

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ATONEMENT

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The following seven articles attempt to answer certain key questions about the atonement, questions which, to some degree, have troubled many Christadelphians. I do not presume to think that I have fully answered any of the questions, but I only hope that something of what I have written may be useful. The articles contain numerous quotations from Brethren John Thomas and Robert Roberts, and other early and esteemed brethren.

I do not intend in this work to be argumentative or divisive, but to redirect attention to the beliefs of our community from the beginning.

1. WHAT DOES 'ATONEMENT' MEAN ?*

THE WORD 'atonement' occurs eighty-one times in the Old Testament, and once in the New, in the AV.

English definitions

According to Webster, the English meaning of 'atonement' is:

1. reconciliation, the restoration of friendly relations (this is the original meaning, now obsolete);
2. a theological doctrine concerning the reconciliation of God and man;
3. reparation, or satisfaction (that is, the doing of something, or the paying of some penalty, to compensate for some wrong action).

It should be noted that originally atonement simply meant reconciliation, was not a theological word, and did not in itself convey the idea of reparation, expiation, or some compensating action or payment.

This (original) meaning appears to be the AV meaning. From other extra-Biblical uses of the English word at the time the AV was translated, this appears to have been the meaning of the word in the 1600s. This somewhat clarifies the Scriptural use, and removes one aspect of misunderstanding and misinterpretation. For we should remove from

the word the idea of compensation or reparation, which is the basis of the orthodox theory of substitution. The introduction of this theory appears to have corrupted the original common meaning of the word. (This should not be surprising. The Apostasy's false teachings have corrupted the meanings of many words: baptism; hell; soul; kingdom; devil; Holy Spirit; and so forth.)

But even 'reconciliation' does not represent properly the Hebrew word translated 'atonement'; for 'reconciliation' as we commonly use it implies a moral relation and personal estrangement, whereas the Hebrew has no such implication. (Accountants do use 'reconciliation' in strictly non-moral, inanimate connections, as 'reconciling' a bank statement, for example. Here the sense is simply to bring into factual or material conformity, without any moral implications whatsoever.)

So much for the meanings of the English words, which are not important in themselves in searching out Scriptural meanings, but only in so far as they colour—correctly or incorrectly—our understanding of the Scriptural terms.

Bible definitions

The Hebrew word, wherever 'atonement' occurs in the AV, is *kaphar* (root meaning: 'to cover'¹) or *kippoorim* (plural: 'coverings'). This

* This article is extracted in large part from G. V. Growcott, "Atonement: The Use and Meaning of the Word", *The Berean Christadelphian*, Vol. 65 No. 9 (Sept. 1977), pp. 309-13.

1. 'Cover' is almost universally regarded as the root meaning of *kaphar*, and this fits with its literal use in Genesis 6:14; but some consider the root meaning to be 'wash away' or 'cleansing'. This, if correct, would be even more fitting in its symbolic use. In many of the examples to be cited in the text the idea of cleansing is the basic one, and the AV several times uses 'cleansing' or 'purge' in translation of *kaphar*. Certainly Christ is both a 'cover' and a 'cleansing' for his people. These are related concepts, but 'cleansing' seems to be the deeper one.

has the same root as *kapporeth*, the 'lid' or 'cover' of the ark, always in the AV translated "mercy seat".²

The first use of *kaphar* is in Genesis 6:14, where it is translated "pitch", but in the sense of 'cover with pitch'. This is the only place where *kaphar* is used literally and neutrally as 'cover'. In all other places it is used of a figurative covering, and in relation to some uncleanness in a thing or person.

Thus *kaphar* is not restricted to moral relations, or to the need for repentance and forgiveness and personal reconciliation. *It does not necessarily imply guilt or error.* It is used for the figurative or ceremonial cleansing and purifying of inanimate objects, as concerning the original cleansing of the altar when it was first constructed: "And thou shalt offer every day a bullock for a sin offering for *atonement*: and thou shalt cleanse the altar, when thou hast made an *atonement* for it" (Ex. 29:36).

In Leviticus 14:34-53 are instructions for the cleansing of an infection-defiled house, and in this case there is no *direct* relation to any sin or guilt: "And he shall take to *cleanse* the house two birds, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop . . . and he shall *cleanse* the house with the blood of the bird . . . but he shall let go the living bird out of the city into the open fields, and make an *atonement* for the house" (vv. 49,52,53).

Other instances of inanimate atonements are as follows:

Exodus 30:10: the altar of incense

Leviticus 16:16: the holy place

18: the altar

33: the holy sanctuary, the tabernacle, the altar

Numbers 35:33: the land itself (the word "cleansed" here translates *kaphar*)

Ezekiel 43:20: the horns of the altar (the word "purge" here translates *kaphar*)

26: the altar (as for v. 20).

As applied to people *kaphar* may imply recognition in the moral sense, and involve the gaining of forgiveness. There are many examples of this in Leviticus chapters 4 and 5. However, when applied to people it may be merely a cleansing without any hint of personal guilt or need for forgiveness. This is most strikingly illustrated in the requirement of atonement for the uncleanness of childbirth:

"If a woman have . . . born a man child: then she shall be unclean seven days . . . when the days of her *purifying* are fulfilled, she shall bring . . . a sin offering: and the priest shall make an atonement (*kaphar*) for her, and she shall be *clean*" (Lev. 12:2,6,8). The most notable and significant case of this very type of atonement is Mary, who was "highly favoured" and "blessed among women": "And when the days of her *purification* according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem . . . to offer a sacrifice" (Lk. 2:22-24). Notice in Leviticus 12 that this is called a *sin* offering for atonement, although clearly there was no guilt or moral alienation involved here.

Kaphar is almost always translated 'atonement', but other renderings (besides those already mentioned) are:

Deuteronomy 21:8: "Be merciful (*kaphar*), O LORD, unto Thy people . . . And the blood shall be forgiven (*kaphar*) them"

Deuteronomy 32:43: "(God) will be merciful (*kaphar*) unto His land"

Psalms 65:3: "our transgressions, Thou shalt purge (*kaphar*) them away"

Psalms 78:38: "He . . . forgave (*kaphar*) their iniquity"

Proverbs 16:6: "By mercy and truth iniquity is purged (*kaphar*)"

Ezekiel 16:63: "... when I (God) am pacified toward (*kaphar*) thee"

Ezekiel 45:17: "to make reconciliation (*kaphar*) for the house of Israel"

Daniel 9:24: "to make reconciliation (*kaphar*) for iniquity".

The right connotation

It has been shown that the English word 'atonement' is not a very good representation of the Hebrew *kaphar*, and carries connotations not in the original. Today 'atone' and 'atonement' carry, to most people, the ideas of

2. "Mercy seat" was first used by Tyndale, literally translating Luther's *Gnadestuhl*, from the Septuagint *hilasterion*, place of reconciliation.

(1) moral culpability, and (2) expiation and a required compensation of some sort.

Guilt, and payment for that guilt, are secondary and acquired meanings, even for the English word. They are not part of the original English meaning, which was simply 'at-onement'—a bringing into unity. And these ideas of guilt of sin, and payment for sin, are certainly not inherent in the Hebrew word *kaphar*, which, as seen, can apply to the cleansing of inanimate objects, or of 'uncleanesses' of people which do not involve any personal guilt.

It would probably be simpler, less misleading, and more understandable, if we used 'covering' or 'cleansing' wherever 'atonement' occurs, being guided by the context as to whether it involved a moral reconciliation or whether it was simply a physical (or legal and ceremonial) cleansing.

The Scriptural concepts of covering and cleansing turn our minds profitably in the direction of what must occur within us, through and as a result of the required atonement. The orthodox ideas attached to 'atonement'—someone else being required to pay for our guilt, to suffer instead of us for our sins—tends to dull our consciences and turn our minds away from our own real need for cleansing and purifying.

It is the blood of Christ, the perfect sacrifice, that first 'covers', then 'cleanses' us—not ritually, but practically and gloriously. He did not die to 'atone' for our sins in the orthodox sense. He lived and died to become a cleansing medium by which our sins are first mercifully covered, and then progressively, and at last completely and perfectly, cleansed from us: 'washed away'.

Atonement, then, as it occurs in the AV, does not mean an *external* payment or compensation, that is, something done outside of ourselves, something substitutionary. This is a corrupted orthodox meaning. Instead, it means an *internal* covering, cleansing, purifying, and putting right—something done not so much *for* us as *in* us.

Bible sacrifice

The sacrifices of the Bible were not to pay for sins; nor were they substitutes to suffer and die in the place of the sinner, as orthodoxy teaches. The sacrifices of the Bible were a humble recognition that the only condition acceptable

to God is purity and perfection; that sin is uncleanness; and that sinful man can be reconciled to God only by being covered by, and washed in, the blood of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

The sacrifices had to be "without blemish", a "perfect" life poured out unto death. There was to be a recognition that the flesh must be cut off and the body of sin destroyed, the ultimate submission and subjection of humanity to God.

The required perfection of the sacrifices is the key to their meaning; the perfection of Christ, which can cover weak sinful man, if man will humbly and obediently accept the covering in the way appointed and live in the way required to maintain possession of this covering.

The sacrifices were a manifestation of faith in the deliverance from sin that God had promised and would provide: the Seed of the woman to crush the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15).³

New Testament atonement

The AV has introduced 'atonement' only once into the New Testament (Rom. 5:11), and there the RV has correctly changed it to "reconciliation", consistent with the AV rendering of the same noun (*katallagē*) and its related verb (*katallassō*) everywhere else.

In the New Testament we read much of reconciliation, redemption,⁴ sanctification, purification, cleansing, and so forth—all of which, in harmony with *kaphar*, turn our minds to the state and condition of the recipient⁵ rather than to something done externally to him and as a substitute for him, as the orthodox idea of atonement has it.

3. For an in-depth study of this foundation verse in all the Bible, consult: George Booker, "The serpent and the Woman's Seed", a ten-part series beginning in *Logos*, Vol. 46 No. 11 (Aug. 1980), p. 331.

4. The concept of 'redemption' or 'ransom' is much deeper than that of a financial transaction, or the paying of a debt. See the analysis of the related Greek words in: George Booker, "Redemption (Titus 2:14)", *The Testimony*, Vol. 56 No. 663 (Mar. 1986), pp. 94-6.

5. Scriptural atonement (*kaphar*) is, truly, always related in some way to the physical condition arising from the general constitution of sin that has come upon the world through Adam. *That is the unifying idea behind all its uses.*

Of Christ's own need of, and participation in, the cleansing benefits of his sacrificial death, we therefore read:

"It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these (animal sacrifices); but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these" (Heb. 9:23);

"By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:12)—not "for us" as in the AV, but "for himself" in the first instance.

Concerning that blood of Christ, as it relates to us, we read:

"ye are washed . . . ye are sanctified" (1 Cor. 6:11);

"we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Eph. 1:7; also Col. 1:14);

"if the blood of bulls and of goats . . . sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ . . . purge your conscience . . . ?" (Heb. 9:13,14);

" . . . that he (Jesus) might sanctify the people with his own blood" (Heb. 13:12);

"ye were . . . redeemed . . . with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pet. 1:18,19);

"the blood of Jesus Christ . . . cleanseth us" (1 Jno. 1:7);

"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood . . ." (Rev. 1:5);

"thou . . . hast redeemed us to God by thy blood" (Rev. 5:9).

Cleansing, purifying, sanctifying (making holy), and redeeming from (rescuing from the bondage to) Sin—this is the picture throughout. It is a process which must, in one sense, be done for us and to us, for we can 'of our own selves do nothing', and "it is God Which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure". But the process also demands our complete devotion and desire, and our utmost effort, for the immediately preceding verse commands: "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12,13).

It is not in contradiction, but in beautiful harmony, that the washing is attributed, not only to the blood, but also to the Word: " . . . that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:26). There must be a constant washing, a total immersion in this Divine water of life, if the great work of 'at-one-ment'—making all things one in Christ—is to have any meaning for us.

(To be continued)

PRINCIPLES, PREACHING & PROBLEMS

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ATONEMENT

2. WHAT IS THE "SIN" OF 2 CORINTHIANS 5:21?

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THERE ARE SEVERAL expressions Scripturally applied to Christ which seem to cause some brethren unusual difficulty. Perhaps one reason for this is that, in recent years, parts of our community have consistently downplayed and undercut the idea that Christ in fact needed to offer, and did offer, "first for himself". One of the Scriptural expressions is: "made . . . sin" (2 Cor. 5:21). We shall consider this phrase as it occurs in the Revised version, along with another very relevant passage (Rom. 8:3):

"God, sending His own Son in the likeness of flesh of sin and as an offering for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3, RV and margin);

"Him who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21, RV).

From these short passages may be deduced the following doctrines:

1. that "sin" is a constituent of the flesh;
2. that our Lord was flesh, constituted as to his physical nature in our likeness (cp. 1 Cor. 15:49);
3. that he was sent to be a sin offering; and
4. that since this sacrifice was of a Holy One who did no sin yet "died unto sin" (Rom. 6:10), sin became condemned *in* human nature, and so could be taken away from it—in the person of the risen Saviour—with full satisfaction to the justice of God.

Correct translations

While 'sin' and 'sin offering' are the same in the Hebrew of the Old Testament, it is erroneous to assume that the same rule applies to the Greek of the New Testament. The Greek for 'sin' is *hamartias*. The translators of the Septuagint, faced with the need to render clearly in Greek what might be doubtful if translated literally, used the phrase *peri hamartias*, (i.e. 'concerning sin') to indicate 'sin offering'. Consequently, where they did not use this phrase, but rendered the Hebrew *hamartias*, they made it clear that in such passages 'sin' was meant.

