

UNDERSTANDING
◆ ————— ◆
THE
ATONEMENT

2nd Edition — April 2011

The material for this book was originally prepared for the Richmond-Petersburg, VA ecclesial Study Weekend held in March 2011.

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Printed by 48 Hours Printing, Akron OH.

First paperback edition published in 2011.

Reader's Notes:

All scriptural quotations are taken from the King James Version, unless otherwise specified.

KJV— *King James Version*

NKJV— *New King James Version*

NIV— *New International Version*

NLT— *New Living Translation*

RV— *Revised Version*

RSV— *Revised Standard Version*

[] — Denote author's comments

Bold Italic Underline — Used in quoted passages for emphasis



“What I like about ‘Understanding The Atonement’ is that it’s Biblical; it’s readable; it’s easy to follow; it’s logical; it’s understandable; it’s practical; and it makes sense...”

~ *Richard Morgan (Ontario, Canada)*



“I found “Understanding the Atonement” to be the clearest and simplest contemporary exposition of the doctrine that I have read, as well as an excellent expose’ of the incorrect theories that have troubled the Brotherhood since the 1870s. I recommend it to anyone who genuinely desires to see through the mists of language and thought that have clouded this most wonderful of all themes in Scripture for far too long.”

~ *Jim Cowie (Queensland, Australia)*



“‘Understanding the Atonement’ is a concise and Biblical treatment of the subject. It helps the reader understand the language used in atonement discussions as well as the extreme teachings that have come about over the years. This makes it beneficial both as a onetime read or for use as a reference.”

~ *David King (Virginia, USA)*



“I found ‘Understanding The Atonement’ an excellent study of the subject. It was very plain and clear, well laid out and brought out points that many will not know. I would that all Christadelphians would have the opportunity to read it.”

~ *Robert J. Lloyd (California, USA)*



“It is refreshing to hear the gospel articulated clearly, and yet with sufficient scriptural and historical detail, as it relates to this so very important subject...”

~ *Ted Hodge Jnr. (Ontario, Canada)*



“I have read five works on this crucial subject in the last couple of months. I feel especially privileged to have had this opportunity to read, and re-read, this considerable contribution to ‘Understanding the Atonement’.”

~ *Richard Purkis (Bournemouth, UK)*



“An excellent uncompromising crystallization of God's righteousness as exemplified in His eternal principles of the atonement or ‘reconciliation’ through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. A wonderful read for young and old by way of reinforcement, clarification and explanation.”

~ *Ron and Debbie McPhee (Virginia, USA)*



“‘Understanding the Atonement’ is a very thorough work, which avoids most of the clichés and makes for easy reading for those who really want to get a grasp of the subject. It is well researched and very fair. Scripture is made the court of appeal and that is how it should be. It will be a useful addition to our literature.”

~ *Des Manser (South Australia)*

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Acknowledgements

There are many brothers and sisters who have been instrumental over the years in helping make these studies become a reality. I especially wish to thank all those brethren who are my own teachers, many of whom spent many hours with me, either in person or on the telephone, patiently explaining (and often re-explaining!) the differences between Truth and error regarding this most important subject of “Jesus Christ and him crucified.” We are also grateful, to those brethren who have laboured so hard in the Word over the years, preparing talks, producing articles and writing books on this subject. Their work is a great source of knowledge and understanding, and remain a valuable heritage for the brotherhood.

I also wish to thank all those who have laboured diligently behind the scenes to help prepare this material for print. I especially wish to thank those who have taken the time to review it for its historical and doctrinal accuracy, and ensure that the material presented is a true and faithful representation of God’s Word. I also wish to thank those who have given so generously of their time to check general readability, grammar and spelling.

Finally, I wish to thank those who know me best (they know who they are) for your support and friendship, and especially for your kind words of encouragement that have helped me to keep the course. Most especially, to Sister Carla for her patience and understanding while these studies and notes were being prepared.



Foreword

In his opening words, Brother Matthew says, “There is no subject in the Bible of greater importance or more vital to our salvation than the subject of “Jesus Christ and him crucified”, more commonly referred to within Christadelphian circles as the doctrine of the ‘Atonement.’” He then proceeds to open up the scriptures to explain, in easy to understand language, how beautiful the doctrine of the Atonement is in its simplicity, and how profound it is in its implications. He then uses three keys to help unlock the true teaching of Scripture on this most important subject of the ‘Atonement’.

‘*Understanding The Atonement*’ is an excellent study of the subject. It is very plain and clear, well laid out and brings out points that many will not know. I would that all Christadelphians would have the opportunity to read it. This is a book that every Christadelphian home should have on their book shelf, or even more importantly, have on their coffee table. It is written in a way to help us understand the problems that have arisen over the years with false teachings, and help us see how important it is for us to truly understand the doctrine of the Atonement.

He has successfully fulfilled his goal in helping us to understand the *doctrine*, understand the *extremes*, understand the *differences*, and, finally, how to put into *practice* what we have learned.

The book is well researched, and it is presented to us in such a way that it will help each of us to ‘know the truth so that the truth will truly make us free’ (cp. John 8:32).

— Robert J. Lloyd



Preface

When I first arrived in North America, coincidentally, I found myself living down the street from a Christadelphian ecclesial hall. On the Sunday morning I arrived at the hall and introduced myself as a Christadelphian. To my surprise I was told that I did not belong to their fellowship and would not be welcome to share the memorials that morning. As the emblems were passed by me, I resolved to take the time to understand why different Christadelphian fellowships existed and what the dividing issues were between them.

During the week, I managed to track down the local ‘Central’ Christadelphian ecclesia. For the next two or three years I searched out experienced teachers to help me understand the reasons for the separation between different fellowships. What I discovered was that the ‘Central’ Christadelphian fellowship was quite distinct in its understanding of the One Faith as expressed in the BASF, particularly with respect to those clauses that address the subject of the nature and sacrifice of Christ.

It did not take long to see that there were differences in beliefs between some fellowships. But because of the complexities in language used in Atonement discussions, it took many more years to crystallize and simplify those differences, so that they could be presented in such a way that they could be easily understood.

These notes are the direct result of my own personal journey to bring clarity to those things that I learned in my youth. We hope that they will provide the same clarity to others, especially those of a new generation, as we consider together this most wonderful and vital subject of “Jesus Christ and him crucified”



Introduction

'Does it really matter?'

In the parable of the talents in Matthew 25, the one talent man buried his talent in a napkin and didn't produce anything positive in his life. The problem with this man wasn't that he was lazy; rather, it was that he had a restrictive and fear-based religion due to his false perception of the doctrine of God. He thought of God as a hard taskmaster and this prevented him from using the talents given to him. Doctrine drives behaviour. How we think about things and understand things affects how we treat others. In Matthew 24, Jesus tells another parable about a man who lost his vision of the return of his master and began to beat his fellow-servants.

When it comes to 'Jesus Christ and him crucified', it is a matter of life and death. Literally. Connected with the sacrifice of our Lord are exhortations regarding the very practical nature of our walk in Christ; the need to mortify the deeds of the flesh, the need to take up our cross and follow Christ, the need to walk in newness of life having buried the old man in baptism. These things are at the very centre of our religion, so if we misunderstand the reason why Christ died and how it should affect us, it can make a profound difference on what our religion consists of. History attests to this fact. Misunderstanding the nature and sacrifice of Christ led the Catholic Church, for instance, into the realm of ascetic monks basing their religion on self-flagellation, thinking that the physical flesh itself was in need of chastening.

True doctrine is essential *for salvation*. The Apostle Paul told his son in the faith “pay close attention to yourself and your teaching; persevere in these things; for as you do this you will insure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you”. These were not empty platitudes; Paul talks about doctrine truly as a matter of life and death, and our salvation. This is why we have to agree with Paul “let God be true and every man a liar” and learn true Bible doctrine while avoiding reading our own philosophies or pet theories into the Scriptures. Doctrinal understanding can erode over time if we don't continually go back to what the Bible actually teaches in simplicity and truth. If we don't do this it can become like a game of Chinese whispers over time, and an ecclesia that once taught wholesome words can become apostate.

The doctrine of the atonement, at its core, is a simple yet powerful practical teaching. It's about understanding our nature, our natural desires, how Jesus overcame them, and how we can bury the old man and live in newness of life. It's not about legalistic mechanisms or complicated formulas that have no practical value. I hope you will read this book with Bible in hand and may it help us all come to a better understanding of God's saving truth.

— *Richard Morgan*



The First Three Keys



The First Three Keys

There is no subject in the Bible of greater importance or more vital to our salvation than that of the subject of “Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Corinthians. 2:2), more commonly referred to within Christadelphian circles as the doctrine of the ‘Atonement’. It is a subject that goes right to the very heart of the gospel message, for as Luke says, “when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning *the kingdom of God*, and *the name of Jesus Christ*, they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12). It is, therefore, a subject most worthy of our careful consideration.

In essence, the doctrine of the *Atonement* is one of the most easy doctrines in the Bible to understand. It is beautiful in its simplicity and profound in its implications. Yet, because of the kind of language that the Bible uses, and its many intricate details, it is a subject that, sometimes, seems complicated and rather overwhelming. For these reasons much confusion has arisen over the years, particularly among the Churches, who have embraced false ideas regarding the nature and sacrifice of Christ and, consequently, adopted systems of faith and worship which are quite opposed to the revealed Word of God.

