



CLAUSE VI, BUSF

Birmingham Unamended Statement of Faith



Original Christadelphian Hall, Birmingham, England

A Compilation of
Christadelphian exposition and understanding on
"The law of sin and death"
which is in opposition to
"The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus"

CLAUSE VI, BUSF

**A Compilation concerning Christadelphian Exposition
and understanding on
"The law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2)
which is in opposition to
*"The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus"***

PREFACE

Over the years this writer has kept a file on the subject of *“the law of sin and death”* and *“the law of the Spirit of life”* (Romans 8:2). All would agree that these are principles which are as opposed to one another as night is to day. The file that we have kept contains gleanings from early Christadelphian writers that are republished in this work, as well as writings that differ from our point of view, and comments from other brethren through personal correspondence, articles, Bible notes and discussions. As such, most of the comments on the subject presented here are not original to this writer (although we agree with them), but are a compilation of the library of correspondence and literature we have saved over the last two decades.

As a young person in the Truth we were introduced to the subject at Bible School where the instructor drew a parallel between *“the law of sin and death”* and the phrase *Adamic Condemnation* (the Greek *katakrima* of Romans 8:1). From that class we penned a note in our margin which reads, *“If Condemnation (vs.1) were a physical law, then we would never die (since we have been freed from it at baptism): Condemnation is the cause, Death is the effect.”*

Now, as regarding the *“law of the Spirit of Life,”* this was presented to us by the instructor as the same as being *“in Christ.”* Thus, both phrases, *“the law of sin and death”* and *“the law of the Spirit of life”* were presented in the context of *“citizenship,”* as it were, and not as being opposing moral/intellectual/physical principles in operation in our mind and body. The former view was presented to the class as being *“Unamended teaching”* with the inference that to think otherwise was to be *“Amended.”* This view appeared logical enough for us, and we stood by it for many years. However, after reading a number of the early Christadelphian writings referenced in this work, we began to question this line of thinking: first, *“amended”* means *“something has been changed from the original,”* but it was the teaching as presented that was not original to the Christadelphians. Thus, representing the view with which the instructor did not agree as being *“amended”* was inappropriate. Second, the instructor’s presentation of the *“condemnation”* in Adam (the *“katakrima”* of Romans 8:1) as being synonymous with *the law of sin and death* could not be substantiated with the context of Romans chapter 7, in which Paul speaks of two opposing principles in operation in his person at one and the same time, both in operation after coming into covenant relationship through baptism. There are no chapter breaks in the original Greek text, so it would appear to be logical if the subject matter of both chapters were one in the same. We believe that an investigation of the early Christadelphian expositors quoted herein will substantiate this conclusion. Without exception, these writers approach the *“condemnation”* in Adam (Rom. 8:1) and the *“law of sin and death”* (Rom. 8:2) as distinct principles: condemnation being the

“Sentence” pronounced upon the race, and the law of sin and death being the effect or the *sin principle* which became a physical law of our being as a result of the sentence. At the same time, these writers of yesteryear recognized that the only remedy to this problem of sin and death was for an individual to avail himself of the benefits of a sure and sound manifestation of the truth (*the law of the Spirit of life*) through belief and baptism, and thereafter rendering obedience which, if successful, would lead to a physical transformation (eternal life) and so escaping “*the corruption that is in the world through lust*”.

The above being the case, we note that both views have existed, and still do exist, among the household — if not harmoniously, at least peaceably and being respectful of the other view. What appears to have helped maintain the peace within the community is that those on both sides of the question recognize and believe that a change in legal standing before Yahweh occurs at baptism — now “in Christ” and having hope, but before being “in Adam” and having no hope. Moreover, both agree that despite this change of citizenship from Adam to Christ, we are all still subject to sin and its consequence of death, and that all still have to wrestle with sin-in-the-flesh which Paul styles, the “*law of sin which is in my members*” (Rom. 7:23). As such, the hope of eternal life is contingent upon the obedience of faith, bringing the mind and body into subjection through the manifestation of the Word of God. Agreement on these principles is important and substantial as regarding our comprehension of the Truth and should give us much to be thankful for.

Despite agreement on these fundamental principles enumerated in the previous paragraph, a spirit of controversy towards those who hold the same understanding as the Christadelphian writings presented in this work (which is also the same understanding of those who framed the 1877 Birmingham Statement of Faith) has arisen from time to time. This is our personal observation and may not be a familiar experience to the reader. Nevertheless, we believe that such a spirit is unwarranted, which, if unchecked, could lead to further division between families and the household of faith, such as it is. Heretofore, a good number of us have been separated from the mainstream of the Christadelphian body due to doctrines of the apostasy being tolerated, a controversy regarding both doctrine and fellowship. Given these set of circumstances placed upon us by our Master, no doubt, now is the time to build up, not to tear down, and to entreat through a fair and equitable consideration of the revealed Word, without malice, pride or libel against those with whom we may not agree. For this reason we have published this compilation of writings on the subject that we hope will illuminate the discerning reader and provide instruction that we all may be careful in how we build upon the foundation which is Christ’s alone.

