

# The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No 264

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### From the pen of Dr Thomas: -

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

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

Brother F. J. Pearce.

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## Editorial

Dear Brethren, Sisters and Friends,

In the Gospels of Matthew chapter 24, Mark 13 and Luke 17 and 21 we find Jesus telling His disciples of His return in response to them asking “When shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?”

The certainty of Jesus second coming must never be overlooked for there are more prophecies in scripture dealing with this event than with any other matter. Over the centuries Christians have anticipated Jesus second coming and He has not yet come, obviously, so why should we think it might be close in our time?

Let’s look at a few pointers.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> April 1948 “The State of Israel” was formed – previously a British Mandate which was ceased at the same time. For Jews, this event brought to an end nearly two thousand years of wandering and being scattered throughout the world for not since A.D. 70, when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and subsequently drove the Jews out of Israel, have they had a country of their own to live in.

The establishment of Israel was indeed a most remarkable fulfilment of the many Bible prophecies indicating the nearness of Jesus return regarding which Jesus said to His disciples, “When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your deliverance draws nigh” and, “So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.” (Luke 21 verses 28, 31 and 32). So we ask what things “will begin to come to pass” and be fulfilled before this generation passes away?

It is my personal belief that the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 was the beginning of the things Jesus mentioned, and here are some of events He foretold should follow on from that time: -

“For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places” (Matthew 24:7.)

“And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. (Matthew 24:12.)

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. (Matthew 24:14.)

“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time.” (Matthew 24:21.)

“And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.” (Matthew 24:22.)

There are two matters mentioned in these quotations which show that Jesus could not have returned at an earlier time and they are...

**1).** The prophecy of Jesus that the gospel will be preached in all the world. This has only recently happened. Ever since the printing of books was invented, the Bible has been circulated far and wide in ever increasing numbers and languages but with the new technology of the Internet being made available world-wide, the Bible is now available in every country and every language. Never before could it be said that gospel of the kingdom is being preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations. Therefore Jesus return could not have happened in earlier times. And more than this, we read regarding Jesus in Revelation 1:7, “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him.” Only modern technology has made such a thing possible.

**2).** Jesus said that, “except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved:” (Matthew 24:22). Never before in all history has such a thing been possible, but now, in this nuclear age, such a

calamity is conceivable. Israel's biggest threat is Iran's determination to become a 'nuclear power.' The hatred of Iran and other Muslim nations towards Israel could lead to widespread nuclear warfare.

But even this is not so immediately serious as the threat from Japan's nuclear power station damaged by an earthquake and tsunami in 2011. Those in charge of the clean-up operation are on tenterhooks, and desperate to avoid things going wrong, for any slip-up at any stage of their work would bring disastrous consequences world-wide! One mistake and many millions of people would die!

A combination of these two disasters hardly bears thinking about. However, we must remember that God is in overall control of events. We know there are to be God's judgments in the world and these are foretold in such places as...

**Zechariah 12:3**, - "And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it."

**Zephaniah 3:8**, "Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy."

**Daniel 12: 1**, "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book."

A time of trouble indeed for all but especially for those not expecting it - though for the faithful they have a great hope to see it through as Jesus explained through illustrations of earlier events in which God intervened. In Luke 17:26 to 30 Jesus says "And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed."

So what happened to Noah and his family? They were all saved and cared for, then to enter a new life. Also Lot and his daughters were spared to start afresh, away from the evils of Sodom and Gomorrah.

And for the faithful of today? ... "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory." (Mark 13:24 to 26).

This is the culmination of God's work in Christ up to the establishment of the Kingdom age and so with these thoughts we will end with a quotation from the Old Testament - Isaiah 45:16 to 25:-

"They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together that are makers of idols. But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end. For thus saith the LORD 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 the LORD; and there is none else. I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right. Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? Who hath told it from that time? Have not I the LORD? And there is no God else beside me; a just God and a

Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.” Amen.

With love in Jesus to all our readers, Russell.

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## Redemption

Bible redemption is presented to us under three heads by which we can understand the scheme as a whole. These heads are: - 1, those to be redeemed; 2, the Redeemer; and 3, the ransom or price of redemption.

1<sup>st</sup>. Those to be redeemed are the descendants of Adam, one and all, because without exception their life was forfeit as the consequence of the one transgression. This consequence is defined as “sold under sin” (Romans 7:14).

If there was no scheme of redemption it is clear that Adam and all his posterity would have returned to and remained in dust. But Almighty God, in His loving kindness and goodness had already in mind the Plan of Redemption. His goodness, power and wisdom were equal to the circumstances and His Plan revealed that He is just and the Justifier of all who will accept His favour. This Plan was first told to Adam in the promise, “The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent.” In making coats of skin to cover them God showed Adam and Eve how He would effect their redemption and that of all mankind. The skins of the animals slain for them were typical of their redemption.

It seems fair to say the Almighty typically redeemed Adam and Eve so that they henceforth stood before Him as covered from their transgression. He did not anymore look upon their nakedness but upon their coverings which had been worn by innocent victims whose blood had been shed for them. The Redeemer, therefore, was none other than God Himself (Exodus 6:6) who caused the animals to be slain, and made their skin into coverings for the transgressors of His law.

This brings us to a consideration of the Ransom. The typical ransom was the life of a lamb or lambs without blemish or spot; but the real or antitypical Ransom was the Lamb of God, or, as expressed by Peter, in writing to his brethren, “Ye were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.” (1 Peter 1:19).

The ransom must belong to redeemer, otherwise the purchase could not be effected. It behoved Jesus therefore, to be the Son of God.

That such was the case is demonstrated by the promise of a Son to be given; with numerous details of it as to the time, manner, cause, and place of His birth; not one of which could have been either arranged or accomplished by any other being but the Almighty Himself who gave Jesus for the Sin of the world.

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

Jesus did not preserve Himself from the jealousy of Herod; He did not please Himself nor keep His own interests before His Father's. The Ransom being neither a dumb animal, which knew nothing of the reason for which it was put to death, nor silver and gold, but a living, intelligent man who had during His whole life pleased His Father. He could not be put to death as an act of justice. No clause in the Mosaic Law, or any other, commanded a son to die because his father wished it. Jesus Himself said, I have power to lay down my life.

Jesus did not lay down His life reluctantly, as a matter of duty, but He laid it down as a free-will offering. He delighted to do His Father's will, because He knew that nothing short of His voluntarily giving up of His life could put away sin, or atone for the guilt of the first man. Jesus said, he gave "his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).

While Jesus had absolute power to either allow or prevent men from taking His life from Him, He had no power to raise Himself from the dead. This was an act of favour on the part of the Redeemer similar to the act of His begetting in the womb of Mary. Hence the Father said to Him on the morning when He raised Him, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee." (Acts 13:33 and Romans 1:4).

These three steps form the three-fold cord by which the Almighty has perfected His scheme of redemption, viz., His promise of a seed or Son to the woman. His word or promise, made flesh when the child is born, and His begetting from the dead of His Son, who is consecrated for evermore the only name through whom any son or daughter of Adam, as kinsman, can obtain redemption from sin and all its consequences, and become heirs of the eternal life promised before the foundation of the world.

Redemption is a gift. We cannot suppose of a compulsory gift. The Father was not compelled to give a son; neither, after having one, was He compelled to give Him to death; nor, after being dead, was He compelled to raise Him up again. These separate acts of favour have once source – the favour of God.

