

# **“A Time to Heal”: Historical Central Teaching on Christ Offering For Himself**

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## A Time to Heal (1940)

Careful readers of *The Christadelphian* from December, 1937, onwards will have noticed that there has been a certain emphasis on the Bible teaching concerning the Nature of Man and the Sacrifice of Christ. These are subjects upon which much dispute has arisen in the past—particularly during the early seventies, and at one or two periods later.

Some ecclesias in the U.S.A. for some years have been separated from the ecclesias represented by *The Christadelphian* because of doubts about the teaching of a brother now deceased, and of the attitude of ecclesias to the question of fellowship. The publication of the recent articles on the disputed subject has awakened hopes of a possible reunion of the ecclesias divided on this matter, and already some reunion has been effected. The Petersham ecclesia (Australia) asked the Arranging Brethren of Birmingham Central ecclesia whether they endorsed the statements published in *The Christadelphian* concerning both doctrine and fellowship. They at once replied that in their considered judgment the article in *The Christadelphian*, May, 1940, pages 228–230 set forth the truth in regard to doctrine and fellowship. With this assurance the Petersham ecclesia resumed fellowship.

The Los Angeles ecclesia sent out an appeal (in March, 1940) that in view of the articles published in *The Christadelphian*, ecclesias in America should heal the wounds of division where no grounds for it existed. They circularised the ecclesias in the U.S.A. and Canada quoting the articles in recent issues showing that the barriers to fellowship were now removed, and urging that steps be taken to close up the breaches.

The response to this effort of the Los Angeles brethren has led them to send out a second appeal. In it they indicate the nature of the responses, the desire on the part of most for reunion, and the doubts, sincerely held, in the minds of some whether the right conditions exist for reunion.

This appeal is fourfold in form:

1. To ecclesias who separated from us in 1923, it is wisely pointed out that it would be profitless to engage in discussions on what a deceased brother may have believed and to demand a statement declaring his teaching to be erroneous, especially when some are not sure what the brother taught, but are quite clear what they themselves believe and are in absolute agreement with the Birmingham Statement of Faith. It urges that if there is doubt about the position of a neighbouring ecclesia they should ask if the statements put forward in the second portion of this appeal are approved.
2. The second portion is addressed to ecclesias who have remained in fellowship with Birmingham Central ecclesia throughout the controversy. It

sets out in four items the doctrines to which **objection** was taken in 1923:

1. That the nature of Christ was not exactly like ours.
2. That the offering of Christ was not for himself, **and that Christ never made any offering for himself.**
3. **That Christ's offering was for personal sins or moral impurity only. That our sins laid on Christ made him unclean and accursed of God, and that it was from this curse and this uncleanness that Christ needed cleansing.**
4. That Christ died as a substitute; *i.e.*, that he was punished for the transgressions of others and that he became a bearer of sin by suffering the punishment due for sins.

In six items the truth is set forth:

1. That death came into the world extraneously to the nature bestowed upon Adam in Eden, and was not inherent in him before sentence.
2. **That the sentence defiled him (Adam) and became a physical law of his being, and was transmitted to all his posterity.**
3. **That the word "sin" is used in two principal acceptations in the scriptures. It signifies in the first place "the transgression of law", and in the next it represents that physical principle of the animal nature which is the cause of all its diseases, death and resolution to dust.**
4. **That Jesus possessed our nature, which was a defiled, condemned nature.**
5. **That it was therefore necessary that Jesus should offer for himself for the purging of his own nature, first, from the uncleanness of death, that having by his own blood obtained eternal redemption for himself, he might be able afterward to save to the uttermost those that come unto God by him.**
6. **That the doctrine of substitution, *i.e.*, that a righteous man can, by suffering the penalty due to the sinner, free the sinner from the penalty of his sin, is foreign to scripture and is a dogma of heathen mythology.**

The ecclesias addressed in this portion are asked to state their assent to these statements of truth and to give assurance to ecclesias now separated, and to help reunion.