Publisher

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Introduction

The phrase "*the law of sin and death*" is used only once in all of Scripture (Rom. 8:2), but it is illustrative of the governing principle of human nature; namely, that all of mankind has a "*law of sin*" working in them as a result of Adam's sin. This principle at work leads to "*death*," death being the result of sin, both Adamic and personal (Rom. 6:23). We are corruptible, dying creatures under sentence of death because of the sin of Adam that has been carried through to all his posterity legally, morally and physically (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:53-56; 2 Cor. 1:9-10). We call this sin condition *Adamic Condemnation*, which, if left unremedied, will certainly lead to a perishing death in the grave. Christ alone perfectly overcame this law of sin, the *diabolos*, in himself (Rom. 6:9; 7:23; Heb. 2:14) which was necessary to provide a perfect offering for sin. Thus, "*God, in His kindness, conceived a plan of restoration which, without setting aside His just and necessary law of sin and death, should ultimately rescue the obedient of the race from destruction, and people the earth with sinless immortals* (John 1:29, 3:16; Rom. 3:26; 2 Tim. 1:1, 10; Titus 1:2; 1 John 2:25; Rev. 21:4)." – **BUSF, Clause VI.**

This treatise will examine the import of the above Clause VI from the *Birmingham Unamended Statement of Faith* (BUSF) and the understanding of those who were living both before and at the time when the original 1877 statement was compiled by members of the Birmingham, England Christadelphian Ecclesia (pictured on the cover), as well as those who have written extensively in support of the meaning. What was their understanding? Was it in harmony with our introductory statement above or

not? We propose to demonstrate how these five words in Scripture, *the law of sin and death*, in contrast with *the law of the Spirit of Life*, were originally understood as evidenced by the following quotations from Christadelphian writers, primarily between 1848 (*Elpis Israel*) and 1898 (*The World's Redemption*) and a few later. By bringing these gleanings forward, it is not the aim of the publisher to establish a position on fellowship, but is simply to share with the reader what we have found. (Note: All bold and caps in all quotations are emphasis made by the publisher.)

The Original Position of Christadelphian Writers

J. J. Andrew (*The Christadelphian*, 1894)

*The passage which is supposed to support the extraordinary idea that believers die under the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, is Rom. 8:2, wherein the apostle says, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death." A little attention to the context, and to the actual facts of the case, will show THAT THIS STATEMENT IS MADE PROSPECTIVELY. The apostle has just been saying, "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" (chapter 7:24); from which it is evident that he possessed a body subject to death. From what source did he derive it? From Adam. By being immersed into Christ his body had undergone no change. It was as much a "body of death" after immersion as before. **The only change which he had undergone was one of relationship.** He had become an heir of life, and, therefore, entitled, in case of death, to a resurrection. His mind had been redeemed from Jewish traditions, but his body had not been redeemed from the effects of sin. Hence he was in the attitude of "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of his body."—(Rom. 8:23). When, therefore, he answers the above question by saying "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord," and afterwards adds that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made him free from the law of sin and death, he has in his mind an event then, and still, future, namely, the resurrection and immortalization of faithful believers. **In other words, the deliverance from the body of death and the freedom from the law of sin and death are prospective, not actual.***

We would like to note at this juncture the correlation between the permanent removal of *the law of sin and death* with the promise of *eternal life*: they are both “*prospective, not actual*”. To enjoy complete freedom from the former is to come into possession of the latter; they are as “hand in glove”.

J. J. Andrew (*The Christadelphian*, 1874, p.305)

*When they are made like unto their Head, then, and not before, will they be introduced into the last Adam in a **physical sense, and so become, as a matter of fact, free from the law of sin and death.** Dr. Thomas, in writing about this event, says that it “occurs ‘in the resurrection,’ an aion period in which the sons of God obtain their new nature or materiality.”*

J. J. Andrew (*The Christadelphian*, 1873, p. 484, quoting Bro. Thomas)

*Brother Thomas made many comments along those lines including this: “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death”—**from this law of sin and death to which my body is subject?** There is but one man that can deliver, even Jesus Christ the Lord, who partook of flesh and blood, that through death he might destroy this law of sin and death from the body, that is, diabolos” (reprinted from *The Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come*, 1852, p. 182).*

J. J. Andrew (*The Christadelphian*, 1874, p. 308)

*The Bible plan of redemption is based upon law, and that law is the result of favour. Sin leads to death, responsibility to resurrection, and righteousness to immortality. As there is a law of sin and death, so there is a law of righteousness and life: the latter is as much superior to the former as is resurrection to death. **The introduction of the law of righteousness and life does not necessitate the suspension or the abrogation of the law of sin and death.** The two exist simultaneously, but inasmuch as the law of life is stronger than the law of death, it necessarily obtains the victory. This may be illustrated in things natural by the law of gravitation. By this law, every body whose specific gravity is greater than that of the atmosphere, gravitates to the earth. But by the introduction of a superior force – as for instance when a stone is thrown into the air,*

or a bird flies – the law of gravitation is, for the time being, superseded; it is not suspended, but simply overpowered temporarily. If the force by which the stone or bird whirls through the air, were able to exert itself perpetually, the law of gravitation in relation to these bodies would be forever overcome. But a time comes sooner or later when this force expends itself, and then the law of gravitation asserts its sway. Not so with the law of life which is in Christ Jesus. Those who once attain to the end of that law, will be able to resist for ever the action of the law of death.”

J. J. Andrew (*Doctrine of the Atonement*, page 26 of the T.G. Publications reprint edition; originally published in 1882, five years after the Birmingham Statement of Faith was compiled)

Anyone for whom an offering is made is in need of redemption, and one who requires redemption is necessarily under the law of sin and death, for where this law is inoperative, there is nothing to redeem. Applying this principle to Christ, how does the matter stand? In Hebrews 9:12 we read in the ordinary version, “Having obtained eternal redemption for us.” This is generally thought sufficient to exclude Christ from the need and act of redemption. But this impression is derived from the words “for us,” which are in italics to show that they are not in the Greek. They are not required, and should be omitted, as in the Revised Version. But the verb “having obtained” is in the middle voice, a mood which is not found in the English Grammar. Its purport is to perform an action to or for oneself. If therefore rendered correctly without the gloss of a false theology, the passage would read, “having obtained for himself eternal redemption,” and thus it would be brought into perfect harmony with the other verses on the subject in the same epistle, already expounded (Ch. 9:23; 13:20). The basis on which Christ’s redemption was effected is thus expressed in Hebrews 1:9: - “Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” The love described here was practical and is synonymous with the “obedience” of chapter 5:8, an obedience which comprised, and was consummated by, the death of the cross.

