

Scripture speaks elsewhere of those who shall not rise:

“O Yahweh our Elohim, other lords besides Thee have had dominion over us: but by Thee only will we make mention of Thy name. They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased; ***they shall not rise ...***” (Is 26:13,14).

“Yea, a man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up: so man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, ***they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep***” (Job 14:10-12).

These men will neither be rewarded for faithfulness, nor punished for iniquity. They “shall not rise,” being dead for ever. But why are they exempt from Judgement? What is it that places a man into the category of those who will rise to appear before Christ?

The BASF states that it is a man’s knowledge and position of calling before his Maker: “those who *know the revealed will of God, and have been called upon to submit to it*”. Those who know the will of God as it is revealed in the Word, and who have therefore received the calling of the Gospel, are deemed to be accountable for their actions in rejecting it.

This is in harmony with Scripture, for as James states, “to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (Jas 4:17). Those who know to do good are convicted of sin if they do it not - those who know the commandment that Yahweh has given them, yet do it not, shall be convicted as sinners, for their rebellion shall be counted sin to them in the Day to come. By the same token, those who do not know the way of righteousness - who therefore have no opportunity to do that righteousness, and be just - will not be held accountable for defying a command that was never made known to them. The Scriptures are quite plain on this:

“the times of this ignorance God winked at ...” (Acts 17:30)

“Jesus said unto them; If ye were blind, ye should have no sin” (John 9:41)

“for as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law” (Rom 2:12)

“... the law worketh wrath, for where no law is, there is no transgression ...” (Rom 4:15)

Men who are “without law”, who are “ignorant” are not held accountable for not responding favourably to that which they did not know. Such men, with no understanding of the commandments of the Creator, rather than being raised for the purposes of being punished for disobedience to a law they never knew, shall rest in the grave without hope, and without punishment - like the beasts that perish:

“Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish” (Ps 49:20).

But whilst God winked at times of ignorance, no Scripture states that He winks at times of knowledge. The Scriptures are equally plain in teaching that those who have received the Light of the Word are accountable as to how they have responded to it, as we have already seen, either in obedience or disobedience:

“Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you” (Prov. 1:24-27).

“This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (Jno3:19).

“If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin” (Jno 15:22)

“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” (Jno 12:48)

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16)

There is, therefore, ample Scriptural proof for the claims of the Amendment—as much proof as there is for any other fundamental Bible principle. It is in accordance with Yahweh’s righteousness that knowledge brings responsibility - a man who knows the revealed will of God, and who receives the call of the Gospel will bear accountability as to whether or not he obeys that call. Even for those who have obeyed by submitting to the waters of baptism, it is their knowledge of the way of righteousness, that will be the basis of their judgement, should they turn away:

“It had been better for them *not to have known* the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them” (2 Peter 2:21).

GIVING ACCOUNT

It is written in Romans 14:12 cited earlier, that “every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” Again, Peter speaks of the believers “who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead” (1 Pet 4:5). But what does the Spirit mean by “give account”? What kind of account is being referred to? What will comprise a good account, which will be accepted by the Master?

The Judgement is sometimes presented as being a review of deeds done, where folk who appear before the judgement seat will recite their works, with their salvation being dependent upon whether or not they are able to speak of mostly good deeds. There is truth in this - there will undoubtedly be a review of past deeds as part of the process, for it is upon the basis of the faith manifested by good works that men shall be rewarded, or condemned. But this alone is insufficient: we cannot earn salvation by good works. Indeed, Scripture would appear to give a slightly different picture to that which is commonly imagined of what comprises a good account. There are those who will be rejected by the Judge, who are able to cite their good works as a reason for their entry into the kingdom:

“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out demons? And in thy name done *many wonderful works*? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Mat 7:22-23).

Here, a good account is given, in the sense that good works are listed with the expectation of gaining entry into the Kingdom. But these men are rejected as workers of iniquity. They boasted of their wonderful works, yet left many other things undone, for they did not the will of their Father in heaven. A good account alone is insufficient; it must be matched with good deeds, and a turning away from iniquity.

But again, the Master told a parable concerning a Pharisee, and a publican, both of whom went into the temple to pray:

“The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other ...” (Luke 18:11-13).

The man who was “justified”, or considered to be righteous by the Father, was the man who was filled with the sense of his sinfulness in the sight of the Almighty, and who sought the Father’s mercy and forgiveness. Again, the one who gave “a good” account of his deeds was the man who was not accepted. He proclaimed his righteousness, but it was the one who sought forgiveness that was a righteous man.