The purpose of this study is to cut through some of the complexities of language and detail and provide some clarity regarding Christ’s sacrificial work, thereby, leading us to a greater appreciation of our relationship to the Father, to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ and with each other.

The study is divided into 4 parts:

Part one is entitled ‘Understanding the Doctrine’ in which we outline the principles of Bible Truth regarding the Atonement.

Part Two is entitled ‘Understanding the Extremes’ where we investigate two extreme teachings on the Atonement which are contrary to Bible teaching.

Part Three is called ‘Understand The Differences’ which clarifies some of the important differences between Bible Truth and error.

Part Four, ‘Understanding in Practice’, takes a look at the practical effect that it should have upon our personal lives and daily living.

As we work our way through the book, you will come across the symbol of a *key*. This symbol highlights certain ‘Key’ statements or paragraphs contained within the text which are absolutely fundamental for us to grasp, if we are going to understand this subject of the Atonement.

Without further ado, let us, therefore, start by looking at three important *Keys* that will help us unlock this subject...

Key Number One

The first and most fundamental ‘key’ in understanding the ‘Atonement’ is, that *it is NOT an event. It is a process*. This is a most important principle to understand. Sometimes we may hear



**“The Atonement
is not an event.
It is a process”**

the doctrine of the Atonement being described as a singular event, namely, the *death* of Christ upon the cross. But the truth is, that the death of Christ upon the cross was but the *climax* or *pinnacle* of an entire life of sacrifice that glorified God. It was the grand finale of a life of perfect obedience culminating in a graphic and public demonstration of this fact. The Atonement is *not*, therefore, about one singular event. It is about an entire *process* which began in Genesis and will finish in the book of Revelation, centred upon Christ, but involving us. If we can grasp this concept then we are already streets ahead in our understanding of the doctrine of the Atonement.

This principle is supported by the fact that the word ‘atonement’ appears only *once* in the KJV of the New Testament in Romans 5:11 where Paul says that, “we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received *the atonement.*” But most modern translations have correctly translated the word ‘atonement’ in this verse as ‘reconciliation’, thus providing a far more accurate description of the work of God through the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. God’s work through Christ is about the *process* of ‘reconciliation’.

Reconciliation by definition implies that distance or separation exists between two parties. In simple terms, the doctrine of the ‘Atonement’ or ‘Reconciliation’ is all about bringing two parties back together upon certain terms and conditions that are mutually acceptable. In the case of Mankind’s reconciliation with God, it was Man who offended God and was the cause of his separation from God. God has laid down His method of reconciliation. Using free-will, Man can decide whether or not he wishes to accept God’s prescribed conditions of reconciliation. If we choose to accept these conditions and follow God’s method of reconciliation, God is “faithful and just to forgive us our sins” (1 John 1:9) and by His grace He will redeem us and extend to us the gift of salvation. If we reject these conditions and choose not to accept His prescribed method of reconciliation, then there is a “fearful looking for of judgment” (Hebrews 10:27).

Key Number Two

One of the first and most fundamental Truths that we learn about God is that He is ONE. “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is one* LORD” said Moses (Deuteronomy 6:4). Everything that God does is consistent with this Truth. This includes His prescribed method of reconciliation. It is clearly evident, therefore, that *there is only ONE method of reconciliation, NOT many!* God does not have one method or theory for one group of people and another method or theory for another group of people. God’s method of salvation is the same for everyone and able to be understood by ALL people regardless of race, intellectual brightness, geographical location, historical context, personality trait or cir-

cumstances of life. There is only ONE way, which is God's way! This is a crucial principle of the doctrine of the Atonement that cannot be overemphasized. It is our job to unravel that method of reconciliation, and the terms and conditions upon which we can become acceptable to God.

In Galatians 3:20 Paul says that, "a mediator is not a mediator of *one*, but God is *one*." Again in Ephesians 4:4-6. Paul says that there is "*one* body... *one* Spirit... *one* hope... *one* Lord... *one* faith... *one* baptism... *one* God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

In other words, because God is ONE, there is only ONE Truth, only ONE hope for Mankind and, therefore, only ONE method of reconciliation leading to the hope of salvation.

Oneness of the "body" is based upon "the unity of *the* faith" (Ephesians 4:13) and being of "the same mind and... the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10). It is not our job to determine who constitutes the "body" of Christ. That is the work of God. There have been many true and faithful men and women throughout all ages, separated by geography and fellowship groups, who will, one day, constitute the "body" of Christ when he is sent back to "judge the world in righteousness" (Acts 17:31). God alone knows who they are. Our job as kings and priests ^a is to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12), first, by separating truth from error, and secondly, by faithfully upholding those truths in our daily lives.



**"There is only
ONE method of
reconciliation -
Not many!"**

God is quite intolerant of any attempt by Man to add or subtract from His method of salvation. This is evident from many examples throughout Scripture. For example, in the book of Genesis, immediately after Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden, the incident of Cain and Abel is recorded. It is an incident that is recorded not only to demonstrate the devastating effect that Adam and Eve's transgression had upon human nature, but to demonstrate the principle that God has only ONE method of reconciliation, and that such reconciliation is based upon the specific principles of 'sincerity and truth'.^b Upon these two principles, Abel

“offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain” (Hebrews 11:4). Abel’s offering was accepted by God. Cain’s was not.

When Nadab and Abihu offered “strange fire before Yahweh” (Leviticus 10:1), He consumed them in his anger. God had laid down a prescribed method of approaching Him. But with their senses dulled by “strong drink” (v.9), they added a new element which was not acceptable to God, and in dramatic fashion they lost their lives as a result.

Following this incident in Leviticus 10, God gave His reason why Aaron’s sons lost their lives: “*I will be sanctified* in them that come nigh me, and before all the people *I will be glorified*” (v.3).

The word “sanctified” means ‘honoured’, ‘regarded as separate’, ‘held in high esteem’, ‘respected’. No one can deny this Truth. And nor could Aaron, for it is recorded that upon hearing these words “Aaron held his peace” (v.3).

King David also had to learn how important it is to approach God in the way prescribed when he brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. No one can question David’s sincerity in wanting to bring the Ark to Jerusalem, but the method by which he did it was wrong. It was not according to ‘truth’ and, consequently, Uzza lost his life.^c

Key Number Three

This truth regarding our proper position before the Father, and the fact that He has prescribed only *one* method of reconciliation, leads to another important key principle of the Atonement, that *God is supreme and must be honoured*. This takes us right back to the beginning and to the purpose of God. A fundamental truth of our existence is that God is the Creator and everything was made *by Him* and *for Him*. God is, therefore, supreme and *we* are His creation. As we read in Revelation “For His pleasure we are and were created” (Revelation 4:11).



**“God is supreme
and must be
honoured!”**

When it comes to the doctrine of the Atonement, we must be clear in our minds of the rudimentary position we occupy in the overall scheme of things: (i) that God is supreme, and (ii) we belong to Him. These principles lie at the very heart of the doctrine

of the Atonement because the Atonement is not merely about ‘forgiveness’ and how *we* can be saved; it is about *God being honoured, and the upholding of His supremacy*. Once we come to this realization, we will have a much fuller appreciation of this subject and be better prepared to serve the Father in the spirit of humility and reverence that He deserves.

Notes:

- ^a Isaiah 32:1; Revelation 1:6; 5:10
- ^b Joshua 24:14;
- ^c 1 Chronicles 13:10



Part One:
**Understanding
The Doctrine**



1

The Purpose of God

The Truth concerning the work of God through the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is very simple and easy to understand: Christ shared our nature; died for our sins; was raised from the dead; given eternal life; has ascended on high, and now sits at his Father's side until such time as he will be sent back to the Earth to reign as its King. Unfortunately, since the time of the Apostles, the beauty and simplicity of this Truth has been complicated by man-made theories which have subverted the very fabric of this Gospel message.

The first step in getting a grasp on this subject of the Atonement or Reconciliation, is to properly understand the *Purpose of God*. Once we understand the *Purpose of God*, we can better understand the *Nature of Man*. Once we understand the *Nature of Man*, we can then understand the *Nature of Christ*. Upon understanding the *Nature of Christ*, we can better understand the *Work of God* through our Lord Jesus Christ, and appreciate the *Hope* that we have in him.

What do we understand, therefore, about God's *Purpose* with the Earth? Well, there are *three* fundamental statements that the Bible uses to define God's *purpose* with the Earth.

First of all, we learn that "God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it *not in vain*: he formed it *to be inhabited*" (Isaiah 45:18).

Secondly, we are told that the Earth “will be *filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD*” (Habakkuk 2:14).

These first two statements together express the *purpose of God* with the Earth. A world which is “*inhabited*” and a world which is “*filled with the knowledge of the glory of God*” are two ways of saying the same thing: that all those who are to be a part of God's world when it is complete and returned to its former glory, after Jesus Christ returns to the Earth, will exhibit characteristics which are a reflection of God Himself. God's character (while not limited to these attributes) is expressed in Exodus 34:6-7 as “merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...”

This is one of the reasons that we have been given the Bible, not merely so that we can understand God's *purpose* with the



**“God is developing
a divine family from
among men!”**

Earth, but so that we can understand more about His *character*. In 1856, Bro. Thomas wrote an article in *The Herald of the Coming Age* in response to a question about God's work in saving Mankind. He responded to this question by expressing God's purpose in terms of

God revealing or *manifesting* Himself as a reflection of His characteristics in people upon the Earth...