3. The third portion is addressed to the Birmingham Central Ecclesia. The soundness of this ecclesia is recognised and it is asked to give a clear cut statement that fellowship is only recognised when the truth is held. The readiness to give the assurance when asked by Petersham is approved, and it is urged that fifty ecclesias are now involved, and that to publish a repudiation of the four erroneous statements and an endorsement of the six positive statements of truth, would give immeasurable help to reunion.
4. The fourth portion is addressed to the Editor of *The Christadelphian*. It expresses appreciation of the articles on the controverted subjects which have been published, and asks support in the appeal made for reunion.

We desire to help. In making a further effort, we would like first to try to clarify the position on the doctrines set out. Objections have sometimes been raised that the Statement of Faith is man-made. It is man-made, but how otherwise could we have a statement of what we believe to be the teaching of the Bible? It is because there are great differences among people who acknowledge the authority of the Bible that a definition of what we believe it to teach is essential. Every lecture is, in a way, a statement and demonstration of our belief as to what the Bible teaches. It does not consist of nothing but the words of Scripture, but of propositions attested by citations of Scripture. A statement in the words of Scripture could be accepted by every professing Christian who reserved the right to attach his meaning to them. The objection that it is man-made is not a good one.

It might be objected by some that the Statement has ambiguities, or that it might be expressed more clearly in other language. We agree that it has the limitations of human expression, but we believe it to be an honest and capable attempt to set out the essential truths of Bible teaching. The author's meaning is well known and is illustrated in many articles and in books in active circulation today. A sympathetic supporter of truth will say, "We know what is meant and we agree with that". As an example of such slight ambiguity, item 2 of the true teaching of the Scriptures, which is from the Statement of Faith, if rigidly construed, says "the sentence" was transmitted to all Adam's posterity. The writer's meaning is well known to be that the defilement which followed man's sin, which came as the result of God's sentence and which also became a physical law of man's being, was transmitted to all his posterity. Any such form of words will make some small demand on the goodwill of the reader.

The need for definition is seen from certain terms which have been the cause of much strife of words. One of these is the word "mortal". As a simple opposite of the word "immortal", we are logically compelled to say that since Adam when made was not immortal, he must have been mortal. But then we have at once to define what we mean by mortal. If we say "capable of dying" it must be admitted that Adam was such. But if we say "subject to death", then it must be denied that Adam was in that state when made. Hence the necessity that terms be clearly

defined, and if ambiguous, avoided when an effort is made to set out controverted truth. The matter might be illustrated by the word "perfect". If a thing is not perfect it must be imperfect; but the want of perfection may be due to some marring element, or merely to the fact of being unfinished, which is expressed in Scripture by the word "imperfect". There is the imperfection of flaw and the imperfection of incompleteness.

Some have objected to having one form of words imposed: we have heard objections to the Birmingham Statement being used by other ecclesias. Wise men will not insist about the use of one particular form of words if the same thing is meant. On the other hand, when a particular form of words has come to be recognised and accepted as stating certain truths, wise men will not create doubt or risk misunderstanding by insisting on the liberty of saying the same thing in words of their own choosing, particularly when grave issues are involved.

We willingly declare again our attitude as Editor of *The Christadelphian*, in the hope of helping forward the present effort for reunion. We believe the Statement of Faith to be the best compiled to set out the teaching of the Scriptures. We accept it without reservation and believe it sets forth the minimum that should be believed as a basis of fellowship. As concerning *The Christadelphian* and fellowship, we have declared that we do not knowingly publish Intelligence from ecclesias who do not accept the teaching set out in the Statement of Faith. We believe that if a man or woman changes their belief it is the honourable course to say so, and resign from fellowship. It is not less so when ecclesias do not subscribe to the doctrines which are commonly believed among us, and which are accepted as the basis upon which fellowship and co-operation can be maintained.