Jesus Christ was not compelled to give Himself up to death for us. He freely gave Himself. Compulsion implies the power to enforce a demand. If the Father had compelled Jesus to give Himself up, or even backed His expressed will with a threat in case of non-compliance, the value of His self-sacrifice would have been destroyed. The act of Jesus therefore, was a free-will offering. Jesus could neither demand nor compel His Father to raise Him from the dead. To demand is to assert a right. This Jesus could not do inasmuch as He voluntarily gave up His life for those who deserved to die. While lying in the grave, He lay there in vindication of His Father's honour, and for this voluntary act of submission, God has exalted Him and gave Him a name which is above every name, that every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that He is the Lord (possessor of the earth, with all its peoples and nations) to the glory of God the Father. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." (Matthew 28:18). Again, "All men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." (John 5:23).

From what has been written it is manifest how God can be just and also the Justifier of every one who believes in Jesus as His ransom for the salvation of His children who have rebelled against Him. He will not compel anyone to be saved any more than He compelled Jesus to die, the Just for the unjust; but He wishes the salvation of all and has given ample evidence of power to do all His good pleasure.

Concerning this matter, the Apostle says "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit – that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." (2 Corinthians 5:19). The last phrase in this quotation illustrates the perfect character of God's scheme of redemption. "God reconciled the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." The world is in trespass but God does not impute them. This shows that they have been sacrificially removed and that all that is necessary on the part of the world is to know what He has done and accept of His reconciliation. For He hath made Him to be a sin offering for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21). The elliptical phrase "Made him sin" has given rise to the idea that Jesus Christ was made sin by being born of a woman. A more unreasonable construction of the Apostle's words could scarce be conceived. Human nature is not sin; neither is it a sinful thing to be born; and besides, it was after Jesus had passed with success through trial that He was made sin. This clearly shows that He was made an

offering for sin, or a sin-offering, but to have made Him sin in the manner supposed would have defeated the purpose for which He was born.

Anon.

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## God Manifestation

My dear brethren and sisters, Loving greetings in Jesus' name. Some time ago someone, I believe it was Bro. Hold kindly sent me a manuscript criticizing what I wrote in my booklet "The Truth about Clean Flesh" (now published under the title, "What God Hath Cleansed") concerning what Christadelphians call "the doctrine of God-manifestation." I stated that they believe that Jesus was a mixture of human and divine nature and I quoted from their literature various passages which appear to me to be clear evidence of this. I went on to explain that if it were true that because He was the Son of God Jesus had a nature in any way different from ours He was not a real man at all and therefore He could not have experienced temptations like other men. We consider that the fact that Jesus was born to Mary as a normal child proves that physically He was the same as we are. The fact that He was conceived by a miracle only affected His relationship; He was the Son of God, not the Son of Joseph. Adam was a son of God; he did not receive his life from a human father but direct from God, but he was nevertheless a human being. In a different, though similar way, Jesus received His life direct from God and this gave Him a son's relationship to God but not divine nature.

This simple reasoning seems to have impressed my critic, since he has gone to some length to deny completely that Christadelphians believe in a dual nature.

It amazes me that anyone could have the audacity to deny a fact which all we who have been Christadelphians know to be true and which their own writers and speakers inevitably come to whenever they have to deal with the problem of how Jesus was able to live a sinless life when He had in His flesh the physical principle of sin. They can only explain that because He was the Son of God He had a divine side which enabled Him to overcome sin. Naturally they never very much like to be pinned down on the point, because they can see there is a serious flaw in their theory. It does not require a degree in law to see that if Jesus was born with a moral strength which no other man ever had, there was no great credit in His excellence. Conversely, if we inherit from Adam a moral depravity which makes it impossible for us to be good then there is no great blame due to us that we are bad. I have no doubt that my critic, like many Christadelphians, can see this and they don't like what they see, but unfortunately something prevents them from doing anything to correct the position. His defence is to write and chastise me anonymously. If he had signed his article or if I had any means of knowing who he is, I would have replied to him. But this is the last thing he wants. If he can snipe unseen, from behind a wall or strike in the dark and make off before being identified I suppose he feels he has accomplished something useful. Personally I feel like Jesus said, "He that is of the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be seen, whether they are good or evil."

He says, "It was not pioneer Christadelphians teaching that Christ's birth resulted in a person who was a mixture of human and divine nature." He charges me that I have "palmed-off" this falsehood from wrested extracts from Dr. Thomas and R. Roberts. This is a serious charge to make against anyone and if he had signed his name I should have wanted to ask him how he justified it. If I have played any tricks with Christadelphian writings it would have been a simple matter to expose me as a cheat and a deceiver and I am very sure that there are those who would have done it long ago had they been able, so I am not very worried about stupid insinuations unsupported by either evidence or reason. Let us see whether I have misquoted or whether my critic is twisting the facts. He quotes me quite correctly as follows:-

"It has been precisely stated by Dr. Thomas when he said (in Elpis Israel I believe from memory) "Jesus had two sides, the one Deity, the other man" and also by R. Roberts who said "he (Jesus) was flesh embodiment of the Eternal Father by the Spirit."

These statements appear to me to define clearly a belief that Jesus was a dual nature or a mixture of human and divine. But my critic does not think so - he says "Both these statements are simple to understand (?) and are perfectly scriptural (?) but neither of them say that when in the flesh Christ was a mixture of human nature and divine nature." That is what he says but I am sure that anyone reading them without prejudice would think otherwise.

They are not simple to understand; they are not scriptural; and they do imply, if not in precise words, in effect, that Jesus was at the same time human and divine.

Apparently my critic takes exception to my describing the thought embodied in these statements of Dr. Thomas and R. Roberts as meaning that Christ was a "mixture" of human and divine. But if you say that Jesus had two sides, one Deity and the other man, how can this be true unless He was in some way a little of both? If the God-side of Him and the man-side of Him were not mixed together in one nature there must have been somewhere a dividing line between the one and the other. If this was so, where was the division? I will agree that put like this the question is absurd, but it is absurd because the statement upon which it is based, namely that Jesus had two sides, is absurd. It is the same kind of mystical non-sense as Trinitarians use when they attempt to justify their belief that Jesus was the second person of a trinity God-head. If Dr. Thomas had said that Jesus was a man having a relationship to God because He was His Son in a very special sense this would have been correct. But he did not say this; he says Jesus had two sides. My critic tries to make out that the Christadelphian doctrine is not concerned with our Lord's physical nature, but this is where R. Roberts' evidence comes in. He declares categorically that "Jesus was flesh-embodiment of the Eternal Father by the Spirit." How any honest person can possibly assert that this does not mean that Jesus was physically in some way different from all other men I cannot imagine.

As I have already indicated, it appears to me that this anonymous Christadelphian has realised the falseness of the teaching to which he is committed and is trying to make out that it is not what it has always been. We owe a lot to Dr. Thomas and I willingly admit that apart from his work neither we of the Nazarene Fellowship nor Christadelphians might exist at all as Christian believers but I do not think this justifies us in closing our eyes to the fact that he was fallible and when he made a mistake (as in this case) it could be a big one. He had undoubtedly a tremendous knowledge of the scriptures and a deep reverence for the things of the Spirit, but more than once in his work he built up a sound scriptural argument and then crowned it with a blunder left over from his earlier orthodoxy. This is what he did in regard both to original sin and to what he called God-manifestation, which was really a remnant of Trinitarianism.