Men were not ushered into being for the purpose of being saved or lost. **God manifestation**, not human salvation, was the great purpose of the eternal spirit. The salvation of a multitude is... incidental to the subject of **God manifestation**. It was not the end proposed. The eternal spirit intended to enthrone Himself upon the Earth and in so doing to develop a Divine family from among men... large enough to fill the Earth when completed.

A Divine family of men and women living upon Earth reflecting in themselves God's heart, will and mind — this is the purpose of God.^a

A third and most important statement that the Bible makes regarding God's purpose, is that His purpose is *eternal*. Psalm

72:19 says, “Blessed be his glorious name *for ever*: and let the whole Earth be filled with his glory.” In Psalm 78:69 we also read that, “He built His sanctuary like high palaces, like the earth which he hath established *for ever*.” Again, in 2 Chronicles 33:7 we read that, “In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name *for ever*...”



**“God’s purpose
is eternal”**

God’s purpose in creating the Earth and the plan of developing a divine family upon the Earth from among men was not temporary. It is eternal. It has been designed to last *‘for ever’*! (This is another important key to understanding the doctrine of the Atonement which will become clear in a later chapter.)

Notes:

^a Isaiah 45:18; Genesis 1:28



2

The Nature of Man

In order to accomplish His purpose of developing beings with characters that were a reflection of Himself, God created Man. In Genesis 2 we learn that Man was formed “of the dust of the ground”.^a He was made of the same physical substance as the animals with the same senses which they possessed, constituted “flesh and blood”.^b

But while we find that Man was created just *like* the animals, we also find that he was created very *unlike* the animals. He was created in the “*image*” and “*likeness*” of God (Genesis 1:26-27). In other words, he had a *bodily shape* that was the same as the angels, with a mind having their same *mental capacity* and, therefore, able to reason at a higher level of consciousness than the animals. He had the ability to appreciate and desire things which the animals could neither comprehend nor understand, such things as were aesthetically pleasing and physically nourishing; things that were “*pleasant to the sight, and good for food*” (Genesis 2:9).

When Adam was created, he was created as a *fully formed human being*. He did not, therefore, have a character moulded by years of social, environmental and physiological influences, as we have in growing from infancy to adulthood. He did not have the benefit of drawing upon life’s experiences to develop his character. He was, therefore, *intellectually immature*. He had not learned the moral distinction between what was right and wrong – between “good and evil”.^c

The garden of delight

God, therefore, placed Man in an environment where he could live and develop that character. It was in his new home, the *Garden of Eden* (or *Park of Delight*) that Adam, and his wife Eve, were able to *freely interact* and ‘fellowship’ with the angels of heaven. The angels (Heb: ‘elohim’) were their teachers, and they were their students. It was by this interaction and through a process of *divine education* that they would be able to develop the *mind of God* and understand the difference between right and wrong.

To help develop Adam and Eve’s characters further, Genesis describes two very special trees which were placed in the middle of this garden: “the *tree of life* also in the midst of the garden, and the *tree of knowledge of good and evil*” (Genesis 2:9).

These trees were not magical trees. They did not have any strange supernatural powers. Rather, they were *symbolic* trees, representing what Adam and Eve were being offered.

The first had the ability to lengthen life indefinitely, called the “Tree of Life”. Man by himself could not live forever. The *Tree of Life*, however, offered the eater the possibility of a life which would go on forever.

The second had the ability to limit life definitively, called the “Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil” or the *Tree of Experience of Right and Wrong*. It was from this tree that Adam and his wife, Eve, were forbidden to eat. Of all the rest of the trees in the Garden, they were allowed to eat freely, but *not* of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. If God’s commandment was broken, the consequence was simple — they would be condemned to die. They would not be able to live forever. As God had said: “In the day thou eatest thereof *thou shalt surely die*” (Genesis 2:17), or as the margin says: “dying thou shalt die”, which is a Hebrew idiom expressing the certainty that they would eventually die. If Adam and Eve wanted to live forever, they had to trust *God* to tell them what was right and wrong and follow His commandments.

Adam and Eve were, therefore, *responsible* to God’s commandment. If they chose not to follow God’s instructions, then conditions would be imposed whereby they would only be able to live *temporarily* and not *eternally*.

So God created beings with the capacity to make a choice and presented them with that choice. *By their own free-will* they could exhibit characteristics pleasing and acceptable to Him, putting their *trust* and *loyalty* in Him, thereby, *honouring him*. Or they could do “that which was right in their own eyes”^d and face the consequences of their actions.

The eternal purpose

A question that comes up from time to time is whether or not man was ‘mortal’ or ‘immortal’ when they were first created. This is an important question and ties into one of the governing principles of the Atonement that we saw in Chapter One, which is that God’s purpose is *eternal* and the Earth would last ‘*for ever*’.

When Man was created he was created of “flesh and blood” which by its very nature was *capable of dying*. But being *capable of dying* is not the same as being *subject to death*. Man became *mortal* on account of disobedience when he was sentenced to death. Being mortal means being ‘subject to death’.^e When man was first created, he was not yet *subject to death*. Neither was Man created *immortal*. He had the *potential* of becoming immortal just as he had the *potential* of becoming mortal, depending on his response to the command of God.

Bro. Thomas, speaking of Adam and Eve’s constituted nature after creation explains:

While in the state of good unmixed with evil, were Adam and Eve mortal or immortal? This is a question which presents itself to many who study the Mosaic account of the origin of things. It is an interesting question, and worthy of all attention. Some hastily reply, they were mortal; that is, if they had not sinned they would nevertheless have died. It is probable they would, after a long time, **if no further change had been operated upon their nature**. But the Tree of Life seems to have been provided, for the purpose of this change being effected, through the eating of its fruit, if they had proved themselves worthy of the favor. The animal nature will sooner or later dissolve. **It was not constituted so as to continue in life for ever, independent of any further modification**. We may admit, therefore, the corruptibility, and consequent mortality, of their nature, without saying that they were mortal. The in-

herent tendency of their nature to death would have been arrested and they would have been changed... as they of whom Paul says: "We shall not all die." The "we" here indicated possessing an animal, and therefore corruptible nature; and, if not "changed," would surely die; but inasmuch as they are to "be changed in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet," though corruptible, they are not mortal. In this sense, therefore, I say, that in their novitiate, **Adam and his betrothed had a nature capable of corruption, but were not subject to death, or mortal.** The penalty was "dying thou shalt die;" that is, "you shall not be permitted to eat of the Tree of Life in arrest of dissolution; but the inherent tendency of your animal nature shall take its course, and return you to the dust whence you originally came." **Mortality was in disobedience as the wages of sin,** and not a necessity.

(*Elpis Israel, John Thomas, p.72*)

It was never God's intention to create man for the purpose of watching him die. As Peter expressed in 2 Peter 3:9, God is "not willing that any should perish." This, therefore, necessitated that at some point in time a *change* would have to come about in Adam and Eve's physical constitution. If they were successful during their time of probation, then their natures would need to be *changed* so that they *would* be able to live forever. But why? Paul makes the reason plain to understand, "for *flesh and blood cannot* inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 15:50).

While Man had been created for the purpose of manifesting God's character, a body constituted of '*flesh and blood*' was never meant to be the final frame in which this character was expected to exist 'for ever'. The divine character, once developed in the man and woman, was, at some point in time, going to have to become framed in *spirit nature* if it was going to live 'for ever'.^f

The inventor of a lie

"*Every thing* that God had made... was *very good*." (Genesis 1:31). This included the serpent! But the serpent was a creature quite *unlike* the man. It had an inferior mental capacity and could not reason on moral things. It was an *amoral* creature, without moral understanding and, therefore, not subject to any moral law.

It was an intellectual, but not a moral, creature. It had no "moral sentiments". No part of its brain was appropriated to the exercise of benevolence, veneration, conscientiousness, and so forth. To speak phrenologically, it was destitute of these organs; having only "intellectual faculties" and "propensities". Hence, its cerebral mechanism, under the excitation of external phenomena, would only develop what I would term an animal intellectuality. Moral, or spiritual, ideas would make no impression upon its mental constitution for it was incapable, from its formation, of responding to them. ***It would be physically impossible for it to reason in harmony with the mind of God; or with the mind of man, whose reasoning was regulated by divinely enlightened moral sentiments.*** In short, we should expect that, if the faculty of speech were bestowed upon it, it would make just such a use of it, as Moses narrates of the serpent in the garden of Eden. Its mind was purely and emphatically a "Carnal Mind," of a more shrewd description than that of any of the inferior creatures. It was "very good"; but, when he undertook to converse upon things too high for him; to speak of what he had seen and heard; and to comment upon the law of the Lord, he lost himself in his dialogisms, and became ***the inventor of a lie.***

(Elpis Israel, John Thomas, p.81)

The serpent, 'the inventor of a lie', was a pure scientist, learning what it knew by mere observation and animal reasoning. When it spoke, it did not know that it was telling a lie. Neither could it understand the moral principle that in disobeying God, Eve would bring dishonour to Him. It struck up a conversation with the woman and in so doing stimulated her senses to desire something that was in complete *opposition to the will of God*. Its words were enticing. And it was right! The fruit did look good (cp. Genesis 2:9). It probably tasted good as well, and who wouldn't want to be wise like the angels, having a knowledge of what was right and wrong, and be able to live for ever? The serpent had promised that her, "eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods (the angels), knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5). It had given Eve the assurance that she "shall *not* surely die"! (cp. John 8:44)

So in Genesis 3:6 we are told that "when the woman saw that the tree was *good for food*, and that it was *pleasant to the eyes*,

and a tree to be desired *to make one wise*, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat”. Bro. Thomas writes: “Adam listened to *the sophistry of flesh, reasoning under the inspiration of its own instincts...* He gave heed to... “the thinking of the flesh,” or “carnal mind”, which “is enmity against God...” The desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life, which pertain essentially to all living human, or ground, souls, were stirred up by what he saw and heard; and “he was drawn away of his lust, and enticed.” His lust having conceived, it brought forth sin in intention; and this being perfected in action, caused death to ensue—James 1:13.”⁸

The state of unbelief

The first great problem that we encounter in the Bible is the problem of *unbelief* which is a state of mind of *not believing what God has said is true*. It is a state of mind that *corrupts*, making us vulnerable to breaking God’s laws, leading to transgression, resulting in feelings of shame and a defiled conscience.

