

# THE CHRISTADELPHIANS IN THEIR TRUE LIGHT

## Three Lectures by Three Lecturers

AS FOLLOWS

“WHY I BECAME A CHRISTADELPHIAN:”

*By (late the “Rev.”) J.H. CHAMBERLIN*

“WHO AND WHAT THE CHRISTADELPHIANS ARE:”

*By ROBERT ROBERTS, Editor of the “Christadelphian.”*

“WHY THE CHRISTADELPHIANS STAND ALOOF:”

*By (late the “Rev.”) R. ASHCROFT*

CONJOINTLY EXHIBITING THEIR TRUE CHARACTER AND FAITH OF “THE SECT  
EVERWHERE SPOKEN AGAINST.”

BIRMINGHAM

R. ROBERTS, ATHENAEUM BUILDINGS, EDMUND STREET

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## PREFACE

The Christadelphians are becoming more known every day. Where known, they are “everywhere spoken against,” like the sect spoken of in Acts xxviii, 22. This is due, in great measure to ignorance of their faith and the grounds of it. To dispel this ignorance and introduce earnest people to the glories of Bible truth, the following lecturers were recently delivered in Birmingham, by special arrangement, in the order in which they appear in this pamphlet. Those who heard them were impressed with the idea that they were calculated to produce this effect, and that it ought not to be confined to the actual hearers, but extended generally by publication. Repeated request having been made for their publication, they are now sent forth imprinted form, with the hope and prayer that honest hearts groping dismally in the embarrassments of popular theology on the one hand, and scientific unbelief on the other, may be led by their means to find in the truth revealed in the Scriptures that rest and hope and joy that many have found before them.

ROBERT ROBERTS

Athenaeum Buildings, Edmund St.,  
Birmingham, May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1883.

## FIRST LECTURE

By (late the “Rev.”) J.H.CHAMBERLIN

### “WHY I LEFT THE METHODIST MINISTRY AND BECAME A CHRISTADELPHIAN.”

I must, in this lecture, beg to be excused for making so frequent use of the personal pronoun “I.” I know it is usually intolerable to hear a man constantly talking about himself; egotism and pretence being amongst the most sickening of human failings. And I would not refer to my own case at all but for certain pressing reasons. For I do not suppose that the world at large cares two straws what I am, whether Methodist or Christadelphian, nor that it cares for the reasons which have induced my change of position. But I thought that perhaps the considerations which have been sufficient to lead me where I now stand might serve for the guidance of at least some anxious and earnest one; and then, again I *know* that many thoughtful persons in orthodox circles are seriously disturbed and dissatisfied, unable to find mental response in their traditional beliefs. I know that my case is only one of many as far as theological uneasiness is concerned. There is much uncertainty and misgiving in the ministerial world. And are the people restful and happy in the dogmas and negations of clerical theology? I know there are many who are not. And so I hope that, in talking of myself, it may not be annoying, but profitable to hear of one who, through much mental tribulation, has come into theological peace, who believes that in the interpretation of the scriptures which is peculiar to Christadelphians in this age, he has found the true ground of human hope, and the sufficient motive of human endeavour.

I may further say that nothing but the oft-repeated blows of conviction could in my case have broken the links which attached me to my ministerial life, and forced me to a situation which is, and must be for a long time, one of social suffering and loss. I am not repining. If old associations are being dissolved, I am forming new ones. If I have less money, I have more peace. If my late friends shake their heads, saying “rash and foolish man, I doubt not he will regret this step,” my breast contains a voice that witnesses “well done.” The fact is, to me the truth concerning God and His purpose for the world is more precious than rubies, and I too, would count all things as loss for the excellence of this knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord. If, indeed, (what is to me) the truth involved far deeper sacrifices than I have been called upon to make, I could have no hesitation in choosing it for my portion still, and clinging to it the more as I could cling to other things the less.

Before I begin to speak of my progress towards the truth, I think I had better say, in as few words as possible, what the central matter, the heart or core of Christadelphian interpretation is, so that if to any of you this interpretation is quite a new thing, you may, by seeing the conclusions to which I was tending, realise my mental progress better. Of course, I did not reach the Christadelphian position at one step, but the grandeur of the truth is its completeness, and when you have taken one step in the right direction you have only to keep pursuing, and all the truths which complete the beautiful circle, will disclose themselves in due time. At the risk, then, of encountering prejudice, I would say that we believe, *as a matter of Scripture*

*interpretation and not of human speculation*, that the gospel or the good tidings for the race is *not* that Jesus Christ died as your substitute that your disembodied spirit might be saved from a torturing hell to a happy heaven, but that God intends to transform this earth into a HOLY PLACE *of habitation*, and this by means of Jesus, who is anointed to administer a Heavenly empire in the earth for the blessing of all the families of mankind.

It is, in our view of what the Scripture teaches, a very partial and misstated account of the glad tidings, that Christ died as the sinner's substitute; partial inasmuch as the *sufferings* of Christ do not in the Scriptures for the highest matter of the glad tidings, this relation rather to the "*the GLORY that shall follow*;" and misstated, inasmuch as though the "suffering Christ" does form part of the gospel, it is not as a substitute, but as the *representative* of the race. I find that the Bible puts before us as the object (the chief object) of our hope and faith, certain glorious things, which are to be realised in due time in the earth, which things are specifically contained in what are called over and over again, THE PROMISES; while the modern pulpit, treating these as metaphors, directs our faith merely to the Cross of Christ as the glad tidings which it is not, though related. To us, the veritable symbol of the gospel is the crown of Christ; to the pulpit generally, his cross. I cannot put, in one brief sentence, the whole substantial difference between this gospel and that which I had been accustomed to hear from my childhood, but when you start from this focalised statement of the truth that God intends to administer on the earth, by Jesus anointed, a kingdom of Heavenly order, the follow that statement out through the whole radius of its correlated truths concerning the promises made to the fathers, the national election of the Jews, the past establishment of a theocracy in the earth, the teaching of the prophets as to the downfall and revival of the Kingdom of God, the past coming of Christ to do a priestly and preparatory work, the second coming in kingly authority and power, the resurrection of those who have been sleeping in the dust awaiting judgement, the change to immortality of Christ's approved friends, and their entrance with him upon the functions of the Heavenly control, the glory that shall then rise and spread and flow till it covers the whole earth, the felicity of the age ensuing, ending in the complete extinction of sin; whoever, I say, follows out these things from the central truth of the glad tidings, will find that clerical teaching of all schools has shifted the ground of hope from the things which God has promised on every page of the Scriptures, old and new, to fancies and conceits which are partly baptised paganisms, and partly strained interpretations of a few isolated texts.

At least this is what I have found; and now I will try to explain how it began to dawn upon me. I can't expect to carry you in conviction with me in all the points I shall refer to, so this lecture will be more a narrative than an argument. But please remember that no one of you could be more repelled from the doctrine I now endorse, than I was when it was first submitted to my attention, for, curious to relate, while I was quite a youth, these very doctrines were brought to my notice by one who is still a brother in the truth, but instead of carefully considering them, I was indignant at the thought of them being true, and went through my Bible from beginning to end with a view to find those texts which should refute the heresy. I am amused now at the selection of texts which I then made, and astonished that I could not see the irrelevancy. So do not prejudge the case as I did, but remember that Protestantism itself was once in the position in which Christadelphian interpretation now stands, viz, starting up in the face of an existing Christendom, and calling in question those things

made venerable by learning, culture, the consent of many minds, and the traditions of the church through ages. I will not trouble you with dates, but will simply say that a good while ago I began to be mentally uncertain as to the truth of the doctrine of eternal punishment. It was Edward White's well known book on "Life in Christ" that first started doubts in my mind in regard to this. I ought to say that it was not so much endless punishment as endless sin, that gave me grave doubts. Of course if you have a condition of sin, you must have a state of punishment to correspond with it. But it was the supposition of endless sin that staggered me. Now if it is not true that sin in God's world shall perpetuate itself for ever, and if the Scriptures do not say that it shall, then endless punishment falls to the ground, for punishment cannot exist where sin is not. Now I did not rely much on the philosophical improbability that God, whose glory is that He is holy, should create a universe knowing that sin would be an everlasting fact confronting Him and defying Him through all the length of His own eternity, though I venture to say that such a supposition is incredible, but I relied chiefly on the unanimous testimony of the Scriptures that sin shall finally be *destroyed*, that God at last shall be ALL IN ALL. Take, for instance, Paul's statement in 1 Cor xv. 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> verses. How can anyone reconcile this with the endless existence of wicked and rebellious spirits? Of if anything more conclusive can be found, take Heb ii, 14, where not only is death destroyed, but it, too, is destroyed that has the power of death, that is the devil. Well, if the devil is *destroyed* by Christ (whatever interpretation of devil you take), it cannot be the agent of an everlasting infliction on wicked men. Again John testifies that "Christ was manifested to destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). Of then, *sin* is the great work of the devil, and Christ is manifested to destroy sin, and this is testified again and again, how can sin be an eternal fact, and so how can it be eternally punished? In this lecture I do not pretend to submit a tithe of the Scripture evidence for the truth I hold, but to indicate the lines of enquiry on which my mind ran; and so I remark that it was the frequent, the repeated, the unanimous testimony of Scripture that sinners and sin should be destroyed – destroyed, even as Peter says, AS "NATURAL BRUTE BEASTS" are destroyed (1 Peter 2:12); together with the fact that there was nothing but a supposed grammatical necessity for making the Scriptures affirm endless punishment, that I gave up the most incredible dogma the intellect of man has ever sought to maintain. I confess that, for some time, I stuck fast over the usual arguments used to uphold this falsehood – the fire that is unquenchable – the smoke that ascends for ever and ever – the worm that dieth not – the word "everlasting" and so on; but on due consideration, there was nothing in these to modify the Scripture teaching that sin is to be vanquished and sinners to be destroyed. I found that the orthodox teachers had committed two blunders in regard to future punishment, viz, they had taken out of it the element the Scriptures insist upon as being part of it, the literal fire; and had put in the element of eternity of which the Scripture knows nothing, nothing, that is, when the popular meaning of the word *aion* is remembered, viz, *the endless*.