Although Jesus Christ is often called the Redeemer, on the basis of such passages as Galatians 3:13 and Revelation 5:9,

yet, strictly speaking, the terms in its highest application, denotes the action of God (Isa. 63:16; Psa. 103:4). Yahweh is the redeemer of mankind, and His Son, Jesus Christ, the medium through whom the redemption is effected. He first redeemed from the effects of sin His "only begotten Son," and then gave to him the power of redeeming the adopted sons (Gal. 4:4-5; Eph. 1:5,7). This constitutes him their "redemption" (I Cor. 1:30). **That redemption is a process in which there are two distinct stages, one mental, the other physical. The mental stage is represented by belief and immersion, when past sins are blotted out. The physical stage is identified with "the redemption of" the "body" (Rom. 8:23) - and bestowal of eternal life after the judgment seat.** To speak, therefore, as some do, of redemption as an act completed at the crucifixion, is a serious mistake. Where there is a clear conception of the taking away of sin it finds no place."

In the bold portion in the 2nd paragraph above, Bro. Andrew views "**redemption**" as "**a process**" with the first stage being the mental/moral stage, including belief, faith and baptism. In the 1st paragraph (pg. 8), he says "**one who requires redemption is necessarily under the law of sin and death, for where this law is inoperative, there is nothing to redeem.**" Thus, redemption is not completed until the second part of the "process," the *physical stage* (identified with the "*redemption of the body*"), is accomplished (Rom. 8:23), when "*the law of sin and death*" can no longer hold sway.

Given these two points, did Bro. Andrew, in 1882, believe the specific phrase "*the law of sin and death*" related only to a legal edict that became "inoperative" (i.e., "terminated") at baptism? No, as this would not be consistent with his understanding of what it meant to be "redeemed" — that it is "a process" not completed until the believer experiences a change of nature making them immune to the sin and death principle.

To summarize so far, in reading these paragraphs from the *Doctrine of the Atonement* and *The Christadelphian* magazine (of which Bro. Andrew was the assistant editor), we believe that Bro. Andrew understood the import of the specific phrase "*the*

law of sin and death” to be an intellectual/moral “law of sin” and a physical “law of death” in our being. Thus, “sin” and “death” as a principle of man’s nature are both still operative upon believers after baptism, and redemption from them in the ultimate sense is not completed unless eternal life is received as the result of a favorable judgment. Until then our salvation is prospective, not actual.

This *Physical Law* which defiled and became part of man’s being following the transgression of the Edenic law is explained in Clause V of the BUSF:

V. *That Adam broke this law, and was sentenced [Adamic Condemnation — the Katakrima, or “adverse sentence” of Rom. 8:1, Publisher] to return to the ground from whence he was taken - a sentence which [in effect—not in original, Pub.] defiled and became a physical law of his being, and was transmitted to all his posterity. (Gen. 3:15-19,22-23; Job 14:4; Psa. 51:5; John 3:6; Rom. 5:12; 6:12; 7:18-24; I Cor. 15:22; II Cor. 1:9; 5:-2-4; Gal.5:16-17).*

As a side note, in the last two sentences in the quote on page 9, Bro. Andrew mentions that it is a “serious mistake” to speak of redemption as an act completed at the crucifixion. Regrettably, this would be the same mistake made by the “once saved, always saved” evangelicals, or those who believe in “eternal life now.” In other words, for Christ to be **truly redeemed** he needed a change of nature. Again, for believers, redemption is not an act completed for us upon our baptism into the death of Christ (i.e., the erroneous teaching that Christ has done all he can do for you at that point), but it is completed after a faithful walk and perfected by a favorable judgment at the time of immortalization.

At this point we would like to move on to the next question: How does the principle of the “*law of sin and death*” (Rom. 8:2) differ from the “*condemnation*” (Rom. 8:1) upon the race which brought it into force?

Condemnation in the Line of Adam

Clause VIII of the BUSF reads as follows:

*That these promises had reference to Jesus Christ, who was to be raised up of the condemned race of Adam, in the line of Abraham and David, and who, though wearing the condemned nature, was to obtain a title to resurrection by perfect obedience, and by dying **abrogate the law of condemnation** for himself and all who should believe and obey him. (Psa. 2:6-9; Dan. 7:13-14; Jer. 23:5; Zech. 14:9; Matt. 25:21; Mark 16:16; John 5:21-22, 26-27; 14:3; Acts 13:34-39; Rom. 1:3; 3:22; 5:19-21; 8:3-4; 6:9-10; I Cor. 15:45; Gal. 1:4; 4:4-5; Eph. 1:9-10; Heb. 1:9; 2:14-16; 5:3-9; 7:27; 9:26; Rev. 1:18; 2:7; 3:21; 11:15).*

This abrogation of the law of condemnation *preliminarily* or *provisionally* occurs at the time of baptism. Brother Thomas in *Elpis Israel* used the phrase “pardon of life” because otherwise there would be no scope for the obedience of faith to operate and that would negate the need for a judgment seat of Christ. Note the emphasis: “...was to obtain a title to resurrection **by perfect obedience**, and by dying **abrogate the law of condemnation for himself and all who should believe and obey him.**”

The first act of obedience is certainly baptism, but obedience is ongoing and will, for the faithful, culminate in that physical change whereby the “condemned nature,” or *diabolos* which has the *power* of the death sentence (see Hebrews 2:14 which is an attached reference to this clause) is destroyed in us physically, and we are made consubstantial with Deity. This, of course, all involves the grace and mercy of God and fits with the overall context of Romans 8.