When the serpent spoke to Eve it introduced a foreign thought into her mind that was in direct opposition to the will of God. It ‘beguiled’ or ‘corrupted’ her mind.^h

As her mind was stimulated by this thought, she entered a state of confusion. The writer to the Hebrews describes this mindset as an “evil heart of unbelief” (Hebrews 3:12). The suggestion of the serpent became a ‘temptation’ to Eve which affected her moral reasoning and led to her disobeying

God’s commandment. Eve knew the commandment given by God, but was deceived (1 Timothy 2:14). She reached a point of decision. Using free-will she had to decide whether to obey God’s commandment, or capitulate to the impulses of her flesh.

When Eve was asked by the serpent: “Hath God said, Ye shall not eat of *every* tree of the garden?” what she should have done in her confused state of mind, is say to the serpent: “I am not sure if that is true. But since God created me, I belong to Him and I trust Him. He is supreme and I owe my life to Him. Out of loyalty



“Unbelief is not believing that what God has said is true”

to Him and because I wish to honour Him, I will be patient and ask my husband to give me the answer to that question.”

Eve did not reason this way and, consequently, made a decision which led down a slippery slope towards the grave. Her desires were inflamed by the serpent and she was “drawn away” in direct opposition to the word of God. She gave in to those inflamed desires and was *enticed*, or *hooked*. She stretched forth her hand and “grasped”ⁱ hold of something that she was not lawfully entitled to. She broke God’s commandment and sinned. She *brought dishonour to God*, which sealed her fate, and guaranteed her a place in the grave.

Ungodly desires

In Genesis 2:9 we learn that there was nothing wrong with desiring something that is “pleasant to the eyes”, or “good for food”, or to



“Their desires were not sinful in and of themselves”

even aspire to be “wise” like the angels and live forever (Genesis 3:6)! Ecclesiastes 3:11 says that God “has put eternity in our hearts” (NKJV). It was part of God’s purpose that man would live ‘for ever’. Adam and Eve had been created with these propensities or desires from the beginning. *These desires were not sinful in and of themselves*. But when those same propensities or desires were inflamed by the thinking of the serpent and used *in opposition to the will of God*, they are described in scripture as being “sinful”^j because they were desires *that lead to sin*.

Bro. Roberts makes this observation:

Literally, sin is disobedience, or the act of rebellion. ***The impulses that lead to this***, reside in the flesh, and therefore ***come to be called by the name of the act to which they give birth***. In determining first principles, we must be accurate in our conceptions. ***The impulses that lead to sin existed in Adam before disobedience, as much as they did afterwards***; else disobedience would not have occurred. These impulses are in their own place legitimate enough... ***The difficulty is to keep the impulses in the legitimate channel.***

(The Christadelphian, Vol. 6, Page 85, 1869 – The Relationship of Jesus to the Law of Sin and Death – Bro. Robert Roberts)

| <u>Genesis 2:9</u> | <u>Genesis 3:6</u> | <u>1 John 2:16</u> |
|--|---|--|
| Man created 'very good' with certain desires... | When those desires incited in opposition to the will of God... | Described as 'lusts not of the Father but of the world' |
| 'Good for food' | 'Good For food' | 'Lust of the flesh' |
| 'Pleasant to the eyes' | 'Good to the eyes' | 'Lust of the eyes' |
| 'Put eternity in our hearts' ^k | 'make one wise' | 'Pride of life' |

John says that when our desires are used in opposition to the will of God they are 'lusts' that are 'of the world': "the lusts of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life are not of the Father *but of the world.*" (1 John 2:16). Other Apostles also use similar language describing them as: 'deceitful lusts' (Ephesians 4:22); 'foolish' and 'hurtful lusts' (1 Timothy 6:9); 'youthful lusts' (2 Timothy 2:22); 'divers lusts' (2 Timothy 3:6 / Titus 3:3); 'worldly lusts' (Titus 2:12); 'fleshly lusts' (1 Peter 2:11); and 'ungodly lusts' (Jude 18).

Unfortunately, we now have an inherent tendency to fulfill our own desires. The hard part is recognising when we are using our desires in service to God, or in opposition to God. As we will go on to see, the solution to this problem is *divine education*.

The vocabulary of disobedience

Ironically, *the very act of eating the fruit* gave Adam and Eve the experience of what was right and wrong, *a knowledge of good and evil*. By the very act of disobedience they understood the difference between *obeying* and *disobeying* the word of God, for the scriptures say that "the eyes of both of them were opened" (Genesis 3:7). This does not mean to say that until that point in time Adam and Eve could not literally see. It is a term that is used in a similar way when it is said of Hagar in Genesis 21:19 that "God *opened her eyes*, and she saw a well of water" or in 2 Kings 6:17 "the LORD *opened the eyes* of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." *It was a discernment of something that*



***"Literally, sin is
disobedience or
the act of rebellion"***

was *already there*, but could not be seen until it was revealed by God. Until this point in time Adam and Eve had relied upon God to provide their *education* so that they could understand the difference between right and wrong, between obedience and disobedience. Now they clearly understood *by personal experience* what it meant to disobey rather than to obey the word of God.

As a direct result of Adam and Eve's sinning or disobedience there came a new discernment. There also came some very dramatic changes and consequences for their actions that they would now learn about as well.

The first change or consequence of Adam and Eve sinning was that *it brought distance between God and Man*, "The LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?" (Genesis 3:9). Disobedience, or the



"Sin brought distance between God and Man"

act of sinning, brought about *distance* between God and man, not only literally as Adam and Eve hid in the bushes, but figuratively as well. Isaiah says: "*your iniquities* have *separated* between you and your God, and *your sins* have *hid his face from you*" (Isaiah 59:2). They were "convicted by their own *conscience*".¹ No longer would they be able to enjoy *fellowship* with God as they had enjoyed it before.

The second consequence was that *fear* entered their lives. Adam said to God, "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was *afraid*..." (Genesis 3:10). Adam had never been afraid before, so why was he afraid now? Because he knew that there were consequences of what he had just done. So *fear*, which each of us have in one measure or another, came about through Adam and Eve disobeying God.

Another consequence was that *enmity* or *hostility* came into the world. In speaking with the serpent God declared, "I will put *enmity* between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15).

As a direct consequence of sin, *sorrow* was also associated with procreation. In speaking with the woman God said, "I will greatly multiply thy *sorrow* and thy conception; in *sorrow* you

shall bring forth children; Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over you” (Genesis 3:16).

Finally, in speaking with the man God said, “cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return...” (Genesis 3:17-19). As a consequence of Adam’s sin, life was going to be cursed. It would be a life full of *toil, stress and pain*, ultimately resulting in *death*...

Shame, fear, stress, hostility, sorrow, pain and death — this was the language of *sin* — the vocabulary of *disobedience*.

Adam’s act of disobedience brought suffering and death into the world. So Paul could, therefore, say: “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon [Greek: ‘through to’] all men” (Romans 5:12). No matter who we are, an old man in the shadow of our lives or a new-born babe, as a direct consequence of Adam’s disobedience, we are all now *subject to death*. We are all mortal, genetically programmed to age and eventually die.



**“Man is mortal
and an inevitable
sinner by birth”**

The law of sin and death

When Adam and Eve sinned, not only did they change *physiologically*, but they changed *mentally and emotionally*. *Physiologically* they were now different. They were mortal, dying creatures. But *mentally and emotionally* they were different as well. The thinking of their minds had been awakened in such a way that they now had an *inherent tendency towards sinning*. *Consequently, all men are dying creatures and inevitable sinners by birth.*^m

The scriptures attest to this throughout the Word of God: “God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was *only evil continually*” (Genesis 6:5). “The heart is *deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*” (Jeremiah 17:9). “For *my thoughts* are not your thoughts...” (Isaiah 55:8). “It is not in

man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jeremiah 10:23). “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and *full of trouble*” (Job 14:1). “And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *none is good, save one, that is, God*” (Luke 18:19). “Who can bring a clean thing out of unclean thing? not one.” (Job 14:4). “As by one man’s disobedience *many were made sinners*” (Romans 5:19).