It was then I began to be suspicious about another point of popular teaching, which I saw lent a certain sanction, and afforded a degree of strength to this doctrine of endless punishment, viz, the natural immortality of man. If man must needs live for ever, it is easy then to find ground for his being punished for ever, but if man is, as to his entire nature, a thing of a few fleeting years, whose breath goeth forth and he is no more, then it will be hard to find ground for him suffering endless pain. Now, I soon found in searching the Scriptures for the truth as to the nature of man, that human nature is represented as staggering under a law of death which involves his *entire*

*being*, and does not simply relate to a part of it. I found the most astounding ignorance and perversion of Scripture on this point. “Soul” as taken to mean the higher constituent part of human nature, SUPERIOR TO DECAY, and involving immortality. “Life” and “death” were taken to mean felicity and woe, and every text that could found bearing on the future state was employed to prove that man must live for ever. All this is not surprising when we remember that men have been educated to believe such things, and when we remember how it flatters human pride to say that man possesses immortality. I admit that it is more surprising that scholars who know well what words mean, should use them in a sense radically wrong and misleading. But this only proves that we all ought to look for the meanings of words ourselves, trusting to nobody’s slovenliness. It is an easy task and very profitable. Well, I found that the Scriptures gave no countenance to this doctrine of man’s natural immortality. It is therein affirmed that God *only* possesses it (1 Timothy 6:16); that man must *seek for it* by patient continuance in well-doing (Romans 2:7); that in death man is extinct (Isaiah 43:17); that his thoughts, his love, his hate, are perished (Eccles. 9:5-6); that, if he *rise* not, he is perished (1 Cor. 15: 18); that he is dust organised by Spirit, and return to dust when the Spirit power is withdrawn (Psalm 104: 29-30); that the wicked abide in death (Psalm 49), and the good put on immortality at the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:53).

If the better part of man is immortal, then the language of the Bible is puzzling indeed, for that language is very different from what is popularly employed to describe human nature. Some scholars admit that the Bible does not *teach* man’s immortality, but contend that the message assumes it. I fancy it is they who assume it, and not the Bible, for the equivalents of “immortality” may in vain be sought for; the uniform testimony is that *man*, and not a part of man, is a creature of dust, which the breath of God has animated and organised, in common with other living creatures. Although once I was as firm a believer in human immortality as any of you may be, and imagined I had Scripture warrant for believing in it, I now found that it was a mere opinion, which the Scriptures nowhere endorsed, but which, with other opinions, had been obtained from pagan schools of speculation. It was an additional matter to find that the Biblical account of man answered exactly to the observations of psychology in reference to him, and completely escaped the criticisms of materialists, as being beside the mark. Mr. Bradlaugh’s tract, “Has man a soul?” would have to be rewritten, for its strictures do not apply to the Bible doctrine of the soul, and every other materialistic impeachment of the popular notions of the soul has no point nor force when considered in relation to the Bible doctrine. That doctrine is not that man *has* a soul, but that man *is* a soul, soul simply meaning “living being,” so that every living being is a soul, which is what the Bible both says and implies. Instead of the world “soul” carrying with it the idea of immortality, the Psalmist (Psalm 49:15) affirms that it is the soul that is *redeemed from the grave*, and Paul says the same (1 Cor. 15:44), where what is sown in death is described as a *natural*, or *soul-body*. So that while “soul” generally and most strictly means “living being,” it is sometimes employed to mean a being that once was living, but is now dead; and so, in Haggai 2:13, and elsewhere, the Hebrew word *soul* is translated *dead body*.

But all this is ignored by the multitude of teacher and scholars alike, who, while professing deference to the Bible, go on platitudinising about man’s “precious” and “immortal” soul; their profound ignorance being proved by this – that the Bible teaches, 1<sup>st</sup> that the Bible teaches that the soul is man himself; 2<sup>nd</sup>, that he is neither

precious not immortal until resurrection and acquittal in judgment have made him so. To show how carelessly the Bible is read, even by professional men, it is assumed that when it is said that man was made in the image of God, it means that he was made immortal. The logic and exegesis are equally surprising. If reference had been made to the explanatory text in Ephes. 4:24 and Col 3:10, it would have been seen at once that Scriptural account of this image is that it lay in those supreme *moral qualities* which are the crown and glory of human nature.

The natural immortality of man is the foundation stone of most of the unscriptural theology of the ages, and when to me this dogma was proved false, nearly every other doctrine I had held for truth began to tremble in its place and to threaten a fall. For as I was convinced that man when dead, *was* dead, and was not, as the chief part of his nature, alive and conscious, my mind ran on in question like these: If when a man dies he is dead and buried, then can it be true that he goes either to heaven or to hell? Is there anything scriptural in these ideas? What is Heaven? What is Hell? What Scripture proof is there as to men going to one place or the other? When I made a close search for the answers to such questions, my mind was opened to a gigantic and extraordinary delusion prevailing over the great majority of Christian people, and of which I had hitherto been a complete victim. I found that the Scriptural doctrine of the kingdom of God, or kingdom of Heaven, had been completely subverted by pagan ideas about a disembodied residence in a celestial world; that while retaining some of the ideas about the kingdom, the *ideas* had been transferred from a glorious historical fact to be realised due time in the earth, to a shadowy philosophical fiction which had not the slightest Scriptural foundation.

A whole world of truth full of splendour and enchantment burst upon my eyes when I made this discovery. The Bible from end to end was ablaze with a glory of which I had no conception before. The pages of Moses and the prophets, which I had been accustomed to notice in Methodist pulpit Bibles as so clean and white, showing that they were seldom referred to, were now thumbed by me with nervous eagerness. Everything Biblical fell into perfect order, and strains of music seemed to pervade the whole book, like the harmony of Moses and the Lamb. What was this world of truth and beauty which floated into my vision as I read? I will tell you.

I learned that “Heaven” of the Bible was the central home of God, from which the divine power and glory expatiate and proceed, unassailable and unapproachable by man, and encircled by a Universe of created things which spring from God’s all-manifesting spirit. I learned that instead of this holy place being the home to which all believers ascend when they die, the Scripture tells us (Heb. 6:20 and 9:24) that Jesus Christ has entered there *as High Priest for us*. I learned that the brethren of Christ who have passed away, and of whom a partial list is given (Heb. 11) – have not entered upon their reward; that the dead saints are sleeping (1 Thess. 4:13); when reference is made to them in Scripture the finger is ever pointed to their dust, and no hint is given that they “live” in heaven. I learned that the kingdom of heaven which the prophets predicted and which the apostles preached, was *heavenly dominion in the earth* for which the faithful were to be prepared by justification, resurrection, judgment and immortalisation, which should be the means of conferring unutterable benefit upon making, thus making good the promises given to Abraham, the father of the faithful, and whose seed was Christ, and to whom the gospel of old was preached saying “in they seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” In this sublime

programme of things, I could see a continuity in the working of Deity through all the ages, the golden thread of Providence could easily be traced through history and the consummation, or what the apostle calls “the restitution of things,” became so bright, so real, so worthy of God, and withal so probably near at hand that my heart rejoiced within me.

As for the “heaven” of pagan derivation, I never could make much of it, and I was not sorry to part with it. There was nothing real about it but the name. It could only be described by forsaking the Scripture and resorting to imagination with an apologetic misuse of the well-known passage (1 Cor 2:9), “Eye hath not seen etc.” Whereas the hope of the believer is a definite “hope of Israel;” definite as to time, locality, and all the principal facts and circumstances of its substance. Our heaven is heavenly order of things which will be our “inheritance,” and which will obtain in a certain land, called “the land of promise,” which order will be instituted and maintained by all those who qualify themselves by belief and obedience of the truth. As to Hell, I learned that it was either the grave, or an engulfment in a fiery destruction that would put an end to sinners after the analogy of that which consumed Nadab and Abihu in the days of Moses. The *Gehenna* of the New Testament refers to the consumptive action of God’s wrath, which will, in the day of the Lord, devour his adversaries, leaving them, as Malachi says, “neither root nor branch.” It is only a metaphysical quibble when it is objected that it is impossible for anything that exists to suffer absolute destruction. For we do not talk of absolute destruction, or destruction of substance, but are only saying that the organised creature called a man, being a sinner is now dissolved, or perished under the punitive inflictions of God’s wrath. With this meaning, Jesus said “for it is better that *one member* should *perish* that that thy *whole body* should be cast into *Gehenna*.” When you have got the idea of “perishing” in the case of the “one member,” you know, what it means by the “whole body” being “cast into Hell.” So, in place of shadowy speculations about “another world,” with its supposed “glory” and “outer darkness,” I grasped the truth that *Heaven* is the palace of God – Hell the tomb of sin- and the Kingdom of Heaven or God, the rule of Christ with his people over all the earth, in fulfilment of the predictions of all the prophets, of whom Daniel may be taken as a representative, who says, 7:27, “and the kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom in an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers shall serve Him.” Of course I had to examine those texts in which it is supposed proof is found that the deceased saints are gone to glory. Enoch’s case – Elijah’s departure-the thief on the cross-the poor man Lazarus-Paul’s anticipations of reward. But each text fell into easy intelligibility with the truth on the subject. The fact is, no doctrine should be based upon the interpretations of occasional texts, but seeing that one of the main reasons for a revelation is to disclose God’s purposes touching futurity, the whole bearing of that revelation must be remembered, if we would understand the truth concerning the future life.

When this is complied with, it is perfectly evident that God is preparing the earth for a *glorious future*, in which a land – a people – a throne – a king – an administration are to be instrumental in promoting the highest ends of human welfare – leading up to the destruction of sin, and the abolition of its grim attendant, death. Whoever understands this, and I believe all who will attend to what it testified in the whole of the Scriptures



may understand it, will find no difficulty in seeing how the texts in question fall in, and face the same way with the general line of Scripture.

Whoever comes to doubt the natural immortality of men, stands fairly in the way of having his orthodoxy shaken, and whoever has come to understand the Bible doctrine of the kingdom of God, bids fair to grasp the whole gospel of Christ. I had by this time satisfied my self that man is mortal, and that in the bible, heaven and the Kingdom of Heaven were very distinct things. I had learned to reject that notion of the Kingdom of Heaven which says it is Christ reigning in the hearts of his people now, for this did not answer to the predictions of the Old Testament concerning that kingdom, and I had learned to doubt that gospel which might still be a gospel, though the Old Testament had not been written, nor its history happened; though Abraham had never lived, nor any promises been made to the fathers, nor Jesus Christ been born in the line of David. For the popular gospel depends on none of these facts and instead of affirming with Paul "*none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come,*" the current gospel can find nothing but an occasional illustration in Moses and the prophets, useful for its teaching. It shakes its head dubiously over those earlier portions of Revelation, and can make nothing of them; while the more "advanced" tell us plainly that in the Jewish forecasts of the Old Testament we have nothing more than the earnest and pious aspirations of that nation which will probably never be fulfilled.

Well, when I had got so far, I began to enquire who is to inherit this Kingdom of God, and what are the terms and means of admission into it. In answering these questions, there are very few persons who simply address themselves to interpret the Word of God. It is supposed to be a very difficult matter to explain, and so it is, when the human kind is pre-occupied by unscriptural ideas. All the more necessary is it that we should cease our speculations, and accept what is written. It is here particularly that the doctrine of immortality comes in to warp the mind, and prevent discernment of the truth. For that truth is simply this, that only those are admitted to the Kingdom of Heaven who are the subjects of justification (and this by faith), resurrection, approval in judgment, and immortalisation; whereas, according to current theology, the great bulk of the human race, being "immortal," finds its way to "glory," as it is called, on the strength of that, without reference to those five Biblical requisites. Current theology, not knowing what the Kingdom of Heaven means, sends all the heathen there, or such as have tried to love according to the light of nature. It finds a place therein for all good children, and transplants the pretty flowers of infancy to "the better land," without any hesitation whatever. A miserably illiterate and scrappy misuse of Scripture is resorted to, with a view of finding some authority for all this, as when Mark 10 is quoted, "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God," to show that infants form part of the population, and the society termed the Kingdom of God. All this come of the falsehood that human nature is such a precious thing, that it must survive, and so a place must be found for it in the world to come.