**The six statements, acceptance of which is asked, are from the following sources:**

**(1) is quoted in *The Christadelphian*, 1937, page 553; (2) is the fifth proposition of the Statement of Faith; (3) is from *Elpis Israel*; (5) is from bro. Roberts in *The Christadelphian*, 1873, page 468; (4) and (6) are statements of fact.**

We have no doubt that the Central ecclesia will frankly indicate its position. We do not doubt ecclesias in Great Britain are doctrinally sound on this issue. We join in the appeal that ecclesias in Canada and U.S.A. should willingly re-affirm their position if by so doing this division can be healed. It is a time for doing all possible to remove misunderstanding, and so bringing union where there is oneness of mind.

It is a duty to withhold fellowship when error is taught; it is a duty to extend fellowship when "all speak one thing".

The following reply has been sent by the Arranging Brethren of the Birmingham Central ecclesia:

November 17th, 1940.

To the Arranging Brethren of  
Los Angeles ecclesia.

Dear Brethren,

We have read carefully your "Second appeal to the ecclesias of the United States and Canada", and in reply to the section addressed to ourselves, we would say that in our judgment the four items of doctrine to which objection is taken in your appeal, are contrary to the Truth, and the six items in which you state the opposite view, are the Truth.

The teaching set out in these six items is embodied in Clauses III. to X. of The Statement of Faith.

We have already declared, as you know, our attitude to these questions in reply to an enquiry from the Petersham ecclesia, and accepting as we do the doctrines set out in The Statement of Faith, we regard them now and have always regarded them as the basis upon which fellowship should be maintained.

We hope that this declaration will help in your efforts to restore the harmony among the ecclesias in America, and our best wishes are with you in what you are doing.

With fraternal greetings,

Sincerely your brother in Christ,

G. T. FRYER,

Recording Brother.

*(The Christadelphian, 1940, pages 564-566)*

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## **"A Time to Heal" Statement by North London Ecclesia (1941)**

The North London ecclesia, it will be remembered, were also disturbed by the teaching of the brother referred to in this article and by the attitude of ecclesias at this time to the question of fellowship. In consequence, we were ourselves for a

period separated from the majority of ecclesias in Great Britain. Happily we later received assurances which resulted in this separation being ended. It is therefore with pleasure and approval that we have read the article "A Time to Heal" and we pray it may be instrumental in restoring harmony in many places.

For the Managing Brethren,

North London Ecclesia,

GEO. S. CLARK.

(*The Christadelphian*, 1941, page 86)

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### **Ecclesial Intelligence – Melbourne Australia (1943)**

MELBOURNE.—Albert Hall, Albert Street, East Melbourne.—With pleasure we record the baptism on March 6 of Mrs. HILDA ROSALYN BAKER. With sorrow we report the death on Dec. 30 of bro. John McColl in his 80th year, 46 years baptized. Our brother was laid to rest in the Springvale Cemetery. Sis. McColl and three daughters mourn their loss, but hope in the Resurrection. Sis. Irene Garland-Lethlean suffers the loss of her father and mother, who died within three weeks of each other. Sis. Guenther had been bereaved of her sisters, and sis. Stirling (Tatura) of her brother. All the bereaved have our heartfelt sympathy. Bro. Robert Hosie has been married to sis. Edith Hedgcock, and bro. John Mullin to sis. Marjorie Hedgcock (daughters of bro. and sis. Hedgcock of Brisbane). Also bro. Alvan Dyer to sis. Constance Downs. We are glad that sis. P. Enever (Bendigo) and the Wangaratta ecclesia (four sisters) are now in our fellowship. The latter is largely the result of the position explained in the article "A Time to Heal" which appeared in December "Christadelphian," 1940, followed by two circulars issued by us and interviews. We pray that the closer relationship will strengthen the bonds of the Gospel to all concerned. Our ecclesial outing, held on Dec. 29 at Hawthorn Tea Gardens, reached by river launch, proved to be pleasant and edifying. On Jan 30 the Sunday School outing was held at the Yarra Bend Reserve. Beautiful weather and surroundings made it a successful day. Brethren Jack Izzard and Jack Smith have removed to Maffra, brethren Jack Downs, Leon Kelly and Ian Wallace to Lah, and bro. and sis. Henry Islip to Bowna, N.S.W., all to undertake farm work. They will all meet with local ecclesias. We have had some difficulties with the "call-up." Some appeals have been allowed, some are pending, while one of our brethren so far has suffered a month in prison. With the "call-up" extended to women for Services and manpower, we are reminded that war-time troubles must be faced—but we do not lose faith.—ROBT. G. WALKER (rec. bro.).