Very remarkably, after denying my charge that Christadelphianism makes Jesus into a being neither a man nor God but a combination, goes on to quote Dr. Thomas in "Eureka," where he says:-

*"In these testimonies it was revealed that Christ was to be the Son of Man and Son of Deity. How this could be otherwise than is related in the N.T. would be impossible to devise."*

He is, of course, referring to the record of Mary's miraculous conception and the birth of Jesus, a man who was the Son of God and in this we are in full and complete agreement. But Dr. Thomas went further than scripture - he went beyond any of the facts or prophetic testimonies of either the old or the new testaments which he adduced or any of the reasoning which he had advanced, when he went on:-

*"Was the product, therefore, not Deity?"*

I answer emphatically NO, the product was not Deity. The product was a man. This is the clear teaching of scripture and anyone who says that He was God is denying a first principle of the truth. Dr. Thomas made a serious error here and Christadelphians have inherited it from him. It amounts to a denial that Jesus came in the flesh. It is no use Christadelphians denying their belief or arguing that Dr. Thomas did not mean what he said, because he continues in the same passage to ask a further rhetorical question to the same effect:-

*"Did the union of spirit with flesh annihilate that spirit and leave only flesh?"*

There is not a word in the record to suggest that in the birth of Jesus there was a union of spirit with flesh. The Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary, as foretold by the Angel, causing her to conceive. Where is there any least justification for affirming that her child was therefore a union of spirit with flesh? And to ask if the flesh annihilated the spirit is a piece of rhetorical nonsense which has for about 150 years succeeded in preventing people from examining the lack of evidence or reasoning which it conceals. Dr. Thomas goes on again, with another question and this one he answers:-

*“Was the holy thing born a mere son of Adam, or the fellow and equal of the Deity? The latter unquestionably.”*

I do not know what my Christadelphian critic makes of this but it is quite clear that Dr. Thomas believed that Jesus was a man with a mixture of divinity in Him.

Neither Dr. Thomas in his day, nor his followers today understands the issue or the explanation. It is not that Jesus was either (1) a mere son of Adam or (2) a divine man. He was not the son of Adam, merely or especially, but a man of the same flesh and blood as Adam and related to Adam through His mother. The difference between Jesus and all other human beings is that His life came to Him, by the miracle related, direct from God. His life was not a bit of the Adamic life; He was a fresh creation of the same nature out of a mother who was a daughter of Adam. That is the vital element of truth which Dr. Thomas missed and which Christadelphians still lack. This is why they do not and cannot understand the Atonement or recognise and appreciate the sacrifice of Jesus when He gave Himself for us to redeem us to God. “O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.”

“Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to him that appointed him... as a son over his own house: whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end,” Hebrews 3:1.6.

Our love and greetings to you all... your brother in the one hope, Ernest Brady

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## **The Fruits of The Spirit**

The position to which we are called by the gospel is a highly exalted one, although for the time being we are in a somewhat isolated state; ridiculed and scorned by some, pitied by others, while by the majority of the people we are blamed, dreaded, and shunned as dangerous to meddle with, and a pest to society. Being not of the world, the world hates us; enmity is manifested between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. Thus it ever has been, and so it will continue until the last battle is fought and the final victory achieved.

We read in the epistle to the Romans of the called according to God’s purpose; this great and glorious theme swells our hearts with gratitude to the Deity, our aspirations are raised, we lay a firmer hold of the hope set before us, and are more established in the truth. The gospel is “the power of God unto salvation” through faith in Christ Jesus; having heard and embraced that gospel, believed in Jesus as presented in the Scriptures and rendered the obedience of faith, we are introduced into the righteousness of God through His Son. He who knows no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. We are “justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,” and in this justification we shall finally be accepted; but it is important to note, only certain conditions, namely, that we remain steadfast in the grace wherein we stand, and that our works be found perfect before God.

As justified we are pronounced blessed, being translated from a state of wrath into a state of favour with God. “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the

sons of God.” Let us endeavour to realize the significance of this expression. It should teach us the close relation into which the saints are brought with the Deity and His purpose. What then is our duty as obedient children, but to do those things which are pleasing in His sight? John says everyone who has “this hope – the one hope of the gospel, the return of the Lord – purifieth himself, even as He is pure.” How high the standard!

It is written that many are called, but few are chosen. The narrowness of the way, the apparent delay of the Lord, and the abounding of iniquity; turn numbers aside. Not all who heard the Word, nor all who receive it, and for a time rejoice in it, endure to the end. The ground must be good in the first place and then a proper cultivation is requisite in order to bring forth fruit unto life eternal. Having obtained an understanding of the one faith and being made conformable unto Christ’s death in hope of the resurrection of the just, we commence a new career. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made us free from the law of sin and death, but we find it necessary to keep under the body, for its divers lusts will, if yielded to in opposition to the law of God, bring us into captivity. We all know how seductive they are; hence the more need of watchfulness, diligence, prayer and firmness of character, coupled with a full reliance upon God, and a thorough acquaintance with the divine precepts. Let us imitate David who said, “Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee.” The word of God was deeply rooted in his affections. It must be so in us. Our affections must be set on things above, not on things on the earth. Naming the name of Christ, let us depart from iniquity, for if we regard iniquity in our hearts, God will not hear us.

The fruits of the Spirit as enumerated by Paul are, “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” The Apostle goes on to say, “They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we love in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” In doing this we shall develop a character well pleasing to God, and shall in the end be pronounced worthy.

Now let us look for a moment at each of these fruits of the Spirit. The first mentioned is love. Love is of God for “God is love.” That love He has manifested towards the whole human race, a love which passeth knowledge. We love Him, because He first loved us; it is easier to love when the objects soliciting our regard are in harmony with our own feelings, than when it is otherwise. But if we love them only that love us, what thank have we? Do not even the publicans do the same? We are to love our enemies, to pray for them, to feed and clothe them; not to love in word merely, but in deed and in truth, whether in respect to foe or friend. Pity without help is of no avail; the man who says to the cold and the famishing, Be warmed and filled, and withholds those things which are needful for the body, will not hear Jesus say, “I was hungry and ye gave me meat.” Do we love God? We answer, yes. Then must we keep His commandments, for this is the love of God. Do we love the truth? Yes; let us therefore do all we can to spread it in the best possible manner. Do we love each other? Yes; then let us make it manifest as we ought. John writes, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” Perfect love, we are told, casts out fear, so that in cultivating this noble grace, the next on the list is sure to follow; indeed we might say, all the rest. We learn from Paul (1 Corinthians 3:4-7) what manner of person is the man who has charity; be it ours to conform ourselves under all circumstances to the perfect model set before us by the Apostle. Should we ever falter under trial, we must remember that “charity never faileth.”

After love come joy. Joy in what? “Joy in God” – that is in the things of God, and these being the source of our joy, everything through which we pass is sweetened by it, hence the apostle could say, Rejoice in tribulation, count it all joy. Rejoice in the Lord alway.” We rejoice in our present attainments in relation to the truth, for ignorance alienates from the life of God, but most of all we exult at the prospect of everlasting joy, when we shall not only ourselves be joyful in glory, but as constituents of the wondrous Name, be the joy of the whole earth.

At that time will the blessing of peace be fully realized. The nations will learn war no more, and peace will universally prevail to the great comfort and benefit of mankind. In the meanwhile it is for us to be of a peaceful mind and to seek peace, “Blessed are the peacemakers.” “As much as in you lies, live peacefully with all men;” especially “be at peace among yourselves.” “The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.” Here is something to contemplate, something to regulate our daily lives. Is the truth producing such effects upon

us? Are we pure in heart? Peaceable in all our conduct; gentle in manner not harsh or unbending when entreated? Are we full of mercy? Knowing that the merciful shall obtain mercy, and that it is written, with what measure ye mete, it will be measured to you again.” Are we without partiality? Respect of persons is not good; for in showing favour from unrighteous motives we become “judges of evil thoughts.” We are enjoined to love as brethren, and without dissimulation.” Hypocrisy in any form is an abomination in the sight of God and man; yet there is a great deal of pretence going on in society in the present day – pretence of humility, gratitude, or any other virtue in may be convenient to assume. But to return, we are to let the peace of God rule and reign in our affections. In so doing, grace and peace will be multiplied to us.