Now nothing like this could have happened if it had been understood that the glory of human nature is as the flower of the field; that man's life is a vapour; a wind, a failing stream, a tale soon told, and that entire nations of men are in the estimate of God as but the dregs of a bucket. No mistake such as this could arise were it understood that the kingdom of heaven is not a state of angelic pleasure, far away from the strife of

the world, but an order of things in the midst of, and over all the thronging nations, in which able and authorised men in the perfect enjoyment of immortal powers will govern, and judge, and beneficently protect mankind. Is this a work for babes, however sweet? For the heathen, however, noble? If the Scriptures are to be trusted, no one will obtain admission into that Hierarchy, but *he who has believed and obeyed the gospel*. For only in this way can human nature be justified from sin, and so freed from the law of sin and death. The gospel must be heard, believed, obeyed. The glad tidings are not glad tidings to those who have never heard them, or if they are, why publish them? Read Paul's arguments in Romans 10: 8-15 and then say if the heathen are justified without the hearing and belief of the truth. And if the heathen are not, then on what testimony, or on what principle, are infants or idiots justified? Do you say it is horrible to think that God should cut them off from participating in future life? Not more horrible than that he should cut them off from an average human life, which we know He does. The fact is, none are admitted to the kingdom of God save those who have been qualified for life by accepting the promises of glad tidings, and whose earnest efforts to live accordingly shall prove that their faith was not a sham. It is a kind of survival of the fittest in a religious sense. They who have not heard or read the promises are irresponsible as to them, there will be no place for them at Christ's judgment seat; they will therefore, "perish without the law" (Romans 2:12.) Of all this is shocking to the orthodox mind, it is because that mind has been trained to a false conception and estimate of human nature, which cannot reconcile itself to the idea of the wholesale destruction of "immortals." Whereas, if it were guided by Scripture teaching, it would know that man's short lease of life is the result of sin, and that sin is a *totally destructive* agent of all who are not righteous, without regard to numbers, as may be seen when Noah's family alone was saved in all the world, or when Caleb and Joshua only were saved of the generation that left the land of Egypt.

But I found that when "belief" was insisted upon in orthodoxy, it was such a belief that the apostles would have spurned and denied. The *person* of Christ, as distinguished from the *doctrine* of Christ it is said, is that in which man must believe. There is a good deal of mystical trash written and spoken about trusting in a "living Christ," losing sight of the fact that the living Christ is *nothing to us at all* apart from the truth concerning the Anointed. For "Christ" is not a personal name, but a title in which we recognise the bearer as God's official – Christed unto this end, viz., the confirming of the promise made unto the fathers, And he only has faith in Christ on whom these truths and promises thus confirmed have laid such hold, that now all love and labour reach forth and bend toward "the recompense of reward."

The more I was determined to let the Scriptures speak for themselves and to abide by what they said, the farther I got from the beaten paths of theology. I had formed the habit of *searching* the Scriptures, and I found that my system of religious belief required complete reconstruction. Not here and there only, but everywhere the warping influence of tradition was clearly detected. From the foundational truths concerning God, to the precepts which form Christ's ethical code, I came to the conclusion that Christendom was astray. For instance, I found that the truth as to God is that He is absolutely ONE, both as to person and to essence, and that Jesus Christ was divine, as being the manifestation of the Father in human nature. The Son of God was born of Mary (Luke 1:35), the Scriptural ground of that august title being his divine conception, under the "overshadowing" of the highest; his plenary investment by the Holy Spirit at his baptism, and his begetting from the dead by the same (John

3:34; Romans 1: 4). All this is vastly different from the popular notion that the Son of God was the second person of a coequal Trinity, and that was born of Mary was the Son of Man.

I had also to correct myself as to the Holy Spirit, for instead of this being the “third” person of the Godhead, I found that it stands for the universally extended *aura* of the Divine Being; that essence of God, which, though not personal apart from the Father, becomes personal connected with Him, as a nerve-nature through which the intelligence and power of God dart from the brain-centre to the outmost manifestations of the universe. The nerves of a man, as distinct from his brain, are as “personal” in him as the Spirit of God is “personal” when considered distinct from Him who is “the Father.” The distinction commonly drawn between “matter” and “spirit” as two *essences* is well said to be the “jargon of the schools.” There is but *one* essence which is spirit now and matter then, and Spirit becomes “Holy” Spirit when the power and intelligence of God are directed to results which have their roots and issues chiefly in the moral rather than the physical world. It was Spirit that energised Samson for his feats of strength; it was Holy Spirit that spake through prophets and apostles, that the man of God might be thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Not only in matters doctrinal, but in ethical things, also, I learned much from the Scriptures which Methodism knows nothing of. In that profession, there is no clear understanding and exposition of what the commandments are; obsolete Jewish ordinances about Sabbaths being retained, while the countenance of heresy or resort to law, or fellowship with unbelievers and other forbidden things being looked upon with no disapproval. When Paul asks, *e.g.*, in his letter to Corinth, “dare any of you go to law before the unjust, having a matter against another?” the answer made by the majority of religious people is, “of course we dare.” And many other commands are treated in the same disregarding manner.

Baptism, or rather immersion, I found to be *commanded*, but the Christian world says it is not *necessary* to salvation. But I came to see that this is the first step of obedience, and the only divine way of putting on the saving name of Christ, and of becoming incorporate in Him who is our head in all things.

I had long agreed with those calling themselves “Baptists” in their saying that the sprinkling of children was no fulfilment of the divine engagement, and at best could be but a service seemly and significant in another view; but now I learned not to trifle with God’s commandments, and submitted myself to typical burial with Christ by immersion in water for the remission of sins.

Many other things unfolded themselves as the arena of God’s Revelation was opened to my view; but in an hour, I feel I cannot tell you nearly all: how the firmament of truth cleared till the whole heaven was blue: how God’s word became a lamp to me in a dark way: how “hard sayings,” which I could never before explain, came as revelations to me now; how incongruous texts fell into sympathetic harmony and order: how vagueness became distinctness and shadows changed to solid things; how faith and moral reason met and hailed each other in mutual recognition; how the shafts of unbelieving criticism fell before me broken, or passed me harmlessly by; how the truth solaced me in the loss of many agreeable social things; of all this it

would take much time to tell. I can simply say that it was pursuing Biblical enquiries along the lines indicated by me this evening that led me, towards the close of last summer, to separate myself from the Methodist ministry, and to throw my lot with the few and obscure things of the truth.

Not that they need be ashamed of their obscurity. I am afraid it is still true that “the rulers” do not believe on Him, and that not many wise, or noble, or learned, are amongst the called, and that the wisdom of this world is still foolishness to God. I was compelled by the pressure of strong conviction, to do what I did, and I would urge you who are earnest-minded, and who feel dissatisfied with the prevailing notions of the modern pulpit, to read the Bible carefully, as I have done. Do not be afraid of using your own eyes, and exercising your own minds. You will find many things therein which may be new to you, and if you read with proper care *every part* of it, you will see how the entire book hangs together in a beautiful continuity of teaching. It will contain within itself its own evidence, and if you will follow the path indicates, it will lead you to an inheritance of glory, honour, and immortality – eternal life. Without its promises, we are all hopelessly dead men, our life is heavy and dark, but in the light of the truth concerning Christ, the resurrection, and the Kingdom of God, the firmament brightens, and with Stephen, we can see the coming glory of God.

## SECOND LECTURE

By ROBERT ROBERTS, EDITOR OF THE *Christadelphian*.

### THE SECT EVERYWHERE SPOKEN AGAINST; OR, THE TRUE CHARACTER AND FAITH OF THE PEOPLE KNOWN AS THE CHRISTADELPHIANS

Some weeks ago, a lecture was delivered by Mr. Chamberlin, late minister of the Wesleyan denomination, in explanation of the reasons which had led him to leave the Methodist ministry and become a Christadelphian. It has been thought by several that the time would not be mis-spent if we were to devote, a little time this evening to the exhibition of the character and faith of the people to whom Mr. Chamberlin has united himself. It is certain that reasonable men would be likely to feel some curiosity with regard to a people whose existence furnishes reasons (apart from emolument of which they have none to offer) sufficient to induce men like Mr. Chamberlin and Mr. Ashcroft to sacrifice the temporal prospects and popularity associated with the pulpit.

The first feature to be noted with regard to them is the one reflected in the subject of tonight's lecture: they are everywhere spoken against. This fact stumbles many. It need not, and will not stumble men who look at things as they are in themselves, and not as they appear, through the medium of popular rumour. The community developed by the labours of the apostles in the first century were in a precisely similar position, as we learn from words the Jews of Rome addressed to Paul on his arrival there: "As concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against" (Acts xxviii. 22). Not only so, but Jesus gave his disciples expressly to understand that this would be their lot. "The time cometh," he said, "that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (John xvi. 2). He further said, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you .... The servant is not greater than his Lord" (xv. 18, 20). No term of opprobrium could be more severe than the one applied to him: "He hath a demon and is mad; why hear him?" (x. 20), concerning which, Jesus said his servants were to expect no better treatment; "If they have called the Master of the House Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household" (Matt. x. 25). So far, therefore as this feature of being spoken against is concerned, it is in favour of the Christadelphians, and not against them.

All depends, doubtless, upon the reason why they are spoken against. In some cases, the reason may be such as can afford no satisfaction. It may be that a contentious, harsh, and arrogant spirit on the part of some bearing the name Christadelphian, has given occasion for unfavourable speech. This will be regretted by none more than the true Christadelphian, who disowns everything not in harmony with the spirit of the Scriptures, which, though a spirit of faithfulness and firmness, and courage in the maintenance of the faith once delivered to the saints, is, nevertheless, a spirit of true kindness, and courtesy, and gentleness, so far as the polemics of the truth in a hostile world allow. It is not, however, excessive zeal carried to the point of harshness on the part of a few that has led to the Christadelphians being everywhere spoken against.

The cause of the antipathy is much deeper and more far-reaching than that. It lays hold of several reasons. We shall soon find some of these.

But, before entering upon them particularly, it is well to realise, in passing, that the Christadelphians are not a new sect in the ordinary sense of that phrase. They have not originated in any new inspiration or notion, nor in the strict sense, do they owe their existence to a new leader. They are not a new sect in the sense in which the Swedenborgians were so, and the followers of Joanna Southcote. They have no Swedenborg, no Joanna Southcote. They claim to have received no new revelation: they profess no new principle: they own to no new teachership. They are simply and purely the result of Bible study, thoroughly conducted. They owe their development to the application of a principle, in which it has been customary for all Englishmen to boast-the right of private judgment in the discernment of religious truth. Men rejoice in the work of Martin Luther because they rejoice in this, that the Bible is the word of God, and that God intended men to make themselves acquainted with it, and to embrace what it teaches, and reject what it denounces, however many may be arrayed against the conclusions to which the study of it may lead them.