From its use in the Septuagint *peri hamartias* became the current and proper expression in Greek, just as 'sin offering' is in English, while *hamartias* (standing alone) continued to be used for 'sin'. The revisers were therefore justified in changing "for sin" to "as an offering for sin" in Romans 8:3, and wherever else *peri hamartias* is found. Examples of this phrase in the Septuagint are found in Numbers 7:16 and Psalm 40:6; and in the Greek New Testament in Galatians 1:4 and Hebrews 10:6,8,18,26—as well as Romans 8:3.¹

1. Much of the above is extracted from W. J. Young, "Sin and Sin-Offering", *The Christadelphian*, December 1913 (Vol. 50, No. 594), p. 531.

Erroneous translations

Some translators and expositors have not been as consistent as, or lacked the knowledge of the revisers, and have inserted “sin offering” in quite a number of passages where the original does not warrant it. Thus in effect they deny (or seem to deny) that sin was (or needed to be) a constituent of Christ’s nature. The attempt, then, to force upon *hamartias* a meaning which it will not bear should be resisted. Here are two examples:

Hebrews 9:28: “. . . and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time *without sin* unto salvation”. The AV is surely correct here, since the Greek is *hamartias*. But notice how modern versions distort and twist this:

NIV, NASB: “not to bear sin” (as though sin were only something that Jesus bore, in an unreal, ceremonial, ritual sense);

RSV: “not to deal with sin” (as though it were impossible that sin could ever have been part of Christ, but was always outside of him—something to be ‘dealt with’);

Even the *Diaglott* falls into this same trap, and worse, when it translates, “without a *Sin-offering*”, altogether inconsistent with the rule described above.

By contrast, John Carter’s exposition of this passage is clear, unambiguous and correct: “As the high priest came out of the tabernacle to bless a waiting, expectant Israel, so Christ will appear a second time. He will come ‘*apart from sin*’ himself, for the old nature, *sin nature*, which he bore, has been changed to ‘a body of glory’. The past years were ‘the days of his flesh’ when he ‘was made *sin*’, though ‘he knew no sin’. He will come for the salvation of those who wait for him, to change their bodies and make them like unto the body of his glory”.² He clearly has no qualms about attaching the word ‘sin’ to Jesus.

To imply (as Hebrews 9:28 plainly does) that Jesus in his first coming was ‘with sin’ is to say nothing else than that he partook of our sin-prone nature:

* Galatians 4:4: “made of a woman, made under the law”.

* Hebrews 2:14: “he also himself likewise partook (RSV) of the same (flesh and blood)”.

* 1 Peter 2:24: “(he) bare our sins in his own body on the tree”.

* 1 John 4:2: “Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God”.

It was only by partaking of our nature of sin that Jesus could “put away *sin* by the sacrifice of *himself*” (Heb. 9:26).

2 Corinthians 5:21: “For He (God) hath made him (Christ) to be *sin* for us, who (Christ) knew no sin”. Again, the AV is correct, since the original is *hamartias*, not *peri hamartias*. But, also again, the correct rendering is lost sight of by some modern translations, that is:

NIV margin, NEB margin: “a *sin offering*”;

The Diaglott also renders “a *Sin-offering*”, adding as well a quite erroneous and misleading footnote.

The word *hamartias* occurs twice in the one phrase of 2 Corinthians 5:21; it cannot possibly be rendered both times by ‘sin offering’, since who would be so foolish as to say: “Christ was made a sin offering, who himself knew no sin offering”?

The whole force of this passage lies in the antithesis between sin and righteousness: that Jesus was, though sinless as to character, nevertheless constituted of our sinful nature (called Scripturally “sin”). This was in order that, through Jesus, we—who have no righteousness of our own—may be constituted righteous in him. The erroneous rendering, “made a *sin offering*”, obscures the antithesis and weakens (if not destroys) the passage as a testimony to our Lord’s nature.

Lord willing, the next article will present the historical Christadelphian understanding of 2 Corinthians 5:21, Romans 8:3, and related passages.

(To be continued)

2. *The Letter to the Hebrews*, third edition, p. 109, emphasis added.

There is a crown of pride (Isa. 28:3) which no one *should* wear, a crown of thorns (Mt. 27:29) which no one *can* wear, and a crown of life (Jas. 1:12) which everyone *may* wear.

**PRINCIPLES, PREACHING
& PROBLEMS**

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ATONEMENT

3. HOW WAS CHRIST 'MADE SIN'?

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THE TESTIMONY of the earliest Christadelphians indicates how 2 Corinthians 5:21 and related passages should be read; how, in fact, 'sin' can be applied to the sinless one, Christ. The brief quotations that follow are even more powerful in their fuller contexts.¹

"For He (God) hath made him (Jesus) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21).

1. "The word *sin* is used in two principal acceptations in the scripture. It signifies in the first place 'the transgression of the 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 into dust... Inasmuch as this evil principle pervades every part of the flesh, the animal nature is styled 'sinful flesh', that is, 'flesh full of sin'... Sin, I say, is a synonym for human nature" (JT, *Elpis Israel*, pp. 126-7).
2. "To be 'made sin' for others is to become flesh and blood... This perishing body is 'sin'... 'Sin', in its application to the body, stands for all its constituents and laws" (JT, *Eureka* 1:247-8).
3. "Christ made sin, though sinless, is the doctrine of God" (JT, 1873:362).
4. "(God) sent (forth) Jesus in the *nature* of the condemned, that sin might be condemned in him. Hence he was 'made sin'" (RR, 1873:402).
5. "Was he not made sin *in being made of a woman*, who was mortal because of sin, and could only impart her own sinful flesh to a son begotten of her?" (RR, 1873:463).
6. "Was he (Christ) 'made sin' (2 Cor. 5:21)? Answer (RR): Yes" (*Resurrectional Responsibility Debate*, Ques. 93).

1. JT: John Thomas; RR: Robert Roberts. In the absence of other references, the numbers refer to year and page number of *The Christadelphian*. *Res. Resp. Debate* refers to the Resurrectional Responsibility Debate between Robert Roberts and J. J. Andrew. (Emphasis in each case is Brother Booker's and not that of the original. Unfortunately some of the references are not readily accessible. In the case of the *Res. Resp. Debate*, besides the original edition of 1894, a reprint was distributed in the 1970s by Enlightening Bible Marking Programs, Lompoc, California, U.S.A.—S.G.).

7. "Christ was 'made sin' in being born into a sin-constitution of things" (RR, 1898:390).
8. "God 'hath made him to be sin . . . ' . . . Par-taking thus of the flesh, he was 'this cor-ruptible', though in character sinless, *and so needed cleansing and redemption* as much as his brethren . . . As to *hamartia*, it means sin, and *not* sin-offering; and we speak from a careful comparison of all the passages in the N.T. and the LXX (Septuagint). In all the 170 or more occurrences in the N.T. it is *never* rendered sin-offering" (C. C. Walker, 1922:222).²
9. ". . . 2 Cor. v.21 . . . cannot be rendered 'made to be a sin-offering' without doing violence to the meaning of the word *hamartia* and forcing upon it a meaning that it will not bear" (W. J. Young, 1922:312).²
10. "The Truth is only maintained by faithful contention, and however much we dislike contention, earnest men do not hesitate to contend for the faith . . . It has been sound Christadelphian teaching from the days of Dr. Thomas that *Jesus was 'made sin' by being born a member of the human family* . . . Jesus by birth was made sin . . . If he was not *related to sin*, in either *nature* or character, . . . then a grave injustice was done when he was allowed to suffer on the Cross, and there was no declaration of God's righteousness . . . The publishing of such teaching [i.e., that which denies this doctrine—G.B.] reveals again the absence of that unity . . . without which union is not possible" (John Carter, 1940:40,41).

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned SIN IN THE FLESH" (Rom. 8:3).

1. ". . . 'that through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil', or *sin in the flesh*" (JT, *Elpis Israel*, p. 99).
2. "Sin . . . had to be condemned in the nature that had transgressed. . . . For this cause, Jesus was made a little lower than the angels . . . that through death he might destroy that having the power of death, that is the *diabolos*', or elements of corruption in our nature, inciting it to transgression, and therefore called 'Sin working death in us'" (JT, *Eureka* 1:106).
3. "'Become sin for us', 'sin . . . condemned in the flesh'. . . 'our sins . . . borne in his body

upon the tree'—These things could not have been accomplished in a nature destitute of *that physical principle, styled 'Sin in the flesh'*" (JT, 1873:361).

4. Question: "What do you mean by 'sin in the flesh' . . . ? Answer: . . . David, by the Spirit, says, in Psalm li.5: 'Behold I was shapen *in iniquity, and in sin* did my mother conceive me'. [Paul adds] (Rom. vii.17), 'I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing'. Now, what is this element called 'uncleanness', 'sin', 'iniquity', etc.? . . . There is a principle, element, or peculiarity in our constitution . . . which leads to the decay of the strongest or the healthiest. Its implanta-tion came by sin, for death came by sin; and the infliction of death and the implantation of this peculiarity are synonymous things. . . . Because the invisible, constitutional, physical inworking of death in us came by sin, that inworking is termed sin. It is a principle of uncleanness and corruption and weakness. . . . For this reason, it is morally operative: for whatever affects the physical, affects the moral. If no counter-force were brought into play, its presence would subject us to the uncontrolled do-minion of disobedience, through the consti-tutional weakness and impulse to sin. . . . *The body of the Lord Jesus was this same unclean nature in the hand of the Father*" (RR, 1874:88)
5. "Sin in the flesh, then, is the devil destroyed by Jesus in his death" (RR, *Christendom Astray*, p. 172, 1910 edn.).³
6. "'Sin in the flesh' will ultimately be the subject of justification through the blood of Christ" (RR, *Res. Resp. Debate*, Ques. 111, paraphrased).
7. "Sin-in-the-flesh is only the root principle that leads to the various forms of diabolism. All these forms are in harmony with the root . . . Judas was a devil (Jno. vi.70), through the action of sin-in-the-flesh; he hanged himself: that form of sin-in-the-flesh was gone; but sin-in-the-flesh survived in all the world. The devil that imprisoned the Smyranean brethren (Rev. ii.10) was a

2. See previous article, "What is the 'Sin' of 2 Corinthians 5:21?"

3. For other editions of *Christendom Astray* consult the index under "sin in the flesh".

form of sin-in-the-flesh. That form . . . passed away, but generic sin-in-the-flesh continues in all the world. So when it is said that the devil is bound for a thousand years, it is that form of sin-in-the-flesh which exists in the organised governments of the world that is bound; but sin-in-the-flesh remains an ingredient in human nature during all the thousand years, until flesh and blood ceases to exist on earth” (RR, 1898:201).⁴

8. “Paul had to say, ‘sin dwelleth in me’, ‘I see a law in my members warring against the law of my mind’ . . . Sin, as disobedience, arose in (Adam and Eve’s) case from a wrong opinion concerning a matter of lawful desire, and not from what Paul calls ‘sin in the flesh’. It became sin in the flesh when it brought forth that sentence of death that made them mortal . . . and implanted in their flesh a law of dissolution that became the law of their being. As a law of physical weakness and death, it necessarily became a source of moral weakness. That which originated in sin became a cause of sin in their posterity, and therefore (is) accurately described by Paul as ‘sin in the flesh’” (RR, 1898:343).
9. “Sin is a term of double import in the Scriptures; it has a physical as well as a moral application. . . . The Apostle Paul is very precise in his references to sin as a *physical principle inherent in human flesh*. . . ‘the body of sin’ . . . ‘Sin . . . wrought in me’ . . . ‘Sin revived’ . . . ‘Sin . . . beguiled me’ . . . ‘Sin . . . working death to me . . .’ . . . ‘. . . sin which dwelleth in me’. ‘The law of sin which is in my members’ . . . Sin as spoken of in these verses must necessarily be considered as something different from actual transgression. It is ‘sin’ within that leads to sin in action” (W. H. Boulton, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, pp. 181-2).

“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of SINFUL FLESH, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:3).

1. “Sinful flesh being the hereditary nature of the Lord Jesus, he was a fit and proper sacrifice for sin” (JT, *Elpis Israel*, p. 128).
2. “Children are born sinners or unclean, because they are born of sinful flesh; and ‘that which is born of the flesh is flesh’, or

sin. This is a misfortune, not a crime” (JT, *Elpis Israel*, p. 129).

3. “Joshua [in Zech. 3:3,4] . . . clothed in filthy garments . . . represents the Christ . . . clothed with the ‘flesh of sin’, in which, Paul tells us, ‘dwells no good thing’” (JT, *Eureka* 1:58).
4. “His nature was flesh and blood (Heb. ii.14), which Paul styles ‘sinful flesh’, or *flesh full of sin, a physical quality or principle which makes the flesh mortal*; and called ‘sin’ because this property of flesh became its law, as the consequence of transgression” (JT, 1873:501).
5. “In what sense did Christ come in sinful flesh? . . . Romans vii., immediately preceding, supplies the sense of the words ‘flesh of sin’ used in Rom. viii.3. Galatians v., [which defines the ‘works of the flesh’—*G.B.*], and all New Testament allusions to the subject, teach that the *flesh* of human nature is a *sinful thing*” (RR, *The Slain Lamb*, p. 19).
6. “Jesus was the sin-nature or sinful flesh of Adam . . . that sin being thus laid on him he might die for it” (RR, 1873:407-8).
7. “How could Jesus have been made free from that *sin* which God laid upon him *in his own nature*, ‘made in the likeness of sinful flesh’, if he had not died *for himself* as well as for us? Answer (RR): He could not” (*Res. Resp. Debate*, Ques. 715).
8. “‘Sinful flesh’ is a generic description of *human flesh* in its total qualities” (RR, 1895:24).

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14).

1. “. . . ‘What is that which has the power of death?’ . . . It is the ‘exceedingly great sinner SIN’, in the sense of the ‘Law of Sin and Death’ within all the posterity of Adam,

4. It is interesting to note that Robert Roberts uses “sin-in-the-flesh” with *hyphens* eight times in this short answer. He does not always use the phrase with hyphens, but he does most often use the phrase in a hyphenated sense; that is, as though it were a unit. There are some today who refuse to use (or to allow others to use) the phrase in such a fashion, who in fact deny that the flesh is related to sin in any meaningful fashion.

without exception. This, then, is Paul's Diabolos . . . 'He that committeth sin is of the diabolos, for the diabolos sinneth from the beginning' . . . All this is perfectly intelligible when understood of Sin's flesh" (JT, *Eureka*, 1:249).