We come now to long suffering. The Deity in proclaiming His Name to Moses declared Himself “longsuffering.” Jesus displayed this grace in conjunction with every excellence that can adorn the character. We are to imitate the Master; to suffer long and be kind, even in the face of unmerited insult and repeated provocation. In many instances we find patience substituted for longsuffering. It is indispensable that patience should have her perfect work, if we would attain to the perfection required of the believer. The animal passions are adverse to restraint, but we must keep under the body and bring it into subjection. When tempted to go astray “How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God” is the language of the faithful disciple. Every thought, every emotion, is to be brought “into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” We are not permitted to render railing for railing, but must commit ourselves to God in well-doing. Jesus when reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered He threatened not, and we are to walk in His steps. Paul found occasion to exhort more than one church to “longsuffering, forbearing one another”, and there is but too much cause for us to take heed to the same admonition.

Next in order we have goodness. Our goodness consists in reflecting the image of the Lord, under the transforming influence of the truth. Let it be displayed in acts of kindness and benevolence to all around us. While we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially to them who are of the household of faith. The saints are members of the one body, and should exercise a tender care over each other.

Faith is now presented to our notice. Without faith we cannot please Gd. Whatsoever is not of faith is sin. We must be strong in faith; we must rely on the word of God and hold fast our confidence to the end. To continue in the faith it is not only necessary to contend for that faith, but to manifest the faith which worketh by love and overcometh the world – a faith which leads to a patient waiting upon God looking for His Son from heaven in power and great glory, knowing that He is faithful who hath promised.

Meekness next claims attention. It is one of the qualifications needful to fit us for the inheritance of which we are made heirs. We have an example of meekness in Jesus; we must possess the same Spirit or we are none of His. He is called the Lamb of God; the lamb is the very emblem of meekness and humility coupled with that innocence so characteristic of the Christ. Meekness is not a quality highly esteemed among men; too often it excites only contempt. But whatever obloquy the cultivation of this lowly virtue may bring upon us, we have ample solace in the words of the Saviour, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Temperance is the last item. It is not running to an extreme in any one of the graces of the Spirit, but encouraging the growth of all in due proportion that leads to perfection of character. Temperance is the great regulator of the whole. In phrenology it is well known that not the excessive development of one or two organs, but the profuse culture of all that makes a great man. Let us see to it that we are temperate in all things, for only thus can we obtain the mastery over the flesh.

These fruits of the Spirit bear the imprint of that Divine nature to which we hope to attain; it is incumbent upon us to foster them that we may be accounted worthy of the gift of eternal life. Jesus in our nature manifested them all in the highest degree, ever submitting Himself to the will and purpose of His heavenly Father. The future, not the present, prompts us to obedience. Moses choose rather “to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.” Jesus endured even unto death, the death of the cross “for the joy set before Him.” Let us give diligence to make our calling and election sure by sowing to the Spirit, that an entrance may be ministered to us abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. -

Brother C. M. Handley.

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## Isaiah 53 and “Sinful Flesh”

Dear Brethren and Sisters,

If there was a chapter in which we should expect to find the doctrine of “sinful Flesh” or any suggestion that this was the nature of Jesus, I think this chapter would be the 53rd. chapter of Isaiah.

However, when we come to read through it and taking into account the marginal references, we find that instead of the doctrine of “sinful flesh” the opposite is the case.

Let us therefore consider the verses of this chapter of Isaiah for a few moments and while doing so, I would like to point out statements which have wrongfully been used to prove the “sinful flesh” theory.

Perhaps we could reconsider some of the interpretations placed upon this chapter beginning with the well-known start: “Who hath believed our report and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”

Now, rightly or wrongly, I would interpret this phrase thus: It is a declaration by the prophet to the effect that whoever has heard and believed the prophetic utterances of Scripture has understood what the Lord intended to do upon the earth, for it is a figurative statement; the arm being a chief operative member of the Body for action.

It brings to our minds, no doubt, the words, “His right hand and His holy arm Him victory hath won.”

What is it that we must needs understand, and what is it that the arm of the Lord has revealed, and who does Christ grow up before, in the singular sense, other than His Father? “For he shall grow up before Him as a tender plant and as a root out of a dry ground.”

Now, we have no doubt whatever that the “tender plant” fits the short life of Jesus on this earth with the nature that you and I now possess; I would be very surprised indeed if someone said to me that it did not mean Christ at all - I very much doubt that this will happen, however.

But very strange is the fact He is not only known as a “tender plant” but the “root” as well.

We should expect, even in figurative language that the “root” would be the beginning of the plant; but here we have a dual application.

He is a “root out of dry ground, which is the figure of the nation of Israel in its “dry” state.

We see that whilst He was the first Lord or the beginning of a new creation, He was not in every sense the start of the nation; Jesus was unique in this event, however, just as He was unique in the offering He afterwards made for sin, for this act of love and obedience cannot be repeated.

One other strange fact, which we do not usually expect to find, is a plant or root growing in dry ground, at all, much less flourishing.

This, however, was no ordinary “plant,” for its beginning was of the Holy Spirit causing a virgin to conceive and bring forth a son - this was a new beginning, for that which was born was the Son of God: out of dry ground, yes, because of the connection with Israel through Mary His mother - planted by God and made to grow.

No doubt, we shall recall the words in Luke 2:40, “and the child grew and waxed strong in spirit filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him;” verse 52 and “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man.”

A picture of the “dry” state of Israel is recorded by the prophet Ezekiel in the 37 chapter; “The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, and caused me to pass by them round about and behold there were very many in the open valley, and lo they were very dry...” Verse 11, “Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; behold they say, Our bones are dried and our hope is lost, we are cut off for our parts.”

Jesus, however, was to alter this “dry” state of Israel and bring fresh hope to the nation, for the time was to come when they should no longer be divided but would be one nation and one King would be king to them all.

This also was the declaration by God through Ezekiel:- “My tabernacle also shall be with them, yea, I will be their God and they shall be my people, and the nations shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.”

How was Jesus to accomplish this? He was wounded for, and became despised and rejected of, men.

Verse 4, “Surely He had borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.”

Are these estimations right or wrong?

The answer is, no doubt, wrong, because He was not stricken or smitten of God but by man - God allowed it, yes, for our sakes, for the purpose in view, and the purpose was He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes are we healed.

Verse 8, “He was taken from prison and from judgment and who shall declare his generation, for he was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgressions of my people was he stricken.”

Who shall declare His generation? That is a question that calls for an answer. He didn’t actually live a full Jewish generation, for He was only 33 years of age when He was put to death, and “He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit found in His mouth; yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief, when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin; He shall see his seed and he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands.”

So although He died without being married, he died that He might be married after a higher order and for the love of His bride-to-be who was also to constitute His seed.

He was to see His seed because of His death, for His death as an offering for sin made the life of the seed possible.

This can be understood from the 11th verse, “He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied. By His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.”

The last verse is greatly misunderstood and made to bolster up the “sinful flesh” theory, yet this verse is really so plain in its teaching “and he was numbered among the transgressors.”

Now why say He was numbered with the transgressors if indeed, He was a sinner and as much in need of salvation as those He came to save?

No, Brethren and Sisters; a sinner cannot make intercession for sinners, neither can he give something that he has already sold.

Jesus, however, was in a position to pay the price, or at least, was the Price itself - for it was God who gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

If Christ had already been sold under sin God could not have given, and Jesus could not have paid with His life - because that is what was necessary under the Divine law of righteousness.

The verses do not suggest in any way whatever that Jesus was a transgressor.

It is more or less the same as if you and I were accidentally entangled in a mob who had just been using violence, and was arrested and sentenced to death with them, though innocent of any offence.