The use of the terms *preliminary* or *provisional* should not be viewed as downplaying the importance of baptism. Baptism provides us with the benefit of a title to resurrection. We are now “made nigh” positionally and thus “in Christ” wherein we

have hope. We have an advocate with the Father and access to the anti-typical mercy seat. These benefits are real benefits now and should be understood as such. For any who may not agree, we would invite them to reexamine the Pioneer writings, including John Thomas, Thomas Williams, and J. J. Andrew, on the subject of baptism as well. More recently, for example, here is a quotation from the *Advocate's* booklet on the Atonement published by Bro. Ted Farrar.

*Paul says, Rom 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." We are in Christ when we are baptized into Christ and we **continue to be free of condemnation to oblivion IF we walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.**" (KGM CAPCO book, pg. 23)*

*"Only a change in legal status takes place, but that change is all important. It frees us from everlasting death, from eternal oblivion. The sentence pronounced upon Adam and all his posterity, is **PROVISIONALLY WAIVED** for those who come into Christ. Such is the wondrous grace and mercy of God." (KGM CAPCO book, pg. 21)*

It is true that the last portion of Romans 8:1 ("*who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit*") is omitted in early Greek texts such as the *Alexandrian*, yet it is found in the later Greek texts, including the *Textus Receptus*, used by William Tyndale as well as the KJV translators. Be that as it may, the Apostle clearly spells out in verse 6, "*For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*" Is, therefore, a belief in the necessity of obedience as a prerequisite to salvation and ultimate freedom from the *law of sin and death* a departure from the Truth? Hopefully, all would agree that it is not. In any case, we humbly submit the following excerpts from the writings of Bre. J. J. Andrew (*The Blood of the Covenant*), Thomas Williams (*The World's Redemption*), and John Thomas (*Elpis Israel, Eureka*) for the reader's consideration on this important subject. The discerning reader must determine for themselves which is the correct interpretation.

J. J. Andrew (*Blood of the Covenant*, 1894, page 29, 3rd paragraph)

*“The law of the Spirit of life” is the only law which provides for justification from sin and consequently the only law which counteracts the reign of death. Only those therefore, who come under the operation of this law can escape the permanent reign of death. Does it prevent them from going into the death-state? No; but it provides for their resuscitation, and this places them in precisely the same position as they were before dying. **Why do they** [those who come under the law of the Spirit of Life—Publisher] **die? As a consequence of “the law of sin and death,” but not under its unrestricted operation;** having been “made free” from that law it cannot retain its hold upon them; they must rise. Is their death a necessity? No; otherwise the last generation of those under “the law of the Spirit of life” would not escape going into the grave. **If, as taught by the Apostacy, the place of reward had always been ready, and there had been a continuous judgment-seat, the faithful would never enter the grave, and the unfaithful would not die until condemned by the Judge.** But inasmuch as the place of reward is not fully prepared, as the time of the judgment has not arrived, and as the faithful are to be all “glorified together” (Rom. viii. 17), they who come under “the law of the Spirit of life”, and live not till its administrator arrives, simply fall “asleep in Christ” (1 Cor. xv. 18), to await the day of adjudication.*

Comment: If, according to Bro. Andrew, one falls asleep (dies) in Christ as a consequence of the Law of Sin and Death, it stands to reason that there must be a relationship to that principle at the time of death, and that such principle could not be one of citizenship, for they had passed out of Adam and into Christ at baptism. It must therefore, of necessity, be a moral/intellectual/physical principle of their very being, styled “a law of sin which is in my members” by the Apostle Paul. However, we note Bro. Andrew’s qualifier: “but not under its unrestricted operation.” As such, if Bro. Andrew’s understanding on the subject is correct, then the law of sin and death is restricted in the life of a believer. How so? It is restricted by the implantation of a higher law: “*The law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus.*” Therefore, the “*Law of Sin and Death*” is not an “Edict” or “Sentence,” but is a principle of

our mortal frame which was the consequence or result of the sentence, not the sentence itself. This is clearly explained in the BUSF Clauses V, VI and VIII. Moreover, if we are freed from that law at baptism, then sin and death would have no more hold upon us and, as Bro. Andrew rightly points out, we would have already been “judged” and “saved” as the apostasy believes. Much to the rather, salvation and deliverance from *the law of sin and death* (much in the same way as the quest for eternal life) is a process predicated upon *the obedience of faith*, and is not, therefore, a present possession. However, consider the rather: If the law of sin and death is removed from the believer at baptism and, God forbid, if that believer is unsuccessful in their race for eternal life, then would this not necessitate that they would have to be made subject to the law of sin and death again such that they may then be cast out and destroyed? If this is so, then where is the Scriptural evidence to support this theory? There is none, in the same way that eternal life (if already in the supposed possession of an unfaithful saint, as some would have it), would have to be taken away. Thus, neither theory appears to conclude in a logical manner.