2. "Sin in the flesh, then, is the devil destroyed by Jesus in his death" (RR, *Christendom Astray*, p. 172, 1910 edn.).³
3. "The release began *with himself*. He destroyed that hold which the devil had obtained *in himself* through extraction from Adam . . . The devil was not destroyed *out of* Christ. He was destroyed *in him*. We have to get into Christ to get the benefit. In him we obtain the deliverance *accomplished in him*" (RR, 1875:375).
4. "What is meant by the devil in those places (Heb. 2:14 and 1 Jno. 3:8)? Answer: I believe it means *sin in the flesh*" (*The Good Confession*, Ques. 120).
5. "'The Devil is a scriptural personification of *Sin in the flesh*, in its several phases of manifestation . . . This old Christadelphian definition [from the *Declaration—G.B.*] is palpably true, and does not need revising; and no exception to its application can be made in Heb. ii.14 . . . Dr. Thomas wrote upon the subject with a grasp and lucidity that were almost apostolic . . . 'Sinful flesh was laid upon him, "that through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil", or sin in the flesh (Heb. ii.14) [*Elpis Israel*, Part I, c.iii] . . . Yes 'the Devil' that had the power of death is 'Sin', and Christ has 'destroyed' him 'through death' *in himself individually*, and will yet destroy him from off the face of the earth" (C. C. Walker, 1913:539,541).

"(Christ) who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Pet. 2:24).

Notice how the New Testament passage is a citation of the Old Testament:

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way: and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6).

1. "The flesh was the 'filthy garments' with which the Spirit-Word was clothed (Zech. iii.3); the *'iniquity of us all'* that was laid

upon him; 'the soul made an offering for sin' (Isa. liii.6,10)" (JT, *Eureka* 1:108).

2. "If *the principle of corruption* had not pervaded the flesh of Jesus . . . sin could not have been condemned there, nor could he have borne our sins 'in his own body'" (JT, *Eureka* 1:203).
3. "The filthy garments of flesh, styled his 'iniquity'" (JT, *Eureka* 2:19).
4. In a reference to the *baptism* of Jesus: "Jesus, with the sin of the world thus defined, rankling *in his flesh*, where it was to be condemned to death when suspended on the cross (Rom. viii.3), came to John as the 'Ram of Consecration', that his inwards and his body might be washed" (JT, 1873:501).
5. "'Iniquities laid on him'. This is a figurative description of what was literally done in God sending forth His Son, *made of a woman* . . . This was laid on Jesus in his *being made of our nature*" (RR, 1873:400).
6. "If . . . our sins were laid on him in the same way as . . . on the . . . animals . . . (ceremonial . . . imputativeness) . . . where then is the *substance* of the shadow? The ceremonial imposition of sins upon the animals was the type; the *real* putting of *sin* on the Lamb of God in the bestowal of a prepared *sin-body* wherein to die, is the substance" (RR, 1873:462).⁵
7. "He kept himself from 'his iniquity' [Ps. 18:23]. . . he must at all times have possessed perfect knowledge of any thought or impulse arising from the flesh contrary to the purpose of His Father, thus leading him to view his temptations as 'iniquities' more numerous than the hairs of his head (Psalm xl.12). While the 'iniquity' that took hold of him was *in his flesh*, in which dwelleth no good thing . . . the character which he manifested was perfect . . . He could say:—"There was no soundness in his flesh" [Ps. 38:7] because He himself said the flesh profiteth nothing (John vi.63). This testimony is amplified by the spirit in the apostle Paul thus:—"In me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing". Jesus also could say:—

5. The 'sin' was not ceremonially laid upon Christ at some point during his life, or even as he hung on the cross; it was part of him from the moment of his birth, in his very nature and flesh and mind. We *must* appreciate this fundamental truth.

‘There is no rest in my bones because of my sin’ when realizing fully, as he did, that there could be no freedom from temptation so long as he was of *flesh and blood nature*’ (Henry Sulley, 1921: 499,500).

“(Christ) who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself” (Heb. 7:27).

1. “(From Paul’s statement in Hebrews 7:27), it follows that there must be a sense in which Jesus *offered for himself also*, a sense which is apparent when it is recognised that he was under *Adamic condemnation, inhering in his flesh*” (RR, 1873:405).
2. “If Christ’s offering did not comprehend *himself* . . . , how are we to understand the statement of Paul (in Heb. 7:27)?” (RR, 1873:466).
3. “It was ‘for us’ that he came to be in the position of having first to offer for himself. . . . ‘He was made sin for us who knew no sin’, and *does not sin require an offering?*” (RR, 1875:139).
4. “As a sufferer from the effects of sin, he had himself to be delivered from those effects; and as the mode of deliverance was by death on the cross, that death was *for himself first*” (RR, 1875:375).
5. “There is no doubt Jesus fulfilled the Aaronic type of *offering for himself*” (RR, *Res. Resp. Debate*, Ques. 290, paraphrased).
6. “As the anti-typical High Priest, it was necessary he should *offer for himself* . . .” (RR, 1896:341).
7. “He did these things (‘was made perfect’, ‘was saved from death’, ‘obtained redemption’) . . . ‘*for himself first* . . . for us only as we may become part of him” (RR, *The Law of Moses*, p. 174).
8. “The sacrificial work . . . ‘*For himself that it might be for us*’” (RR, *The Law of Moses*, p. 178).

9. “Does Heb. vii.27 teach that Jesus offered *for his own sins?* . . . Yes, it says so plainly” (C. C. Walker, 1902:148).
10. “That Christ had to *offer for himself* is testified in Heb. vii.27 . . . The reason why is revealed, namely, that he might himself be saved *by his own blood*. See Heb. xiii.20; v.7” (C. C. Walker, 1910:547).
11. “His sacrifice . . . was first for himself, and then for the people. . . . *To say that it was . . . ‘not for himself’, is to contradict the word of God*, and to take a step at least towards that doctrine of Antichrist . . . The salvation was by ‘the blood of thy covenant’ (Zech. 11:11), by which both *the ‘King himself* and his ‘prisoners of hope’ are ‘brought again from the dead’. These things have been faithfully upheld as principles of the Truth from the beginning, and contradictory teaching has not been tolerated and should not be now” (C. C. Walker, 1921:313).

The Scriptures speak of Jesus as being “made . . . sin”. This statement leads inexorably to the conclusion that Jesus needed to offer for himself as well as for us. In fact it was only in offering for himself that he *could* offer for us. If he had not offered for *himself*, and obtained eternal redemption for himself, then what possible benefit could there be for us in being baptised *so as to be “in him”*? He only obtains for us what he has already obtained for himself. The suggestion that Christ’s death was merely a ceremony or ritual by which we draw near to God, and that there was no real benefit in it for him, is in direct contradiction to the teachings of Brethren Thomas and Roberts and other early Christadelphians. Therefore it is a theory very much to be repudiated, on that ground as well as the ground of the Scriptures.

It is hoped to continue this theme in later articles, and to analyse further how it was that Christ offered for himself.

(To be continued)

CORRESPONDENCE SECTION

Readers are reminded that letters for publication in the Correspondence Section are always welcome. Letters regarding specific articles that have appeared should be addressed to the editor of the section in which the article concerned appeared. Other letters should be addressed to whichever section editor seems to be the most appropriate, or, if this is not readily apparent, to the Publishing Editor. Correspondents are advised that only letters which are adjudged to be constructive in character, and of interest to readers, will be published.

know for a fact that it was still in use in Christ's day. In recent years a large number of papyri dating from the first century have been discovered, particularly in the Dead Sea region. These papyri, some in Hebrew, others in Aramaic, consist of legal and business documents as well as private letters. The formula "I . . . to you today" occurs a number of times, especially in land transactions and writs of divorce⁷ where some kind of solemn affirmation or declaration is involved.

Here then we have a reason for placing the comma after "today" rather than before. To assure the dying man of his place in Paradise, Christ was simply underlining his statement by using an idiom of his language, which the thief would have understood to be a solemn promise from which there was no going back.

Nor is Luke 23:43 the only place in the New Testament where we find this idiom. In Acts 20:26 it is also spoken by the Apostle Paul when he says to the Ephesian elders: "Therefore I testify to you this day (today) that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God". Again the context is similar to the other occurrences—an emphatic statement. Paul is stressing that he could no longer be

responsible for them, seeing that they already knew all they needed to know.

There remains just one final question. Was Christ deliberately echoing Deuteronomy when he spoke these words? Under the Law of Moses the thief had no chance whatsoever of receiving a place in the Kingdom: "And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is accursed by God" (Deut. 21:22,23). The thief, like Christ, was accursed. Yet in the crucifixion of Christ the curse of the Law was being done away with once and for all (Gal. 3:13), being nailed to his cross (Col. 2:14). Christ, himself bearing the pain of this curse let us not forget, took up the same language by means of which Moses had once declared the Law and its curses (Deut. 27:10ff; 28:1) to Israel, and as the bringer of "the law of the Spirit of life" announced to the thief that he would indeed be in Paradise. Thus the language of the Law and condemnation is turned into language of freedom and forgiveness.

7. For example text no. 40, line 2, in J. A. Fitzmyer and D. J. Harrington, *A Manual of Palestinian Aramaic Texts*, Rome, 1978, p. 139.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ATONEMENT

4. WAS JESUS LIKE US, OR DIFFERENT? (1)

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"Through his own blood, (he) entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:12, RV).

IT IS A fundamental point of truth that death came upon all men through Adam (Rom. 5:12,15), and that condemnation came upon *the whole race* through his offence (vv. 16-19). Paul succinctly summarises this principle when he writes: "in Adam all die" (1 Cor. 15:22).

Here was—and is—the breach between God and the human race. Christ's mission was to heal that breach and reconcile the race to God. If we carefully examine all Paul's teachings on this subject we shall find that all the advantages of Christ's sacrifice for us depend upon

the fact that *he was one of us* "in all points", and hence under the same condemnation that Adam brought upon the race.

Two aspects

Christ was one of the race which, *as a race*, was separated from God by the defilement caused by Adam's sin. (There is of course no guilt attached to the simple fact of separation.) It was only by being a member of our defiled and condemned race that he could fulfil the requirements for the redemption of that race. And, furthermore, the redemption of the race

involved—necessitated, for that matter—his own redemption also.

It was also true that Jesus from his birth—even from his conception—was a holy thing (Lk. 1:35) and a special creation. He was *the* Son of God in a sense which could be true of no other man. He had a unique relationship which, in part, strengthened him (Ps. 80:17) and allowed him the possibility of living a sinless life—and this was necessary also for the reconciliation of man to God (2 Cor. 5:19-21).

It is the failure properly to balance these two necessary aspects of Christ's identity that has caused considerable misunderstanding, discord, and even division among Christadelphians. From the earliest days of our history undue emphasis on one or the other of these two aspects (and a corresponding neglect of the counterpart) has created problems. Both must be kept in view at all times: the condemnation that rested upon Christ, and the uniqueness of his relationship with the Father. Or, put another way, that which made him like all other men, and that which made him different from every other man. One point of view should never be allowed to overshadow or displace the other. The two aspects are equally important.

Christ partook of our condemnation

Christ was a man (1 Tim. 2:5; Acts 2:22, etc), who came in the flesh (1 Jno. 4:2), being born of a woman, under the law (Gal. 4:4). It would logically follow, even in the absence of any other testimony, that, in having the same physical constitution as ourselves, he was thereby subject to the same racial condemnation as the rest of mankind; in other words, that he had the same "law of sin" in his members (Rom. 7:23).

But there is plenty of other testimony to this effect.

1. Hebrews 2:14,15: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, *he also himself likewise took part of the same*; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil". There are two points here. First, the fact: that Christ was made in all points like his brethren; note the repeated expressions "also", "himself", "likewise", "the same". Second, the reason: so that he might destroy the "devil". It was necessary for him to partake of the same flesh and blood

in order that he might destroy the devil by death. We know that the devil is sin in the flesh. Jesus had to *have* sinful flesh in order to *overcome* sinful flesh and by dying to *destroy* sinful flesh. This is the very strength of the whole argument.

2. Hebrews 7:27: "Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, *first for his own sins*, and then for the people's: *for this he did once*, when he offered up himself". The simple and obvious meaning of this verse is that he offered once *for his own sins* and for the people's. This conclusion is sometimes evaded by objecting to the expression "his own sins", inasmuch as Christ was free from personal transgression. But by an examination of the ordinance referred to we find that the high priest offered "because of the *uncleanness* of the children of Israel, *and* because of their *transgressions*" (Lev. 16:16, RV).

So "sins" in Hebrews 7:27 includes uncleanness as well as actual transgression; it includes the whole "sin constitution". It is only by considering these two aspects of sin as inseparable parts of one whole that we can understand how Christ, by destroying the body of sin on the cross, could cover our transgressions.

Our sins are not something separate from our nature, they are a development of it. There are not "two kinds of sin", one moral and real, and the other only shadowy and metonymical. Rather, there are two aspects of sin: the "root" in our flesh and the "branch" in our actions. And the two aspects are intimately and absolutely connected to one another. In us sin is too strong for us and becomes manifest in our actions. In Christ sin was controlled and overcome, and never became manifest in action. But in both cases it is *the same battle with the same adversary*.

3. Hebrews 9:12: "*By his own blood* he entered in once into the holy place". The holy place signified the immortal state beyond the "veil" of the flesh. Christ entered it "by" (RV, through) *his own purifying, sacrificial blood*. The text continues: "... having obtained eternal redemption". The "for us" in italics in the AV is incorrect, and is omitted in the RV, RSV, NEB, NIV, and NASB. The verb "obtained" is in the middle voice, indicating reflexive action; that is, it means "having obtained for himself".