Now, Christadelphianism is nothing more nor less than the result of that principle strictly carried out. Christadelphianism takes its stand on the Bible. It maintains that the Bible can be proved to be divine, and that it is the only source of divine ideas at present in the earth on the subject of religion; and that all systems and doctrines are to be discarded that conflict with what is to be found in the Bible, however ancient or popularly supported such systems or doctrines may be. In maintaining this, they only maintain what the bulk of the English people profess to believe. If they go a step further, and say that the popular systems of the day are in conflict with the Bible, they raise an issue which may disturb complacency, but which ought to receive a sympathetic attention at the hands of so ultra-Protestant a nation as the British. It is a plain, intelligible, and debatable issue, in which there is no fanaticism, or anything to offend the highest culture, or the purest reason.

It is the result of the issue that excites the offence, and causes the Christadelphians to be everywhere spoken against. The ordinary neighbour says he could do with the Christadelphians holding the Bible up; he may even go to the length of saying he admires the fidelity of the Christadelphians on this point; but what he cannot do with is their pulling down everybody else as wrong. Well, this is not exactly the right way of putting it. The Christadelphians put down nobody. It is natural for our good-humoured neighbours to feel in just this way about it; but the question is, are the Christadelphians right in what they say the Bible teaches? Because, if so, it follows that those who reject the teaching must be wrong; and that it is a pity to divert attention from the main issue by questions of style.

Now, what have the Christadelphians to say about the teaching of the Bible which gives such mortal offence! They affirm two things which the Old and New Testaments separately sustain, though also sustaining both in a general way. The Christadelphians affirm that mankind is separated from God, not only as regards their moral condition, but as regards what may be called their legal relation to Him: that is, they are all under condemnation,-all under sentence of death,- a sentence written in their very constitution, and that they cannot by any contrivance of their own escape

from, or alter, this position. The Christadelphians point, in proof of this view, not only to the garden of Eden, where sentence of death was passed on Adam (and, in him on all men), but to the system of the law of Moses, which, in all its details and significances, teaches one thing above all others: that man is an exile from God, whom we cannot approach, even afar off, except under the most stringent appointments which uphold the authority and greatness of God and abase man to the very dust.

Now, this contention is naturally very unacceptable to the mass of the people. They prefer to take the humanitarian view, that God is a Being of unconditional goodness, who embraces all mankind in His bosom as a Father, and that although men are sinners, God's goodness is equal to the overlooking of all their sins, and giving salvation somehow or other to all at last. If this view is the truth, let us accept it and rejoice in it by all means; but how is the question of its truthfulness or otherwise to be determined? It is not to be settled by what men think or prefer. It is to be settled by what God has declared: for He only knows. Now, the Bible contains His declaration, and by this the Christadelphians maintain we are bound. They bind themselves by it: they say it is binding on others, whether they submit or not. Christ's resurrection sets at rest all question as to the authority of the Old Testament: for he endorsed it unreservedly as the Word of God which could not be broken: and if he rose from the dead, his endorsement proves all; and therefore this, that man is alien from God and cannot restore himself. This is an unpopular doctrine, but true. It is one of the doctrines which cause the Christadelphians to be "everywhere spoken against."

The second thing which they maintain, and which, if possible, gives more offence than the first, is this, that God has appointed a way by which man may return from his alienated position, and obtain the forgiveness of his sins, and the hope of life everlasting. They say there is no other than this one way. They say that this "way" centres in one man-Jesus Christ, the Son of God: apart from whom, no man can be saved, however estimable he may be or consider himself in a moral sense. Are they to be considered "uncharitable" for believing and maintaining this, if it be true? Who can deny its truth that believes the Bible? Has not Jesus proclaimed himself "the Way?" Has he not said: "No man cometh unto the Father but by me ?"-(John xiv. 6)-and "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John viii. 24). Has not Peter, his leading apostle, proclaimed, "There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved?"(Acts iv. 12). And Paul, "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts xiii. 38). It may be considered narrow; it may be stigmatised as uncharitable; but it cannot be proved unscriptural, for the Christadelphians to maintain that there is only one way of salvation, and that way is in Christ, and in Christ alone.

But here comes another point of objection. Our opponents, some of them, do not object to Christ being held up as the way of salvation. They say, "We rather admire that, and would say 'Amen' to that; but we object to the idea that Christ will save none but those who hold Christadelphian doctrines." Here there is a little unhappiness in the way of putting the objection. It obscures the issue to put it in that way, and raises needless prejudice. The question is, "Will any be saved but those complying with

Christ's own conditions?" To this, there can be but one answer on the part of those who believe the Bible, and that answer is, No, however harshly it may appear to bear. The ways of God are unimpeachable, however hard they may seem sometimes from a human point of view, as when He destroyed the antediluvians, the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, the army of Pharaoh in the Red Sea, seven nations of Canaan by the sword of Israel; or as when He required His own dear Son to submit to crucifixion. It may seem to men hard, but it cannot be held unreasonable that Christ should dictate the conditions on which alone men will be saved.

The question is, what are the conditions? In answer to this, nothing is more undeniable than the fact that the very first condition is *a belief of the Gospel*. Friends may object to the condition, but they cannot deny that it is the condition as laid down both by Christ and his apostles. What did Christ send out his apostles to do? To preach the gospel. To what end did he wish them to preach the gospel? He answers this in what he said to them when sending them: "He that *believeth* and is baptised *shall be saved*; he that believeth not shall be condemned." You must be aware how distinctly the apostles themselves reiterated this view: Paul speaks of the gospel as "the gospel of your salvation" (Eph. i. 13). He says men are *saved by it* "if they keep in memory the things" constituting it (1 Cor. xv. 2). He says, "It is the power of God unto salvation *to every one that believeth*" (Rom. i. 16), and that "it hath pleased God by the foolishness of preaching (it) *to save them that believe*" (1 Cor. i. 21).

Why, then, should the Christadelphians be spoken against, for maintaining that men cannot be saved without believing in the gospel? They maintain only what the apostolic writings reveal. It is popular objection that is in fault. It opposes what the apostles teach. But, here again comes our well-meaning, religious-minded friend. He says: "It is not your contention for the necessity of the gospel, that we object to. We object to your version of the gospel." Well, let us see. It comes to this: What is the gospel, as apostolically proclaimed for the salvation of men? When the apostles speak of the gospel, they speak of a definite conception of truth, of course. It is not an indefinite phrase in their mouth. In the abstract, it means glad tidings: but glad tidings, before they can be glad tidings, must be definite. This is their very character-definiteness. Without definiteness they cannot be glad tidings: for who can be glad about that which is indefinite? Glad tidings are definite news of some sort, that on account of their intelligibility in some direction of goodness, make the believers of them glad. Now, the apostles not only preached glad tidings, but they spoke of them as "the" glad tidings-*the* Gospel,-which makes the necessity for definiteness more imperative still. The question is, what was the Gospel they preached?

Before ascertaining the New Testament answer to this question, let us ask for a moment, what is the gospel preached in the churches and chapels? Is it not this, that *Christ died to save immortal souls from the torments of hell*? No one will demur to this as a correct definition of the gospel, as understood by all denominations of Christendom. Now, the Christadelphians say that this is not the gospel the apostles preached. This assertion of theirs may stagger people, and offend them; but it certainly ought also to arouse them, for, if it is true, of what overwhelming importance is the fact to all who believe the popular gospel-and there are thousands upon thousands who do so without considering for a moment whether it is apostolic or not. The assertion can be disproved, if it is untrue. On what grounds do the Christadelphians advance it? On a variety of grounds.



First, they say the popular gospel cannot be the true gospel, because the Bible nowhere speaks of "immortal souls," upon whose supposed necessities the popular gospel is based. "Immortal soul" is an unscriptural collocation of terms altogether. It belongs to Greek philosophy, not to apostolic Christianity. Search and see. You will not find "immortal soul" in the Bible anywhere. You will find "immortal" and you will find "soul," but the words together-never. You may think, at first, the words being apart makes no difference; it makes all the difference in the world. Hunt up all the cases in which you find the word "immortal," and you will find it *is never applied to man at all*. God only is said to be "immortal" (1 Tim. i. 17); *He only* is said to have "immortality" (vi. 15). If "immortality" is ever spoken of in connection with man, it is always as a thing he has to "seek for" (Rom. ii. 7), a thing put on as a clothing of his mortal nature at the resurrection-if he be accepted (1 Cor. xv. 53; 2 Cor. v. 4). As for "soul," you will find this word hundreds of times; but you will find it used in a way that excludes the idea of its being an immortal thing. It is used of beasts (Gen. i. 20; Num. xxxi. 28); of bodies (Josh. xi. 11); of fishes (Rev. xvi. 3); of living men (Lev. v. 2); and of the mind (Psa. vi. 3: xxxiii. 20). The last is the only use of the word that you may think favours the popular idea; but on reflection you will find this is empty as well. You must first prove the mind immortal before you can logically see immortality in a term applied to the mind. Now, concerning the mind of man, it is said that it ceases to act when a man dies (Ecc. ix. 5, 10; Psa. cxlvi. 4), which is a complete disproof in itself of the idea that the mind is an immortal thing.

The fact is, the Bible knows nothing of immortal-soulism. Immortal-soulism is a speculation of the pagans, coming to birth first in Egypt, and afterwards imported into Greece, where "the wise of this world," whose wisdom Paul says is foolishness with God (1 Cor. i. 21), adopted it with improvements. It is opposed to what the Bible reveals concerning man, which is expressly to the contrary effect. The Bible reveals that "death has entered into the world" because of sin (Rom. v. 12; Gen. iii. 19), that it has passed upon all men (Ib.), and that consequently all men *are mortal* and die (Job iv. 17; Psa. lxxxix. 48), and when dead, it teaches they are truly dead and know nothing at all. It is here where the Bible doctrine of resurrection finds its place. If men die and dissolve in the grave, it is obvious that if they are to have another life, they must rise from the dead. And this is the very doctrine of a future life taught in the Bible. "Since by man came death, by man came also *the resurrection of the dead*" (1 Cor. xv. 21), Christ proclaimed himself the resurrection and the life (Jno. xi. 25), and pointed to the resurrection as the time when men should receive the results of their present life (Jno. v. 29; Luke xiv. 14). But in the popular system there is no need for the resurrection. According to that system, men pass out of their bodies into a state of reward or punishment.

Now, if there be no immortal soulism in the Bible, it follows that a gospel which is contrived for the salvation of immortal souls cannot be the Bible gospel. But there is another reason why the popular definition of the gospel already advanced cannot be a true one. It makes the death of Christ the essence of the gospel. Far be it from us even to seem to lessen the importance of the death of Christ. In its place in redemption, it is of an importance that cannot be exaggerated; but the question now is as to the gospel.