Thomas Williams, *The World’s Redemption*, 1898
(Excerpts taken from *the 3rd edition*, 1951)

Ch. XVI, p. 317— *Now that eternal life is a matter of promise to the righteous only the following testimonies will clearly show; and these carefully read and studied will make manifest that man by nature is not related to the law of life and immortality — only to the law of sin and death; and that if he ever obtains eternal life it must be by becoming related to the law of life, which he can do only in the way God has revealed in His Word...*

Ch. XVI, p. 321— *When our Lord says he who believeth on him shall not “come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life,” he shows clearly that only those who believe are in any way related to the law of life and immortality. **Before they “passed from death unto life” they stood related to the law of sin and death only**; and therefore the only way one can pass into a relation to eternal life is by complying with the conditions laid down. This goes to more fully establish the fact that eternal life is conditional and not a natural inheritance.*

But the words, "is passed from death unto life" are sometimes used in the fruitless attempt to prove present actual possession of eternal life, and the conditional feature of the text is ignored. We have said sufficient to show that actual possession now is out of the question; and it is necessary under this heading only to show how the words in question can be understood in harmony with the facts in the case and the general teaching of the Scriptures...

Ch. XVI, p. 322— Thus are all men by nature and by actions under the just condemnation of God, "born in sin and shapen in iniquity" and "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:2). Here is relationship to the law of sin and death. Now when we by belief of the gospel and baptism into Christ pass out of this hopeless state and in him who is our life are "made free from the law" -the condemnation or the sentence- "of sin and death" there is "no condemnation." **We are "in Christ Jesus."** The "**law of the spirit of life in Christ hath made us free from the law -the condemnation- of sin and death**" (Rom. 8:1, 2), and the "dead in trespasses and sins are quickened" or made alive (Eph. 2:1). We were dead legally and morally. When we were dead legally and morally we were awaiting death physically without hope of life; now that we are alive legally and morally **we are waiting the "redemption of the body" (Rom. 8:23).** Legally and morally it is therefore true of one in Christ that "he is passed from death unto life;" **and if he continue faithful he "shall not come into condemnation..."**

Ch. XVI, p. 326—By "patient continuance in well-doing" we must "seek for glory, honor and immortality" if ever we come into its possession; but one deluded with the belief that he is in the possession of it by nature will not be apt to seek for it. To put ourselves in the right position to believe and receive the benefits of the gospel **we must discard the tradition of natural immortality and accept the truth of man's mortality, and his natural relation to the law of sin and death.** All who do this will now seek for immortality, and at the resurrection this corruptible will put on incorruption and this mortal will put on immortality, and then shall be brought to pass the saying, "Death is swallowed up in victory." **Now we are suffering from the sting of death;** but then the righteous will triumphantly exclaim, "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?" And our praise will go up to a merciful and beneficent Creator in the words, "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ..."

Ch. XIX, p. 392—**From the fall of man in Eden, by which he passed under "the law of sin and death," whose sentence was, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," until Christ had triumphed over death and the grave by perfect obedience to "the law of the spirit of life," the doctrine of resurrec-**

tion and judgment was an unsolved problem, and made dependent upon Christ. "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead" (I Cor. 15:21). The "law of the spirit of life" is the gospel, and the gospel is the "everlasting covenant," or the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants combined. What is true of the "everlasting covenant" is likewise true of the gospel, and of "the law of the spirit of life;" for they are but different terms expressive of the same thing...

Ch. XIX, p. 398—*These passages need no comment. All the reader can do is believe them: for they cannot be "interpreted" to mean anything but what they say. They show that those they speak of go down to hell or hades, or the grave, to come up no more. The abnormal increase of the children of Adam's race is the result of the curse which came by man's fall, as will be seen by the words, "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception" (Gen. 3: 16). The sentence passed upon all those in Adam, as the federal head of the race, was, "Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return;" of which the Apostle Paul says, "And so death passed upon all men" (Rom. 5: 12), and "By man came death" (I. Cor. 15: 21). Had man been left under this "law of sin and death" without God interposing in his behalf, death would have been his destiny without the possibility of escape from the grave — unless God by His arbitrary right should see fit to make special exceptions to manifest His power, or for other incidental reasons. But as a rule an irrevocable grave would have been man's portion...*

Ch. XXII, p. 453—*There are revealed facts on this subject which cannot be ignored, and which must shape our course in deciding the question of the nature of Christ and how salvation was exemplified in him.*

1. It is a fact that God devised his plan of salvation in such a way as to depend upon the death of Christ.

2. It is a fact that Jesus realized that he must die a sacrificial death in obedience to the law of the spirit of life, or the gospel.

3. God has revealed it as His law that death cannot take place by His approval unless the subject is in some manner involved in the "law of sin and death."

Now it must be evident that an immortal Christ could not be in any sense related to the law of sin and death; neither could an immaculate Christ be subject thereto. In order,

*therefore, to really believe in the actual death of Christ we must believe that he was of a nature capable of dying, and that he was so related to the law of sin and death that his death, as required by the plan of salvation, should not conflict with any revealed law of God but rather be in accordance with it; I use the words, “really believe in the actual death of Christ,” because one holding that Jesus was the second person of the Trinity, deathless and co-equal with God, cannot really believe that Jesus actually died. He must, when he says that Christ died, hold in mental reserve the thought that he who was “God very God” could not and did not die; but he will quiet his conscience with the thought that he does believe that his body died, and so with this compromise he lets it go at that, which is but a sort of a bargain made with a solemn, serious subject. **But even to admit that Christ’s body died, there must be an admission that his body, instead of being immaculate, was involved in the law of sin and death,** under the same Adamic condemnation which all descendants of Adam are under; otherwise the belief in the death of even his body, only, would be in direct conflict with the law and justice of God as revealed in his Word. **To believe that Jesus was mortal, under the law of sin and death in common with those he came to redeem, and that notwithstanding this he lived a perfect life, triumphed over sin and death and hades and thus merited the honor and glory he now enjoys, is to honor him in the highest sense;** while to believe that he was God, immortal and immaculate, and that he therefore could not sin, is to regard his temptation, suffering and death as unreal, a mere sham, in which there could be no merit, no honor, no glory. But we must be sure that the three propositions we have submitted are sound, and the Scriptures must be our authority...*