Upon the basis of these passages, we would suggest that a mere proclamation of personal righteousness is not what will be required at the Judgement Seat of Messiah. “Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?” (Prov 20:6). A proclamation of one’s own goodness is of little value when compared to the faithfulness of one who humbly seeks the mercies of Yahweh, and who seeks to walk uprightly in His sight. What will count in the day to come, is not how many good works, or great works, we are able to boast of, but our entire disposition of character. Whether we have humbly sought to walk with our God or no. Whether we have used our Talents wisely, or whether we have buried them in the ground. In reflecting upon the coming Judgement Seat of Christ which we will stand before, we should be stirred up to take heed to our ways, to seek forgiveness wherein we have erred, and to strive to uphold the Father’s righteousness in all that we do. If we do those things, it will then surely be given to us to enter into the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world.

Clause 25

“That the unfaithful will be consigned to shame and ‘the second death’, and the faithful, invested with immortality, and exalted to reign with Jesus as joint heirs of the kingdom, co-possessors of the earth, and joint administrators of God’s authority among men in everything.- Mat. 7:21; 8:12; 25:31-46; Dan. 12:2; Gal. 1:8; 5:21; 2 Thess. 1:8-10; Heb. 10:26-29; 2 Pet. 2:12; Rev. 21:8; Mal. 4:1; Psa. 37:29-38; Prov. 10:25-30; 1Cor. 15:51-55; 2 Cor. 5:1-4; Jas. 1:12; Rom. 2:7; Jno. 10:28; Mat. 5:5; Psa. 37:9,22,29; Rev. 5:9; Dan. 7:27; 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Pet. 1:11; Rev. 3:21; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 5:10; Psa. 49:7-9; Lu. 22:29, 30”

In our considerations of Clause 24, we saw how the “responsible,” that is, those who are considered accountable to judgment by Christ, are those “who know the revealed will of God, and have been called upon to submit to it”. They shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to give account of themselves and to be rewarded according to their deeds (Rom. 14:10; 2:6; 2 Cor. 5:10). Clause 25 now brings our attention to the consequences of that judgment; either blessedness for the accepted, or cursing to the rejected.

THE UNFAITHFUL

“The unfaithful will be consigned to shame and ‘the second death’”. The allusion here, is to two passages of Scripture, which we shall consider in turn; the first being Daniel chapter 12:

“... many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some *to shame* and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever”

Of those who emerge from the dusty beds where they have lain for perhaps thousands of years, there will be those who rise to shame and contempt. The word for “shame” is used 72 times in Scripture, including Isaiah 47:3, where it is used for the shame experienced at being stripped naked: “Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and I will not meet thee as a man.”

The rejected are those who sought to enter into the marriage supper wearing the incorrect attire (Mat. 22:11,12). That is to say, they were not clothed with garments of righteousness, but rather garments spotted by the flesh. These shall experience great shame, as their sinfulness becomes exposed for all to see. Here is the warning of Messiah: “Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see

his shame” (Rev. 16:15). We must take heed to these words whilst time remains, that we might be ready for our Master when he comes. But by contrast, those who are wise unto salvation, shall “shine as the brightness of the firmament” in glorious immortality. Which of these two groups we become part of, is determined by our walk in life, and how we stand before Almighty God.

The other passage being alluded to in the BASF (“the second death”) is Revelation chapter 21:

“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: ***which is the second death***” (Rev. 21:8).

In the lake of fire portrayed here, we have a symbol of total destruction. The closest thing in nature to a lake of fire, is the larva which flows from a volcano, destroying everything in its path. Here is a picture of utter annihilation, into which all forms of ungodliness shall eventually descend. It is styled the second death, for those cast into it have already died once before. They have been raised from death to appear before Messiah that their deeds might be made manifest, and they are to be severed from the company of the just ones (Mat. 13:49), and cast into the apocalyptic lake of fire (cp Heb 10:27), to utterly perish (2 Pet. 2:12) in the terrible judgments which are coming upon the earth.

THE RIGHTEOUS

But concerning the righteous, it is written that the second death shall have no power over them: “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias, He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death” (Rev. 2:11).

Being raised and approved by their Master, they shall be granted Immortality, that they might die no more. The second death shall not hurt them; rather their mortal bodies shall be made like unto the most glorious body of their Elder Brother (Phil. 3:21), and they, being united with him, shall continue as “one spirit” (1 Cor. 6:17) throughout the ages to come. “We shall all be changed”, testified the Apostle Paul, “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Cor. 15:52). And the Apostle John likewise: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1 Jno 3:2; cp Ps. 17:15). Being conformed to the

Image of Yahweh's Son, they shall inherit the glory prepared for them from the foundation of the earth.