Jesus, however, in His love, went further than this: He paid the price instead of the sinner and providing the sinner recognizes this and associates himself or herself in the death of Jesus by being baptised into His death, they become free from the yoke of bondage in which sin held them, and if they continue to use this freedom as they ought they will ultimately become free indeed, and will receive incorruptible bodies and, as the angels, to die no more.

Jesus made intercession for the transgressors. He could not have done so had He been a sinner, but if some would read more carefully these verses they would understand that it was because He was completely free from sin, and because He gave this free life as a price or ransom for our freedom from the bondage of sin, that He is to receive the reward in the last verse of the 53rd chapter of Isaiah. 12<sup>th</sup> verse, "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great and he shall divide the spoil with the strong." Why? Because "he hath poured out his soul unto death, and he was numbered with the transgressors and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors".

Would God allow Jesus to have all these rewards if He was as much a sinner as those He came to save? Read these verses again and consider.

E.G.Parry

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## DID JESUS NEED TO DIE FOR HIMSELF?

**Note:** All names refer to Christadelphian scholars, apart from Professor Harold Dodd. Emphases added in quotations.

The Apostle Paul stated that someone may possibly, be willing to die, for the benefit of a 'very good man' [Romans 5:7]. This presumably, would be even more so, if that 'very good man' were oneself! But Paul stated that God demonstrates how much He loves us, because while we were yet sinners, "Christ died for us." If there was any element of self-interest, in Christ laying down His life - then how could we really be certain, that through the death of the sinless Jesus, God truly loves us sinners? Furthermore, when Jesus made statements, that His death was the sole benefit of others [John 10; 15-17], then how could He, as a man of truth and integrity, have been less than fully honest? Christadelphians however, have traditionally claimed that Jesus' death was necessary for His own salvation - because He supposedly inherited some form of 'defilement', which only his death could remove. Dr. John Thomas believed that when Adam transgressed, then: "Evil was then evolved in his flesh as the punishment of his sin; and because the evil was the punishment of the sin, it is also styled 'sin'. 'Flesh and Blood' is naturally and hereditarily full of this evil. It is therefore called 'sinful flesh' or flesh full of sin" [page nine, of "Clerical Theology Unscriptural"]. Dr. Thomas also wrote: "sin in the sacred style, came to stand for the substance called man." [p. 127; 'Elpis Israel']. In a fairly recent, re-published work, entitled "The Cross of Christ" by Peter

Watkins, the author on page twenty, expressed the thought: “Human nature is evil and offensive to God. It must be destroyed.” If we bear in mind that Jesus Himself, was a possessor of human nature – then the implications of Peter Watkins’ statement are staggering. Robert Roberts put it like this: “The crucifixion of Christ as a ‘declaration of the righteousness of God’ and a ‘condemnation of sin in the flesh’, exhibited to the world the righteous treatment of sin. It was though it was proclaimed to all the world, when the body [of Jesus] was nailed to the cross; ‘This is how condemned human nature should be treated according to the righteousness of God; it is fit only for destruction’.” Peter Watkins on page eighteen [ibid] wrote: “In character He [Jesus] was perfect, yet He inherited from Adam a ‘serpent’ nature – a nature which could be tempted to sin. This nature was the cause of the trouble. It had to be cursed and crucified.” But whose “trouble” is Peter talking about, because Jesus - although severely tested - never committed any transgression? So why did Jesus have to die, if His death was not a true voluntary sacrifice, made entirely on the behalf of others? Peter Watkins effectively, advances three supposed reasons. These will be enumerated, and then commented upon: [1] Every human being has to die, because this ratifies the Divine verdict on fallen Adam. On page fifteen [ibid], Peter Watkins wrote “When God pronounced the death sentence on mankind in Eden, He was upholding His own righteous law. If He were to waive this sentence, He would, in effect, be saying that sin does not really matter after all. So the sentence of Eden stands, and God requires that each of us must die.” [2] The personal virtue of Jesus’ character cannot [supposedly] be used as a mitigating plea, against the implementation of His crucifixion, because His ‘moral virtue’ was due entirely to God. [3] Human nature is “evil and offensive” to God [Watkins ibid p. 20]

**COMMENT on point [1.]:** The falsity of this claim is evidenced by 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 [which links with 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18], which clearly states that “We shall not all die, but we shall be changed in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye.” If God’s “own righteous law” demands that every human being must necessarily die, then for the sake of consistency, the faithful Christians who are alive at the second coming of Christ, should also die. But this is obviously not the case. This therefore suggests that there is something very wrong, with the traditional Christadelphian conception of “the righteousness of God.” Furthermore, Hebrews 11:5 clearly states that Enoch did not die. The literal English translation of this verse reads “Enoch was removed not to see death”. The phrase “not see death”, in the Greek is: “me idein thanaton”; and these very same Greek words occur also at Luke 2: 26 – where it is said of Simeon, that he would “not see death” [me idein thanaton], until he had seen God’s Messiah. In Simeon’s case, “me idein thanaton”, refers to physical death - so presumably this is exactly what these same words mean with reference to Enoch, at Hebrews 11:5? Moreover, we know that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, was very well acquainted with the works of Philo of Alexandria. This is because there are stunning terminological parallels, between the works of these two authors. This points to Apollos as being the probable author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, as he, like Philo, was also Jew from Alexandria. Both ‘Apollos’ and Philo quote the Biblical ‘Enoch passage’ [Genesis 5:22-24] exclusively from the Septuagint. In his work “On Genesis” section 86, Philo writes: “What is the meaning of the expression, ‘He [Enoch] was not found because God translated him?’ (Genesis 5:24). In the first place, the end of virtuous and holy men is not death, but a translation and migration, and an approach to some other place of abode.” It is highly likely therefore, that ‘Apollos’, having an Alexandrian Jewish background, shared this same essential belief as Philo, with respect to Enoch [Hebrews 11:5] – namely, that Enoch did not suffer death. Ron Abel in his work “Wrested Scriptures” [p. 129] concedes the possibility that Enoch did not die – so Enoch may be the ‘exception’, that proves the ‘general rule’, enumerated at Romans 5:14? Furthermore, Dr. John Thomas [by 1855] had conceded the point that Adam was originally created in an essentially ‘mortal condition’, but did not thereby, necessarily have to die [“The Herald of the Kingdom Age...” July 1855]. Harry Whittaker [in “Genesis 1-2-3-4”, p. 58] is also insistent that Adam was definitely created in a mortal condition, but did not necessarily have to die. And as Adam was ‘a type’ of Jesus [Romans 5:14], then it could logically be said that the mere fact that Jesus was ‘mortal’, did not necessarily mean that He was destined to die. This point seems to be clearly verified by Jesus’ words at Mathew 26:53. Both Mathew and John wrote their Gospels with Jewish audiences in mind – and one of the main Jewish objections against Jesus, would have been that, as an alleged sinless Messiah, Jesus should not (in Jewish eyes) have ever suffered death at all [see John 12:34]. John rebuts this Jewish objection at John 10:14-18 and 12:30. In the latter verse, ‘the ruler of this world’ was a reference in Jewish tradition, to the Angel of death, or Satan. Jesus, at Matt. 26:53, claims that He could have been rescued from impending arrest, leading to His death, by an appeal to God, for Angelic assistance. The very fact that Jesus had this very real option, and that God would rescue Him, clearly confirms what Jesus always said about His death - namely that it was a true voluntary sacrifice, made solely for the benefit of others [e.g. John 10:11-17]. One can

hardly claim that a person makes any sort of “sacrifice”, if that person stands to primarily, greatly benefit himself, from the “sacrificial action.”