Is the death of Christ the gospel? It cannot be so for this all-sufficient reason that the apostles preached the gospel before the death of Christ occurred, and while they were yet ignorant that it was to take place. No one will dispute the first point in view of Luke ix. 6 ("The disciples departed and went through the towns, *preaching the gospel*"): and no one can dispute the second in view of the fact that when Jesus informed his disciples of his approaching arrest and death, "they understood none of these things, and this saying was hid from them" (Luke xviii. 34). We ask another question, and the evidence is complete. What was it they preached in preaching the gospel? The answer is found many times throughout the apostolic record. They preached what Jesus preached, and Jesus "preached the kingdom of God." "He went throughout every city and village preaching and showing the *glad tidings of the kingdom of God*" (Luke viii. 1). "He went about all Galilee, teaching in their Synagogues and *preaching the gospel of the kingdom*" (Matt. iv. 23). "He said, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also, for therefore am I sent" (Luke iv. 43). Of the apostles themselves, it is specifically declared that "He sent them to preach the kingdom of God" (Luke ix. 2). This was all while Christ was on earth. When he had departed to heaven (after his resurrection), we find the apostles continuing to preach the same gospel: "preaching *the things concerning the kingdom of God* and the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts viii. 12). "Preaching *the kingdom of God* and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts xxviii. 31; see also verse 23; also chapters xx. 25: xix. 8).

Now what the Christadelphians say is, that looking to this evidence, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the gospel preached by the apostles was the gospel of the Kingdom of God, and not the death of Christ. The death of Christ was afterwards (after Christ's ascension) added to the gospel of the kingdom as the sacrificial provision God made for the forgiveness of those who should approach Him in the belief of the gospel of the kingdom and faith in the shed blood of His son. But it was not proclaimed as the central idea of the gospel. It was a corollary of it: if you will, an ingredient of it; an essential supplement to it. But primarily, the gospel was the gospel of the kingdom. And the Christadelphians have to ask, what is this Kingdom of God, the announcement of whose approach is glad tidings? And in answer to this, they do not put forward their own guesses. They hold fast by the testimony of the Scriptures. They note that the apostles expounded the Kingdom of God from the prophets (Acts xxviii. 23). They find Paul saying the gospel was promised in the prophets (Rom. i. 2): and that in preaching the gospel, "he said none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come" (Acts xxvi. 22). Consequently, they feel themselves justified in looking to the prophets for a correct idea of the Kingdom of God—an idea which they find abundantly confirmed by the apostles. They can suggest no more expressive definition of it than is found in the prophet Daniel, who, speaking of the upshot of human history, says, "The God of Heaven shall *set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed*; it shall not be left to other people. It shall break in pieces, and consume all other kingdoms, and *it shall stand for ever*." A kingdom to be set up by the God of heaven must be the Kingdom of God; and if it is to stand for ever when the kingdoms of history have been overthrown, it must stand for ever upon earth. They further read in the last book of the New Testament of a time when the "*kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever*" (Rev. xi. 15). Therefore, they say the territorial groundwork and locality of the Kingdom of God is to be sought for in the earth at

present occupied by the kingdoms of men-an earth which Jesus said the meek should inherit (Matt. v. 5), which they never have done yet.

This is a mere rough sketching out of the ground. When the prophets are looked into in detail, a great amount of information is discoverable concerning the Kingdom of God. Its divine centre is found to be located in the land God promised to Abraham, which he will then possess-the land of Palestine (Gen. xiii. 14; Heb. xi. 8); its first people the descendants of Abraham, whom God chose as a nation to Himself above all people (Deut. vii. 6: xiv. 2), and which, though now scattered in punitive dispersion, is to be gathered from all lands, and restored to the land of their fathers, and made a great and glorious, righteous, humble, and God-glorifying nation; its governing dynasty, the house of David, with whom God made an everlasting covenant (2 Sam. xxiii. 5)-making the throne permanent in David's family (Psa. lxxxix. 34-37), and a covenant which has been fulfilled in Jesus, of whom the angel testified to his mother, "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 i. 32).

It is, therefore, no merely interesting fact, but the solemnly imperative corollary of the divine purpose that we are invited to consider when we read that "God shall build again the tabernacle of David that is fallen down, and raise up the ruins thereof, and build it as in the days of old" (Amos ix. 11); that "He shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah, from the four corners of the earth" (Is. xi. 12); that He "will gather them on every side, and make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel, and one king shall be king to them all, and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms, any more at all" (Ezek. xxxvii. 22).

All the prophets speak of God's purpose to restore the Kingdom of Israel under David's promised Son-the Messiah-who is also to be "king over all the earth" (Zech. xiv. 9), whom all people, nations, and languages shall serve and obey (Dan. vii. 14). "The law shall go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, whither all the nations shall repair to learn the ways of God, beating their swords into ploughshares, and studying war no more (Is. ii. 1-4). Then shall all the nations be blessed (as covenanted to Abraham)-blessed in the seed of Abraham-Christ, who shall then be manifested as King of Kings and Lord of Lords." "Men shall be blessed in him and all nations shall call him blessed."

The more this gospel of the kingdom is considered, the more it will be seen to be glad tidings. It is the good news that God Himself purposes to provide for all the groaning needs of man, politically, socially, individually, spiritually. If it be asked what connection has this gospel of the kingdom with us as individuals, the answer is to be found in Paul's statement to the Thessalonians (1 Epist. ii. 12), "God hath *called you to his kingdom* and glory." If it be asked in what sense are we called to the kingdom, we have the answer in Peter's words, that, if we please God, "an *entrance* shall be *ministered to us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom* of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. i. 11). Christ will say to such "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. xxv. 34). The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. vi. 9). "Hath not

God chosen the poor of this world *rich in faith*, heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?" (James ii. 5).

But what is it to "enter" and to "inherit" the kingdom of God! Is it not to possess the honour and glory and wield the power thereof when it comes? If there could be any doubt, it is set at rest by the express declaration that those suffering with Christ now, shall "reign with him" (2 Tim. ii. 12). The exact meaning of this is placed beyond doubt by Christ's own promise to the twelve disciples: "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and *sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*" (Luke xxii. 29). Also by his promise to all who overcome: "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give *power over the nations*, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron" (Rev. ii. 26). All the parables of Christ exhibit the same feature of the giving of authority to his faithful servants at his coming. The song of the redeemed puts it forward in the strongest light. "Thou hast made us unto our God **KINGS** and **PRIESTS**, and *we shall reign with thee on the earth*" (Rev. v. 10).

Those who are to be honoured with this unspeakable honour of reigning with Christ are first to be qualified for it by the transformation of their bodies into the likeness of the Lord's own glorious body : "This mortal must put on immortality" (1 Cor. xv. 53); "He shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his own glorious body" (Phil. iii. 21). "We shall be made like him" (1 Jno. iii. 2). All these glorious things are comprised in the gospel of the kingdom, which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.

Now, what do we hear of these glorious things in the religious teaching of the present day ? Not a word; not a whisper; not the shadow of an allusion. Whether it be in the most venerable cathedral, or the most elegant Nonconformist place of worship, these things might never have been written so far as what is to be heard within their walls is concerned. All denominations are alike destitute in the matter: and because they call attention to the fact, is one reason why the Christadelphians are everywhere spoken against.

"But then," say our religious friends, "it is not your doctrine of the kingdom of God that offends us: we also are inclined to receive it: in fact, many of us believe it already. [ASIDE – not *the gospel of the Kingdom*, dear friend.] It is your awful doctrine about the state of the dead. We can do with the resurrection: but we cannot do with your soul sleeping. It is your denial that the righteous go to heaven that is so awful." Good friends, consider. We merely contend for what you yourselves would receive apart from your philosophical pre-conceptions, viz., that the dead are dead and we say that, on this point, we have both Scripture and reason on our side. The Scriptures we have looked at already: they teach death to be the portion of mankind because of sin, and resurrection the appointed remedy, and that "the dead (when dead) know not anything." If we say that men do not go to heaven, it is only what Jesus said. "No man hath ascended up to heaven" (John iii. 13). It is only what Peter said of David: "David is not ascended into the heavens" (Acts ii. 34). It is only what Paul said

of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, "They died, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off" (Heb. xi. 13).

What do you say ? You say these passages only mean the body. You are right, but what does this prove ?-that the body is the person: that in the estimation of Jesus, and Peter, and Paul, the bodies of men, Abraham, Jacob, David, and others, were the men themselves. Why should you be shocked at this ? You shout, "Dead bodies!" No: you know better than that: it is the living bodies that are the men, and when the living bodies are dead, then the men are dead, because the living bodies were the men. "But what about the life ? what about the spirit ?" Surely you do not mean that the life and spirit of a creature are the creature ? Have the animals no life ? have the animals no spirit ? The Scriptures say they have both, as we have seen. Do you say that when the animal is dead, its life continues to exist as a spiritual animal entity once inhabiting a bodily animal ? If not, why so much difficulty about man ? "God giveth unto ALL, life and breath and all things" (Acts xvii. 25; Gen. vii. 21, 22). God is the fountain of life (Psa. xxxvi. 9). All life is His: and when a creature ceases to possess it it goes back to God who gave it (Ecc. xii. 7). The life of Abraham and David, is not Abraham and David.

The living bodies of men are the men. Is not this in accordance with your experience ? Did you ever know a man without a body? and when a man ceases to possess his body, do you not cease to know him ? Can you conceive of a man without a body ? Can you conceive of any living being without a body ? Christ has a body (though not now a corruptible body like ours): the angels have bodies (though their bodies are spirit substance). Yea, the Creator has a body. "What !" you exclaim, "the Creator possess a body! Is it not written, He is 'without body or parts ?'" Yes, it is so written in the 39 Articles, but they are not inspired: it is the utterance of man. It is not so written in the Bible. On the contrary, He is always spoken of in a way that attributes person and bodily form to Him. The very first sentence of the Lord's prayer teaches it: "OUR FATHER *who art in heaven*." This locates a person in heaven. Christ is his Son: and he is said to be "the image of the invisible God" (Col. i. 15), the express image of His person (Heb. i. 3). "The similitude of Jehovah" Moses was permitted to behold, though Israel saw it not (Num. xii. 8). Moses saw His back parts (Ex. xxxiii. 23). It matters not whether this was an angelic manifestation: it was to Moses the similitude of Jehovah. It is the human similitude. So James says, "Men are made after the similitude of God" (even the Father-see first part of the verse, Jas. iii. 9). The angels are in the same similitude. The Father is the archetype of them all. He is the kernel, or radiant centre-point of Eternal Universal Power and Wisdom, a Stupendous Unit, filling, and embracing, and controlling all creation. The Personal Father is the will-power of the Universal Spirit with which He is one, as the sun is one with its effulgent light-ocean.