(*The Christadelphian*, 1943, page 136)

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## **Ecclesial Intelligence – Melbourne and Malvern Australia (1950)**

MELBOURNE AND MALVERN.—We rejoice to report the union in fellowship of the ecclesias meeting at Albert Hall, Melbourne, and U.F.S. Hall, Malvern. Following correspondence, representatives were appointed to each ecclesia, and a conference was held on Aug. 28, 1949, to determine whether unity of belief on Scriptural essentials existed sufficiently to enable delegates to recommend to their respective ecclesias the desirability of the resumption of fellowship. Five resolutions embodying recommendations were carried unanimously and were confirmed at special meetings of the two ecclesias. The effect of these decisions is that the two ecclesias have agreed to resume fellowship on the basis of the Amended Birmingham Statement of Faith, after agreement upon the Editorial articles in *THE CHRISTADELPHIAN* of May, 1939, “On the Nature of Man and the Sacrifice of Christ”, and of December, 1940, “A Time to Heal”. We are very hopeful that many brethren and sisters in country parts of Victoria who have been separated, will also be able to enjoy fellowship together. Most have already expressed agreement on the above basis. We are indeed grateful to God at the successful outcome, and pray for His blessing in our united work in His service.—FRANK R. MORGAN (rec. bro.), U.F.S. Hall Ecclesia, Malvern; ROBT. G. WALKER (rec. bro.), Albert Hall Ecclesia, Melbourne.

*(The Christadelphian, 1950, page 32)*

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### **The Truth in Australia (1956)**

The following is the Basis for Union and Fellowship in Victoria agreed to by Horticultural Hall, Balwyn, Coburg, Malvern and Moorabbin, ecclesias in June, 1953:

(A) BASIS:

- 1 (a) That as fellowship is generally upon the doctrines and precepts of Scripture expressed in the “Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith”, including “Doctrines to be Rejected”, and “Epitome of the Commandments of Christ”, we recommend that this be the basis of union and fellowship throughout Victoria.
- (b) That we recognize as brethren and welcome to our fellowship all who have been immersed by whomsoever, after their acceptance of the same doctrines and precepts; and that any brother departing from any element of the one Faith as defined in the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith is to be dealt with according to Apostolic precept.

(B) In applying the above basis to ecclesial life and association:

1. **It is accepted that, should the need arise for a further elaboration of clauses 4 to 12 of the “Birmingham Statement of Faith”, the “Time to Heal” articles shall be deemed quite satisfactory for the purpose.**
2. It shall also be agreed that the basis of faith and fellowship being essentially the determination of each ecclesia any ecclesia may, if it desires, adopt for its own use a more explicit definition or elaboration of the Statement of Faith without it being an addition thereto, and may restrict fellowship at its meetings to those in agreement therewith; but this shall not affect the general fellowship among all ecclesias who accept the basis set out in resolutions 1 (a) and (b).
3. It shall be understood that fellowship with all ecclesias in Australia or overseas shall be limited to those who accept the doctrines and precepts as expressed in the “Birmingham Statement of Faith” and where it is not known by letter of introduction from ecclesias in fellowship or other reliable sources, that visitors are in harmony with the doctrines set out in the “Birmingham Statement of Faith”, they shall be interviewed to ascertain oneness of mind and their relationship to fellowship.