**Comment on Point [2]:** The second reason that Peter Watkins implicitly puts forward, as to why Jesus had to die – and not only for the sake of others – is found on page nineteen of his booklet. Peter wrote: “All His [Jesus’] virtue and the perfection of His character had come from God.” Robert Roberts used this same argument in “The Slain Lamb”. Robert had previously written on page 86 of ‘The Ambassador’ [March; 1869]: “Yet He [Jesus] was tempted because He possessed the impulses common to our nature. He [Jesus] possessed however, the counter-balancing endowment of knowledge and superior power which enabled Him to do what no human has ever done, that is to pass through this state of existence without sin.” The implication of these arguments, used by both Robert and Peter, is that without this ‘superior power’ given to Him by God, then Jesus was essentially, and in ‘reality’, just like any other person, possessing a human nature that was “evil and offensive to God” [Watkins *ibid* p.20]. If all the ‘personal virtue’ of Jesus, was entirely due to God, then His morally sinless life could not be used as a mitigating plea, against the imposition of His death penalty. Robert Roberts wrote in ‘The Slain Lamb’: “God gave not the Spirit to Him [Jesus] by measure, therefore the praise is entirely of the Father”; and also: “How, then, some say, was He, with [supposedly] sinful flesh, to be sinless? God did it. The weak flesh could not do it. Jesus was God manifest in the flesh that the glory might be to God.” In “The Cross of Christ”, Robert Roberts also wrote: “It pleased God to require the ceremonial condemnation of this sin-nature in crucifixion, in the person of a righteous possessor of it, as the basis of our forgiveness ... The man produced by Mary, by the Spirit of God, combined the two essential qualities for a sacrifice; He was the very nature condemned in Eden, and therefore wrong was not [supposedly] done when He was impaled upon the cross.”

But if there was no such thing as genuine, personal human virtue, then there would be no point in divine human judgement. Nor would there be any basis for the allocation of divine rewards, at the resurrection. The Apostle Paul stated that he had worked harder than any of the other Apostles [1 Cor. 15:10] – and yet, it was also a result of God working within him - both to will and to take action [Philippians 2:13]. However, this means that Paul had to righteously co-operate with God, through personal obedience; and therefore, Paul did have some responsibility for his own personal moral achievement. Similarly, Jesus was always God’s Son, but His filial obedience to God, must have had some merit, because He was elevated to the position of ‘Lordship.’ Consequently, the future redeemed saints, ascribe their salvation to both God and Jesus - with Jesus sharing equal praise and honour, with God (Revelation 5:13-14; cf. John 5:23).

**Comment on point [3]:** “Human nature is evil and offensive to God” [Watkins; *ibid*. p.20].

This common traditional Christadelphian view, seems to derive primarily, from the exegesis of Dr. Thomas, concerning the meaning of phrase “sinful flesh”, as mentioned in the A.V. at Rom.8:3. But there is a problem here that some later Editors of “The Christadelphian” magazine have rightly picked up on. The King James’ version, renders the Greek words “sarkos hamartias” at Rom. 8:3, as ‘sinful’ flesh’. This is the only time that the A.V. renders ‘hamartias’ [= ‘sin’] as ‘sinful’. Furthermore, the phrase ‘sinful flesh’ occurs only once in the entire A.V. But later astute Editors of “The Christadelphian” have long realised that the term “sinful flesh” represents a serious mistranslation. “Sarkos hamartias” literally reads “Flesh of Sin”, and means ‘Sin’s flesh.’ Both John Carter [see “The Christadelphian”, ‘Sin and Its Condemnation’, April, 1956] and Louis Sargent [see “The Christadelphian”, ‘Comment’, March, 1965] recognised that ‘Sin’ in Romans 8:3, is being personified as both a ‘Slave owner’ of ‘the flesh’ [human nature], and as a ‘Litigant’ in a court room setting. ‘Sin’, as the customary ‘Slave owner’ of human beings, is depicted as putting in its death claim against Jesus [because He is a human being]. However, in the unique case of Jesus, ‘Sin’ loses its legal case, because Jesus has given sin no foothold within Him [cf. John 14:30], and is ‘without sin’ [Hebrews 4:15]. Therefore, it is Jesus who is ‘acquitted’ in God’s law court, and ‘Sin’ who is ‘condemned.’ John Carter recognised that ‘Sin’ at Romans 8:3 is playing a personified role, within a vitally important legal metaphor, which Paul is utilising – and this important fact is totally obscured by mistranslating “sarkos hamartias” as ‘sinful flesh’, “Sarkos hamartias”, according to John Carter and Louis Sargent, should be translated as ‘Sin’s flesh’ [note capital letter]. The correct translation of Romans 8:3, when recognition is given to the underlying legal metaphor, should therefore run along the lines of: “Christ entered this human nature of flesh and blood ... Sin put in its claim to be his master; but Christ won the

case; Sin was non-suited, its claim disallowed, and human nature was set free.” [Professor Harold Dodd’s paraphrase translation, in his “Epistle of Paul to the Romans”]. Furthermore, there is actually, a specific Greek adjective, which does mean “sinful” [‘harmatolos’]. Paul does use ‘harmatolos’ [sinful] at Romans 7:13, but not in Romans 8:3, and never in conjunction with ‘sarkos’ [flesh].

Nowhere does the Bible confirm that the Gnostic belief that the human physical nature is intrinsically ‘evil’. Neither does the Bible state that human nature is irredeemably evil. This is acknowledged by Allan Eyre, who, in writing about the influence of ‘Calvinism’ upon Christadelphian thought, stated: “The concept of ‘sinful human nature’ is nowhere found in Scripture ...the doctrine of the hopeless, inherent sinfulness of human nature, can have no place in our thinking.” [“The Christadelphian Tidings”, October, 1996]. Human nature is described in Scripture as being intrinsically ‘weak’, ‘mortal’, ‘corruptible’ and ‘perishable’, but it is never described as being intrinsically evil, per se. This is why Paul is able to state that ideally, he does not want to lose his physical body, but rather, to have his resurrection body [2 Corinthians 5:2] ‘put on over’ [Gk: ependyomai] his current body. If the human physical body was intrinsically evil, then Paul would definitely want to lose his physical body! When Paul talks about ‘sin’ dwelling within him” [Rom. 7:17, 20] he is using a figure of speech [metonymy] that describes those lawless human impulses that actually result in transgression. Therefore, with respect to actual transgressors, ‘Sin’ can be said to exist within them, as a “property owner” [Romans 7:17, 20]; as well as to dominate them, as a ‘Slave owner’ [Romans 7:14; John 8:34]. Because there is this link within all transgressors, between their inner lawless impulses, and actual resultant transgressions [in thought, word or deed], then these lawless impulses can figuratively [by metonymy] be called ‘Sin’ – but this was not the case with Jesus. His human impulses were always controlled, and harmonised with the will of God - so that Jesus - in thought, word and deed - always did what was pleasing to God [John 8:29]. Therefore, the citation of indwelling ‘sin’, in Romans 7, has no applicability to Jesus. John Carter recognised this important fact when he stated “His [Jesus’] flesh did not yield to sin. Jesus had not to say with Paul [at Romans 7:14-25], that He failed to do what He would, or to bemoan that Sin dwelt in Him ...He knew the flesh was weak, but He [Jesus], and not Sin, was the master.” [ibid]. Indeed, the word “flesh” within the Bible, often refers not only to physical flesh, but to weak human nature, which is devoid of the influence of God’s Spirit. This is why Paul can say to Christians that: “You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you.” [Rom 8:9]. The ‘flesh’, or “Godless human nature”, has a tendency to “self-indulgence”; but obedient Christians, through the influence of the Holy Spirit [Romans 8:13, Galatians 5:24] can be said to be “full of goodness” [compare also Matthew 12:33, 35]. This is why Michael Ashton could correctly write: “Yet others believe that His [Jesus’] human nature, which He shared with us, deserved God’s condemnation, and that this was publically declared at His crucifixion. Although the word ‘flesh’ is often used in Scripture pejoratively, because in all mankind, with the exception of Christ, it has resulted in sin, flesh is not of itself condemned. While in man it is impossible to separate flesh and sin, in Christ they were separated... If flesh is worthy of condemnation, how in Christ could it be said that the ‘Word became flesh’?” Michael Ashton also accurately stated “...God by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3). This phraseology has created confusion in the minds of many [Christadelphians], who believe it is saying that in the sacrifice of Christ, God was condemning flesh. If this is what is meant, we are asked to believe that our very natures, not only the disobedience which results from them, are worthy of God’s wrath – and so must Christ’s have been. Any doctrine that makes the Son of God a child of wrath, must be rejected.” [“The Christadelphian”; ‘Jesus Christ came into the World to Save Sinners’, June, 1987]