Paul styles this fixed principle within us as being “a law in my members” (Romans 7:23), “the law of sin” (Romans 7:25), “the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2), “the flesh” (Romans 8:4-9), “the carnal [or animal] mind” (Romans 8:7). This language is used by Paul to describe *the natural law of the inward mind when it works in opposition to the will of God*. In Romans 7:18-19,24 he says: “In me (that is, in my flesh,) *dwelleth no good thing...* For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do... O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death (RV: ‘this body of death’)?”

The battle of the mind

The ‘carnal mind’ is the *thinking of the mind*, which produces thoughts and actions that are at *enmity*, or in opposition to, the will of God when the Word of God is missing. Paul says, “The *carnal 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” (Romans 8:8). He further explains what the result of the carnal mind or carnal thinking is upon our conduct: “Whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, *are ye not carnal*” (1 Corinthians 3:3). Again, “*The works of the flesh* are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like” (Galatians 5:19-21).

By contrast, what is the ‘spiritual mind’? It is the *thinking of the mind* which produces thoughts and actions that are in *harmony* with the mind of God. “*Let this mind be in you*, which was also in Christ Jesus who... humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:5,8). “*The fruit of the Spirit* is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness,

faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22-23) “But ye are not *in the flesh*, but *in the Spirit*, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you” (Romans 8:9).

We all have the same minds, created of the same physical substance. However, whether we have a ‘carnal’ mind or a ‘spiritual’ mind is evidenced by our thoughts, our words and our actions. By nature we have a mind with an inherent tendency towards fleshly serpent reasoning; easily tempted by the pleasures of sin. If we give in to temptation and we sin, we are exposing the ‘carnal’ mind. On the other hand the ‘spiritual’ mind produces pure thoughts and righteous actions, and can only be developed by its assimilation with the mind of God. Our conscience is our judge which is developed and directed by the Word of God.

Bro. Thomas explains it this way:

The carnal mind, or thinking of the flesh, unenlightened by the truth, is ***the serpent in the flesh***. It was for this reason that Jesus styled his enemies "serpents, and a generation of vipers" (Matt. 23:33). Their actions all emanated from the serpent-thinking of the flesh, which displayed "a wisdom not from above", which was at once "earthly, sensual, and devilish"; as opposed to that which "is from above", and which is "first pure, then peaceful, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, hypocrisy".

(*Elpis Israel, John Thomas, p.91*)

The battle between the ‘thinking of the flesh’ and ‘the mind of the spirit’ is outlined graphically in Romans 8 where Paul contrasts these two different ways of thinking:

| | | |
|------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 7:25 | law of sin | law of God |
| 8:1 | walk not after the flesh | but after the Spirit. |
| 8:2 | law of sin and death | law of the Spirit of life |
| 8:3 | in the likeness of sinful flesh | God sending his own Son |
| 8:4 | walk not after the flesh | but after the Spirit |
| 8:4 | after the flesh | after the Spirit |
| 8:5 | things of the flesh | things of the Spirit |
| 8:6 | carnally minded | spiritually minded |
| 8:6 | death | life and peace |
| 8:9 | in the flesh | in the Spirit |
| 8:10 | dead because of sin | Spirit is life |
| 8:13 | after the flesh | through the Spirit |

Paul concludes by saying in Romans 8:14 that, “as many as are led by the *Spirit of God*, they are *the sons of God*.” This is the challenge to all of us who aspire to become sons and daughters of the living God. We must seek to “be led by the spirit of God” to the honour and glory of the Father.

Notes:

- ^a Genesis 2:7
- ^b Hebrews 2:14
- ^c Genesis 3:5; cp. Psalm 8:5; Hebrews 2:7
- ^d Judges 17:6
- ^e Scripture uses the term ‘mortal’ to describe the state of Man in relationship to death. It uses the word ‘immortal’ to describe the state of life everlasting as a contrast to the condemned state of death. CP. Romans 6:23 — “For the wages of sin is *death*; but the gift of God is *eternal life*.” Also compare 1 Corinthians 15:54 — “this *mortal* shall have put on *immortality*, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, *Death* is swallowed up in victory.” Adam and Eve were created in a state whereby they were neither condemned to death or deserving of eternal life.
- ^f 2 Peter 1:4
- ^g *Eureka — Diabolos (Vol. 1, Section II)*, Bro. John Thomas
- ^h 2 Corinthians 11:3
- ⁱ Philippians 2:6 (RSV)
- ^j Romans 8:3
- ^k Ecclesiastes 3:11 (NKJV)
- ^l John 8:9; The immediate consequence was Adam and Eve feeling a sense of *shame* for what they had done, which led to them trying to cover themselves with fig leaves. This was followed by a sense of *fear* as they tried to hide themselves in the bushes, which was expressive of the *distance* or *alienation* between themselves and God.
- ^m While all men are inevitable sinners by birth, the Lord Jesus Christ did not sin. He was, however, like us, a “constitutional sinner” sharing our same dying nature with its impulses that lead to sin, but which in him, did not lead to sin (cp. ‘The Constitution of Sin’, *Elpis Israel*, pages 126-131 by Bro. Thomas and *The Christadelphian* 1874, p. 525).



3

The Nature of Christ

We *suffer* and are subject to *death* as a direct result of Adam and Eve's *sin* or *disobedience*. But not only do we *suffer*, we also *sin* by doing things which displease God. This is because we are born with an inherent tendency to do those things that *we* want to do rather than what God wants us to do. We are inevitable sinners. This does not mean to say that it is our *fault* that we share this nature. It is our *misfortune*. Neither does it release us from our individual *responsibilities* to try to please God, instead of ourselves.

Now that sin, suffering and death had entered the world, how could God solve the problem caused by Man's disobedience? How could God remain true to His *righteous* judgment upon Adam, but at the same time, exercise *mercy* and redeem Mankind? Or as Isaiah expresses it, *how could God be "a just God and a saviour"?*^a These questions go right to the absolute heart of the doctrine of the Atonement. God is a "*just*" God and true to His judgments. He is *supreme*. His *honour* must be upheld. But, He is also a "*saviour*", willing to exercise mercy and kindness in order to redeem Mankind and fulfill His purpose.

In the *Blood of Christ*, Bro. Roberts, explains the 'options' that God had to save Mankind without compromising His righteous judgment upon Adam and Eve, or His purpose with the Earth:



***"How could God
be a Just God
and a Saviour?"***

There were three ways of mending it. One way was to exterminate the whole human species. But this would have been a poor remedy. It would have been to confess failure; that God had set a-going an arrangement on this planet for His glory and could not make it work. This was impossible. God has said that He has not made the earth in vain: that He formed it to be inhabited by the righteous; and that as truly as He lives, it will be wholly filled with His glory yet. The second way would have been what might be called the toleration-of-sin method — the universal and indiscriminating pity method, by which the wickedness of disobedience should have been ignored, and mankind allowed to occupy the earth immortally for their own pleasure. But this also was impossible. It would have meant God's abdication, and the handing over of man to eternal misery. **There was a third way** – a middle way, and that is the way which has been adopted — namely, **to enforce the law against sin, and at the same time leave the door open for mercy to repentant and obedient sinners.** How such a method could be made consistent with itself has been exhibited to us **in the birth, death, and resurrection of Christ.**

God's decision was to formulate a plan which would put right the problem based upon the principles of (i) *Responsibility*, (ii) *Retribution* and (iii) *Redemption*. This was the Divine method.



**“The 3 R’s -
Responsibility,
Retribution &
Redemption”**

In other words, God did not cancel out the first two principles of *Responsibility* and *Retribution*, being the law by which Adam and Eve were supposed to live. Instead, He added the third, which would enable all who want to, to benefit from the same forgiveness that Adam and Eve were offered.

It was a divine plan conceived in *wisdom* that was brilliant in its simplicity. It did not compromise His *righteousness* in any way. But at the same time was an expression of His *love* and *mercy* towards Mankind.

God immediately set to work. He goes right to the root of the problem and addresses the serpent: “Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and

between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:14-15).

The serpent had ‘corrupted’ the woman’s mind, expressing the *carnal thinking of a fleshly animal* rather than the *spiritual thinking of a righteous God*. And so it was, *for the man’s sake*, that God addressed the serpent, to direct his mind to the *root cause* of the problem. God gave the serpent no opportunity to speak or defend itself, but rather condemned the serpent to slither with its belly against the dust of the earth, to be at one again with the very substance from which it had been made. In a very dramatic way God was telling the man and woman that there is only one place where fleshly, carnal thinking can end up — back in the very ground that it came from. Again, put another way, “flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God”! There are no words more expressive of God’s mind on this principle than those directed towards the serpent in Genesis 3:15: “It [the seed of the woman] shall bruise [crush] thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”



**“We fail God by
sinning AND by
not manifesting
His character
perfectly”**

In other words, the lesson being taught is that the ‘carnal mind’ cannot have free reign. It must be ‘crushed’ and destroyed for ever. It is incompatible with the spiritual mind. The promise made, which Adam and Eve would hear, was that one day, one of Eve’s descendants, the Lord Jesus Christ, would destroy the ‘thinking of the serpent’ in his own life, by living a life of perfect obedience “even unto death”,^b thereby, condemning *sin* and its consequences, *suffering and death*. As we saw in the last chapter, it is a battle that true believers are encouraged to engage in, throughout their lives. It is a battle within the mind between fleshly carnal-thinking and spiritual godly-thinking.