The faithful are described by the BASF as being: "joint heirs of the kingdom, co-possessors of the earth, and joint administrators of God's authority among men in everything". They are "joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17), for they have been baptized into Christ, and are therefore "heirs according to the promise" made to Abraham (Gal.3:29). The principle enshrined within all the many promises made to Abraham was that he should be the "heir of the world". And that promise is not something that can be earned, like wages can be—it is a gift of grace: "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt" (Rom. 4:4), whereas "the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith" (Rom. 4:13). Those who share Abraham's faith shall be counted heirs, and they shall inherit the earth with Christ, even as he promised: "The meek shall inherit the earth" (Mat. 5:5).

Being co-possessors of the earth with Messiah, the faithful will also be "joint administrators" with him. This is the promise given to those who overcome:

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 3:21).

The throne referred to here, is the ancient Davidic seat of power restored, for it was said of Christ even before he was born, that "the Lord God shall give unto him *the throne of his father David*" (Lu.1:32). Those who overcome shall sit with him in that throne—that is to say, they shall share the power and authority that this throne represents. As Paul exhorted his son in the faith, Timothy: "it is a faithful saying: for if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him ..." (2 Tim. 2:12). They shall be part of the immortal multitude who shall sing a new song to the Lamb, saying:

"Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:9,10).

Here is a most glorious prospect placed before us. All of Humanity is, in the ultimate sense, composed of only two classes: the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent. The seed of the serpent shall only inherit destruction,

as they shall be removed from the face of the earth, and even the memory of them shall be forgotten. But the destiny of the woman's seed, is that they shall inherit eternal life. These are they who seek after glory and honour and immortality (Rom. 2:7), who "seek first" the Father's Kingdom and righteousness (Mat. 6:33) above all else in life.

It behoves us therefore, to decide which class we are to fall into, and act accordingly. Do we sow according to the flesh? Then, of the flesh, we shall reap corruption. That much is a certainty (Gal. 6:8). But if we sow according to the Spirit, and bring forth the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), then we shall reap life everlasting - that much is of equal certainty (Gal. 6:8). The decision, at the last, is ours.

Clause 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; 11:15; Isa. 65:20; Eze. 37:22,25; 1 Cor. 15:24-28."

As we saw in our last chapter, Clause 25 considers the rewarding of men according to their deeds, and the elevation of the faithful to being immortal co-heirs and administrators over the coming kingdom with their Messiah. This next clause deals with the length of the Kingdom "thus constituted", and the conditions under which mortals shall dwell there.

The testimony of the Apocalypse concerning the Redeemed, is that "they live and reign with Christ a thousand years" (Rev. 20:4). This defines the duration of the Kingdom, thus arranged with the Saints reigning as kings and priests, as being precisely one millennia. However, it must be borne in mind that the kingdom itself shall continue much longer than this, for it was promised to Mary concerning her son: "he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom *there shall be no end*" (Luke 1:33). At the end of the thousand year reign of Christ and his saints, the kingdom shall not come to an end, but will change in it's form and constitution. Paul hints at some of those changes, saying that:

"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 ... and when all things are 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).

At the end of the thousand years then, the kingdom will be “delivered up” to the Father, with the Son himself becoming a subject - the end result being that “God may be all in all,” or that all of the glory of God (his attributes) shall fill all of the earth (in the glorified, immortal inhabitants thereof). Even so it is written: “all the earth shall be filled with the glory of Yahweh (Num. 14:21). The form, or constitution of the kingdom shall change - for there will be no more mortal population to be ruled over and interceded for after the Millennium - but the kingdom itself shall remain for ever. The BASF is careful in it’s wording, saying that the duration of the kingdom “thus constituted”, shall end after one millennia—but as we have shown, the kingdom itself shall continue “without end”.

It has been truly said that the Millennial Kingdom Age is to be a transitional period between the Flesh and the Spirit. Prior to Messiah’s Return, the Flesh rules supreme in the earth. After the Millennium, the Spirit fills the entire globe. The Millennium is therefore the time in between, with the Flesh being subjugated to the Laws that Christ will institute as the basis, or constitution of the new Age. During that time, as the BASF states, sin and death will continue, albeit to “a milder degree than now”.

There is some indication of this in the words of Isaiah, speaking of affairs in Jerusalem during Messiah’s reign:

“ ... I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. 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. 65:19-21).

These words speak particularly of Jerusalem, and His chosen people in The Land. The city will be the capital or queen city of the world, from whence shall go forth Laws, Commandments and Blessings. One who dies aged an hundred will be considered as a child, indicating that longevity of life not dissimilar to the early history of mankind (as described in the book of Genesis) will become the norm. But although men and women will become subject to the laws of the kingdom, sin will still continue, even if suppressed. Psalm 72, a wonderful word-picture of that age describes how:

“He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor ... he shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight ...” (Psa. 72:4, 13-14).