This is what one would naturally take from the passage as it stands in English. The translators of the AV appear to have added the “for us” in direct violation of the grammatical meaning, just to support their false theory of ‘substitution’. Any theory that attempts to separate Christ from the effects of his own sacrifice is just a variation of the old ‘vicarious substitution’ doctrine, and a denial of the representative nature of his sacrifice.

4. Hebrews 4:15: “(He) was *in all points* tempted like as we are”. We are tempted by the law in our members, which wars against the law of our mind (Rom. 7:23). We are tempted when we are drawn away of our own lusts and enticed (Jas. 1:14). Then this must be how Christ was tempted, and this must be what he perfectly resisted and overcame, and this must be what he destroyed by death.

5. Romans 8:3: “God sending His own Son *in the likeness of sinful flesh*, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh”. Christ had to be in the very likeness of sinful flesh in order to condemn sin in the flesh. Sin had to be condemned in the very ‘arena’ where it had reigned supreme. The word “likeness” does not mean *apparent* similarity; it means absolute identity.

6. John 3:14-16: “. . . as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up . . .”. According to Jesus’s own testimony, he was the antitype of the brazen serpent that Moses erected in the wilderness (Num. 21:9). What did this symbolise? How could it possibly typify Jesus Christ?

That which *caused* death was lifted up as a type of *sin’s body* being crucified, thus forming the basis of reconciliation for all who look toward it. Paul refers to this when he says: “our old man is crucified with him, that the *body of sin* might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom. 6:6). Christ overcame and crucified our “Master”, “Sin-in-the-flesh”, and delivered us from his service. The “serpent” dwelt in his “body of sin”, and required first to be restrained and finally to be crushed (Gen. 3:15). Christ raised up the body of sin on the cross just as Moses raised up the brazen serpent, exhibiting and condemning that which brought death; those who look upon him in faith are delivered.

7. Hebrews 9:22,23: “Almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these (that is, animal sacrifices); but the heavenly things themselves with better *sacrifices* than these”. We know that the Mosaic Law points forward to Christ. Under the Law the high priest was to purify with blood, among other things, the mercy seat and the altar (Lev. 16:15-19). What is the antitypical fulfilment of the cleansing of the mercy seat and the altar by blood? What is signified by this? Who is it that was typified by the mercy seat and the altar?

“God has set (Christ) forth to be a *Mercy-seat*” (Rom. 3:25, *Diaglott*);

“We have an *altar*, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle” (Heb. 13:10).

Christ is the mercy seat and the altar, cleansed by his own blood from the uncleanness of sinful flesh.

That which was accomplished provisionally in the temple offering (Lk. 2:22-27) and in his baptism (Mt. 3:13-16) was accomplished absolutely in his death and resurrection.

8. Galatians 3:13: “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree”. He had to come under the curse of the Mosaic Law, reasons Paul, in order to redeem those under that curse. This is parallel with the argument that Christ had to be flesh and blood in order to destroy the Adamic curse. He had to come under it in order to destroy it *in himself*, and open a way out of it for *himself*, and for all those who unite themselves with him in the appointed way.

He came under the Adamic curse by birth, as we all do. The Mosaic curse he came under, as Paul says, by the manner of his death. He came under both without the loss of his personal righteousness, it is true; but both were real nevertheless.

9. 2 Corinthians 5:21: “He hath made him . . . *sin* for us”. In what way was he “made . . . sin”, other than as Paul explains, by partaking of the same flesh and blood as the children, in whom the law of sin reigned?!

1. See previous articles Nos. 2 and 3 in the series.

10. 1 Peter 2:24: “Who his own self bare our sins *in his own body* on the tree”. In what way did he bear our sins “in his own body”? As Paul explains, it was by partaking of sinful flesh, bearing “in his body” the root and tendencies of sin which he conquered and subdued.

“In his own body” establishes the connection between him and us. He was *one of the defiled race*. Therefore he could be accepted by God as *representing* the race.

If God had exacted a penalty from someone upon whom it did not rightly fall this would have been neither justice nor love. Instead it would have been a paganised ‘substitutionary’ ‘sacrifice’. But when God especially provided and strengthened one of the race, and enabled him to fulfil the conditions which all (including himself) should fulfil, and then was and is willing to receive all the rest on the basis of an identification with this one perfect example and sacrifice—there indeed is both love and justice demonstrated with beautiful Divine wisdom and power!

11. Hebrews 13:20: “God . . . brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus . . . *through the blood* of the everlasting covenant”. Here is another key statement of great importance. Jesus was brought from the dead (surely this must include his glorification also?) *by his own blood*. His purification, redemption, and final exaltation to immortality were contingent on his being really associated with his blood.

Testimony of the ‘pioneers’

To this essential truth the ‘pioneer’ brethren agreed:

- “Sin could not have been condemned in the body of Jesus, if it had not existed there . . . the purpose of God . . . was to condemn sin in the flesh; a thing that could not have been accomplished, if there were no sin there” (John Thomas, *Elpis Israel*, p. 128).
- “Sin . . . had to be condemned in the nature that had transgressed . . . He (Jesus) . . . took part of the same; that through death he might destroy . . . the *diabolos*’, or elements of corruption in our nature, inciting it to transgression, and therefore called ‘Sin working death in us’” (John Thomas, *Eureka*, Vol. 1, pp. 106,107).
- “He (Jesus) was Sin’s Flesh crucified, slain, and buried; in which by the slaying sin had

been condemned, and by the burial, put out of sight” (Vol. 2, p. 124).

- “If the principle of corruption had not pervaded the flesh of Jesus . . . (sin could not) have been condemned there; nor could he have ‘borne our sins *in his own body* . . . ’” (Vol. 1, p. 203).
- “‘Iniquities laid on him’. This is a figurative description of what was literally done in God sending forth His Son, made of a woman (Adamic), made under the law (Mosaic), to die under the combined curse . . . This was laid on Jesus in his being made of our nature” (Robert Roberts, *The Christadelphian*, 1873, p. 400).
- “What is cancelled at baptism (and it is only cancelled potentially—for there is an ‘if’ all the way through) is the condemnation resting upon us as individual sinners, *and the racial condemnation which we physically inherit*. I have never diverged from this view . . .” (Robert Roberts, from the Introduction to *Resurrectional Responsibility Debate*).
- “He offered first for himself . . . He obtained eternal redemption in and for himself, as the . . . verb . . . implies . . . He was brought again from the dead ‘through the blood of the everlasting covenant’” (Robert Roberts, *The Christadelphian*, 1875, p. 139).
- “Christ . . . (was) purged by the antitypical blood of his own sacrifice . . . He must, therefore, have been the subject of a personal cleansing in the process by which he opened the way of sanctification for his people” (Robert Roberts, *The Law of Moses*, pp. 170,171).

It may be true that an occasional brief citation, out of context, may appear to teach otherwise than the above (for example, several brief answers by Brother Robert Roberts during the heat of debate). But the above are only a few quotations from a pervasive, altogether consistent whole of exposition in the works of Brethren Thomas and Roberts, and others, to the effect that Jesus shared with us every aspect of Adamic condemnation.

(To be continued)

Due to insufficient space, Brother Booker’s remarks on his second important aspect of this ‘Question about the Atonement’, namely on Christ’s unique relationship with the Father, have to be held over to the next article in the series.—S.G.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ATONEMENT

5. WAS JESUS LIKE US, OR DIFFERENT? (2)

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WE HAVE ESTABLISHED that Christ was under the same condemnation as all the rest of mankind, and that his sacrifice was first for his own cleansing and redemption from that condemnation. This is half of the full picture; now we must examine the counterpart (just as necessary to understand), that Christ was a holy and special person set apart from all other men by his Divine parentage.

Christ had a unique relationship with the Father
Hebrews 1:3. Christ was “the brightness of (God’s) glory, and the express image of (God’s) person”. He was the perfect man; the perfect image of God (in a moral and spiritual sense); the flawless, unblemished manifestation of the eternal Father. He was the perfect Son because he was the perfect likeness of a perfect Father. Do we fully appreciate who and what this man really was? Have we concentrated on the fact (undeniable though it be) that he was *not* the pre-existent, eternal second person of the Trinity to such an extent that we have missed the honour and glory due to him as the Son of God?

John 14:9. “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father”. The Father was revealed, or unveiled, in Christ (17:6) in an absolutely unique way. He was a man, truly; but *not* ‘a mere man’, *not* ‘man only’. As to his nature (and the condemnation he bore), he was certainly man in the fullest sense; as to his status, and his relationship with his Father, he was the manifestation of God and “the Lord from heaven”. We must never forget this.

John 1:14. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth”. Christ was “Emmanuel”, “God with us” (Mt. 1:23; Isa. 7:14), “God . . . manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16). In the face

of Jesus men could see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God (2 Cor. 4:4-6). And all of this was true of Christ even before he was made immortal. It was true while he still bore the curse of a condemned nature.

Colossians 1:15,16,18. Christ is the “image of the invisible God” (cp. Heb. 1:3), by whom (Greek: *in* whom) all things were created (this is undoubtedly the new or spiritual creation: cf. 2:12; 3:1,9,10; 2 Cor. 4:6; 5:17; Gal. 6:15, etc.), “that in all things he might have the pre-eminence”.

John 13:13,14. “Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am”. It was not immodest of Jesus to say such a thing, even in the days of his flesh. While he never presumed upon his Sonship and special status (this is the point of Phil. 2:5-8), there is no doubt that he asserted its reality. Even before he was crucified he was “the Lord of glory” (1 Cor. 2:7,8), the “Lord . . . of the sabbath” (Mk. 2:28, etc.), and the Lord over all illnesses and disease (Mk. 1:39, etc.), over the wind and the waves (Mk. 4:41), and even—to a limited extent?—over *death* (Jno. 11:25).

1 John 1:1,2. “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested . . .)”. The apostle echoes the introductory words of his Gospel. Even in the days of his flesh Jesus possessed recognisable Divine qualities: he was “the Word of life”, who manifested “the eternal life, which was with the Father”. “Never man spake like this man” (Jno. 7:46).

Out of the numerous possible quotations from earlier Christadelphian writers which attest to the *necessarily* unique status of Christ, one will be sufficient:

“The two relationships are here presented in a manner to show how completely Jesus was qualified to meet the requirements of the fallen race. A ‘son of man’ merely had never been found, during four thousand years, who could accomplish the work; and yet the redeemer must be son of man in order to practically and representatively redeem fallen human nature by overcoming its sin-produced proclivities. But a son of man merely was not equal to the task; and had such an one done so there would not thereby have been a manifestation of God’s love and the glory due to Him as the Saviour. Therefore Jesus must be *‘the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth’* (John 1:14) as well as the ‘Son of man’ according to the flesh in order that the work of redemption might be possible” (Thomas Williams, *The World’s Redemption*, pp. 428-9).

Truths of salvation

We must have both these truths concerning Jesus as ‘foundation stones’ upon which to erect the true gospel of salvation in Christ. It was imperative that Christ be of our nature in every sense of the word, so as to identify with us, and allow us to identify with him. Otherwise any ‘victory’ he won could have had no practical connection with and effect upon us. But it was equally imperative that he be specially created and specially strengthened by his Father to win that special victory. Otherwise there would be no triumph or glory to God. We do him no service when we attempt to diminish either of these concepts.

We are not playing with words; this is the reality of salvation. As a race, we *are* ‘sin’. Everything we do naturally is sin. Sin is the very fibre of our being. We are conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity (Ps. 51:5). This was true of Christ, and most assuredly of us as well. It is from this ‘constitution of sin’ that we need redemption, cleansing, and deliverance. Let us realise this fully; sin is far deeper and more pervasive than we may be willing to admit. A full realisation of what we *are* is the key to the achievement of what we *may become*. Facing the facts is always the essential beginning to any solution. Let us face this reality concerning Christ and ourselves.

By total devotion to God, and with absolute faith in God (without which it would have been impossible), Christ lifted himself out of the

universal ‘sin-constitution’. He cleansed himself from it in the sacrificial way appointed by God from the beginning. *Now* he who was “made . . . sin” (2 Cor. 5:19-21) is no longer “sin”, or sin-tainted (Heb. 7:26), in any respect. He is *free* from sin, *without* sin; sin has *no more* dominion over him (cp. Rom. 6:7-14).

And he now offers, by God’s merciful arrangement, to reach down and lift *us* out—if we have total faith in him, and give total devotion to him. This was the very purpose of his creation and existence and glorious work.

Paul said: “in me, (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing” (Rom. 7:18). And Jesus could say exactly the same: “Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God” (Lk. 18:19). *That* is why he crucified the flesh, and tells us we must do the same, to the best of our abilities. And the fact that Jesus could say this along with Paul *is what makes him one with us in our problem*. It is what makes his putting the flesh to death a manifestation of God’s justice (Rom. 3:25), in which he himself totally concurred.

In that death Jesus was saying exactly what Paul said publicly, humbly, and to the glory of God: “In my flesh dwelleth no good thing. *This* is what sin’s flesh deserves. I have never yielded to it for a moment. I have always crucified it within me. And now, in obedience to the Father, and in full agreement with Him, I am putting it to death *in me* once for all. I am destroying the *diabolos*. That is the essence and climax of my work of perfecting *myself* so that I may save *you*”.

Redemption of himself

Christ—in the God-appointed way, and with the indispensable God-provided help and guidance—had to cleanse himself from sin, and destroy sin in himself. This he did, not in one act, but by a total, inseparable life-and-death work. That is the basis and meaning of what we may too glibly call ‘sacrifice’. It was his *only* way to his *own* personal salvation. He was made perfect by “suffering” (Heb. 2:10), and thus was the “suffering” required. He was redeemed “by his own blood” (Heb. 9:12).