Ch. XXII, p. 461—*The great question involved is, Did Jesus experience salvation? Some are shocked at the very thought of such a question, because they are prejudiced by the theory of the divinity and “immaculate conception.” If Jesus did not experience salvation, then his life in the flesh was a sham; for he is represented as suffering, tempted, dying, being raised, and rewarded. We are not to be driven from facts by the amazement of superstition. The testimony we have given shows that Jesus was born into the fallen state into which the sin of our first parents plunged the race. Man’s fallen state was that of his very nature, in which “the whole creation groaneth;” and how could Jesus “come in the flesh” without partaking of the same fallen nature? If he did not inherit a nature which caused or necessitated his life of suffering and his death, then all that he*

suffered was directly imposed upon him without an adequate cause, and in that case according to God's revealed law of sin, suffering and death, there was injustice. A substitutionary saviour would be the suffering and death of one for whose suffering and death there was no law, and that would be unlawful. We see infants suffering, and we know that it is according to "the law of sin and death." Sin took effect in the beginning, the stream was poisoned at the fountain. Recognizing the laws of God in Nature and in Revelation, we can trace the effects to a lawful cause. Now apply this to Jesus, and we are compelled to attribute his suffering and death to the one primary cause of the world's evils. Upon this principle of divine law Jesus really, in his nature, bore the burden of mankind; and the reason that burden did not crush him and hold him under its ponderous weight in death and hades was because he accomplished what no man ever had been able to accomplish; and which no mere man ever could have accomplished, namely, a life of perfect holiness despite the heavy burden of a sin-stricken, tempting nature in which diabolos dwelt, but, in His case, to be destroyed...

Ch. XXV, p. 490—*When one is baptized into Christ, he is "free from sin," in the sense that he is no longer a servant of sin; and since all his sins are "washed away" he is "clean through the word."* But only the Lord Jesus was able to live a life of absolute holiness. It is by virtue of his having become the "Captain of our salvation" by a life of absolute holiness that he becomes to us, as it were, a garment of righteousness which fits us for reconciliation and communion with God. So that he gives us a clean start on our probation in him. Hence the Apostle Paul says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus; for the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death"—Rom. 8: 1, 2. If ever those who have been freed from condemnation, come under another condemnation, they will have no one to blame but themselves. **But the question arises, how can weak mortals escape condemnation? Answer, by not becoming sinful.** There is a difference between one who is sinful and one in whose life sin is the exception. Those who are "born of God" do not "walk in sin;" but if they say they have no sin they deceive themselves. See I. John 1. God knows our weaknesses, and He is a merciful God. Therefore he has given us His Son as our High Priest who "ever liveth to make intercession for us." Having "been touched with the feeling of our infirmities," he will have compassion upon all who strive to do the right, but who through weakness or lack of knowledge may stumble.

Brother Williams writes that ***“Before they ‘passed from death unto life’ they stood related to the law of sin and death only.”*** Logic of language and reason dictate that the meaning intended here is that a believer, once baptized, is no longer left to the *“law of sin and death” only*, but now has the tools whereby sin in himself or herself can be defeated; this “tool” is the manifestation of the Word, the operation upon the mind of *“the law of the Spirit of life.”* When Bro. Williams writes of Christ that, ***“there must be an admission that his body, instead of being immaculate, was involved in the law of sin and death”*** we are led to a physical, not legal, relationship concerning the body of Christ, as “immaculate” is never used in a legal context. When he afterwards mentions the condemnation in Adam, he then touches upon the legal aspect of sin. It would have been unnecessary to mention both if he meant to express them as one and the same thing.

We would summarize Bro. Williams’ thoughts by saying that the “law of condemnation” in Adam as a legally binding sentence to eternal death is provisionally waived at baptism (again, a *pardon of life* as Bro. Thomas expresses it in *Elpis Israel*), while the freeing from the *“law of sin and death”* - a moral/intellectual/physical principle of our being - is an ongoing process that involves the manifestation/implantation of a higher law in our mind to overpower its carnal instincts. This higher law is the *“Law of the Spirit of Life.”* Over all, brethren, this is the process of “God Manifestation,” without which we cannot be saved.

John Thomas (*Elpis Israel*, 1848)

RUDIMENTS OF THE WORLD

When we die we are buried, or “sown”, like so many seeds in the earth. We are sown, says the apostle, “in corruption , in dishonor”, “in weakness”, and with an animal nature; but, when we are raised to inherit the kingdom, we become incorruptible, glorious, powerful, and possessed of a spiritual na-

ture, such as Jesus and the Elohim rejoice in. Now, a spiritual body is as material, or substantial and tangible, a body as that which we now possess. It is a body purified from “the law of sin and death”. Hence it is termed “holy” and “spiritual”, because it is born of the spirit from the dust, is incorruptible, and sustained by the ruach, or spirit, independently of the neshemeh, or atmospheric air. “That which is born of the flesh”, in the ordinary way, “is flesh”, or an animal body: and “that which is born of the spirit”, by a resurrection to life, “is spirit”, or a spiritual body (John 3:6). Hence, in speaking of Jesus, Paul says, “born of David's seed according to the flesh; and constituted the son of God in power, according to the spirit of holiness, through the resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 1:3, 4.). Thus, he was born of the spirit, and therefore became “a spirit”; and, because highly exalted, and possessing a name which is above every name (Phlp. 2:9) he is styled “the Lord the Spirit”.