According to this testimony therefore, there will be “poor” and “needy” who need to be delivered from oppression. And Messiah shall be their deliverer, “breaking in pieces” the oppressor, ensuring that true justice shall prevail over the earth. Also, Isaiah 11 describes how that “with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked” (Isa. 11:4). Again, we see that there will be the “poor”, and the “wicked” extant in the earth, but with the wicked being slain, and the poor having their cause judged. Even so, although Messiah’s dominion shall extend globally, there will be a need for the cause of the poor and the needy to be upheld, that oppression will cease, and the wicked be destroyed.

In the language of the Apocalypse, the coming Reign of Messiah shall see the devil (sin in the flesh) being “bound” for a thousand years (Rev. 20:2). The binding here referred to in symbol finds it’s literal counterpart in the “bands,” or constraints of the Laws that shall go forth out of Jerusalem - enforced by Omnipotent Power (see Psa. 2:3). Sin shall be suppressed, but will not be entirely absent in the Kingdom, as human nature remains inherently evil (Rom. 7:17). But after the thousand years, both sin and death shall be entirely removed, as all rebellion shall be destroyed by the devouring fire of Yahweh’s Glory (Rev. 20:9).

Clause 27

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”.—Mic. 4:2; Isa. 42:4; 11:1-5; 2:3,4; Hab. 2:14

The end “result” of the things detailed in this, and earlier clauses of the BASF is as stated in Scripture that “the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Yahweh, as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. 2:14). This is a most important point to be understood: the promises of Scripture relating to the

future are more concerned with the glorification of the Creator, than the saving of souls. Salvation is but the means to an end, as it is written, "Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; *that* glory may dwell in our land" (Psa. 85:9). Salvation is extended in order to cause Yahweh's Glory to dwell in the land. Micah chapter 4 details how it will be by the means of Law being taught, that the nations shall also be brought to a "knowledge" of Yahweh's Glory:

"in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of Yahweh shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh, and to the house of the Elohim of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth from Zion, and the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem" (Mic. 4:1-2).

The first event that shall "come to pass" amongst the things so described, is the elevation of Yahweh's house to become a global centre of worship and learning. The next thing is the elevation of the natural man, to reach that high standard. Notice this: people are said to "flow unto" the elevated house. Naturally, fluid does not flow upward: it is always a downward motion. Just as the natural inclination of men tend to earthly things, ending in the return to the dust from which they are formed. But in the Kingdom, nations will "flow" upward - against nature - to reach Yahweh's House where they will be instructed. That is, they shall aspire to things above - to heavenly things. So it is written that "The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from *sheol* beneath" (Prov. 15:24). And again, the Apostle exhorts: "if ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the Right Hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1-2). Nations will flow upwards to Jerusalem, to be instructed in The Way, and to worship according to the Laws which will be established in the earth.

This is a vital point to be understood: it is through the discipline of learning and instruction that men will become elevated to walk in the paths of Yahweh. We live in an age when in religious circles "head knowledge" is disparaged, with the unspoken concept that only those who are "academic" should give themselves over to study. But this misses the point entirely: where else do we receive knowledge if not in our heads? The point of learning the Truth is to cleanse our way (Psa. 119:9) and purify our mode of life by elevating our minds away from carnal living to the ways of Yahweh.

The prophet Isaiah describes a situation where the Word of Yahweh is presented before man, but:

“the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith I cannot; for it is sealed: and the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned” (Isa. 29:11-12).

Notice this: in the scenario presented to us here, everyone has a reason not to read the book. The everyday man claims they are not learned enough, so they can’t open it. And the learned claim that we are not meant to know the things contained in the book (both sentiments the present writer has too often heard expressed in relation to certain aspects of Bible Teaching). The truth of the matter, however, is that if we would be regarded as acceptable workmen in the servitude of Christ, we will all give attendance to reading, and to labouring in the Word and the Doctrine. Even as it is written:

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of Truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

We never cease to be amazed at how university students so often neglect Bible Study because it is “difficult”, whilst they can readily attend to their complex studies in natural things! But to labour in the Truth and the Doctrine is a duty for all who would be “approved of God,” and who seek the things of the Kingdom before all else in their lives. Yet it is more than a duty – for lovers of the Truth, it is a delightful thing to meditate upon the Scriptures (Psa.1:2, Rom.7:22), and is something that is able to bring great joy and peace of mind.

It is part of the future work of Messiah then, to establish his Father’s judgements in the earth, so that the world can be subdued under him. So the prophet spake:

“A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law” (Isa. 42:2-3).