His great work was not merely a symbol, illustrating what *should* be done to *someone else*. Neither was it, as some imply, just one final *ritual*. It was, instead, the ultimate one-time act (Heb. 9:12,26). It was an actual, essential accomplishment: the self-cleansing from, and

destruction of, sin. He did not just typify this; he *did* it. He did not 'pay the penalty' for anyone else. He did *the actual job of destroying sin* that was required by God's holiness, so that the race could be saved. He did it *in* and *for* himself. There was no other way or place he could do it.

It is true that Christ was always one with God. There was never any barrier separating them *morally*, although he was of sin-defiled flesh. But still the defiled nature was a barrier in one sense, for him as it is for us. He could not be one with God in perfection and eternal substance, *as he is now*, until that barrier was removed: not a moral barrier, but a physical and legal one; not a 'guilt', but a misfortune, a disability, an inherited 'disease' of the flesh that must be cleansed in God's required way.

As to the motive for his sacrifice, Christ did it, not for himself, but in love and obedience to his Father, and for the sake of the glorious "seed" whose eternal redemption and joy was to be his eternal satisfaction (Isa. 53:10,11).

The total life-and-death work of sin-destroying that was laid upon him as the representative man of the race was essential for his own cleansing and salvation, as part of the race. As the representative man, the embodiment and nucleus of the new race, the beginning of God's new creation, he must first himself be transformed from a defiled, condemned condition to a totally purified and perfected condition.

And his culminating blood-shedding death on the cross was an inseparable Divinely-required part of that work of racial salvation. He was not just *ritually* "cleansed" by "sacrifice". It was not just an arbitrary form that God required him to go through as an act of obedience, or to symbolise something. It was an actual personal process of conquering and self-cleansing; a being made perfect by suffering.

Redemption of the race

The work Christ did—the essential, race-redeeming work that was preordained and foreshadowed from the beginning—was the overcoming and destroying and condemning of sin in himself and, necessarily, *for* himself. It was not in and for himself as a personal, selfish motive, but as a practical, necessary operation to achieve the redemption of the race.

As a moral and physical actuality Christ could conquer and destroy sin *only in himself*. His flesh was the arena of his total and perfect victory over sin, by which he laid the eternal foundation for his further work. Christ will complete the battle against sin by two final, related acts:

- (1) He will absorb into his own glorious, sin-free nature all those who accept this deliverance provided by God, and who in faith do what God requires them to do to receive it (Rev. 21:1-7);
- (2) He will destroy all who do not accept him and enter into him (Rev. 20:11-15; 21:8).

In these two ways the whole of mankind will eventually be saved or destroyed.

The race in Christ

Could Christ have attained to immortality without that blood-shedding death? No, because he must share the common racial salvation, or it has no benefit for us. In God's wisdom that particular death was essential to lay a sound basis for the salvation of the race. And (let us strive to grasp this wonderful and exalted concept) *Christ was, and is, the race!* He is all mankind. None can live eternally except within him and as part of him, by becoming "one" with him in the appointed fashion: "of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Cor. 1:30,31).

(To be continued)

TESTIMONY BOOK EXCHANGE

Readers are reminded that one of the most useful functions of *The Testimony Book Exchange* is to enable books belonging to deceased brethren and sisters, or to elderly brethren and sisters who are leaving their homes to live in a home of some sort, to be passed on to others who can put them to good use. Would brethren and sisters disposing of books, whether on their own behalf or on behalf of the deceased, please consider making them available to other brethren and sisters via Brother Jones rather than disposing of them to second-hand bookshops, etc.

CORRESPONDENCE

“MADE SIN FOR US”

I note in *The Testimony* of November 1988 that Brother George Booker, writing on the atonement, suggests that the words “He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin” in 2 Corinthians 5:21 refers to Jesus’s birth of flesh.

Surely this is not the natural reading of the passage; perhaps it is the AV inversion of the two clauses which leads to confusion. If altered to read in a straightforward way, the sentence would be: “He who knew no sin was made sin for us”.*

In fact, the Greek text uses this more natural sequence of ideas, and the RV, following the Greek order fairly closely, reads: “Him who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf”. This makes clear that it was a man who had already shown himself sinless who was “made sin”.

To suggest that this passage refers to Jesus’s natural birth could raise problems. Did he pre-exist in a sinless state? Did he achieve anything for us by being naturally born?

There is an interesting record in the 1880 *Christadelphian* (p. 7) in which Brother Thomas quotes this verse, and takes the type of the

scapegoat to illustrate it. The sin of Israel was “laid” on the scapegoat, which took it away; Isaiah, using the same imagery, says of the servant: “the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (53:6). The scapegoat was not a slaughtered sacrifice; it was the other goat that died. While both goats represent different aspects of Jesus’s sacrifice, the image in 2 Corinthians is of the living goat upon which sin was laid. It could be truly said of Jesus that he willingly, in his life (and death), took upon him the burden laid by his Father of responsibility for the sins of mankind (of which he was part), and then took them away, when he ascended to God, to be removed for ever.

What Jesus did for us was not in being born (though this was the first step in God’s plan), but through knowing no sin in his life, and yet accepting, both in his life and in his death, the consequences of sin.

This letter does not seek to deny the truth that Jesus was of our sin-tending nature. It is only concerned with the accurate understanding of a particular verse.

Ray Walker
Kidsgrove

Reply

I do not know whether the letter of Sister Walker will run with or after my third article. But either way the third article has quite a

number of other quotations (JT, RR, etc.) showing that their (JT, RR, etc.) basic view of 2 Corinthians supports mine. Not that that is conclusive by itself, of course. Certainly Sister Walker’s main point is correct, that is, that Jesus was “made sin” in his death as well as in his birth—I would find no fault with that. But the only way his death could have been meaningful for our atonement was if his nature was the same as ours. An angel (not having our nature) could not be a sin-bearer for mankind. That seems obvious.

There is also the point that Christ could only have died if he had been made, at birth, of our nature. Therefore Sister Walker’s concern about the time sequence does not strike me as being terribly important. Time for God does not exactly run in the same constraints as our time. Hence 2 Corinthians 5:21b: “that we (who knew no righteousness of our own) might be made the righteousness of God in him”; we were *made* righteous in Christ (at least in one sense) *before* we were even born.

George Booker

* A parallel sentence might read: “The man who won the battle was made an earl”. One would never suppose from this that the man had in fact been made an earl at birth, and had won his battle later, even if the sentence had been inverted to read, “He was made an earl, who won the battle”.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ATONEMENT

6. DID CHRIST HAVE TO OFFER FOR HIMSELF FIRST?

(The Pioneer Viewpoint)

GEORGE BOOKER
Austin, Texas

CHRIST CLEANSED *himself* first, in the God-appointed way: by neutralising, overcoming, and eventually destroying—in his flesh—the impulses of sin. His sacrifice cleanses and redeems us *only as we become part of him*. These are the emphatic and consistent teachings of the pioneers, and together they are the heart of the sacrifice of Christ. These are the central issues that distinguish the Truth from the apostasy on this subject.

The issue

Did Christ offer *as one of those needing the sacrifice*? If so, then he was—as we teach—truly a *representative*. Or did he offer merely on behalf of others, not needing the sacrifice himself? If so, then he was—as the apostasy teaches—no more than a *substitute*. Brethren Thomas and Roberts are emphatic that the former is the truth, and the very heart of the truth, concerning his sacrifice.

All animal sacrifices *typified* what needed to be done. Christ was not just another type. He actually *did* in himself and for himself what needed to be done: overcoming and destroying the *diabolos*; offering the bloodshed sacrifice that God's wisdom had appointed for the cleansing of sin's flesh; and breaking out of the law of sin and death that held all mankind, including himself, in bondage.

God, through Christ, now freely offers this victory to all who completely deny themselves, and become a part of him, and enter into him. Where they fall short of his perfect victory, his blood continually cleanses them through repentance and prayer and God's mercy, *if* they are giving their utmost in loving service to God.

Where should we stand on this vital issue? The following are the word-for-word, Scriptural teachings of John Thomas and Robert Roberts, in question form, with references. Those who

believe the Truth taught by Christadelphians from the beginning should have no difficulty answering each question with a 'Yes'.*

Historical review

1. Was it necessary that Jesus should offer for himself for the purging of his own nature? (1873:468).
2. Was Christ's sacrifice operative on himself first of all? (RR, *Law of Moses*, 1924 edition, p. 91).
3. Did Christ offer for himself first, and only "for us" as we may become part of him? (*Law of Moses*, p. 174).
4. Was Christ's flesh purified by the sprinkling of its own blood? (*Catechesis*, third edition, p. 13).
5. Did Christ require purging from the law of sin and death by his own sacrifice? (1873: 468).
6. Was the altar-body on the tree sanctified by its shed blood? (JT, *Eureka*, 2:224).
7. If one denies the need for Christ to be purified by his own sacrifice, does this displace him from his position, destroy the reason for his being partaker of our common nature, and substitute the confusion of the sectarian atonement? (1877: 376).
8. Is it true that God could not have condemned sin *in* the flesh of Jesus if there were no sin there? (JT, *Elpis Israel*, 1942 edition, p. 128).
9. Is the *diabolos* that Jesus destroyed the "exceeding great sinner Sin" in the sense of the law of sin and death within *all* the posterity of Adam without exception? (*Eureka* 1:249).

* In the absence of other references, the numbers refer to year and page numbers of *The Christadelphian*, for articles authored by Brother Robert Roberts.

10. Was the flesh of Christ the “filthy garments” with which the Spirit-Word was clothed—the “iniquity of us all” that was laid on him? (*Eureka* 1:108).
11. Does “sin” in Paul’s argument stand for human nature with its affections and desires? Is to be “made sin” for others to become flesh and blood? (*Eureka* 1:247).
12. Were our iniquities “laid on him” by his being made of our nature? (1873:400).
13. Was it necessary that Christ should first of all be purified with better sacrifices than the Mosaic? (*Law of Moses*, p. 92).
14. Was the flesh of Christ cleansed by the blood of that flesh when poured out unto death on the tree? (*Eureka* 2:224).
15. Does an evil principle pervade every part of human flesh, so that the animal nature is styled in Scripture “sinful flesh”, that is, “flesh full of sin”? (*Elpis Israel*, p. 127).
16. Was Christ’s own shed blood required for his exaltation to the Divine nature? (1897: 63).
17. Did Christ have to offer for himself? (1873:405).
18. Is *sin in the flesh* hereditary? and is it entailed upon mankind as the consequence of Adam’s violation of the Eden law? (*Elpis Israel*, p. 128).
19. Was Christ’s flesh “flesh of sin” in which “dwells no good thing”? (*Eureka* 1:106).
20. When God made Jesus “to be sin” (2 Cor. 5:21), does this mean He made him to be sinful flesh? (*Elpis Israel*, p. 134).
21. Did Christ offer for himself, first, by reason of his participation in Adamic mortality? (1873:555).
22. Did the Spirit clothe himself with weakness and corruption—in other words, “Sin’s flesh’s identity”—that he might destroy the *diabolos*? (*Eureka* 1:246).
23. Is it true that the Devil was not destroyed *out of Christ*; but that it was destroyed *in him*? Is it true that we have to get into Christ to get the benefit of his work? Is it true that in him we obtain the deliverance accomplished *in him*? (1875:375).
24. Is *diabolos* a very fit and proper word to designate the law of sin and death, or sin’s flesh? (*Eureka* 1:249).
25. Did Christ “through the shedding of his blood enter into the spiritual state”? (1895: 139).
26. Is it true that if Christ had not *first* obtained eternal redemption (Heb. 9:12), there would have been no hope for us, for we attain salvation only through what he has accomplished *in himself*, of which we become heirs by union with him? (1875:375).
27. Was Jesus himself as the firstborn necessarily comprised in the sacrificial work he accomplished for his brethren? (1884:469).
28. Is it true that these things (“became sin for us”, “sin condemned in the flesh”, “our sins borne in his body on the tree”) could not have been accomplished in a nature destitute of the physical principle styled “Sin in the flesh”? (JT, 1873:361).
29. Did Christ “offer for himself”? Did he obtain eternal redemption *in and for himself*, as the middle voice of the verb implies (Heb. 9:12)? Was he brought from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant? (1875:139).
30. Was Christ purged by the blood of his own sacrifice? (*Law of Moses*, p. 171).
31. Is it true that condemnation has passed upon *all* men through Adam, and that it cannot be annulled without sacrifice? (1893: Sept. cover).
32. Was Jesus, though personally sinless, by constitution condemned? and did he therefore have to offer for himself and for his brethren? (1873:405).

(To be continued)

BACK ISSUES

Copies of back issues of *The Testimony* are available for the last twenty years (apart from the occasional issue). A few are also available for some of the years before that. Please send your wants lists to Brother Ken Thompson (address rear cover), who will arrange for despatch and invoicing. Prices are at face value, with an allowance for increased postage.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ATONEMENT

7. HOW DID CHRIST DESTROY THE DEVIL?

GEORGE BOOKER
Austin, Texas

WE CANNOT HAVE a proper understanding of the death of Christ, who was the second Adam, unless we have a clear perception of the cause of the death of the first Adam. At his creation Adam is described as being “very good”. If there were no physical change in him at the time of his condemnation, he must have remained so throughout his life. In such a case his posterity, who inherited the qualities of his physical organisation, would surely be described by later writers as having at least something good present in their nature; but Scripture says: “in me (that is, *in my flesh*.) dwelleth *no good thing*” (Rom. 7:18).

Initially, Adam was not hampered with the shackles of sin, the bondage of corruption, nor sorrow of heart and bodily pain. Instead, he was a “living soul” (neither mortal nor immortal), entirely free from the power of sin and death. But the transgression brought both a *moral* and a *physical* change. There was implanted in it the seeds of decay, which ultimately brought forth death. His flesh became what the Bible calls “sinful flesh”. ‘Sin’ became a law of his being—a physical property in his constitution. This principle was called “*sin in the flesh*”, and it was transmitted to all his descendants, Jesus Christ included (compare the genealogy in Luke 3). If Adam had been obedient for some determinate period, we might suppose that God would have allowed him to enter eternal life without dying, because there was no sin in his flesh before he fell. But with Christ it was quite different. In being born of Mary—“made of a woman”—he was ‘made sin’ (2 Cor. 5:21);¹ he became a partaker of the nature that had sin in its constitution—the law of sin and death in its members. And as that law had not been abrogated, Christ’s obedience could not exempt him from death; he could not enter eternal life alone without dying.