*(The Christadelphian, 1956, page 189)*

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## **Statement of Position Adopted by Horticultural Hall Ecclesia (1957)**

4 August, 1957

1.—**That the Statement of Faith (B.A.S.F.) contained in our printed Constitution be re-affirmed as our basis of fellowship, and that clauses 4 to 12 be understood according to the teaching of the “Time to Heal” articles** (published in THE CHRISTADELPHIAN in December, 1940.—Ed.).

2.—That our past practice with regard to fellowship be modified to the following extent: That we welcome to our fellowship visiting brethren and sisters who individually accept the basis set out in paragraph 1, subject to the following conditions: (a) That, if they are members of an ecclesia, that ecclesia accepts all doctrines expressed in the B.A.S.F. (b) That if their ecclesia has not adopted the “Time to Heal” articles, such visiting brethren or sisters should urge them to do so. (c) That, if we know of any of the ecclesia from which the visitors come who teach wrong doctrine, they give an assurance that they will press for action according to apostolic precept against such error. (d) That if time does not permit of discussion of these matters with a visitor whose position is not known, he be given a statement of our basis and practice, and be received, without prejudice, on the understanding that he express his agreement before any further meeting with us. (e) That if an ecclesia is proved to be wilfully and persistently preaching

error, no member of such ecclesia shall be received by us at the Lord's Table without first repudiating such error and giving assurance of intention to take the scriptural course to terminate his association with such ecclesia.

3.—That members of our ecclesia recognize the duty to break bread only with ecclesias which accept the doctrines and precepts set out in the B.A.S.F. together with the explanation of clauses 4 to 12 given in the "Time to Heal" articles.

*(The Christadelphian, 1958, page 143)*

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### **Comments by brother John Martin (1970)**

"And so **there appeared in 'The Christadelphian' of 1939 and 1940 articles which were entitled 'A Time to Heal'** and brethren from Los Angeles, realizing that **the truth was now held**, generally speaking, throughout that country, and that they had no real cause for division with the brethren in England wrote for assurances from 'The Christadelphian' office that they would reject the "Clean flesh" heresy and stand by the truth, and **they received those assurances and those articles were printed in 'The Christadelphian' of 1939 and 40** and brethren from Australia wrote to them on the same score and received assurances that we did hold those doctrines in common and there began to be put into motion the machinery of unity b/s and the unity which we now enjoy today began right back at that time and was only achieved because faithful brethren, humble brethren, spent hours of their lives, sleepless hours of their lives, working steadfastly towards unity **on the basis of truth and that is being challenged today. When those articles appeared in the 1939 and 40 'Christadelphian' they of course created a good feeling amongst the brotherhood and as I said the machinery was put in motion for ecclesial unity.**" ...

"they adopted the four negative points which the "Time to Heal" article set out - that they would deny the doctrine of "clean flesh" - and **they adopted the six positive points which spoke of the clarity of the truth.** And on the basis of rejection of error and wholehearted acceptance of truth by 1953 unity had been virtually achieved in Melbourne." (Cumberland, 1970, "Echoes of Past Controversies")

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## Comments by brother John Martin at Yagoona Meeting (May 2000)

“Roland, do you believe that God required of our Lord, OUR Lord, as an individual, do you believe that God required of him to make an offering for that with which he was born?”



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**It sets out in four items the doctrines to which objection was taken in 1923:  
2. That the offering of Christ was not for himself, and that Christ  
never made any offering for himself.**

Note: The above quotations from the pages of the Christadelphian speak for themselves. Some, in an attempt to distract from the issues, have called into question brother Biggar’s soundness (he was one of those responsible for the Los Angeles 10 Points cited), representing him as an extremist &c. That is only so much dirt cast into the air by clean-flesh sympathizers. Brethren, nay, entire ecclesias could read the 10 points, understand and accept them as written and find unity on that basis. The 10 points came into disrepute by some only after the death of brother H.P. Mansfield and the “unity” effort began its *universal* or world-wide (which is the literal definition of “catholic”) push.