And the judgments administered by him shall not be according to outward appearance, or hearsay, for the same prophet spake again:

“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”

But he shall:

“smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked” (Isa.11:1-5).

THE REBUKING OF NATIONS

This latter passage demonstrates that the taking over of the kingdoms of men will not be a peaceful affair. There are those who think that the Kingdom of God will be brought about by preaching alone - but that is not the testimony of Scripture. The Bible speaks in the clearest possible terms that “the wicked” shall be “slain”, not converted. Again, the passage from Micah chapter 4, cited above, goes on to say:

“and he shall judge among many people, ***and rebuke*** strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Mic. 4:3).

Whilst we readily cite the latter part of this passage as evidence that Messiah shall reign as “prince of peace” (Isa.9:6), we need also to consider the earlier part which speaks of a judgment, and “rebuke”. The New Testament presents a consistent picture:

“ ... the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels. In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord ...” (2Thes.1:7-9).

For men to be condemned for “obeying not the Gospel” implies that they have been presented with the opportunity to obey it, and have chosen not to. It is plain therefore, that the preaching of the Gospel alone is not what will bring the earth into subjection before Christ - there is a need for judgment also.

The other side of the matter, is that focusing upon the judicial condemnation of men before Christ, ought not detract from our vision, the importance of the Gospel of peace being preached. It is a consequence of this preaching that the earth will be filled with the knowledge of Yahweh’s Glory. When Messiah comes, it is testified that ***“he shall speak peace*** unto the heathen”

(Zech. 9:10). That is to say, the “gospel of peace” shall be made known to them - and men will either accept it, or reject it as they see fit, and reap the consequences of their decision.

After Jerusalem is delivered, the offer of a gospel of peace is made to the nations. The Messengers will be sent forth as was shown to John, “having the Gospel of the Age to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue and people” (Rev. 14:6). There will be peace to those nations that submit, and destruction to those who resist until they are pacified. In this way, Messiah will bring peace to a troubled earth, stilling the sea of nations and abolishing all things that offend, and to cleanse The Land of Promise of anything that would mar the ensuing paradise of the Deity in the midst of the earth; concerning which we read:

“the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Yahweh as the waters cover the sea” (Isa. 11:5-9)

“They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain” - that is Zion and Jerusalem representing all the land of Israel- the Paradise of Deity.

Clause 28

“That the mission of the kingdom will be to subdue all enemies, and finally death itself, by opening up the way of life to the nations, which they will enter by faith, during the thousand years, and (in reality) at their close”. (1 Cor. 15:25,26; Rev. 21:4; 20:12-15; Isa. 25:6-8).

This statement concerning the coming Kingdom is of great and particular importance, as it outlines a feature that is not commonly taught. In this clause of the BASF, we have stated the actual mission, or end purpose of the coming Millennium. It is not simply to end the present order of things, or even simply to bring blessings upon the earth. It is not to solve the problems of mankind. Rather, it has a higher purpose, “to subdue all enemies” of God, with the final enemy being death itself (1 Cor. 15:25-26). Standing between two epochs—a time when men of flesh have dominion, and a time when only

men of the Spirit shall exist upon the earth- the Millennium is the means to an end, and that end shall only be finally reached after 1,000 years of divine rule, when the last enemy shall be no more. The words of Bro Robert Roberts are pertinent, speaking of this in Christendom Astray:

“The kingdom of God is itself but an instrumentality—another step in the march of God’s beneficent scheme—another stage in the accomplishment of His purpose to “gather together in one all things in Christ” (Eph. 1:10). It only lasts for a thousand years (Rev. 20:6). What is to be accomplished during this period? Paul says, “He [Jesus] must reign till he hath put ALL ENEMIES under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Cor. 15:25-26). Hence, the Millennial mission of Christ is to subdue “all enemies,” which he will accomplish within the period of a thousand years” (Christendom Astray page 158). “It will thus be seen that the kingdom of a thousand years is but a transitional period between the purely animal and purely spiritual ages. It will blend the elements of both. It will exhibit the perfection of the eternal ages in the Lord Jesus and the saints who will be immortal and incorruptible, and the imperfection of the human age in the mortal population who will constitute the subjects of their rule. Both will coexist for a thousand years, and will constitute a state of things as superior to the present dispensation as it will be inferior to the glory ages beyond. The Kingdom of God will lead us by a bridge of a thousand years from the age of sin and death defection to the age of restoration to the bosom of the Deity, in righteousness and life eternal” (Christendom Astray, page 169-170).