In Matthew 19 a young man addressed Jesus as “Good Master”. Christ replied: “Why callest

thou me good? there is none good but one . . . God” (vv. 16,17). What was there about the Son of God that was *not* good? His moral character was flawless, perfect, and unparalleled in history (Jno. 8:46). The excellence of his life and conduct was such as evoked from Pilate the declaration: “I find no fault in him” (Jno. 19:4,6). What was there in him, then that was faulty or not good? Surely it was his defiled and unclean nature inherited from Adam through Abraham, David, and Mary.

That nature was originally “very good” and free from the principle of death, but now it had been physically changed in this respect by the introduction of “the law of sin and death in its members”. While being perfect morally, Jesus was yet not “very good” physically. Had he been as undefiled physically as he was morally, or as good physically as Adam was before the Fall, death would have had no claim on him whatever. Consequently there would have been an injustice committed in giving such an one over to death. But had he been as imperfect morally as he was physically, there would have been no resurrection and consequently no salvation. Both features were required in the plan of redemption that God “might be just, *and the justifier of him which believeth*” (Rom. 3:26).

“Sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:3) when personified in Scripture is called “the devil” (Heb. 2:14,15). Part of the mission of Christ was to destroy this devil through death. This mission would have been impossible if sin, as a physical element, had had no existence in him. But having sin in him constitutionally, we can see how he “put away sin by the sacrifice of *himself*” (Heb. 9:26). This *diabolos*, or devil, being in all the descendants of Adam, is called “our old man” and “the old man”. In mankind generally we see

1. See previous articles Nos. 2 and 3 in this series.

“the old man with his deeds” (Col. 3:9), but in Christ “the old man” existed without his deeds, that is, without evildoing. In his death the old man was crucified, that the body of sin might be destroyed (cp. Rom. 6:6); the enmity (Gen. 3:15) in himself was slain and abolished (Eph. 2:16). There was justice in his death, *and* justification in his resurrection. In his death there was a declaration of God’s righteousness (Rom. 3:26 again), by showing man’s sinfulness even by nature, and in his resurrection an illustration of the fact that God would not suffer His Holy One (even in sin’s flesh) to see corruption (Ps. 16:10; Acts 2:27; 13:35).

Because of the whole argument above, it is wrong to suggest that death was inherent in Adam’s nature from his creation. Those who maintain that mortality was a law of his being even before the transgression, and that as a result of his disobedience he was simply driven from the garden and allowed to die when his nature wore out, are in fact teaching that that which worketh death in us was in Adam before he sinned. They are also suggesting that, contrary to Romans 5:12, death did not come by sin, but rather by the law of nature as at first constituted. Such a position also destroys the force of the reasoning in Hebrews 2:14, as to why Christ needed to be partaker of our nature, and nullifies the statement that the power of death lay in the *diabolos*, or “sin in the flesh”. To suggest that the Diabolos already existed in Adam even before the Fall requires that it must have been a “very good” Diabolos, and if “very good”, then why destroy it?

This latter reasoning leads inevitably to confusion. It is far simpler and more satisfying to accept the fact that there was no Diabolos in Adam’s flesh prior to the Fall. The implantation of the law of sin and death in his members by God’s sentence, was the introduction of something that did not previously exist there. That ‘something’, having in it the power of death, was transmitted to all born in him, causing death to pass upon all (Rom. 5:12). The only way of salvation for any of the children of Adam who are passing away under this irrevocable law is by the destruction of this evil principle. Christ destroyed this evil principle in his nature by death, after living a morally perfect, upright and holy life, keeping all God’s commandments. This act entitled him to a resurrection from the dead. What was accomplished in Christ was a moral impossibility

with mankind, because of the depravity of their nature, caused by indwelling sin. No man, left to himself, is able to keep the law of God perfectly and sin not; and, consequently, no man is able to secure for himself a resurrection to life. God, Who understands this and knows what is in man, sees the weakness of the flesh, and has pity upon His children. In His infinite love and wisdom, God developed a plan of redemption by sending His own Son in sinful flesh.

Concerning the working out of this plan, God was in Christ—in him by His Spirit, which dwelt in him without measure, specially strengthening him for the purpose at hand (Ps. 80:17). It was God in Christ that enabled him to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, or sin in the flesh. Through death he destroyed this devil, and by a shedding of his blood offered a sacrifice for sin’s flesh, and therefore could and did thereby obtain eternal redemption for himself because of his holy life. God’s purpose from the beginning was the perfecting of one of the race for the salvation of many. Jesus was a declaration of God’s righteousness, showing the justice of His dealings with the human race. Through forbearance, God remits or passes over the sins of all coming unto Him through this perfected Son, whom He has established as a mediator, and in whom He has been sanctified. The conditions for such forgiveness are faith in His promises and a manifestation of that faith by obedience.

Thus God has opened up a way through His dear Son whereby many shall be redeemed from death. As in Adam we die, so in Christ we shall be made alive (1 Cor. 15:22). In Adam we partake of his sinfulness, and in Christ we are covered by his righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21). Christ having had our nature, “our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed” (Rom. 6:6). For those whose sins are remitted, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit”. The law of the Spirit of life in Jesus Christ makes us free from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:1,2). And so it is that “as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous” (Rom. 5:19). But *it must be the obedience of one of the race that was under the condemnation of death*. This was the case with Jesus Christ, who was the Son of man as well as

the Son of God, and thus it was not possible for him to enter eternal life alone without dying.

Some may protest that in emphasising his Adamic condemnation and defilement by sinful flesh we are belittling Christ. Not so. It is really honouring Christ to recognise that a life of perfect obedience was achieved, as it were, against the grain of a nature encompassed with the infirmities of the flesh. To maintain that somehow Christ was not defiled misses the glorious plan of redemption that God has worked out in Christ.

“For many deceivers are entered into the world, *who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh*. This is a deceiver and an antichrist . . . If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed : for he that biddeth

him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (2 Jno. vv. 7,10,11).

Why does the kind and loving Apostle John write so ‘harshly’ in these verses? Surely it is because the Truth can least afford compromise on this very question of the nature of Christ. To water down, or explain away, such plain statements as have been discussed here, is to introduce an element that disrupts and distorts the plan of salvation at its very heart: the sacrifice of Christ.²

(To be concluded)

2. This article is extracted in large part from B. J. Dowling: “The Death of Christ as the Devil’s Destruction”. *The Christadelphian*, Vol. 26, No. 295 (January 1889), pp. 17-20.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ATONEMENT

8. HOW HAS CHRIST REDEEMED US?

GEORGE BOOKER
Austin, Texas

TO UNDERSTAND the sacrifice of Christ we must start with the actual work Christ did, and which God from the very beginning determined that he should do. *This* is the reality. From it we may work back to develop our understanding of the types and shadows that point to it.

Because they come first in time, the natural tendency is to work forward from the shadows and types (or what we think the shadows and types mean), and then to define the reality in terms of the types. Thus one might argue that Christ 'needed a sacrifice'. But Christ did not need *a* sacrifice, in the common sense of the term; he needed *the* sacrifice. In other words, he needed that *God-ordained reality* of which 'sacrifice' as we know it is merely the shadow and type.

Sacrifices—Mosaic and otherwise—though predating Christ's work in time, are just foreshadowings of that work, and have no real meaning or purpose apart from it. The picture is further confused and compounded by the concept of 'sacrifice' introduced by the apostasy. They make it mean punishment, appeasement, vicarious transfer of penalty, purchase of Divine favour, and suchlike. We must be very careful not to be influenced subconsciously by the contrived, non-Biblical meanings that now cling closely to the term.

Sacrifice

The actual accomplishment which God required of some one member of the race, and which Christ voluntarily undertook to do for the race, is the meaning *at the source* of the ritual that we call 'sacrifice'. As an English word, 'sacrifice' has various meanings that may or may not be relevant. Its literal, root meaning is simply 'holy work' (from the Latin *sacra*—holy, sacred; and *facio*—to make or do).

Its current, common meaning is 'the giving up or foregoing of something for the sake of

something better or someone else'. Certainly this meaning is involved in Scriptural sacrifice. It is the basic idea of choosing the good, and rejecting the evil. But this is certainly not the whole picture of Scriptural 'sacrifice', nor even the central feature of the picture.

There are two aspects in the words which are translated 'sacrifice': 'to slay' and 'to offer'. In the majority of cases the words mean 'a slaughter' (*zebach* in Hebrew and *thusia* in Greek). This is fundamental; Biblical sacrifice is a putting to death.

The other aspect is quite limited by comparison: it is 'offering up to God, causing to ascend, bringing near to God' (*minchah* and *korban* in Hebrew, *prosphero* in Greek). It might be said, then, that Christ's life was an offering, and his death was a sacrifice. And that would be true. But actually the two—life and death—are an indivisible sacrificial offering. His whole life was a symbolic putting to death; his death was the supreme and climactic offering of a perfect life.

From the beginning, ritual sacrifice was meant to be an obedient act of faith in God's promise of the Seed of the Woman to "(take) away the sin of the world". It was faith, prospectively, in Christ and his work. Such belief involved a repudiation of oneself, a confession of one's total inability to save oneself, and a declaration of allegiance to God and His holiness. It also involved thankfulness to God for His promised provision and deliverance from the sin-condition into which the first man had plunged the race. These aspects are more specifically delineated in the various sacrifices under the Law of Moses.

Sacrifice has to do with sin. Its background and framework is in relation to sin. It arose from the problem created by sin. It takes into consideration the punishment of sin. It recognises that sin must inevitably bring death. But sacrifice is not *the* punishment for sin. It is a

conquering of sin, a victory over sin, a deliverance from sin.

Sacrifice is not a symbol of 'punishment' or 'paying a penalty', although it does involve the implied confession that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). True sacrifice also recognises that sin as a totality—focalised in the 'sin-nature'—must be condemned and put to death in order to free a person from its grip. We make a mistake when we say that Christ 'offered a sacrifice'. We are coming at it from the wrong direction. We should say that Christ did a work that became the basis of, and gave meaning to, the shadow and type that we call 'sacrifice'.

In the beginning

God created man "very good"—free from sin, free from death. Man disobeyed God, and this brought sin and death upon the race. While Adam was created "very good" (Gen. 1:31), Paul very powerfully states that in his own flesh (and Paul was one of the best of men) was "no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). And this "no good" condition of his flesh he repeatedly calls "sin". With Adam's sin and sentence, sin (as a physical principle) infected the whole race, defiled the whole race, and brought the whole race under "condemnation" of death. (This condemnation was upon the whole race, without exception, and would be upon Christ from the moment of his birth.)

After Adam sinned, God inaugurated a plan to cleanse the race from sin, and redeem it from death. This plan was that, *from the race itself*, there had to be one man to give himself voluntarily to remove from the race that condemnation of death, and its cause, sin. He must be *one of the race*, subject to all the disabilities and defilements brought on the race by Adam's disobedience, and with them *equally in need of deliverance* from those disabilities and defilements. These were the typical "filthy garments" of the typical high priest Joshua (Zech. 3:4), who was typically cleansed and re clothed in the purity of new fresh garments, which symbolised a sin-free immortal nature.

This representative man must overcome and destroy sin, and abolish death. He must thus achieve salvation from these two evils for himself, in full harmony with God's law and justice and holiness. He must do it by a life of perfect obedience voluntarily completed in a blood-shedding death.

Such a life and death publicly condemned sin (in *all* its aspects), justified God's law, exalted God's holiness, and manifested God's justice. The obedient death that completed that obedient life was to condemn and destroy sin *in himself*.

God required an actual destroying of sin

God required, not a symbol, not a shadow, but a reality; a real overcoming and conquering of sin, a real condemning and destroying of sin. And that is what Jesus accomplished *for himself*. His obedient death was just as real and necessary a part of his salvation as was his obedient life. And what he did in his death was no more a mere shadow than what he did in his life.

The blood-shedding death (rather than a 'natural' death) was required by God for sin's public condemnation, and God's public justification. Christ on the cross was a public repudiation of sin, a public confession that God's sentence on sin—the whole 'sin-constitution' through Adam—was just (Col. 2:15; Rom. 3:25,26).

The putting to death of Christ was to show God's justice. How did it do so, if Christ never sinned? How can it possibly manifest God's justice to put a perfectly righteous man to a violent death? Why—if sin must be condemned publicly and God justified publicly for His condemnation of sin to death—why, of all people, pick the only man who never sinned to do it to? *To answer this question correctly puts us well along the way to understanding the atonement.* Christ had no sins. Therefore his death made the issue crystal clear that it was the *body* of sin, sin's *flesh*, the "law of sin . . . in (the) *members*", that was being condemned and put to death. And it had to be done in this way before any one of the race—Christ included—could be cleansed from the sin-constitution. This was God's requirement for cleansing the race from sin, in harmony with His holiness.

Some say his sacrifice was merely a type, a shadow, a symbol. They say God was simply declaring to man: "This is what by justice should happen to you. It shouldn't happen to this man; he has no connection with it, but I am just doing it to him to illustrate what should be done to you".

It is difficult to see either logic or justice in this. How is sin "condemned", or how is God's justice "manifested", by arbitrarily putting to

death the one person who had never sinned, just as a sample of what should happen to sinners? This is a strange way of portraying God's justice: to choose, as the example of what should be done to sinners, the one man who had nothing to do with sin!

If we do not see Christ being "made . . . sin" (2 Cor. 5:21) as God's plan for cleansing the whole race from sin's flesh, then we shall never make any real sense out of Christ's death, or see *how* it simultaneously destroyed sin and manifested God's justice.