*Now, the law of God is given, that the thinking of the flesh, instead of being excited by the propensities within and the world without, may be conducted according to its direction. So long as Adam and Eve yielded to its guidance, they were happy and contented. Their thoughts were the result of right thinking, and obedience was the consequence. But when they adopted the Serpent's reasonings as their own, these being at variance with the truth, caused an “enmity” against it in their thinkings, which is equivalent to “enmity against God.” **When their sin was perfected, the propensities, or lusts, having been inflamed, became “a law in their members”; and because it was implanted in their flesh by transgression, it is styled, “the law of sin” and death being the wages of sin, it is also termed, “the law of sin and death”; but by philosophy, “the law of nature”.***

THE TWO PRINCIPLES.

“With the mind I myself serve the Law of God; but with the flesh the Law of Sin...”

...Although a sinner may have been “delivered from the power of darkness”, or ignorance, and have been “translated into” (Col. 1:13) the hope of “the Kingdom of God and of his Christ”, (Rev. 11:15) by faith in the divine testimony and bap-

tism into Christ — yet, if he turn his thoughts back into his own heart, and note the impulses which work there, he will perceive a something that, if he were to yield to it, would impel him to the violation of the divine law. **These impulses are styled “the motions of sins” (Rom. 7:5) Before he was enlightened, they “worked in his members”, until they were manifested in evil action, or sin; which is termed, “bringing forth fruit unto death”. The remote cause of these “motions” is that physical principle, or quality, of the flesh, styled indwelling sin, which returns the mortal body to the dust; and that which excites the latent disposition is the law of God forbidding to do thus and so; for, “I had not known sin, but by the law”.**

Now, while a righteous man feels this law involuntarily at work in his members, the law of sin, or of nature within him; he also perceives there a something which condemns “the motions of sins”, and suppresses them; so that they shall not impel him to do what he ought not to do. **The best of men — and I quote Paul as an illustration of the class -- are conscious of the co-existence of these hostile principles within them.** “I find”, says he, “a law that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.” Yes; the Principle of evil and the principle of good are the two laws which abide in the saints of God so long as they continue subject to mortality. The reader is invited to re-peruse pages eighty-nine and ninety on the subject of these laws, as it will prevent repetition in this place.

The law of sin and death is hereditary, and derived from the federal sinner of the race; but the law of the mind is an intellectual and moral acquisition. The law of sin pervades every particle of the flesh; but in the thinking flesh it reigns especially in the propensities. In the savage, it is the only law to which he is subject; so that with his flesh, he serves only the law of sin and death. This is to him “the light within”; which is best illustrated by the darkness of Egypt, which might be felt. It was this internal light which illuminated “the princes of the world, who crucified the Lord of glory.” It shined forth in the philosophy of Plato, and in the logic of Aristotle, who walked in it while “dwelling in the land of the shadow of death” (Isa. 9:2) and it is “the light within” all babes who are born of blood, of the will of the flesh, and of man under the constitution of sin, in all countries of the world.

The above exposition was written in 1848, yet after more than ten years of study, Bro. Thomas' view on the subject, in which he is emphatically clear, remained an absolute constant: Man and Sin are synonymous terms, but enlightenment from the Word, followed by an earnest discernment and wholesome application to one's intellectual and moral faculties, is the only means of escape from the physical absolutes leading to death.

John Thomas (excerpts from *Eureka*, Volume I, 1861, page 210, first full paragraph through page 212, last full par. – 5 volume set, Red Edition)

Man, then, having introduced Sin, "death entered into the world by sin; and so death passed upon all men ... to condemnation; for by one man's disobedience the many were constituted sinners; and the wages of sin is death to those who obey it" (Rom. 5:14,18,19; 6:23,16). But though constituted sinners in Adam, if no law had been given after his transgression, his posterity would not have known when they did right or wrong; for Paul says, "I had not known sin, but by the law." The law is, therefore, "the strength of sin." Sin reigns by "the holy, just, and good law," through the weakness of the flesh (Rom. 7:7,12:8:3). Where there is no law there is no sin; for "sin is the transgression of law:" so that "without the law sin is dead" (7:8; 1 John 3:4). This shows how inherently bad flesh is in its thoughts and actions, that a good thing should stir it up to wickedness. Its lusts and affections are impatient of control. Paul therefore said, "in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing." When this, which is utterly destitute of any good thing, is placed under a good law, scope is afforded it to display itself in all its-natural deformity; and to prove that "the law of its nature" is not the law of God, but "the law of sin and death." Thus, the introduction of a good law, demanding obedience of that which has nothing good in it, is the occasion of sin abounding in the world (v. 20), and thereby evinces its enormity, and shows that "SIN is an exceedingly great Sinner" (7:13). In this expression Paul personifies Sin; and says that it deceived him, slew him, and worked death in him.

"SIN" is a word in Paul's argument, which stands for "human nature," with its affections and desires. Hence, to become sin, or for one to be "made sin" for others (2 Cor. 5:21), is to become flesh and blood. This is called "sin," or

“Sin's flesh,” because it is what it is in consequence of sin, or transgression...

...Seeing that man had become a transgressor of the divine law, there was no need of a miracle for the infliction of death. All that was necessary was to prevent him from eating of the Tree of Lives, and to leave his flesh and blood nature to the operation of the laws peculiar to it. It was not a nature formed for interminable existence. It was “very good” so long as in healthy being, but immortality and incorruptibility were no part of its goodness. These are attributes of a higher and different kind of body. The animal, or natural body, may be transformed into a deathless and incorruptible body, but without that transformation, it must of necessity perish.