When Messiah first comes, it is evident from the holy writ that many peoples shall not welcome him. Psalm 110 contains the words of Yahweh to Messiah: “rule thou *in the midst of thine enemies*” (Psalm 110:2). Once Messiah has established the seat of his dominion in Zion, it will not be the case that all nations shall automatically subject themselves to him and his laws. There is first this period of ruling “in the midst of” his enemies, and those enemies will be those who reject the constraints imposed upon the flesh by a righteous lawgiver. Psalm 2 describes this:

“the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rules take counsel together, against Yahweh, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break the bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us ...” (Psa. 2:1-3).

Again, the Apocalypse describes in symbolic terms the war declared upon the Lamb, by the “ten horns” of the European political animal:

“These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb ...” (Rev.17:12-13).

These testimonies plainly state that when Messiah comes, the nations at large will not immediately fall into subjection to him. There will be a time of war, during which Christ will reign in the midst of his enemies—but his power shall grow to ultimately fill all the earth (Dan.2:35). The fact that Christ will be victorious in this warfare is spoken of in what follows from the above.

“... he that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure ... I will declare the decree: Yahweh hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee ... thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel” (Psalm 2:4,7,9)

“... the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful” (Rev.17:14; see also Psalm 47:3).

Bringing the Kingdom Age upon the earth will not be a peaceful affair at all. The natural man being unable to receive the things of the spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:14), will by nature be unable to accept the imposition of Divine Rule, and so there will be a need for severe judgments to be meted out against the rebels: “by fire and by his sword will Yahweh plead with all flesh: and ***the slain of Yahweh shall be many*** ... they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me ...” (Isa. 66:16,24).

What an awful and graphic picture this is! Hardly in keeping with the humanistic spirit of our age, which permits every man to do that which is right in his own eyes so far as religious belief goes. In the days to come, Yahweh alone shall be exalted, with every vestige of idolatry being removed:

“Yahweh alone shall be exalted in that day. And the idols he shall utterly abolish ... in that day, a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats...” (Isa.2:17-21)

With the nations having been rebuked (Isa.2:4), a house of prayer for all nations shall be elevated in the mountains (Isa.2:2;56:7), and Zion shall be established as the global centre of worship, education, and administration. In that day, mortal men and women will live their lives in obedience to the commandments of Christ - which is, of course, how we should live today

(Rom.13:13). During that time, the Way of Life will be set before them, providing them with the choice of whether or not to enter it, and so be judged worthy of everlasting life at the end of the Millennium.

THE NEED FOR FAITH

It is written concerning our God: "without faith it is impossible to please him..." (Heb.11:6). We see no reason why this principle should be any different during the Kingdom Age. Men cannot naturally follow and obey all of the principles of Yahweh's righteousness, and so faith, not works of obedience, is the basis upon which men may stand, and appear holy before God. Just as righteousness was imputed to Abraham through the faith that he manifested, even so it is with us - and so it will be for the mortals during the Kingdom.

This aspect of things seems to be difficult for some to grasp. With Yahweh's Laws being sent out via an immortal administrative command, it is perhaps difficult to see how the mortal inhabitants can do anything else but obey the commands. But the difficulty is removed when we consider the example of the Kingdom of God in the past, and the pernicious nature of the human constitution. Being miraculously delivered from Egyptian bondage, Israel saw first-hand the power of Yahweh in dividing the sea, in the pillar of fire, and the daily provision of Manna to meet their need for food. Yet they turned aside very quickly: ten times they rebelled against Yahweh in the wilderness (Num.14:22), despite seeing all the signs and wonders performed in their presence. They saw with their physical eyes, but their spiritual sight was blinded, that they could not perceive, or receive the things done in their presence.

Even so it will be in the future. Many signs and wonders shall be shown, testifying to the divine nature of the new world ruler, yet many will not believe, and shall dare to fight against the omnipotent power wielded by the Lamb. It would appear that though the miraculous blessings are readily apparent, some will not believe that Christ and his fellow-heirs are in fact, immortal. Indeed, this will be the case at the end of the Millennium. Then it is testified that once the constraints are removed, men shall seek to rebel one more time, compassing the camp of the saints (Rev.20:7-9) - which there would be no point in doing, if they believed that those whom they warred against were immortal. So it will be that then, as now, and as times gone before, faith will be the only means of acceptance before the Almighty, securing a great reward for those who have it, and whose primary goal in life is to inherit the Kingdom, and attain to the Righteousness of God.

Clause 29

“That at the close of the thousand years, there will be a general resurrection and judgment, resulting in the final extinction of the wicked, and the immortalization of those who shall have established their title (under the grace of God) to eternal life during the thousand years” (Rev.20:11-15; 1 Cor.15:24).