It is God who saves

The picture that we are presented with in Genesis 3:15 is a graphic and dramatic depiction of the work of God through the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This verse contains a number of important lessons. But the most prominent lesson of the verse, however, has to do with the redeeming work of God through Christ. The *serpent*, not only represents the fleshly reasoning of a will which is in opposition to the Will of God and, therefore, the first lie spoken by the serpent in the garden, but it also represents the *consequences* of this lie — sin, suffering and death. The “*seed of the woman*” represents *Christ* who was “born of a woman”, Mary, and constituted “flesh and blood”. He was “in all points tempted as we are” (Hebrews 4:15) and under the same condemnation of death as we are. But the scriptures are emphatic. He had no *earthly* father. In 2 Samuel 7:14 we are told that God “will be his father” and in Isaiah 7:14 that “a virgin shall conceive”. Luke says that he would be called “*The Son of the Highest*” (Luke 1:32).

This leads us to one of the great lessons of Genesis 3:15 that: *Man cannot save himself! It is God alone who saves.* It was God who was going to redeem Mankind through a method of reconciliation of His own design and choosing.



“Man cannot save himself! It is God alone who saves.”

His “own arm brought salvation” (Isaiah 63:5). God’s method was that one of Adam’s race would be born who was going to share *the same nature as the rest of the human race*, but who would have the *capacity to reflect the characteristics of Himself*. Christ was going to be the first to conquer sin and death, and while sharing the same nature as the rest of Mankind, represent others from Adam’s race in doing so.

The picture in Genesis 3:15 is that of the heel of a man, crushing the head of the serpent while, at the same time, incurring a wound in the heel as the serpent lashes out and strikes it as it comes down upon the head. The imagery presented is most applicable to the work of God through the Lord Jesus Christ

In dying on the cross, Christ, the *seed of the woman*, was *temporarily* ‘bruised’ in the heel. In other words, when Christ was crucified, his death was only a *temporary blow* which would heal, since after three days and three nights he was resurrected from the dead to life by God. He had beaten and overcome death, and was, therefore, only in a grave *temporarily*.

At the same time, however, sin (and by extension, suffering and death) represented by the serpent, was permanently ‘crushed’ in the head — a fatal blow which destroyed it, forever. Christ's life, death and resurrection, therefore, removed sin which was the enmity between God and man, giving us the hope of life.

Coats of skin

When Adam and Eve tried to cover up their transgression, they soon learned that *there was nothing that they could do for themselves to get out of the mess that they had got themselves into*. The covering of fig leaves that they had sewn together was useless. And they knew that, for they sought another covering by hiding in the bushes. Their disobedience was punishable by death. There was no escaping this fact. But in His love and mercy, God was prepared to implement His plan of *Redemption*. He could not compromise his righteousness by not executing justice upon Adam and Eve for disobeying His commandment. But He would extend mercy and provide opportunity for them to be redeemed *upon certain terms and conditions*. Had He not done so, His plan to manifest His character in a divine family taken from among men and women upon the Earth, would have failed.

While Adam and Eve were now condemned to die, in order to fulfill His purpose, God did not destroy them right away. Instead he allowed Adam and his wife to pro-create and produce offspring. He also gave them hope. But they had some vital truths to learn.

First of all, they needed to *understand* God's plan of *Redemption*. Secondly, they needed to *acknowledge* their rightful position before God and that they had a need for redemption. Finally, they needed to *identify* themselves with that plan of redemption.

In the slaying of an animal and in the provision of coats of skin there were lessons that He was teaching them:

- (1) The first lesson that they had to learn was that *they were rightly subject to death* and that God was righteous in His judgment to condemn them to die. In a graphic way he demonstrated this to them by killing an animal so that they would understand that “the wages of sin is death”.

- (2) The second lesson that they learned was that there was *nothing they could do to save themselves*. It was *God* who took an animal and killed it, thus providing them with a covering for their nakedness, which was a fitting symbol of their shame and ‘defiled conscience’ brought about by their transgression.^c
- (3) The third lesson that He also needed them to understand was that “without shedding of blood there can be no remission [of sins]” (Hebrews 9:22). But why? Adam and Eve and their descendants were under condemnation of *death*. Blood shedding was a reminder to Adam and Eve that flesh and blood is subject to *death*. But not only was it a symbol of death, it was also a symbol of *life* for it was the very substance which transported the vital nutrients and oxygen around the body in order to sustain life. “For the *life* of the flesh is in the blood” (Leviticus 17:11). Without the blood a body cannot sustain life. It was, therefore, a reminder that God is supreme, that their lives belonged to God and that their lives should be wholly dedicated in service to God.
- (4) The next lesson that God needed them to understand was that *the dead carcass of an animal could not remove sin and death*. It was a *man* who had sinned. It was, therefore, a *man* who would have to die and represent the whole of Mankind in doing so. But not just any man. A man who had never sinned. Remember, God’s law had said that if you sin, you die. Paul stated that “the wages of sin is death”. Adam sinned. Adam was condemned to death. How could this law be broken? It could not! Only if a *man* was able to lead a sinless life could he be saved out of death and represent the whole of Mankind in doing so.

Literally, the coats of skin covered their ‘nakedness’. *Figuratively*, because disobedience was the *cause* of their self-consciousness, they covered their *transgression* and ‘shame’. The coats of skin represented the future *work of God* through the Lord Jesus Christ in reconciling Mankind to Himself and, therefore, the forgiveness of sins extended in mercy to them by God.^d

Born of our Nature

It was critical in God's plan of Redemption that whoever was going to redeem Mankind from sin and death, also shared our nature. But why? The answer is simple. It was through a *man* that sin was first conceived and came into the world. Sin had to be condemned *by a man, in the very place in which it first took hold*. So it was that in being "born of a woman" that "*he also himself likewise took part of the same*". He was sent "*in the likeness of sinful flesh*" and was "tempted in all points as we are" but he never sinned.

Earlier we looked at Romans 8 where Paul contrasts the 'thinking of the flesh' with the 'thinking of the spirit'. In verses 3-4 Paul says that Christ "condemned sin *in the flesh*: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us..." Sin was conceived *in the flesh*. It had to be condemned *in the flesh* by the righteous possessor of that flesh, as a basis for our reconciliation to God.

There was only one way that this could happen. Not only was he *born of a woman*, but he was also *the Son of God*. He was his Father's son, and had to battle daily with the same impulses that lead to sin, as we do. It was the consummate battle between flesh and the spirit, but it was the spirit that overcame! How? Because, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself."^e

Bro. John Carter on "The law of sin and death"

"Primarily, of course, law has the force of commandment, but when we speak of the law of nature we mean there is an operative series of sequences which are constant. We speak of habits as being the law of our being. In this way Paul speaks of "a law in my members" and in Romans 7 he works out a series of contrasts which provide us with two series of synonymous expressions.

"Paul speaks of the *flesh*; evil present with me; a law in my members, and an "I" which does not do what Paul himself wanted to do. There is in contrast the inward man, the law of the mind, etc. These, of course, are two principles at work within us; the first is native to the flesh, the second is inculcated by the Word. The first Paul calls the "law of sin" which he amplifies in Rom. 8 as the "law of sin and death". In contrast to this, he speaks of the "law of the spirit of life" which, of course, is the law of his mind of the inward mind."

Notes:

- a* Isaiah 45:21
- b* Matthew 26:38
- c* CP. Revelation 3:18; 16:15
- d* CP. Isaiah 47:3; Revelation 3:18
- e* 2 Corinthians 5:19



4

The Work of God

In the overall scheme of things, *God and Man are looking for two different things*. On the one hand, God is looking to develop a divine family from among men and women who will honour Him and reflect His holiness. On the other hand, Man is looking for redemption and salvation from sin and death. It is through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that *both* of these fundamental ‘needs’ were met.

The way in which Christ was able to fulfill both of these needs was by acting as a *representative* of both *God and man*. In Chapter 3 we saw that Christ was a *son of man* being in “all points tempted like as we are”^a sent to “suffer for sins... *that he might bring us to God*”.^b He was, therefore, able to *represent* Mankind to God as a member of Adam’s race. But he also came to *represent* God to the world! He was the *son of God* and a perfect reflection of His Father’s character. He was *God* (or ‘the word’) manifest in the *flesh* “full of grace and truth.”^c This idea that *Christ came to represent both God and Man* is a most important principle that we *must* understand, because it is this principle that forms the foundation to God’s method of reconciliation with Man.