Jesus came to take away “the sin of the world.” [John 1:29]. But John also records that Jesus said that: “I am not of this world.” [John 8:23]. Jesus was born into God’s family [John 8:35-36; where the Greek ‘oikia’ here means ‘family’], and He was never ‘a slave of sin’ [see John 8:34, Romans 7:14], because He never transgressed. Hence, He did not personally need to sacrifice for any ‘sins’ of His own [Hebrews 7:27], He came to inaugurate the New Covenant, by Himself alone. This is the meaning of Hebrews 9:12 – Jesus “obtained eternal redemption”. The Greek word for “obtained” here [‘HEURAMENOS’] is in the intensive middle voice, because the whole context of the Epistle to the Hebrews (especially verses 2:17 and 6:20), clearly demonstrates that only Jesus, and Jesus alone, makes true atonement for the sins of the people [Hebrews 2:17; 6:20]. The verb ‘obtained’ at Heb. 9:12, in the intensive middle voice, emphasises this vital fact that it was Jesus, and Jesus alone [and not anyone, or anything, to do with the Old Covenant], who obtained ‘eternal redemption’. By His sacrifice, Jesus became the great shepherd of the sheep - who are the adopted children of God (Hebrews 13:20).

The forgiveness of ‘sins’ and the Divine forgetting of iniquity provided by the New Covenant [Jeremiah 31:31-34] only has reference to transgressions. This is brought out by the poetic parallelism of the Hebrew Bible, which reads in “The Jewish Study Bible”:

“For I will forgive their iniquities,  
and remember their sins no more” [Jeremiah 31:34].

Here we see that ‘iniquity’ is equated, via Hebraic poetic parallelism, with transgressions (sins). This is confirmed by Jesus, and the Apostolic Gospel proclamation, which only offers forgiveness for transgressions [Matthew 1:21; Mark 2:5; 1 Corinthians 15:3, Acts 2:38]. The New Covenant also provided for the internalisation of God’s law [cf. 1 Cor. 2:16], and the ability to know, love and obey God [cf. Rom. 8:9-16]. But these were abilities that Jesus already possessed as a Son of God. Therefore, it appears that the sinless Christ was not in personal need of the New Covenant; and that He altruistically inaugurated that Covenant only for the sake of others. This is confirmed by the fact that Jesus Himself, is never stated to have partaken of the emblems of His body and blood, at ‘the last supper’. Jesus specifically gave the bread and the wine only to His disciples, because, as He claimed, it was for the forgiveness of sins [Matt. 26:28].

**Conclusions.** Traditional Christadelphian Atonement beliefs derive essentially from the formulations of Robert Roberts, who believed that Dr. John Thomas was effectively, for the purposes of personal salvation, an infallible interpreter of the Bible. Roberts wrote “There is but one safe position, and in that we mean, by the favour of God, to entrench ourselves for ‘better or worse’ viz. the whole Truth as brought to light by Dr. Thomas.” [“The Christadelphian”, 1873, p. 564]. However, since these words were penned, in the nineteenth century, there has been a vast increase in our knowledge of the New Testament Greek language, and of Hebrew linguistic idioms [which has helped clarify our understanding of the Hebraism: “the righteousness of God” – see “The Language of the Cross”, pp.52-74, by Graham Jackman]. Consequently, the only reasonable response is to follow the lead of the Christadelphian Editorial Committee, who wrote in “The Christadelphian” [‘For Whom Christ Died’; pp. 358-363; 1971], with specific reference to the Atonement: “It follows from this, that any knowledge we have at any time on this subject [the Atonement] should continue to grow as our experience, both of life and of the Word of God, becomes deeper and richer, and new needs call forth new understanding.”

Brother Tony Cox

Brother Tony Cox invites comments please.

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## Brotherly Love

We realise after perhaps being absent from the company of Brethren and Sisters for some time what a blessing it is to meet together and to talk about those things of God which constitute our hope. It is indeed a source of strength to us to mix with those that love God, whose thoughts are in harmony, who desire the same things as regards this present life and who love to meet one another as more than just friends (in a worldly sense) when we meet together, have a feeling of security and love which the world cannot or does not give. Brotherly love is a virtue which is to be added to Godliness according to the epistle to Peter.

John tells us that “He that loveth his brother abideth in the light. Offence is a thing that we should never give, not even to people of the world. Moses forbids it – to put a stumbling block or offence before the blind; Paul said that he exercised himself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man.

So Christ warns that whosoever offends one of his humble children it were better for him that a millstone be hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the midst of the sea. “Woe unto the world,” He says, “because of offence! for it must needs be that offences come.” Matthew 18:7). Let out strivings be to give offence to none. The wise man Solomon says “A brother offended is harderto win than a city.” (Proverbs 18:19). If we love God no offence will be given because we shall love our brother also, knowing that “we, being many, are one body in Christ and everyone, members one of another.” (Romans 12:5)

Brother Tom Gettliffe.

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**From The Nazarene Fellowship Facebook Forum. 20<sup>th</sup> October**

## **Resurrection and Judgment.**

**Russell Gregory:** - 2 Corinthians 5:10, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

Many have unnecessarily feared the Judgment seat of Christ over this saying of the Apostle Paul for it is commonly believed and taught that in the resurrection at the coming of Christ some will be accepted while the rest are rejected and no one will know which group they are in until that final moment. This is a cruel teaching and not at all what the Bible teaches.

To read the Bible effectively we must always interpret prophecies in their right order. The early prophecies are not always complete and are added to with more detail at a later time and this is what we find with regard to events at the return of Jesus.

God’s judgments have been in the earth from the earliest times, as in Noah’s day with the flood, as the plagues on Egypt as a result of oppressing God’s chosen people, as in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and later, the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70 for rejecting Jesus as their Messiah.

With regard to the resurrection and the appearing before the Judgment Seat of Christ we must look for harmony between earlier and later predictions. There is little in the Old Testament on the subject of the resurrection but we will look at Daniel 12:1 & 2, “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

John 5:27-29, agrees with Daniel 12 for here Jesus tells us “And (God) hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

It is easy to see why people believe that the resurrection of the just and the unjust take place together but what are we told elsewhere? As I said, later prophecies should be taken into consideration where possible because they fill out earlier prophecies.

What are we to make on Matthew 24:36-41 where Jesus tells us - “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the

field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.”