In our previous studies of this section of the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith, we have considered various aspects of the coming Kingdom, and its establishment upon the earth. In this study, we focus more particularly on what will take place at the close of the 1000 years of Messiah's Rule. It is revealed that at the end of the Millennial age will be marked by a final rebellion of the Flesh against the ways of the Spirit:

“And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them” (Rev 20:7,9).

So it will be, that after 1,000 years of restraint, the bonds of Divine Rule (Ps 2:3) shall be relaxed, and “satan”, “the diabolos”, or “sin in the flesh”, will be permitted to assert itself once more, in rebellion against the imposed dominion of Christ.

There are those who question how it could be, that after 1,000 years of experiencing the blessings of the Millennial age, that mortals would want to rebel - but such do not take into account the perversity of the human condition. As we have seen, there is, as part of man's physical make up, a law of his being, styled apostolically, “sin”, or “sin that dwelleth in me” (Rom.7:17), which when unrestrained, leads all its possessors into transgression. And as this principle, or “law”, resident in human flesh (Rom 8:3) can only be removed when mortality will be swallowed up of life (2Cor.5:4) and transformed to Immortality (Phil.3:21, 1Jno.3:2), it will remain within the mortal populace, albeit under the suppression of Divine Law and it's rigorous enforcement. But once the pressure is released, at the termination of the 1,000 year period of restraint, it will be permitted to exert itself once more, leading it's possessors into rebellion against the immortal rulers. As Bro Thomas wrote:

“If the apostle felt the workings of “the law of sin” within him, though obedient to “the law of the spirit of life”; need we wonder that the same “law of nature” should gather force in the hearts of nations subdued by fire and sword to the sovereignty of Israel’s King? Man, unrenewed man is essentially ungrateful and rebellious. The whole history of his race attests it. A thousand years of peace and blessedness will fail to bind him, by the bonds of love and a willing fealty, to the glorious and benevolent, yet just and powerful emancipator and enlightener of the world” (Elpis Israel, p455).

So it will be, that the King will permit the Adversary (the *diabolos*, or Sin in the flesh) to muster an innumerable company for his army, and march them against “the camp of the saints, and the beloved city” of Jerusalem, in a vain effort to depose the Son of the Most High God, and his brethren, and re-establish a kingdom based upon sinful principles of wickedness.

“But fallacious will be the hopes of the rebel multitude, and dreadful the vengeance to burst upon them. The trembling earth and the blackening heavens warn them of a coming tempest. The dark vapours and thick clouds of the sky, curling in dense and lowering masses, suddenly hiss forth the forked lightning, and the heaven is rent by the deafening roar of the voice of God. Hail, and fire mingle with hail, pour down upon them, and they are destroyed from the face of the land. Thus God will deliver his King; for “fire shall come down from God out of heaven, and shall devour them” (Elpis Israel, p456).

After the final insurrection of Sin’s Flesh against the Spirit, the Spirit shall prevail, and the final enemy, even death itself shall be ultimately destroyed.

The mortals who lived during the Age of Righteousness, whose names are found written in the book of life (Rev 20:12-15), shall be rewarded with glory and immortality. And “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 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 ... then shall the son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all” (1Cor 15:24-26,28).

Clause 30

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

As we saw in our last article, the ultimate Purpose of Yahweh is to fill all of the earth with an immortal multitude who reflect His Glorious Attributes. We can see this by comparing two passages which each describe why the earth was created:

“thus saith Yahweh that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am Yahweh and there is none else” (Isa. 45:18).

“Truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of Yahweh” (Num. 14:21)

Putting these two passages together, we can see that Yahweh created the earth to be “inhabited”, or “filled”. The first passage defines the objective for the earth to be filled with people, the second with glory. Logically therefore, the people are the glory, that is, who show forth the glory of Yahweh in both their characters and physical nature.

The passage from Isaiah, cited above, is significant, for it also demonstrates the purpose of Yahweh with His People, Israel. The verse immediately before the one we quoted states that by contrast to the nations, “Israel shall be saved in Yahweh with an everlasting salvation: Ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end” (Isa. 45:17).

This endurance of Israel in contrast to the nations is also seen in several oft quoted passages to do with her future restoration:

“I am with thee, saith Yahweh, to save thee: ***though I make a full end of all nations*** wither I have scattered thee, yet ***will I not make a full end of thee***: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished” (Jer. 30:11).

“Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith Yahweh: for I am with thee; for ***I will make a full end of all the nations wither I have driven thee***: but ***I will not make a full end of thee***, but correct thee in measure; yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished” (Jer. 46:28).