One's own intuitions tell him the Father-form must be the human in its highest perfection. What other form can we associate with intelligence and goodness? We may have every conceivable form-the globe, the cloud, the unhewn block, the mountain, the rock, the sea, straight lines, curves and angles, in every possible combination, in every variety of creature; and with none of them but the human form can we associate the idea of love, and wisdom, and goodness. Human in form, in the main features of that form, divine in substance, the Father is glorious and immortal in

nature, "dwelling in light that no man can approach." So that not even the Creator is to be conceived of apart from body. If the body of God could die, God would die; but this is a physical impossibility. The body of God and the universal spirit of God are one, and eternal, and the basis of all existence, and cannot die. But the body of man can die, and, therefore, man dies. When the body of man rises from the grave, man rises again to renewed and glorious life.

"But then," says our friend, "the Christadelphians have such dreadful ideas of Christ." Nay, good friends. We but receive the apostolic testimony, that he was the Son of God by His begetting by the Spirit of God (Luke i. 35): that though thus begotten of God, he was a man "made in all points like as we are-touched with the feeling of our infirmity yet without sin" (Heb. ii. 17: iv. 15); that, nevertheless, though a man, he was not a mere man, but the manifestation of God in the flesh by the spirit, enabling him to say "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (Jno. xiv. 9). If we do not receive the Trinitarian definition, it is because that is both a violation of language (unlike anything to be found in the Scriptures), and because it is inconsistent with the Bible revelation of God, which exhibits to us the Father as supreme (1 Cor. xi. 3: viii. 6: xv. 28); and the bodily Christ as the medium of his manifestation (Col. ii. 9; Acts ii. 22: x. 38; 2 Cor. v. 18-19).

"You make too much of baptism," say our friends again. A mistake, good friends, a mistake. You would not have us make less of baptism than the apostles made of it? We make no more of it than they made of it. We receive and maintain exactly their teaching on the subject, We say that baptism (immersion in water) is God's appointed institution in which believing men find union with Christ for the remission of their sins. In this we go not one iota beyond the apostles. All believers in apostolic times were baptised, as the Acts of the Apostles show. This is their language on the subject: "Be baptised for the remission of your sins" (Acts ii. 38); "Be baptised and wash away thy sins" (Acts xxii. 16); "As many as have been baptised into Christ have *put on Christ*" (Gal. iii. 27); "Know ye not that so many of us as were BAPTISED INTO JESUS CHRIST were baptised into his death" (Rom. vi. 3).

"But, you don't believe in hell." We don't believe in the popular hell: but we believe in the hell of the Bible. What that hell is, you declare when you answer this question: Where were honourable soldiers interred in ancient times with their swords under their heads? Ezekiel says, "They have gone down *to hell with their weapons of war*: and they have laid their swords under their heads" (Ezek. xxxii. 27). What hell is this? Is. xiv. 9, 11, informs you: "Thy pomp is brought down to *the grave*" -described as "hell" two verses before (verse 9). The fact is, the word translated "hell" (*sheol* in Hebrew: *hades* in Greek) is frequently translated "grave." Take a Greek and Hebrew concordance of the Bible, and you will find this to be the case. The Bible hell is the grave; which enables us to understand how Jesus descended into it, but was not left there, being delivered by resurrection. Concerning *Gehenna*, also translated "hell," investigation will show that that is the introductory punishment of the rejected which introduces them at last to the final hell of their destruction -the grave, where "the wicked cease from troubling" (Job iii. 17).

"You do not believe in the devil." Oh, we do. Unhappily, we are obliged to do so. Facts compel recognition. We believe in the Bible devil, but not in the devil of "the church." Who is the devil of "the church?" Let us ask you. You say, "A fallen archangel -once an angel in heaven who rebelled against God and was cast out with other angels that helped him." We ask where do you find your information? You say Rev. xii. 7: "There was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels." Good friends, consider. What you quote is part of a prophetic revelation of what was to transpire among men after the day when John received it in Patmos: See chap. i. 1-" That his servants might know *things that shall shortly come to pass*;" chap. iv. 1-" I will show thee *things that must be hereafter*." You quote a prophecy of things on earth to prove a history of things in heaven. But what does it mean? The question can be answered (*See Thirteen Lectures on the Apocalypse*), but this is not the time. Sufficient that it does not prove the popular devil. Where else do you find him? In Isaiah xiv. 12, Lucifer, son of the morning, aspiring to set his throne above the stars of God. Read the chapter: see the subject: verse 4: "the king of Babylon "-prophecy of an earthly potentate: and so you will find it in every place where it is imagined there is Scriptural countenance to the popular theory of the devil.

There is a devil: but he is a very large one, made up of much diabolism in detail, having existence and power in places little suspected. He has various names. He is called Mammon, the world, the old man, the flesh, Sin, Satan, and so forth. You have a bit of him in the words of Christ-" Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil" (Jno. vi. 70). He comes into view when Peter, taking up a hostile attitude to the purpose of God in the death of Christ, was rebuked thus: "Get thee behind me, *Satan*. thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men "(Matt. xvi. 23). He shows in another guise when Paul says, "Ye have put off the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts" (Eph. iv. 22). Still another, when Jesus says, "The devil shall cast some of you into prison" (Rev. ii. 10); and in still another, when Paul informs us that the very object of Christ's death was, that, "*through death*, he might DESTROY him that hath the power of death, *that is, the devil*" (Heb. ii. 14), which he elsewhere tells us was "the putting away of SIN by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. ix. 26). Oh, yes, we believe in the devil, but in the Bible devil only, which is the personification of all the evil in the world, which, in various forms and guises, opposes God, and is the slanderer of God, a liar, and the destroyer of man. This devil will shortly disappear from creation, with the hell appertaining to him. The work has been begun in Christ, who has vanquished him in death and resurrection.

But, perhaps, the main reason of the popular antipathy to the Christadelphians is their insistence on the commandments of Christ as the rule of our acceptance with God. You know, the common doctrine of the churches is that men can have a present unconditional and free salvation in the simple act of recognising the cross by faith; and that salvation, in its ultimate sense, is in no way dependent on the actions of men. This doctrine is naturally a very palatable one, against which the Christadelphians place this apostolic teaching, that, although believing men may receive the forgiveness of their past sins in the obedience of the gospel in baptism, their acceptance at the coming of Christ depends upon their conformity to the commandments of Christ during the time of their probation.

This teaching is constantly put forward, both in the discourses of Christ and in the letters of the apostles. From Christ's mouth, we have the following words: "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you" (Jno. xv. 14). "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, *but he that doeth the will of my Father, shall enter into the kingdom*" (Matt. vii. 21). "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love" (Jno. xv. 10). "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke vi. 46). From the letters of the apostles: "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption" (Gal. vi. 8). "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die" (Rom. viii. 13). "The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. vi. 9). "If the righteous shall scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Pet. iv. 18). "Let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous ... He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar" (1 Jno. iii. 7: ii. 4).

With these doctrines is conjoined this fact arising out of them, that all responsible persons must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ at his appearing, and give account, and receive in accordance with the account they render, good or bad (2 Tim. iv. 1; 2 Cor. v. 10; Rom. xiv. 10, 12; Luke xix. 15). Now, the community at large have no relish for such doctrines. They prefer a doctrine that leaves them at liberty. They do not like to be called upon to recognise the world as an evil world-to live in it as not of it-as strangers and pilgrims-"denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly and righteously and godly in the present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Tit. ii. 12, 14).

What are we to say to these things? If men are to be faithful to the apostolic testimony, they have no alternative but to "come out" from communities that both in works and words deny it; and if being spoken against is the result, they will accept it in the spirit of the apostles, who rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ. This has been the decision of many. Their "coming out" has necessarily resulted in the formation of a sect, and they have called themselves by the name "CHRISTADELPHIAN" because of the necessity for a name that will distinguish them from those who profess a belief in the Bible but do not submit to its teachings, and because that name proclaims a fact that Christendom has forgotten, viz., that all who believe and obey Christ are his brethren, whom "he is not ashamed to call such" (Heb. ii. 11). But as a sect, they have no sacerdotal pretensions. They are a number of private men and women who have surrendered to the claims of Scripture teaching, by the exercise of the inestimable right of private judgment, and who, on that basis, are seeking to "work out their own salvation" by conformity to the law of Christ in all things. They make public efforts, not because they have anything of themselves to offer the public, but because that public effort is made part of their duty by the law of Christ. Without boasting, they are sure that they have the truth. They invite their neighbours to look into the matter, and see whether this is so or not; and, finding that it is so, to follow the example of Mr. Chamberlin and others, and identify themselves with "the sect everywhere spoken against."





## THIRD LECTURE

By (late the “Rev.”) MR. ROBERT ASHCROFT

“WHY THE CHRISTADELPHIANS STAND ALOOF:”

It may not be known to all here that there exists, in various parts of the earth, wherein English-speaking populations are to be found, a community of Bible-believers who have no manner of religious association with their contemporaries, and who take what is regarded as extreme and narrow ground in relation to all such questions. The time was, when it would be considered that the numerical insignificance of this body made it a matter of no public consequence what its members might do or say. A few earnest men, here and there, had found what they knew to be the truth, and they did their best to place it before their neighbours and their acquaintances, and for a considerable period their efforts were rewarded with no substantial encouragement. They were subjected to no small amount of ridicule and contempt, and even indignation from that portion of the religious public which became acquainted with their attitude; but as far as the great proportion of that public were concerned, the movement was unheard of, or, where heard of, treated with supreme indifference and disregard.

But of late years, this community has compelled a sort of recognition on the part of its adversaries, that justifies us in specially inviting your attention to its peculiarities as a sect. Though its friends are yet by no means relatively numerous, it is, notwithstanding, fast becoming a common thing for devout men of education to be found in their ranks, and, in many cases, identification with them has followed upon the most determined opposition to the principles upon which their communal existence is founded.

I have, tonight, to speak as to the mouthpiece of this sect, and to detail to you some of the reasons which compel us to entirely separate ourselves from all other recognised religious bodies that associate on Bible grounds, or on what are believed to be such.

Let me say, first of all, that we do not stand aloof *as a matter of mere natural preference*. There are great inconveniences and disadvantages connected with our posture of isolation from these movements on behalf of which so much zeal and piety are put forth. It not unfrequently happens that the temporal interests of men are advanced by reason of their religious connections, and a prominent seat in a church or on a revivalistic platform has often been found to be a profitable commercial investment. But there are no inducements of this order as the result of alliance with the sect of which we speak. On the contrary, it is a form of collective association that in several cases has meant social disability and pecuniary loss. For all kinds of hatred and ostracism, that has generally proved the most fierce and determined which has been generated for religious reasons.

There are very many whose fellowship, on natural grounds, is much to be desired. We can but admire their earnestness, and the evident intensity of their desire to do

what they believe to be the will of God; and if mere preference were to be allowed to govern our action we should doubtless no longer avoid their company.

We wish you further to understand that we do not, by our attitude, intend to illustrate any invidious distinction in respect of moral behaviour, or to credit ourselves with moral excellencies and virtues, for which those from whom we separate are not also conspicuous. It is our endeavour to exemplify the mind of God in these relations, and we cheerfully recognise the fact that so far as regards the duties which may be said to arise out of the social compact, there is much that is commendable in circles other than our own. But our contention is that this is not an affair of mere *morality*, as the word is commonly understood, and that the Scriptural grounds of fellowship (which are the only true, and reasonable, and permanent grounds) are much more extensive than are those on which a claim to the most unqualified moral recognition may be established.