Human flesh is Scripturally 'sin'

There is in all human flesh—as a result of the sin and sentence of Adam—an evil, defiling principle that the Bible calls "sin in the flesh", "the law of sin . . . in (the) members", "sin that dwelleth in me", "sin . . . working death in me", and so forth. It is Paul, in Romans 7, who goes into this most fully; but what the Spirit says throughout the Scriptures about the flesh and the natural mind and the heart of man repeatedly testifies to this sin-defiled condition of *all* human flesh: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death (this body of death, mg.?)" (Rom. 7:24).

As pointed out in numerous quotations from the pioneers,¹ the sin-caused and sin-causing principle that is in human flesh is called 'sin' by the Scriptures. Certainly this is, as some have said, metonymy. ('Metonymy' is simply the title for a figure of speech by which the name of something is extended to its related aspects.)

Sin most literally is an act of disobedience against God's law. By metonymy, and very reasonably, God extends the name 'sin' to that principle of evil in all human flesh that came by sin and causes sin. But let us not suppose that this secondary aspect of sin is not real because it is metonymical. *God Himself* inspired men to use the term 'sin' to include the evil, sinful principle in all human flesh. Let us not belittle *His* choice of words, but rather let us ask: *Why* did He do so? And what bearing does the fact have on salvation? We find that the fact that He did so is a very important step in the developing picture. Paul, continuing his exposition from chapter 7, says: "to be carnally (fleshly) minded is death . . . the carnal (fleshly) mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can

be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:6-8).

This identifies the flesh as 'sin', and justifies the name the Bible gives it. What better definition of sin is there than "enmity against God . . . not subject to . . . God, neither . . . can be . . ."? That is the flesh: all mortal flesh—it is flesh that *belongs* to 'King Sin'! That is why it had to be crucified. That is why the crucifixion of Christ was a declaration of God's justice and holiness and righteousness. That is why Christ, who successfully fought sin's flesh all his life, voluntarily crucified it—in life and in death, wholly, completely.

Our oneness with Christ: a common sin-nature

This evil principle in the flesh—Biblically called 'sin'—is the essential unifying factor between Christ and us; sharing the same human nature makes it possible for *our* sins to be done away in *his* blood-shedding. It is our common, mutual problem. He solved it and escaped it, cleansing himself from its defilement in God's appointed way. And he now offers, by God's merciful arrangement, to reach down and lift us out—if we give total devotion to him. That was the very purpose of his creation and work.

The work Christ did—the essential, race-redeeming work that was foreshadowed from the beginning—was the overcoming and destroying of sin *in* himself, and, necessarily, *for* himself. As a moral and physical reality, Christ could conquer and destroy sin *only in himself*. That was the arena of his total victory over sin, by which he laid the eternal foundations for his further work: the ultimate salvation of those individuals who by faith enter *into him* and lay hold of the victory *he* has won.

Christ—in the appointed way, and with God-provided help and strengthening—had to cleanse himself from sin, and destroy sin in himself. That is the root and basis and only real meaning of what we call 'sacrifice'. It was his only way to his own personal salvation. He was made "perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2:10), and *this* was the "suffering" required. He was redeemed "by his own blood" (Heb. 9:12; 13:20), and *this* was the manner in which that blood must be shed.

1. See especially "How was Christ Made Sin?", and "Did Christ have to Offer for Himself First?", earlier articles in this series.

His great work was not a mere shadow, not a mere symbol illustrating what should be done to someone else. It was an actual, essential accomplishment: the self-cleansing from, and destruction of, sin. He did not just typify this; *he did it*. He did not 'pay the penalty' for someone else. He did the actual job of destroying sin that God's holiness required to be done for the race to be saved. He did it *in* and *for* himself so that it might then be for us too, who become a part of him. He, as *the* representative man, the new nucleus of the race (the "last Adam"), must first be transformed and glorified, so that others may also be transformed and glorified *in him*.

Did Christ need a sacrifice?

But did Christ 'need a sacrifice'? Perhaps we can see it more clearly this way: Christ, as one of the race, and as the embodiment of the race, needed what the whole race needed—the reality that is simply foreshadowed by the ritual of sacrifice. He did not need a 'sacrifice' as such, in the shadowy, typical sense of the term, *and neither do we*. We need, as he with us needed, the reality that God's holiness and wisdom demanded from some man for the salvation of any of the race.

Starting *within* the condemned, defiled race, he—with faith and by God's strengthening—was delivered *out of it*. That work *was* his sacrifice.

Ritual can never save anyone. It is true that ritual may be required by God (as baptism in this dispensation, and circumcision and sacrifice in the Mosaic) as an act of humility and obedience to connect us with the reality, and to bring us its benefits. And when God requires a ritual then salvation is impossible without that ritual. But a ritual must have a fulfilling reality; a shadow must have a fulfilling substance. Christ's actual accomplishment—the destruction of sin—is the reality and substance of which baptism and breaking of bread, sacrifice and circumcision, are the representative rituals.

It was not for himself only that he redeemed himself. He was specifically created to redeem the race (of which he was only a part), and he joyfully accepted the great work for which he was born, the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world (Jno. 1:29). Someone had to win his way out of the sin-constitution, in the righteous way God appointed, with whom God

could deal as the race. There was no one already in the race—nor naturally ever would or could be—that could do it. So God in love especially created one within the race, and specially strengthened him so that he could do what had to be done.

Two extremes

In the past Christadelphians have tended to explain the atonement either too mechanically or too superficially.² It has been demonstrated that the sacrifice of Christ was not a mere mechanical device; there was grim reality behind his work, for himself first and then in prospect for us. With us, as with Christ, nothing is actually accomplished by the magic wand of ritual; there must be a real doing, a real labour, a real victory and overcoming of "the motions of sins . . . in our members".

The sacrifice of Christ is not just, superficially, 'a way to get your sins forgiven', and nothing else. There is more, so much more. Sin as a totality is being addressed and at last conquered in Christ, and in us. If we cannot see this picture, then we just have two disjointed, unconnected things: (1) our sins, and (2) Christ's sacrifice. And we have to invent a shadowy link between the two in the name of 'ritual', which just boils down to substitution. In that case, Christ was not actually treating sin as it ought to be treated, and had to be treated to solve the problem. If he had no sin in his flesh to overcome and destroy, then he was not destroying sin, but just once more *typifying* how it *ought* to be destroyed.

The main issue

The fact that Christ offered for himself first, and was cleansed and redeemed from the sin-constitution by his own blood, is crucial to a full understanding and appreciation of the atonement. It is the essential link that binds him to us and makes his death on the cross a declaration of God's holiness and justice (as it is said to be). This full and correct view makes his personal perfecting and cleansing efficacious for us as a true representative (one in

2. A brief summary of some of the doctrinal differences and resultant divisions among Christadelphians regarding the atonement is to be found in: Reg Carr. "The Doctrine of the Atonement: The Christadelphian Experience". *The Testimony*, Vol. 54, No. 637 (January 1984), pp. 1-8.

need of the same thing), and not as a mere ritual substitute (just illustrating something not applicable to himself).

Once we confess that Christ offered *for himself* (Heb. 2:10-15; 4:14-5:9; 7:27; 9:7,12,21-28; 13:20) then the picture is clear. Until we make this vital link secure we leave his sacrifice an isolated enigma, a shadow, unrelated to reality and accomplishment; a symbol and nothing more, a yawning chasm between *his* work and *our* need. As Brother John Thomas put it,

“Sin could not have been condemned in the body of Jesus, if it had not existed there . . . The purpose of God . . . was to condemn sin in the flesh; a thing that could not have been accomplished, if there were no sin there”.³

Separating Christ from his brethren

It is quite possible, either in being too mechanical and ritualistic, or in being too simplistic, to separate Christ from his brethren. This is a serious mistake. Any theory that has two different salvations—one for Christ and another for his brethren—must be wrong. We all, the whole race, need the same thing. And what we need is not just a ritual that points, but an accomplishment that finishes; a real, actual

victory over the sin nature, that we can (in God’s mercy) enter into and share.

God deals with the race as a race, but on an individual basis. That sounds like a contradiction, but it is not. God is saving the race, as the race, *in* and *through* Christ. But He is not saving the whole race, just those members of the race who individually take advantage of His provision of salvation for the race.

By the grace of God, Christ is the firstfruits of them that sleep. Having “obtained eternal redemption” for himself, he extended that salvation, by the mercy of God, to all who make themselves part of him, who enter *into* Christ through belief and baptism.

“Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made *unto us* wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30).

“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself . . . For He hath made him to be sin *for us*, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God *in him*” (2 Cor. 5:19,21).

(Concluded)

3. *Elpis Israel*, p. 128.

CONCEIVED IN SIN

I refer to Brother Booker's article on the atonement in the March issue of *The Testimony* (p. 78) and his use of Psalm 51 as Messianic. While I subscribe to the truth about Jesus bearing his mother's nature, it is surely going too far to apply the strong words of that psalm to the virgin birth of the Son of God. Such an application would make the Holy Spirit (the power of the Highest) party to sin and iniquity, and Jesus could never then be called "holy", as in Luke 1: "... therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God"; or, as in the RV: "... called holy, the Son of God" (v. 35).

So it is equally true and equally important to hold that Jesus's birth was unique—he was the beginning of a new creation—and he was born in that way so that, though bearing human nature, through his Divine paternity he was able to conquer sin. Surely David's confession in Psalm 51 of his grievous sin with Bath-sheba contains an element of inherited sin and iniquity in the statement that he was of purely human parentage, shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin (v. 5). This could not possibly be applied to Jesus.

Another disturbing contextual misquotation is that of Paul's words in Romans 7:18. Brother Booker puts words into the mouth of Jesus from this verse without realising (I hope) that the second half of the verse tells us that Paul, with all the saints of God, confesses, "... for to will is present with me; but how to perform that

CORRESPONDENCE

which is good I find not", and in 19b, "... the evil which I would not, that I do".

Who was it that said, "A text without a context is but a pretext"?

Jeff Hammett
Llanelli

Reply

Brother Hammett does not feel that Psalm 51 (especially verse 5: "I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me") can have any application to Christ. To this I would respond as follows:

(a) Articles 2 (Nov. 1988), 3 (Dec. 1988) and 4 (Jan. 1989) in my series "Questions About the Atonement" have already addressed the matter of Christ having been "made sin" in his birth. My interpretation in those articles of 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 7:27; 9:28; Romans 8:3 and 1 Peter 2:24, bolstered by extensive quotations from Brethren Robert Roberts and John Thomas, and others, should have shown how such "strong words" as "sin" and "iniquity" may justifiably be applied to Christ. Does the fact that God sent Jesus "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3) "make the Holy Spirit ... party to sin"? I should hope not.

(b) It may seem, in a rather superficial way, that Christ could not at the same time be a "holy thing" and a thing related to "sin" and "iniquity". How can the same thing (or person) be in some sense "holy" and in some sense "sinful" simultaneously? But that, of course, was the primary point of my article, "Was Jesus Like Us, or Different?". (This article was rather

unfortunately split up into two separate portions for publication, with two months intervening; see January and March 1989 issues. Thus it lost, in my opinion, some of its intended impact. I would recommend that anyone interested in this discussion might now read the whole article all at once.) Jesus *was* like us in having a nature, inherited from his mother, which was prone to sin; he was wholly human, tempted in all points like his brethren. He *was* different in that he was the only begotten Son of God; and thus he was a “holy (that is, special or set apart) thing” (Lk. 1:35). I myself used this same passage, Luke 1:35, which Brother Hammett now suggests contradicts my other statements (see January issue, p. 6).

Brother Hammett thinks that he has found a “disturbing contextual misquotation” in my exposition. But the Bible itself, and particularly the New Testament, is, if I might say so, filled with passages which, superficially, seem disturbingly out of context; one might even be tempted to call them contradictions. And it seems that the atonement is especially susceptible to expression by such ‘contradictions’. For example:

1. Was Christ “made . . . sin”? Or did he know “no sin”? Two ‘contradictory’ statements in one verse (2 Cor. 5:21). But are they really?
2. Is the cross “foolishness” (1 Cor. 1:18), or is it “wisdom” (v. 24)? Assuredly it cannot be both. Yet, of course, it is: “foolishness” to those who perish, but purest “wisdom” to the redeemed.
3. Was Paul “crucified with Christ”? Or did he still “live”? Both again (Gal. 2:20).
4. Or, yet again, in the same verse: Did Paul really live, or did he not live because it was “Christ” who lived in him? Another disturbing contradiction? Or, instead, a deep spiritual teaching by means of paradox, a teaching designed so that, when we sort out what first *appears* to be impossible, then we may learn a valuable lesson?
5. Is the cross of Christ the means by which the world crucified Paul, or is it the means by which Paul crucified the world (Gal. 6:14)?
6. How can the saints wash their robes in the *blood* of the Lamb, and at the same time make them *white* (Rev. 7:14)?
7. And so we come to: Christ a “*holy* thing” (Lk. 1:35), or Christ “conceived in *sin*” (Ps. 51:5)? One or the other? Or both?

(c) There are in fact quite a number of psalms with Scripturally attested Messianic application in which sin and iniquity are associated with the subject. Some examples:

1. Psalm 40:6-8 is cited as prophetic of Christ in Hebrews 10:5-9. But verse 12 reads: “mine *iniquities* have taken hold upon me”.
2. Psalm 41:9 is applied to Christ in Mark 14:18 and John 13:18. But verse 4 reads: “I have *sinned* against Thee”.
3. Psalm 69:4,8,9,21,22,25 all have New Testament Messianic citations. Yet verse 5 speaks of “my *foolishness* . . . my *sins*”.

Here are three undeniably Messianic psalms. Yet each contains phrases that seem at first glance decidedly inappropriate to a sinless Messiah. How should we deal with such problems, such disturbingly out-of-context verses? I suppose some might argue that Psalm 69:1-4 and Psalm 69:6-36 are all Messianic (they most assuredly are!), but that Psalm 69:5 applies only to David (being, in effect, “out of context” in this psalm). But is this really a satisfactory or satisfying way to handle Scripture? Does it not in fact create more problems than it solves?