We are familiar with the principle that “they are not all Israel, which are of Israel” (Rom. 9:6), but that rather “the children of the promise are counted for the seed” (Rom. 9:8). Or, in other words, “they which are of faith, they are the children of Abraham” (Gal. 3:7), of whom it is written: “so then, they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham” (Gal. 3:9). Though they be Gentiles according to the flesh, men and women are being called out of the Gentiles for the Name of the Most High, and become Israelites of the Spirit. These are Jews “inwardly”, whose “circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Rom. 2:29). Together constituting the “Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16), those who constitute Jews after the Spirit, are thus part of the “Israel” described by Isaiah as being saved with an “everlasting salvation”, which will constitute the “world without end”. At the end of the Millennial reign of Messiah, the nations shall indeed be made a full end of—and the earth shall be filled with an immortal race—Israel after the spirit—and shall so continue for ever. Speaking of the nations at this time, Bro Robert Roberts wrote:

“When the end of the thousand years is reached, these will have ceased to be. The world will be one race and one family—and that, a new race, an immortal race—the last Adam in multitude—as the heir of the first Adam in multitude who will then have passed away. This last Adam multitude being in Christ are all the seed of Abraham, as Paul says, “If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed.” Being Abraham’s seed, they are Israel. Consequently, in their sole occupation of the earth when “the former things shall have passed away,” there will be a fulfilment of what God says by Jeremiah concerning the house of Israel: “Though I make a full end of all nations among whom I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee.”— (Jer. 30:11). Abraham will also see in its fullest sense the meaning of the promise made to him “I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is upon the sea shore.” (Gen. 22:17)” (Thirteen Lectures on The Apocalypse)

“WORLD WITHOUT END”

The scriptures reveal that the Divinely established Kingdom shall itself continue for ever. Consider the following testimonies:

“Israel shall be saved in Yahweh with an everlasting salvation: Ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded ***world without end***” (Isa. 45:17).

“he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom *there shall be no end*” (Luke 1:33).

“in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven 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 these kingdoms and *it shall stand for ever*” (Dan. 2:44).

Indeed, this is itself shown by 1 Corinthians 15, alluded to by the BASF as the supporting Scripture for this clause:

“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” (1Cor.15:24-25).

Notice this: “the end” of the thousand years is not the end of the Kingdom, for at “the end”, the kingdom is delivered up to Yahweh. The kingdom will continue beyond that time “without end”. What will rather take place, is a change in the constitution of that Kingdom. With death being destroyed and mortality being no more, the Kingdom will be handed over to the Father, who shall manifest himself as being “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28). With all of the earth being populated with an immortal multitude, all of Yahweh shall be manifested in all of man.

The expression “world without end” is only used in one other place in Scripture: Ephesians chapter 3:

“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, *Unto him be glory in the ecclesia by Jesus Christ throughout all ages, world without end. Amen*” (Eph. 3:21)

Notice this: what is to continue “without end” here, is the ecclesia that shows forth the Glory of Yahweh. Or, as we have seen from the use of the same phrase in Isaiah 45, Immortalised Israel inhabiting the earth, and filling the earth with the glory of Divine Likeness.

We conclude with some words by our beloved brother Thomas describing this situation in his book Elpis Israel:

“Such is “the end, when the Son shall deliver up the Kingdom to the Father that God may be all in all” (1 Cor. 15:24-28; Rev. 21:3). The separation between God and man began with the transgression of the first Adam; it continues till the end of the 7000 years, when sin and death are utterly eradicated, and harmony again established in this orb of His glorious universe. Earth will have been delivered from moral and physical evil by His power administered and displayed through the Lord Jesus Christ, who, though “subjected to the Father,” will have the pre-eminence over all “his brethren” through the endless duration of ages. The last resurrection, which is implied in the development of “the end”. (Rev. 20:6), will bring up from the dust the sleeping dead of the previous thousand years. Those who are accounted worthy of eternal life will receive it, and be added to the saints of the “first resurrection.” Thus a population will have been provided for the earth, which, instead of being destroyed, will be renovated, and all things belonging to it made new (Rev.21:5).

The earth and it’s inhabitants will be incorruptible, undefiled and unfading. God, according to His Word, will have made “a full end of all nations,” except that of Israel; which will be the sole occupant of the globe, and every Israelite, “an Israelite indeed,” “equal to the Elohim,” and crowned with glory and honour throughout all ages. During the thousand years their nation will consist of three classes: Christ and the saints, righteous Israelites in the flesh, and those who “die the curse,” but when perfection comes, there will be but one class, and all will be immortal. The purpose of God, in the formation of the earth, will be accomplished; and the “headstone of the creation will be brought forth with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.”

Christopher Maddocks