Nor do we in the least impugn the *sincerity* of our friends in so renouncing their company. We believe it is their conviction that they are right and that we are wrong, that they are doing God's service, while we are acting a hostile part. No doubt they are prepared to credit us with a similar ingenuousness. But it will be apparent to all that nothing of any great importance can be established by this appeal to a man's sincerity, since there have been sincere adherents of every form of undebatable foolishness and error. The sincerity of the Apostle Paul was every whit as genuine before his conversion as it was after. "I verily thought with myself" – says he – "that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 26:9). A more sincerely devout man than Cornelius could not have been found in the whole of Palestine. He is described as one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway." (Acts 10:1). Such an one in our day would be considered in no need of evangelistic attention, but would be gladly welcomed as a fellow-labourer in the various ecclesiastical enterprises for which divine approbation is claimed. If sincerity had availed for salvation, none would have been more eligible than Cornelius; yet it was necessary that the Apostle Peter should be sent to this devout man to tell him words whereby he and all his house should be saved! (Acts 11:14). I have no doubt that much of the opposition that was encountered by the Apostles was most sincerely directed and inspired. In one case we read that "The Jews stirred up the *devout* and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts" (Acts 13:50). It is impossible to suppose that their devoutness was accepted in place of a child-like submission to the gospel; or that it gave them a title to that eternal life which the Apostles preached.

We believe, moreover, that in thus standing aloof from others, we violate no law of *charity*, as apostolically, delivered. Again and again it has been necessary for us to vindicate ourselves from the charge of gross uncharitableness in this matter. There are few charges that can be brought against a religious community of a more serious nature than this. If we are uncharitable in the apostolic sense; if we are without the quality which Paul wrote so impressively about, we are justly excluded from the pale of righteous recognition, and are become "as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." The accusation, therefore, of *uncharitableness* is not to be lightly preferred or dismissed. We ought to be quite sure that there is abundant ground for it before we attempt to bring home so serious and so sweeping a charge. In order to do this it is

indispensable that we know precisely what the word “charity” means, otherwise we are in danger of flinging mistaken and inappropriate epithets abroad.

Allowing the apostle to be the interpreter of his own terms, we find on referring to 1 Cor. 13 that a charitable man is one who “believeth all things,” who “hopeth all things,” and who “rejoiceth in truth.” Doubtless would have refused to recognise as *charitable* a state of mind from which these characteristics were absent. The question is, what meant he by them? He surely cannot have intended to teach that a charitable man was ready to give credence to any and every story that might be told in his ear; or that his expectation and desire were excited by everything he heard concerning the future. It can admit of no dispute that Paul meant to say that a truly charitable man is one who believes and hopes for all that is matter of divine testimony and promise. Indeed, without this state of mind it is clearly impossible that any man can answer to the remainder of this apostolic definition, and *rejoice in the truth*. All charitable pretensions, from whatever quarter they may come, are to be tested in this particular way. They are valid if they reveal faith and hope in those direction which are divinely indicated in the Scriptures of truth. That man is demonstrably uncharitable, in the apostolic sense of the term (and for no other sense need we care) who for any reason fails to rejoice in what Paul understood to be “the truth.”

Now it will immediately be seen that we are thus introduced to the main, and, indeed, the only reason for an attitude of separation such as ours. It is reduced to the convenient form of the simple enquiry “what is the truth?” If a man does not know what the truth is, how is he to *rejoice* in it? And if he does not *rejoice* in it, how is he to answer to Paul’s description of a charitable man?

It is very certain that the Apostle did not recognise as “charity” the kind of sentiment which in our day goes by this name. Because *it* would prompt to entire abstention from much which is distinctly enjoined.

Nineteenth century charity is but another word for a compromising toleration and Paul would be considered in many respects exceedingly intolerant. He used very strong language on several occasions in the arms of what is called “a large hearted and comprehensive charity.” And those of whom he spoke thus strongly were not men who had made themselves conspicuous by immoral behaviour of any sort (though no doubt he would have dealt summarily with all such), they were men who had in one way or another departed from that “form of sound words” which he had delivered by the authority of Christ himself. Concerning these he gave counsel to his brethren that they were to *avoid them* (Rom. 16:17), *to have no company with them* (2 Thess. 3:14), *to withdraw from them* (2 Thess. 3:16), *to turn away from them* (2 Tim. 3:5), *to come out from among them, and be separate*” (2 Cor. 6:17). Such counsel doubtless exposed those who followed it to much misrepresentation and abuse; nevertheless it was as binding upon the friends of the truth as was any other apostolic injunction.

There is, unhappily, wide disagreement among the readers of Paul’s letters nowadays as to what he really taught under the general caption “the truth.” All parties representing all shades of religious conviction are prepared to quote vehemently and copiously from the apostolic writings in support of their respective contentions and views. This may appear to make the task of deciding with what party the truth lies, one of peculiar embarrassment and difficulty to any impartial person who may be

viewing the conflict from the outside. It does, no doubt, seem in the estimation of some as though all religious and theological questions had become involved in such complete uncertainty that it is no longer possible to make such points a reason for assuming an attitude of apparent unfriendliness towards those who may conscientiously differ from ourselves. They deny that it is in anybody's power to say for certain what the truth is on many points of importance, and, therefore, they would have us sink all differences, and cooperate on such broad grounds as are generally assumed by those who regard the Bible as divine.

But we are not prepared to endorse this statement which affirms a condition of complete uncertainty and fog, as the present state of all such questions as go to make up what Paul regarded as "the truth." If it were really so that no one was justified in speaking at all positively touching these subjects, the conditions of fellowship would not exist; or if they did they would be at the determination of individual preference and taste.

There is, we note, a growing disposition in all the churches to widen the entrance,, and to make more all-embracing the fold; and some regard it as an ideal state of affairs that all religious communities whatsoever, should be willing to throw aside their distinctive characteristics, and unite in a common efforts to advance what is regard as "the cause of Christ." And, indeed, if the grounds of ecclesiastical separation are not such as effect any vital principle it is difficult to justify the numerous separations that have occurred. If, for instance, *baptism* is not imperative, but may be left an open question to be settled according to individual inclination or opinion, in that case there would remain no reasonable ground for such a division upon this subject as is known to exist in the case of one denomination, which itself has suffered sub-division on the same point, although all its members hold that the ordinance is not absolutely indispensable to a state of acceptance with God.

We believe, however, that the apostolic records are not in the uncertain condition that would justify the policy which is now so generally recommended and pursued. A policy of indiscriminate association for revival and general religious purposes - a policy without any well-defined beliefs, touching the most momentous branches of human enquiry and hope.

How do we account for the element of mist which is said to envelop these question, and which inspiration itself seems powerless to dispel? Why don't men and women come across the genuine and undoubted truth concerning all matters of theological debate when they read the Bible? Why is it necessary that books be written and lectures delivered whose object is to call attention to the first principles of the oracles of God? We believe the principal answers to these queries will lie in the fact that the Scriptures are approached with preconceived ideas on the subject of man's relation o endless life. Men come to the Bible, and conduct revivalistic and other religious movements, wit the notion in their heads that they are deathless beings. And this one conceit deranges everything, and introduces confusion and mystery into every page of the sacred volume.

It is impossible for one who knows the truth on this point to co-operate in enterprises which are conducted on the very opposite assumption; or to regard such enterprises as having the least apostolicity of character and result. The Bible cannot be explained or

harmonised on the current hypothesis of man's immortality. If there be thus error at the very foundation, and starting point, all that follows must necessarily partake more or less of the same character. And, as a matter of fact, we find this to be the case. A very different salvation is needed for an immortal soul, and a very different Saviour, from those with which the Scriptures make us acquainted. Our kind and well-meaning friends say: "Why don't you join us at our glorious revival meetings," and we are compelled to reply: "Because your meetings do not present a single feature which we can regard as in accordance with the word of God: the gospel preached there does not agree with what we find written in the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures: we are not able to persuade ourselves that men are so precious in God's sight as they are made to appear. You address them as beings who are destined to live for ever in happiness or woe; whereas we believe that entire nations of them go for nothing in every divine estimate of their value, and are but so many perishing forms apart from God's purpose in Christ, to which those only are advantageously related who do His commandments and hearken unto the voice of His word. The Saviour you preach is not in any sense the same as He whom the Scriptures reveal. Yours is the second of three co-equal and co-eternal persons; whereas ours is the only-begotten Son of the one eternal God, in whom the Father was manifested by His spirit for the expression of His will to the house of Israel, and for the putting away of sin. Your Deity needed pacifying by the vicarious death of His eternal Son; whereas ours was "in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor 5: 19). With you the Cross of Christ means the payment of a debt; while with us it is the vindication of God's majesty and holiness in the circumstances in which man has placed himself by transgression, the death of a representative sufferer who bore the nature of the disobedient to a grave which could not hold him for more than three days and nights, by reason of His unblemished character before God, and who thus became a foundation on which others might build unto life eternal. Your Holy Spirit is not the same as that of which we read in the Scriptures, for there we find that men possessed of the spirit always spoke in harmony, one with another, however relatively remote the ages in which they lived; and they were able to accomplish many wonderful works by the Spirit's power; whereas, in your case, no miracles are ever performed, the Spirit is made responsible for all manner of divergent opinion and practise with what the Holy Spirit declared in ancient times; and everything to which you point us as the work of the Spirit can be explained on natural grounds! According to your view it is the mission of Christ to save men from the torments of an endless hell; whereas we hold that He came "that men might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." While you are straining every nerve to escape from an impossible doom, we see the grave at the end of every human path, and look upon Christ as the promised Emancipator of men from its thralldom, "the resurrection and the life." You are looking forward to a celestial recompense, while we are led to anticipate an existence of glory and honour and incorruptibility upon the earth, in accord with the inspired declaration that "the righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever" (Psalm 37:29).

If we went with you we should be required to do and say things against which every dictate of enlightened reason within us should rebel. We should be expected to encourage men to hope for God's salvation whom society refuses any longer to endure, and whom it consigns to a violent and ignominious death for the most horrid forms of crime! If we were to go with you we should sanction by our presence and cooperation the proposition which affirms that a man in our day can who I either

ignorant or unbelieving of the glad tidings of the kingdom of God as preached 1800 years ago by Jesus and His apostles! If we cast in our lot with you, it would mean that we had begun to expect that the world was to be brought to God by such agencies as those now in operation, a notion utterly untenable in view of the apostolic declaration that “God has visited the Gentiles to *take out of them* a people for His name” (Acts 15:14). If we went with you we would only confirm you in what with all our hearts we believe to be an entirely hopeless and fruitless form of endeavour; and, before we could do it, we should have to surrender the conviction which has been born of patient and prayerful study of the Scriptures, that the only hope worth entertaining is “the hope of Israel” for which Paul was bound with a chain (Acts 28:20), the hope of the promise made of God unto the fathers of the Israelitish nation (Acts 26:6) the hope of the grace that is to be brought to the earth at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:13).