“Christ came to represent both God and Man”

God was in Christ

The Apostle Paul tells us that Christ was sent for the express purpose to “save sinners”.^d As “sinners” we *fail God in two ways*. First of all, we are disobedient and *sin* through “ignorance” and “unbelief”. Secondly, we fail to *manifest God’s character perfectly* for “all have sinned”, says Paul, “and come *short of the glory of God*.” But Christ was the first member of the human race to lead a sin-less life of obedience. He was also the first to manifest His Father’s character perfectly. He was, therefore, raised from the dead as the “firstborn among many brethren.”^e



**“We fail God
in two ways:
We sin, and we
fail to manifest
His character.”**

The reason that Christ was able to do this, we are told, is because “God was *in Christ* reconciling the world unto himself.”^f In other words, Christ was strengthened by God for the work that he came to do. In Hebrews 1:3 we are told that Christ was “the brightness of his *glory*, and the *express image* of his person.” We cannot miss the parallel to Genesis 1 where we are told that Adam was created in the “*image*” and “*likeness*” of God.^g Just as Adam was created for the purpose of manifesting God’s character, so, too, was Christ born for this same purpose. Christ shared our same physical nature, but he had a *mental capacity* that was filled with the *mind of the Father*. Isaiah 11:2-3 tells us that “the spirit of the LORD” rested upon him, “the spirit of wisdom and understanding,

Separated by transgression...

GOD ←————→ **MAN**

“Your *iniquities* have separated between you and your God,
and your *sins* have hid his face from you...”^h

Reconciled in Christ...

GOD → **CHRIST** ← **MAN**

“God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself...”ⁱ

the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.” He was “of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD.” Not only did he have a full and complete understanding of what sin is so that he could identify it and, therefore, overcome it, but he knew how to manifest His Father’s character perfectly. This did not happen by accident. It came about through a process of *divine education* and development. God was with Christ every step of the way, working through him to achieve His purpose. Psalm 80:17 says that His hand was “upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man *whom thou madest strong for thyself.*” Christ’s success and victory was, therefore, the *work of God.*

Our perfect example

Forgiveness is easy to understand, but the *conditions* of forgiveness are not so easy to understand. One of the most important verses in the Bible concerning *the work of God* through Christ is Romans 3:25 where we read that: “God hath set [Jesus] forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, ***to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins*** that are past, through the forbearance of God.”

The word ‘declare’ means to ‘demonstrate’ or ‘exhibit’. One of the great principles of the Atonement is that Christ’s entire life, death and resurrection was a *demonstration* or an *exhibit* for all to see of *certain facts and truths concerning human weakness in contrast to the supremacy of God.* It was this demonstration or exhibition of these facts and truths that serves *as a basis* for “the remission of sins” and our acceptance before God.



“Christ’s life was a demonstration of certain facts and truths.”

This interpretation of Romans 3:25 is entirely consistent with Clause 12 of the BASF which says:

Jesus was put to death by the Jews and Romans, who were, however, but instruments in the hands of God, for the doing of that which He had determined before to be done, viz., the condemnation of sin in the flesh, through the offering of the body of Jesus once for all, as a propitiation ***to declare the righteousness of God, as a basis for*** the re-

mission of sins. All who approach God through this crucified, but risen, representative of Adam's disobedient race, are forgiven. **Therefore, by a figure**, his blood cleanseth from sin.

A misconception that sometimes arises is that somehow our sins were *literally* placed upon Christ or 'imputed to him', and magically disappeared when he died! Our sins are moral things. They are intangible. They could not, therefore, have been *literally* placed upon Christ. Christ's death did not *literally* cleanse us from our sins. Rather, by a figure Christ's death cleanses us from our sins. In other words, God laid down a method of reconciliation. That method of reconciliation came with certain terms and conditions. One of those conditions was that a man would need to be born of Adam's race, who would demonstrate certain facts and truths about life, that would bring honour and glory to God, and declare His righteousness. With God's help, Christ *was* able to demonstrate these facts and truths throughout his faithful life of obedience and in his sacrificial death. Christ's sacrificial life, death and resurrection, therefore, formed the basis of our reconciliation to God. It is through our *acknowledgement* of those facts, and truths and our *identification* with the Lord Jesus Christ, that we can benefit by having access to the Father who, for Christ's sake, is righteous and merciful to forgive. In *The Blood of Christ* (p.26), Bro. Roberts says:

Christ was himself absolutely sinless as to disobedience, while subject to the impulses and the consequences of sin. The object was to open a way out of this state, both for himself and his brethren, by death and resurrection after trial. It pleased God to require **the ceremonial condemnation of this sin-nature** in crucifixion in the person of a righteous possessor of it, **as the basis of our forgiveness**.

What is sacrifice?

So Christ's death upon the cross did not *literally* remove our sins, or the guilt of sin. *Forgiveness* removes sins. *Sacrifice is not forgiveness. But sacrifice is the basis upon which God chooses to ex-*



**“Christ’s death
cleanses us
from our sins
by a figure.”**

tend His mercy and forgive. So what is sacrifice?

Sacrifice can be described as the ceremonial death of an animal to honour a deity, or the loss or giving up of something for the benefit of someone else. But sacrifice is more than that.

Imagine for a moment that we live on a farm and we have on that farm some sheep. One day we decide to take one of those sheep, kill it and have it for dinner. Killing that sheep to provide meat for the family does not constitute sacrifice. All that killing the sheep does is provide some meat to feed the family.

Sacrifice is not merely about *death* or the killing of an animal. Animals die and are killed every day. Sacrifice is a practical expression, demonstration and declaration of certain facts and truths about *life* designed to have a practical effect upon the offerer. It is about the *personal identification* with the animal being offered, teaching moral lessons that ultimately leads us to reconciliation with the Father. *It was designed to lead a man to righteousness, repentance and reconciliation to the Father.*¹



“Sacrifice is not forgiveness. It is a basis for forgiveness.”

In the *Blood of Christ* (p. 9) Bro. Roberts observes:

At the very crisis of transgression and condemnation, He [God] provided a **shadow institution**, by which... man might approach God acceptably, in hope of the rectification of his position **in a far-off day**. He appointed that he should lay his hands on the head of an animal, confess his sins, and kill it and take its blood, and offer it to God. **The poured out blood was the offered life**. It was the **ritual recognition** and declaration by the worshipper that he was under condemnation, and had no right to his life. He acknowledged this in coming to God in this appointed way: and God was pleased.

The perfect sacrifice

It is evident, therefore, that the sacrifice of an animal by itself could never remove transgression and sins. But why? Because a man could never identify himself fully and completely with an animal being offered! The animal was an amoral creature and not subject to the moral principles associated with God’s Law. It did not

understand the concept of divine righteousness and the difference between right and wrong. Animal sacrifice was, therefore, merely a “shadow institution” and “ritual recognition” because the moral principles of sacrifice could never be worked out completely in it.

In the Old Testament sacrifice involved three parties. It involved the *offerer*, the *animal* and *God*. All three were involved in the sacrifice. The *offerer* was the one making the offering. *God* was the one being honoured. And the *animal* was the one being offered.

So, too, in the New Testament there are three parties involved in the sacrificial work of Christ. There is *ourselves*. There is *God*. And there is the *Lord Jesus Christ*. In the same way that the offerer in the Old Testament had to follow certain steps and processes to identify himself with the offering in order to find divine acceptance, so, too, do we need to identify ourselves with Christ and the work that he came to do in order that we can find divine acceptance.

Christ’s sacrificial *death* was not merely about the public execution of a righteous man upon a cross. Rather, it was the climax of a sacrificial *life* of obedience which had been dedicated in service to God. It was the ceremonial condemnation of flesh and blood nature by a man who was the righteous possessor of it.

Sending Christ as the perfect sacrifice was a loving and compassionate work of God. But it had a purpose. It was designed to lead a man to live a life of righteousness and repentance.

Take by way of example two men. Both men make a sacrificial offering. The first man follows all of the requirements laid down by the Law. He has prepared himself accordingly; the animal is inspected and prepared as instructed; he identifies himself by placing his hand upon the animal; the animal is killed; the fat is placed upon the altar; the animal is dismembered in a series of steps and, finally, it is consumed by the fire upon the altar. He has followed every step according to the Law — but he does not understand and appreciate the reasons why he followed those steps.

Another man, however, follows exactly the same routine — but this time, he has a full and complete understanding of why he is performing each step in the process. He understands why the

animal needed to be inspected; why he placed his hand upon the animal; why it had to be washed; why the fat was placed upon the altar first; why it was dismembered the way that it was; why the skin was removed; why the flesh of the animal was completely consumed upon the altar. *And he understands how he is personally involved and identified with that sacrifice.*

While the first man followed the ritual of sacrifice correctly, as did the second, it was the second who understood the purpose and value of the sacrifice in leading him to righteousness, repentance and reconciliation to the Father.

One of the great passages in scripture which demonstrate this fact is Psalm 51:16-17,19 which is David's Psalm of contrition after he sinned in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. David understood the principle of sacrifice when he said: "Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are *a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart*, O God, thou wilt not despise... Then shalt thou be pleased with the *sacrifices of righteousness...*"

Paul makes this point in Romans 12:1-2, having spent the first eleven chapters explaining the purpose of Christ's life, death and resurrection: "I beseech you *therefore*, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies *a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service* (Greek: 'service of reason'). And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed *by the renewing of your mind*, that ye may prove what is that *good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*"

Conversely, in Proverbs we read that "The *sacrifice* of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?" (Proverbs 21:27).

The work of God through the sacrificial life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is all about the practical demonstration of certain principles and truths about *Man* and about *God*. *It is Christ's public demonstration of these principles and truths, and our identification with them, which forms the basis for "the forgiveness of sins" and our reconciliation to God.*



"The purpose of sacrifice is to lead a man to righteousness."