Alternatively, might not Psalm 69:5 be seen, in Messianic terms, as yet another reference (cp. 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 8:3; Heb. 2:14, etc.) to Messiah’s inheritance of cursed human nature, as a son of Adam? The very presence in himself of *propensities* to sin (even though they were all separately and continuously defeated) was surely a sore trial to this wholly dedicated Son of God. Certainly we all know, from our own limited (but nonetheless effective) experiences, that an impulse to sin which is continuously resisted teaches us more about the power of sin in our nature than does an impulse quickly and thoughtlessly yielded to. So, in that sense, who would know more about the *power* of sin (or sinful impulses) in human nature than the perfectly righteous Son of God? And should we not expect that the Psalms (which are, more than we may suppose, the ‘fifth Gospel’ and the inspired account of his inner life) might somehow reflect this part of our Saviour’s experiences also, that is, the ongoing, relentless burden of a sin-prone nature?

The fact of the matter is that this approach (that is, of applying the terms ‘sin’ and ‘iniquity’ in such passages to the *nature* Christ bore) was regularly adopted by the earliest

Christadelphian expositors. Several examples of this may be found in my earlier articles; other examples could be easily discovered by reference to their writings. Is there some reason now why some in our community are afraid to use, or even for others to use, such language with reference to Christ?

(d) In the foundation work of the Christadelphian faith Brother John Thomas writes the following:

“Sin, I say, is a synonym for human nature. Hence, the flesh is invariably regarded as *unclean*. It is therefore written, ‘How can he be clean who is born of a woman?’ (Job 25:4). ‘Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one’ (Job 14:4). ‘What is man that he should be clean? And he which is born of a woman that he should be righteous? Behold, God putteth no trust in His saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in His sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man, who drinketh iniquity like water?’ (Job 15:14-16). This view of sin in the flesh is enlightening in the things concerning Jesus. The apostle says, ‘God *made him to be sin* for us, who knew no sin’ (2 Cor. 5:21), and this he explains in another place by saying, that ‘He sent His own son *in the likeness of sinful flesh*, and for sin, condemned sin *in the flesh*’ (Rom. 8:3) in the offering of his body once (Heb. 10:10,12,14). Sin could not have been condemned in the body of Jesus, if it had not existed there. His body was as unclean as the bodies of those for whom he died; for he was born of a woman, and ‘not one’ can bring a clean body out of a defiled body; for ‘that’, says Jesus himself, ‘which is born of the flesh is flesh’ (John 3:6).

“According to this physical law, the Seed of the woman was born into the world. The nature of Mary was as unclean as that of other women; and therefore could give birth only to ‘*a body*’ like her own, though especially ‘*prepared of God*’ (Heb. 10:5). Had Mary’s nature been immaculate, as her idolatrous worshippers contend, an immaculate body would have been born of her; which, therefore, would not have answered the purpose of God; which was to condemn sin in the flesh; a thing that could not have been accomplished, if there were no sin there.

“Speaking of the conception and preparation of the Seed, the prophet as a typical

person, says, ‘Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me’ (Psalm 51:5). This is nothing more than affirming that he was born of sinful flesh; and not of the pure and incorruptible angelic nature”.¹

(e) In the light of all the above, and for other reasons also, I would have seriously to question Brother Hammett’s implication that David’s “*purely human parentage*” means that he (and presumably we) inherited a nature more sinful than did Jesus. It surely should not be suggested that Jesus’s Divine parentage made him something other than *fully* human.

In reference to Romans 7:18 and Brother Hammett’s second main point, Brother Hammett seems to say that Christ’s flesh (or human nature) was in some sense different from Paul’s. How can this be, when Jesus specifically asked: “Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God” (Lk. 18:19).

Brother Thomas writes: “. . . the animal nature is styled ‘sinful flesh’, that is, ‘*flesh full of sin*’, so that sin, in the sacred style, came to stand for the substance called *man*. In human flesh ‘dwells no good thing’; and all the evil a man does is the result of this principle dwelling in him (Rom. 7:18,17)”²

Jesus did no evil, but he did have human flesh, and human flesh is, by Divine definition, not “good”. We do not need to quote Romans 7:18 to prove this (see other references above in *Elpis Israel*). It is true that Jesus not only willed, but he also (in contrast to Paul, and in contrast to all the rest of mankind) actually performed everything that was good. Did he attain perfect righteousness because he was a unique *human* created by the Father for a special task or because he was not *really* human at all? Or, to put it another way, did Jesus, by faith, overcome and finally destroy the *diabolos* in his fully human, condemned nature, or was he somehow permitted, through his descent from the Father, to sidestep or avoid the full brunt of that nature?

In my opinion we are bound to conclude that Christ’s flesh was not inherently or qualitatively different from that of any other man. The difference between Christ and other men is to be found, not in the flesh which he

1. *Elpis Israel*, pp. 127-8, fourteenth edition, 1966, emphasis Brother Thomas’s.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 127, emphasis Brother Thomas’s.

bore, but in the fact that *he* alone (with the Father's help) did not yield to the sinful tendencies of that flesh.

I must cite two other statements relevant to Romans 7, and to my citation of Psalm 51:5 in reference to Christ:

"I refer to the Psalms to which Jesus made allusion as 'concerning' him. Here the sufferings of Christ are vividly manifest, as well as the glory that should follow. Those sufferings are not to be confined to the closing scene of his tribulation: the dreadful moment when he was in the hands of a scornful and brutal soldiery, and a spectacle on the cross to the jeering rabble. That was but the climax of his sorrows. We must consider how he felt and what he thought in relation to his whole surroundings. The opportunity of doing this is abundantly afforded in the Psalms, and more particularly in the Psalm to which Paul refers when he says (Rom. xv. 3), 'Christ pleased not himself, but as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached Thee fell on me'. This is written in the 69th Psalm.

"Turning to that Psalm, we are presented with the inner and personal experience of Christ in a form not accessible in the gospel narratives, and are able to perceive many points of resemblance to our common experience, with an effect which is encouraging . . .

" . . . 'O Lord, Thou knowest my foolishness, and my sins are not hid from Thee' [Ps. 69:5]. The application of this to Christ is only intelligible on the principle that *he partook of the common nature of our uncleanness—flesh of Adamic stock, in which, as Paul says, there dwelleth no good thing*; a nature the burdensomeness of which arises from its native tendencies to foolishness and sin. This burden is felt in proportion as higher things are appreciated. Christ knew, as no man can know, the gloriousness, and spotlessness, and spontaneous holiness of the Spirit nature. The indwelling of the Father by the Spirit would make him sensible of this. Hence, he could feel more keenly the earthward tendencies of the earthy nature—the tendencies to foolishness and sin, which are the characteristics of sinful flesh, not that the tendency was stronger in him than in others, but that his spiritual affinities and perceptions were higher, and that, therefore,

he would be more conscious of the burden which all the saints of God feel, more or less, causing them to exclaim, 'Oh, wretched man that I am!'. True, Christ sustained the burden; he carried the load without stumbling. He kept the body under; he held it in subjection to the will of the Father in all things, and thus by obedience, obtained the Father's approbation, Who was in him. Still, the burden was there; and his consciousness of it finds expression in the words under consideration".³

"He could say:-

"*'There was no soundness in his flesh'* [Ps. 38:3] because he himself said *the flesh profiteth nothing* (John vi. 63). This testimony is amplified by the spirit in the apostle Paul thus:- 'In me (that is *in my flesh*) *dwelleth no good thing*' [Rom. 7:18]. Jesus also could say:-

"There is no rest in my bones because of my sin' [Ps. 38:3 again] when realising fully, as he did, that there could be no freedom from temptation so long as he was of flesh and blood nature, and for this reason: until crucifixion, when the life-blood exuded from his wounds, there *could be no release* from those impulses which are aroused by temptation and which were intensely offensive to him . . .".⁴

I apologise for the length of this reply, but it does seem necessary in order to address Brother Hammett's objections.

George Booker

3. Brother Robert Roberts, *The Christadelphian*, Vol. 11, April 1874, pp. 170-2. Emphasis Brother Booker's.
 4. Brother Henry Sulley, *The Christadelphian*, Vol. 58, Nov. 1921, p. 500. Emphasis Brother Sulley's. Additional references added by Brother Booker.

CORRESPONDENCE

THE ATONEMENT

In the May instalment of his series "Questions About the Atonement" Brother George Booker has used words and phrases which have caused "no small stir" among some brethren (to use the understatement in Acts 19:23). Now I know that some words have different meanings in America from those in Australia, but there is a need to clarify some of these for the sake of peace of mind for many of our number.

I agree that the nature of Adam was "free from the principle of death" before the fall (p. 150, col. 2), but "the law of sin and death" always existed and was not introduced at the fall. God had already warned Adam of that law in Genesis 2:17: "but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die". Adam contravened that law and suffered its consequences. By speaking of "The implantation of the law of sin and death in his members by God's sentence" (p. 151, col. 1) Brother Booker probably means that Adam suffered its effects. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23) is simply stating the cause and effect of that law.

Why should we take Romans 8:3 and hyphenate the last four words to read "sin-in-the-flesh"? Jesus came to condemn *sin*—not a supernatural devil, as we know, and *not* another devil called sin-in-the-flesh (p. 150, col. 2), but *sin* itself—and the only place this *diabolos* could be experienced was in the flesh.

The natural impulses common to mankind were overcome by the mind of the Spirit, and he refused to be brought into subjection to it. On the very ground where sin usually flourished, there it met its vanquisher. Therefore it was not possible that the grave should hold him (Acts 2:24).

Why change "the likeness of sinful flesh" to read "God . . . sending His own Son in sinful flesh", and then go on to say that "God was in Christ" (p. 151, col. 2), when "we know that God does not hear sinners" (Jno. 9:31, RAV), let alone be manifest in His fulness in one of them (Jno. 14:9)? And God would hardly be 'in the devil' if we put that connotation on the flesh of Christ!

I agree with Brother Booker's statement that "it must be the obedience of one of the race that was under the condemnation of death" that enabled the making of many righteous. The difficulty arises with making the nature of Jesus "an unholy thing" for which he had to sacrifice. If the nature (flesh and blood) of Jesus was the devil, with what nature did he rise from the dead? Did God raise the devil from the grave? Are we to believe in immortal emergence?

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Reply

Responding to Brother Wright's statements and questions:

1. In page 150, column 2, I use "the law of sin and death" to refer to the implantation

(p. 151, col. 1) into Adam and Eve of a principle of corruption of the flesh and enslavement to sin. These principles did not exist in their natures until God's pronouncement of sentence upon them in the garden. That there was a "law of sin and death" in commandments given by God before that judgement I of course do not deny.

2. I have pointed out, in previous articles, that Brother Robert Roberts and others very commonly hyphenated the words "sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3), because they saw it as descriptive of the very principle described in 1. above: namely, the law of sin and death implanted in our members. This, as I see it, is the *diabolos* (the enemy, the false accuser, the deceiver) that constantly tempts man to sin. This is the *diabolos* which Christ overcame and at last destroyed.
3. Brother John Carter has an example of a generally consistent Christadelphian understanding of "likeness" in Romans 8:3 with which I would agree (that is, that "likeness" is simply a further stressing of "identity with", and not simply "similar to") in the following passage from *The Letter to the Romans*:

"It was necessary for this that God should 'send his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh'. Have we to infer from that word 'likeness' that the flesh of Christ only *resembled* sinful flesh, and was not actually such? A similar phrase occurs in Phil. 2:7: 'he was made in the likeness of men'. This likeness was identity; Jesus was a man. And that Jesus partook of the flesh common to men is decisively proved by Paul's words in Heb. 2:14, where terms are added together to establish that Jesus shared the flesh and blood of the children whom he came to lead to salvation (verse 10): 'Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death'. To appreciate the emphasis of this language, the reader is recommended to read the passage through several times, omitting in turn the words 'also', 'himself', and 'likewise', and then with all three words omitted. It will then be apparent that their work is to emphasize the 'sameness' of Christ's nature and ours.

"But why did not Paul say in Rom. 8:3, 'God sent His Son in sinful flesh'? Because he was stressing the sameness here also, with the additional fact that though like us in nature he was not like us in *character*. He was the sinless One" (p. 83).

However, I would never say that possessing "sinful flesh" would make Christ a sinner. And, if we may so speak, God was not "in" that part of the fleshly mind of Christ that generated temptations: He was, instead, "in" that part of Christ's mind that consistently resisted those temptations. In other words, God was not responsible for the "enmity" in Christ's flesh, but for the abolition of that "enmity" (Eph. 2:15).

So I would say: "enmity" in Ephesians 2:15 = *diabolos* in Hebrews 2:14, 15 = "the works of the *diabolos*" in 1 John 3:8 = "sin (as a principle, not as a transgression) in the flesh" of Romans 8: 3.

4. The nature of Christ, like that of every man, was unclean or defiled by the law of sin and death/*diabolos*/enmity inherited from Adam. But Christ himself (if we may speak of him as distinct from his nature) was holy and absolutely righteous, and even without sin in the ordinary sense of the word.
5. The Scriptures tell us very little (I would say, nothing directly) about the time between Christ's resurrection and his glorification. Was he raised with the same nature with which he died? I would say: Probably yes; since the pattern of first resurrection and then judgement and then reward is a Biblical one, then he must have been raised mortal. Was that nature still capable of sin (that is, was it still subject to the *diabolos*)? I would say: Almost certainly not. Nor will our natures still be capable of sin when we are raised from the dead. We will certainly be raised mortal, but we will not be raised with an insurmountable tendency to sin, for I do not believe the Scriptures teach that our probation continues after our resurrection from the dead and until the actual judgement. So (I would suppose) the diabolical effect in our mortal natures will somehow be suspended or rendered inert by God during that (again I would guess) relatively brief period. But almost everything I have said in this paragraph can be no more than speculation.—*G.B.*