Now, before it would be possible for us to join hands with the promoters of any of the recognised religious movements of the day, we should require to get rid of these convictions, and this could only be done by the destruction of the evidence on which they are based, which cannot be as long as reason occupies her seat, and the Scriptures remain open in our hands.

We simply do not believe that the Bible teaches human immortality – which is, in fact, a contradiction in terms, for what is *human* cannot be immortal, and the moment it becomes immortal, it ceases to be human. Nor do we believe that in the inspired pages there is the slightest countenance given to any of the other doctrines on which the popular systems have to depend for their success. We do not believe that the gospel consists of the story that is commonly told in the pulpits about Jesus having suffered in the sinner’s room and stead – this rendering it unnecessary for men to do anything towards their own salvation. We could in no wise undertake to preach such a gospel as that, for to us it confounds every sentiment of justice, and every principle of reason; and has not, we are sure, the smallest countenance in any part of the Scriptures. The faculty by which we sift, and analyse, and judge, is distinctly invited to employ itself upon the things which have been revealed. It is a “reasonable service” which is required at our hands. Such a service is impossible on the current hypothesis of Christ’s death. It is undoubtedly a part of the Gospel as proclaimed by the apostles, that Christ died for the sins of men according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3). But in what sense is this statement to be understood? Are we to extract from it the idea that in dying Christ was the *substitute* of those who are to derive advantage from his death? *That* notion would surely commit us to a variety of embarrassing conclusions. It would mean that there was no chance for Christ himself – no possibility of his escape from the power of the grave, for he who suffers vicariously submits to all the conditions which properly attach to the case of him instead of whom he suffers. Man being under sentence to return to the dust because of sin, it is obvious that nothing could possibly rescue his *substitute* from the same fate, for the moment he was rescued from it, his character as a substitute would disappear.

But it was also a part of the apostolic gospel that Christ “rose again the third day.” He never could have done that if the current theory of his death were true. In that case the grave would have claimed him as its occupant for ever, and there would have been no release for him from the death-penalty which man had incurred.

And then how are we to believe that in some mysterious way Christ endured while on the cross the entire accumulation of sufferings which were due to all mankind from the days of Adam downwards – suffering that were to last for ever – all crowded into the brief space of a few hours, and even then endured for the most part in vain, since it is the contention of our friends that only a fraction of the human race will actually experience the salvation which Christ died to effect!

You will readily see that threes thoughts amount to a total; disqualification for our joining in the popular religious movements of the day. We should simply be guilty of pretence and sham, were we to engage ourselves in a work which did such violence to the Scriptures, and offered such continual and gross affront to the organ by which we reason and judge.

We cannot believe that human beings are in danger of being “burnt alive for ever,” or of spending eternity in any *mental* condition of which such unspeakable torment would be a all an appropriate figure. And we discard this fiction on the authority of the Scriptures, which declare that *destruction* is the end of all ungodly men, and that the wages of sin is death, and that all the wicked shall pass away, and be no more, and utterly perish in their own corruption. Nor do we believe that the Bible anywhere affords real encouragement to that “hope of heaven” which is so dear to the hearts of devout men. Were we to fall in with the aggressive religious movements of the times, we should have to keep our mouths shut on the subject of this most unfounded and delusive expectation, which is not only contradictory of Christ’s explicit declaration that “no man hath ascended up to heaven” (John 3:13), but also diverts the popular attention from the glories which do really await the faithful in the kingdom of God, a kingdom which it is God’s good pleasure to give to all who believe in His word, and do His will, and glorify His name (Luke 12:32), a kingdom which is to be established on the earth (Dan 2:44), the kingdom of Israel restored, in the hands of the Lord Jesus, who to this end was born, and for this cause came into the world (Luke 1:23; Acts 1:6; John 18:37). A kingdom that will place a sheaf of sceptres which He will have wrenched from the grasp of fallible potentates who have exercised authority over the nations of the earth; a kingdom that will tolerate no rival, and never pass from heir to heir; a kingdom by means of which the afflicted sons and daughters of men will be rescued from the evils of their condition, and Yahweh’s name exalted from the rising to the setting of the sun.

Were we to join our religious neighbours in their well-meant endeavours, it would be necessary for us to keep silence on this glorious matter of our hope, without the mention of which we are persuaded there can be no proclamation of the gospel which was preached in apostolic times. We should have to content ourselves as best we might with another gospel altogether, and so render ourselves obnoxious to the solemn anathema which Paul did not consider too emphatic to be uttered respecting any who might thus subvert the testimony which he himself had delivered: “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 1:9).

Nor is this all. For, in cooperation with the sects around us which recognise each other’s existence on a fraternal basis, we should be giving countenance to the proposition that men can attain a state of justification before God, without conforming to those requirements which were delivered in the first century by divine authority as



the sole conditions on which it was possible for any to gain eternal life. We find on examining the records which make us acquainted with the work of the apostles, that they not only required men to believe their testimony concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, but also to be baptised in water for the remission of sins. This is a fact which no one will dispute who is acquainted with the apostolic Scriptures. When, on the day of Pentecost, the devout Jews asked Peter what they should do, the answer was, "Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). Nor later on did this same apostle make an exception in favour of Cornelius. He asked, "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptised?" And then "he commanded them to be baptised in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:47). The apostle Paul also insisted upon the same form of subjection to the will of Christ, declaring in Gal 3:27, that as many of them as had been baptised into Christ, had put on Christ, and so become "Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

There was undoubtedly perfect unanimity of practise among the apostles as regards this ordinance. This was admitted by the late Dean Stanley, in a remarkable paper which he contributed some few years before his death to the *Nineteenth Century* magazine. When the Samaritans believed Philip, "they were baptised, both men and women" (Acts 8:12).

Now, is this the practise among all who are said to receive the grace of God in the present day? Are converts at revival meetings, and other religious services required to be "baptised for the remission of sins?" Is it not a fact that nothing of the kind is insisted upon under such circumstances, and that men and women are allowed to depart from these assemblies without having their attention directed to the divinely-appointed means of becoming related to the work of Christ? Supposing that the subject matter of this popular preaching revealed no divergence from the truth as made known by the apostles, by what authority would men be excused from submission to the gospel in the way appointed? Has there been a future revelation of the divine mind abrogating this law of immersion as the means of induction into Christ? Who will take upon himself the tremendous responsibility of affirming that the statute requiring those who believe the gospel to be "buried with Christ by baptism into his death" has been authoritatively set aside? Who will venture to affirm that what God has commanded is matter for private choice, as convenience and taste may direct?

We must be excused if we elected to be guided by the Scriptures in preference to the customs of men. The most eminent ecclesiastic of the present day cannot boast a scrap of real authority to alter one iota of those commands which have descended from apostolic times. He stands in no more favoured a position as regards divine obligations than that of the most ignorant and obscure of men. If he wants eternal life – if he desires to have a part with Christ in the matchless honour and glory which will appertain to the Kingdom of God; if he aspires to a place among the immortal sons of Deity in the day of their manifestation upon the earth, then it is indispensable that he humble himself, and become as a little child, and thankfully submit to those arrangements which God was pleased to make by the hands of His well-beloved Son 1,800 years ago, arrangements which have never been changed by *divine* consent from that day to this, but which, alas! Have been very seriously modified and disregarded by men of corrupt minds, who early succeeded in drawing away the

sympathy and allegiance of their brethren from the purity and simplicity of the faith, and who, by this means, inaugurated that evil state of things in the midst of which the light of the Gospel went entirely out (for anything history has to say to the contrary), and which filled the earth with a counterfeit imitation of the apostolic original, which is now current everywhere as the genuine coin.

It will doubtless, by this time, be perceived that we are in no sense qualified to take part in the religious operations that are going on around us. Even if we were to associate with our devout neighbours and kinsfolk in the furtherance of such schemes, our room would soon be very much preferred to our company, and our presence would be felt to be an inconvenience and a bore. For the truth would as a fire in our bones. It would prevent us from holding our tongues, and settling easily down in the midst of what we knew to be fraught with fallacy and peril. We lament that it should be so. It is a grief and a pain to see so much zeal and devoutness and intellectual ability engaged on behalf of enterprises which start on false assumptions, and are bound to come to nothing, so far as eternal results are concerned.

These no doubt seem extraordinary and even outrageous things for a man to say; and the first impulse is often one of mingled indignation and contempt at the apparent audacity of such a wholesale impeachment of the sectarian institutions of the day. That anyone should have the temerity to arraign the whole of Christendom, and charge it with departure from the truth of God in respect of every element of it, is considered the climax of presumption, if, indeed, it be not the act of a madman. It is affirmed that the great and good of this and previous generations cannot have been in error. Why not? Were they infallible? Had they the gift of inspiration? Did God speak through them as He spoke through the prophets and apostles in ancient times? Are we not at liberty to compare their utterance with those of the divine Spirit, which are recorded for our instruction? Or are we incompetent for this work of comparison? Must we needs take everything as a matter-of-course? Must we go through life with our eyes closed, and our judgement and understanding sealed against all investigation? Is piety necessarily a guarantee of truth! May not devoutness be allied to grievous error? Does it not often happen that sincerity is the handmaid of superstition? Is not a fact that men as often inherit their religion as the complexion of their countenances, of the colour of their hair? Who will deny that it altogether depends upon what University or College a youth graduates at as to the particular brand he bears through life? Is it not notoriously inconvenient and difficult to make a change that involves the sacrifice of friends and livelihood, and to start life afresh on entirely unaccustomed lines? Are there not innumerable considerations which operate to check enquiry and to stifle dissatisfaction and doubt; and which abundantly account for the general loyalty of men to the baseless pretensions of traditional theology in this our day?

We earnestly beseech you to give these things your unbiased thought. The mistakes of others, however pious they may be, can never be any good excuse for you, as long as you are capable of searching for yourselves. Surely a man's only safety lies in this complete subjection to the will of God, as revealed in the Scriptures of truth. A lie is none the less a lie, though excited multitudes run after it. And extol it, and praise the man who speaks it. Therefore we ask you to make yourself acquainted with divine truth – to go the fountain-head of saving knowledge, and compare what you find written in the Bible with the things you were taught in childhood to believe. If you go

honestly to work in this way, we are certain the same result will follow in your case that has happened in ours – you will be astonished – as we were – that you ever could be so blind and foolish as to give credence to the dogmas in which you were reared; and you will be delighted with the wisdom, and the beauty., and the harmony which characterise the writings of the apostles and the prophets, than which we have no other guide amid the confusion and darkness which God has permitted to prevail in the earth – but which will assuredly disappear in the presence of that Great Light which, in the person of the Lord Jesus, has already for a brief period and over a limited area diffused its glorious beams, but which is destined to shine again with matchless splendour, and to be the light and strength and joy of every man that cometh into the world.