## Correspondence

fellowship before it is too late. To cry 'peace' when there is no peace, is like daubing the wall of a leprous house with 'untempered mortar' (Ezek. 13:10). Covering the fretting condition of the wall will not save the house. What is urgently needed is the removal of the bricks too badly affected for reclamation before they in turn ruin what is left in the building (Lev. 14:38-42). Already the condition in some areas has reached to the foundation, making 'shipwreck of the faith'.

"As you correctly state in your editorial, what is necessary is that brethren implement the terms of our basis of fellowship with 'faith' and 'courage'. May I add another virtue that is going to be necessary if these will be implemented: humility! It seems to me that ancient antipathy over matters not fundamental are proving a stumbling block of pride against the possibility of brethren in agreement on fundamentals uniting together in a cause really worth fighting for. If 'Jesus Christ and him crucified' is not enough to constrain us to forget differences of relative minor importance, then I despair of the situation.

"May I make an appeal to all brethren to make a realistic appraisal of the situation, and in the light of those facts that you have already listed in the editorial, observe that there is a desperate situation requiring urgent correction. To do otherwise will be spiritual suicide. Let us heed the warning sounded so many years ago, but terribly relevant today:

"They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, Peace: when there is no peace" (Jer. 6:14).

"In making this appeal we do not ask that everyone under suspicion be rejected as a heretic, but that those glaring departures from sound doctrine be dealt with forthwith. When these causes of division are removed, then we can begin to clear up uncertainties in the minds of those sadly affected by error.

### An Appeal For Unity.

"Having read your editorial for August, *Unity In Australia*, I hasten to add my voice in support for your proposals for unity amongst the Brotherhood. Every brother and sister who cares for the things of God is watching with anxious heart, the developing crisis that threatens to divide the ecclesia in this country. None desire it to happen. Yet they share diverse views as to how to best preserve the unity of the household in Australia.

"Some believe that the issue will 'die out' if it is left alone, and thus obviate the necessity for any action at all. This is a vain hope. Wherever do we read in the divine history book that error 'dies out' because it is left alone! To the contrary, the reverse has ever been the case.

"Others maintain that there is no problem whatever. They feel that there are merely matters of 'minor disagreement'. I am convinced that such brethren do more for disunity than they may realise, unless they quickly see the issue for what it really is, and act to implement our basis of

## LOGOS

October, 1971

"Surely the lesson of history must impress us with the fearful consequences of procrastination and compromise. Why is that so much love and toleration is shown to one whose views are so far astray from the truth, and who refuses to be corrected, when in the interim he leaves behind him a trail of shattered faith, broken hearts, and divided ecclesias! Just how long are faithful brethren going to stand by and do nothing when they see the 'grievous wolves' moving unhindered among the flock? Ecclesias have been asked to exercise 'brotherly restraint' and to await for a 'reasonable settlement' when these discussions have been going on for six years! In that time the controversy has widened, and now involves many brethren and sisters, many of them ignorant of the real issue and who go to bed at night to shed tears of misery.

"But when these things are pointed out, we are accused of 'extremism', and blame is laid at our feet. Surely, the fault lies not with those who point to error, but with those who propound it, and their companions who encourage them by their continued toleration. Remember the sad history during the

reign of foolish Ahab, who permitted 'that woman Jezebel' to infiltrate into Israel with her pernicious teaching. Who did the people blame for that? Of course, Elijah! 'Art thou he who troubleth Israel?' (1 Kings 18:17).

"His answer:

"I have not troubled Israel; but thou and thy Father's house . . ." (v.18).

"How much bloodshed would have been avoided if only they had learnt the lesson of Mt. Carmel. How shall we escape if we neglect the warning of the Lord: Rev. 2:20.

The time is long overdue to implement the terms of our Unity agreement. Faith without works is dead, and so is a Statement of Faith without the determined resolution to see that it is carried out in practice.

"Whilst I regret the need to occupy space in your magazine with negative material, I hope that truth will prevail, and the courage will come to do valiantly for the Truth, so that when purity is established, we can immerse ourselves in the delightful task of expounding the positive powers of the Living Word."

— Bro. J. Martin (S.A.).