What we wish to point out here is that the taking away of some and the leaving of others is a judgment made by God. He takes some and leaves others. The righteous are taken to be with Jesus and there is no mention here of the unfaithful or wicked being taken. This saying of Jesus only takes into consideration those living at the time and no mention is made of those who have died. So let's go to 1 Corinthians 15:35, where Paul tells in plain language about those raised, “But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?” This is a straight-forward question and the straightforward answer is given in verses 42 and 43, “It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:”

Again we note that Paul makes mention of those raised in incorruption, or those raised in glory and raised in power. All these also go to be with Jesus at that same time as when one is taken and another left in total agreement with Jesus saying. Going next to Revelation 20:4-6, it is Jesus again giving the instruction: - “and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

What of those who some say will appear with the righteous at the Judgment Seat of Christ? We find by reading the Bible effectively that they do not. There is to be a thousand years between the resurrection of the faithful and the resurrection of the unfaithful. The first to receive their rewards from Jesus; the later to receive the wages of sin, which is death. Judicial death which is final.

Let Paul give us the exhortation (1 Corinthians 4:13 – 16), “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (precede) them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

**Nathan:** - I find it interesting that three of the passages that give us the most information about what will happen to believers at the return of Christ and the resurrection, do not mention any sort of judgment seat or “Great Assize” at all. These passages are 1 Cor 15 [52. “*In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed*”] (which speaks of being “raised imperishable!”), Rev 20:1-6 [“*This is the first resurrection. 6. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power*”], and 1 Thess 4:13-18 [“*and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18. Wherefore comfort one another with these words*”]. If there is some sort of judgment process it perhaps isn't a big enough deal to even mention here, perhaps something more like just a “well done thou good and faithful servant”. The passages speak of those being raised as being “in Christ”, which I think perhaps we've misunderstood to mean all of those who have been baptised whether they have remained faithful or not. But perhaps “in Christ” just refers to those who have stayed faithful out of those who have been baptised. How can you still be “in Christ” if you have left him? Those who haven't stayed faithful, are no longer “in Christ” and will not be “raised imperishable”, will not be raised at all, or perhaps raised at the end of the 1000 year reign (the text in Rev 20 certainly implies heavily a universal resurrection at the end of the millennium). An interesting topic, and worth a review.

**Russell** :- Yes, Nathan, I agree.

Many years ago I remember hearing of people who were really frightened by the thought of having to appear before Jesus at His judgment seat, not knowing if they were to be accepted or rejected. It was many years before I realised how wrong this teaching was.

I can imagine this notion being used as a preaching tool by those who wanted to exercise tight control over their congregations hundreds of years ago, but the reality of Bible teaching is very different. In the first resurrection we find no one is condemned.

The Greek word here translated “judgment seat” is “bema” and referring to Wikipedia we find the definition of “bema” as : -

*“The Bema, Bima or Bimah - - - means a raised platform. In antiquity it was probably made of stone, but in modern times it is usually a rectangular wooden platform approached by steps. The original use of the bema in Athens was as a tribunal from which orators addressed the citizens as well as the courts of law. In Greek law courts the two parties to a dispute presented their arguments each from separate bemas.*

*Bema was also used as the name for a place of judgment, that is the raised seat of the judge, as described in the New Testament, in Matthew 27:19 and John 19:13, and further, as the seat of the Roman emperor, in Acts 25:10, and of God, in Romans 14:10, when speaking in judgment.”*

Jesus tells us, in Revelation 20:6, “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power.” Paul wrote in similar vein in Romans 8:1, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” - so we see there is no place at the judgment seat of Christ for punishment, no pronouncement of ‘guilty’, nothing called into question; but I would suggest it is the moment of presenting awards as Jesus, in His great love for us, sees right and good in His eyes. And here I would like to quote Paul’s words in 1 Thessalonians 4:18, “Wherefore comfort one another with these words”.

**Nathan:** - I helped counsel a dying sister who was dealing with this issue. It is still part of the CD culture.

**Russell:-**

Nathan, regarding not knowing whether or not one is saved until they appear before Jesus at His Judgment Seat, you say this is still part of Christadelphian culture, so I thought I would look up Bible Basics to see what they had to say. Here it is: -

“From what we have seen so far, it is fair to assume that after the Lord’s return and the resurrection, there will be a gathering together of all who have been called to the Gospel to a certain place at a specific time, when they will meet Christ. An account will have to be given by them, and he will indicate whether or not they are acceptable to receive the reward of entering the Kingdom. It is only at this point that the righteous receive their reward. All this is brought together by the parable of the sheep and goats: “The Son of man comes in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory (David’s throne in Jerusalem, Luke 1:32, 33). All the nations (i.e. people from all nations, cf. Matthew 28:19) will be gathered before him, and he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And he will set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you...’” (Matthew 25:31-34).” – Taken from Bible Basics. Section 4.6. The Judgment.

I wonder if there is anyone from Carelinks or Aletheia College who would care to join in this discussion, please?

**Nathan:** - It is interesting that this passage doesn’t mention any sort of giving of account or interrogation or anything like that. There is just a gathering together and a separation into sheep and goats. In fact the only comments made by the people raised are surprised at finding themselves where they are. I’ve never realised this before but this passage actually supports the idea that the judgment seat will not be a fearful Great Assize but rather a quick process that basically amounts to “well done thou good and faithful servant” for those in Christ, and condemnation for those who are not in Christ.

But here again much depends upon what you consider “in Christ” to mean. Does it mean just the righteous? Or does it include everyone baptised into Christ, whether they remained righteous or not? I would argue the former, only those who don’t fall away can still be “in Christ”.

**Russell:** - I don’t know if anyone from Carelinks will respond to my invitation to discuss these matters or not, but it seems to me there is a confusing of two distinctly separate occasions in the paragraph quoted from Bible Basics – first there is the gathering together of the elect to meet with Christ, and second, we go to the beginning of their reign with Christ. There is an unknown interval between the two events.

Let me explain my thinking on this: First of all there are those who are called to meet the Lord in the air and who will ever be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Then at a later time we have these same called ones returning with Jesus to commence their reign as angels – of which time we read in Matthew 25:31-46:

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”

I believe this is the time when Jesus will purge out from His kingdom “all things that offend” as we read in the parable of the tares (Matthew 13:37-43).

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## “Life in Adam” and “Life in Christ”

### Romans 5:15 to 21

In Romans 5:15-21 the Apostle gives a sevenfold reiteration of the fact that, as one sinner (Adam) closed the door of life against himself and all in him, so God has provided a ransom (Jesus) in value equal to the greatness of the occasion: -

15. 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.

16. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification.

17. For 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.

18. 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.

19. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

20. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:

21. That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

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## A Pearl of Great Price

In the parable of the labourers in the vineyard each one received a penny, whether he had borne the burden and heat of the day or had laboured but one hour; so those who are Christ's at His coming shall each receive the gift of eternal life - the young disciple who, at the last hour of the day of salvation, put on the Lord Jesus, and the veteran who from youth to old age has fought the good fight of faith; yet the place and position of these in the glorious Kingdom of God shall differ immensely from each other. And so the Judge heralds His advent cry: "Behold, I come quickly and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be." And all this is in perfect accord with the apostolic deliverance, "The dead shall be raised incorruptible."

In further confirmation of this truth see the words of our Lord in Luke 20:35, 36, "They who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from amongst the dead, cannot die any more, but are equal to the angels." And Revelation 20:6, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." In 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17, the Apostle writes to the same effect; "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

This teaching of the Apostle is directly opposed to the doctrine that the dead in Christ rise in mortal bodies; but is in complete harmony with his glowing words in 1 Corinthians 15:51,52, "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

As in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17 two companies are spoken of - "the dead in Christ," and "those who are alive and remain" - so here; and both companies share the same glorious being and destiny; the dead raised incorruptible, and the living changed while alive; thus, together, they

meet the Lord in the air. One incorruptible band, to be associated for ever with the ever-living Redeemer. Blessed Hope! Transcendent destiny!

So far from having to be tried for his life at the judgment seat of Christ, the Christian has his name inscribed in the book of life even now. Else what mean these gracious words “He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels” - Revelation 3:5?

Brother William Laing

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