*This perishing body is “sin,” and left to perish because of “sin.” Sin, in its application to the body, stands for all its constituents and laws. **The power of death is in its very constitution, so that the law of its nature is styled “the law of Sin and Death.”** In the combination of the elements of the law, the power of death resides, so that “to destroy that having the power of death,” is to abolish this physical law of sin and death, and instead thereof, to substitute the physical “law of the spirit of life,” by which the same body would be changed in its constitution, and live for ever.*

*By this time, I apprehend, the intelligent reader will be able to answer scripturally the question, “What is that which has the power of death?” And he will, doubtless, agree, that it is “**the exceedingly great sinner SIN,**” in the sense of “**the Law of Sin and Death**” within all the posterity of Adam, without exception. This, then, is Paul’s Diabolos, which he says “**has the power of death;**” which “power” he also saith is “sin, the sting of death.”*

“...The same was a man-killer from the beginning, and stood not in the truth, because truth is not in him. When he speaks a lie he speaks of his own things, for he is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44). And “he that committeth sin is of the Diabolos, for the diabolos sinneth from the beginning” (1 John 3:8). All this is perfectly intelligible when understood of Sin's flesh, in which dwells no good thing, and which of itself can neither do right nor think aright. Man's ability to do either is derived from a higher source -- from the truth indoctrinated into him. When this is declared and reasoned into him, and he

comes to understand it, to believe it, and to love it, a power is set up within him called “the law of the Spirit of life,” which is counteractive of “the law of sin and death,” and brings the man to “the obedience of faith,” by which he is manifested to the skillful in the word as a son of God. The disobedient are all of father Diabolos; and his spirit, which is the spirit of the flesh, works in them. Hence the clergy, Jewish and Gentile, are all of what they call “the Devil,” being ignorant, and consequently disobedient of the gospel of the kingdom.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the previous quotations demonstrate that these Christadelphian writers understood that, at baptism, the sentence of perishing death - the *katakrima* of Romans 8:1 — is provisionally waived for the believer (Rom. 8:1; Jh. 3:18; Jh. 5:24). As a result, we no longer stand related to the grip of eternal death, but now stand related to hope, hope in the resurrection to eternal life (1 Cor. 15: 22; Acts 4: 2). This is a hope not previously enjoyed. This is the “legal absolution” preliminary to our standing before the judgment seat of Christ, where we will receive the final verdict. This final verdict will be based upon whether we have manifested the principles of “*the law of the Spirit of life*” in our lives (obedience to a higher order of thinking - Rom. 6:6-7; 11-13), or whether we have been habitual servants to “*the law of sin and death*” (our natural in-born way of thinking - Rom. 8:4-6, 13), and, of course, the Master’s righteous judgment. These are, therefore, two laws or principles operating within a believer that are contrary one to the other, leading Paul to exclaim the following (bracketed comments by the Publisher):

“I find then a law, that, when I would do good [to manifest the law of the Spirit of Life], evil is present with me [the law of sin and death]. For I delight in the law of God [the law of the Spirit of life] after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members [the law of sin and death]. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the

body of this death? [necessitating a physical, not merely legal, change] *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God [the law of the Spirit of Life]; but with the flesh the law of sin [the law of sin and death]*” (Rom 7:21-25).

This understanding is the original position of the Christadelphians and of those who were the primary contributors to the Truth’s literature during the first 50 years of the Truth’s rediscovery with regard to *the law of sin and death* and *the law of the Spirit of life* (including Brethren J.J. Andrew, Thomas Williams, Robert Roberts and John Thomas). This is the position held by the framers of the Birmingham Christadelphian Statement of Faith (which is important to establish as a matter of context, for it defines the intent of the words which they carefully chose to frame the statement). This position in no way negates the federal (legal) principles of citizenship via adoption (in Adam vs. in Christ), of entering the covenants of promise (Gal. 3:27-29), of becoming heirs with Christ and fellow citizens with the Saints (Eph. 2), of putting off the old man, Adam, or any of the other present benefits we receive at baptism.

While some brethren sincerely believe that the phrases “*the law of sin and death*” and “*the law of the Spirit of life*” should be understood in a “citizenship” context (i.e., in Adam or in Christ—a principle which is validly supported by other Scripture), others, including this writer, recognize these phrases as being opposing principles in operation in both the mind and body that are contrary one to another as described by the Apostle Paul in Romans 7 [i.e., “*For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do... I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me*” (Rom. 7:19 and 21).]

These differences in understanding regarding the Law of Sin and Death and the Law of the Spirit of Life certainly amount to more than just semantics. Thus, missing the mark on clauses V, VI and VIII of the BUSF, as written and intended, should be a con-

cern for all who look to the foundational writings of our community as a measuring line for staying the course for the Truth in these last days.

The antidote to these concerns requires that individuals be willing to study the matter and *“try the spirits”* for themselves, to read the works quoted herein and to reason out the Truth. Nevertheless, it must be recognized that those who hold the position presented in this treatise have not strayed from or *“amended”* the One Faith as some might suggest, but have upheld the original position of understanding of the Christadelphians as defined in Clause VI of the Birmingham Unamended Statement of Faith (BUSF).

*“Long have sin and death enslav’d us
Long in dust hath faith remained;
Come, O Lord, whose grace hath saved us,
Give thy saints the victory gained”*

Hymn 111 (1932 edition)

***“Buy the truth and sell it not;
Also wisdom, and instruction,
and understanding.”***

Proverbs 23:23

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