Certain facts and truths

The sacrificial *death* of Christ would have been absolutely meaningless had it not been for the perfect *life* of obedience that he led and his voluntary submission to the will of God. While the *death* of Christ was absolutely necessary for us to be reconciled to God, we are saved because of his perfect *life* of obedience which culminated in his *death* upon the cross. Had he not led a *life* of perfect obedience, his *death* on the cross would have meant absolutely nothing. In Romans 3:25 Paul says that “God hath set [Jesus] forth to be a *propitiation*...” The word ‘propitiation’ is the same word translated ‘mercyseat’ in Hebrews 9:5 and comes from a root word meaning ‘to make reconciliation’. In Hebrews 2:17 we read that Christ made “*reconciliation* for the sins of the people.” Christ was the *place* of ‘reconciliation’. He was the ‘mercyseat’ — the place of meeting between God and Man. It is because he demonstrated certain principles, facts and truths in his life, death and resurrection, that we can be reconciled to God.

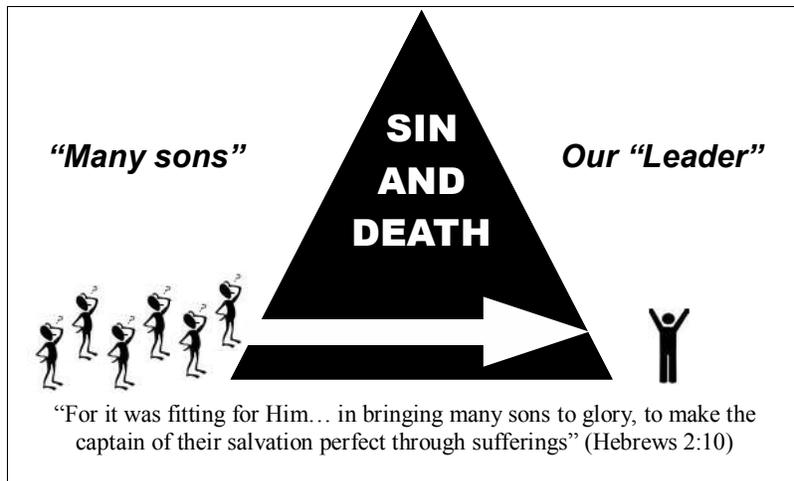
So what were these principles, facts and truths that Christ came to demonstrate that form the basis of our reconciliation to God? Well, there are many, each of which helps us understand and appreciate the incredible work that he came to do.

- He perfectly reflected his Father’s character and, therefore, demonstrated that *God alone is the source of all righteousness, goodness and truth*.
- In contrast, he demonstrated *the weakness of human flesh* by exposing the evil thinking of those around him.
- He showed what man is by nature and that *man alone is the source of temptation and sin*.
- He showed just how *weak and frail mortal man is*, as he encountered, and was himself subject to, all kinds of “sicknesses” and “infirmities” of human flesh.^k
- But he also showed that *God is all powerful and the source of healing, suffering and pain*.
- He demonstrated that *he, too, was subject to temptation* and

was “in all points tempted as we are”.^l

- In every part of his life he declared that *God is supreme and, as a Father, deserving of all honour and glory.*
- He exhibited *God’s righteous character, His mercy and His compassion* through his teachings and in his way of life.
- He declared *God’s plan and purpose* with Mankind and with the world and *gave people hope.*
- He showed that *God was right as the Creator to demand obedience from His creation and that obedience is only possible through God’s help and strength.*
- By submitting to the death of the cross, even though he did no sin, Christ demonstrated that *all men are rightly related to death* as members of Adam’s race.
- In his death he demonstrated that *God was just to condemn Adam and Eve to death* for their disobedience.
- He demonstrated that “*flesh profits nothing*”^m because he did not sin, but he was still subject to death.
- He showed that *man needs redeeming from death* and that *there is nothing that man can do to save himself.*
- By faith in his resurrection from the dead he demonstrated his *complete and utter reliance upon God*, and proved that *God is a faithful God and will not leave a righteous man in the grave.*
- He demonstrated that *it was the work of God that brings reconciliation and redemption.*
- He showed that it was *only through a process of divine help and education* that Christ was “delivered... out of temptations” and “overcame the world”.ⁿ
- Ultimately he demonstrated that *God was right and the serpent was wrong* for the serpent had said, “thou shalt not die!”

There are many more facts and truths that Christ demonstrated through his life, death and resurrection, all of which were designed to help us understand more about God's character in contrast to human weakness. They also help us understand God's process of reconciliation and redemption, and our relationship to our Lord more clearly.



The Captain of our salvation

We have seen the great significance of Christ's life, how he honoured God and *demonstrated* certain important facts and truths about life for our understanding and benefit. Now we need to consider what was *accomplished* by his death and resurrection.

By way of review, we have seen that it was Adam and Eve's *sin* or disobedience that brought *suffering and death* into the world. Christ came to deal with the *root* of the problem to suffering and death, which was *sin*. He dealt with sin in his own life by leading a sin-less life, demonstrating for all to see that God is supreme and must be honoured, and that the flesh cannot be allowed to have free reign. God was, therefore, right to condemn Man to death, and Christ openly declared this fact by willingly sacrificing himself on a tree. Thus, it was "*through [his] death*"^o that we are reconciled to God and can receive access to the forgiveness of sins.

In Hebrews 2:10, the Apostle calls Christ “the captain of our salvation.” The Greek word for ‘captain’ is actually the word ‘leader’ (cp. Darby/Wey.) So what we are being told is that Christ is the “*leader* of our salvation”. The Apostle’s analogy is that of a leader or captain of an army going in front to lead us into battle.

Christ came in our likeness: subject to all of the weaknesses of human nature, and subject to temptation and sin. He was also subject to death just like us. But he was our ‘leader’. *His job was to lead us out of the death-state into the life-state.* This meant that not only would he need to lead a life of perfect obedience, but he would need to go “through death” and experience the resurrection. But why?



“Christ was our leader out of the death-state into the life-state”

We have to remember that when Adam sinned, men and women became *inevitable sinners*. The simple formula that God had put in place is that if you sin, you die! “For the wages of sin is death...”^p says the Apostle. The only way that this formula could be overcome is if a member of Adam’s race could beat sin and death, and represent the whole of Mankind in doing so. In other words, he did not go over it, or around it — he went “*through it*” and experienced death “for all men” as one of Adam’s race.

In the Garden of Eden, the serpent lied to the woman. God had said that if Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, then they would die: “In the day thou eatest thereof *thou shalt surely die.*” But the serpent said that if they ate of the tree, then they would “*not surely die*”! Christ’s death was a demonstration for all to see that God was absolutely right; that the serpent was wrong; and that the consequences of disobedience is death.

Christ himself did not sin. He never surrendered to his impulses in order to enjoy the “pleasures of sin”.^q But as one of Adam’s race, and our representative, he “tasted death for every man”.^r He was “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”^s

Christ, therefore, “condemned sin” in his own life, first, by leading a sin-less life and, secondly, by voluntary submission to the death of the cross when those impulses that lead to sin, died. It

was his perfect life of obedience and voluntary submission to death on the cross that becomes the basis for our reconciliation to God.

Scripture expresses what was accomplished in Christ's death this way: "God sending his own son in *the likeness of sinful flesh*, and by a sacrifice for sin, *condemned sin...*" (Romans 8:3—RV). "God hath set forth Jesus to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, *to declare His righteousness*" (Romans 3:24). "*He destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil...*" (Hebrews 2:14). "We are *reconciled to God by the death of His son...*" (Romans 5:10; cp. John 3:14) "that he might *bring us to God*" (1 Peter 3:18).



**"Christ's death
condemned sin
and reconciled
us to God."**

One of the fundamental principles that we saw early on is that our *sins* separate us from God.^h Christ's death opened up the way so that our sins could be forgiven and we can be reconciled to God. Christ "condemned sin" in his own life, which, "*declared God's righteousness*". He, thereby, "destroyed the devil" or "sin", which "reconciled us to God" and "brought us to God".

As a consequence of Adam's sin we receive certain *disabilities*. Christ also received those same disabilities. But because he led a perfect life of obedience, he has also now received certain *benefits*. Christ honoured God and upheld His supremacy. God, therefore, allows Christ to share those same benefits with the rest of Mankind. But *upon certain conditions*.

The Apostle put it this way: "By fall of the one, death reigned by the one; much more those having received the abundance of the favour and the righteousness reign in life through the one— the anointed Jesus. Therefore, indeed, as through one offence sentence came on all men to condemnation; so also through one righteous act, sentence came on all men to justification of life" (Romans 5:17-19—Diaglott).

The significance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ

So we have seen that it is our sins that 'separate' us from God. But Christ's death has 'reconciled' us to God. If we have been reconciled to God by the death of Christ, then what was the significance of his resurrection?

God's Law had said that "the wages of sin is death." But what if a *righteous man* were to die? What if a man were to die who had led a sin-less life in complete obedience to his Heavenly Father? Could the grave still have power over him? Would God leave him in the ground to "perish"?

The short answer to this question is clearly, 'No!' By God's own law, it was impossible for the grave to hold him, and so Christ was raised to life "by the glory of the Father" and changed from "corruptible to incorruptible; from mortal to immortality". Notice that Paul does not say that Christ was raised by the 'power of God'. The resurrection was indeed a most awesome act of power (cp. 2 Corinthians 13:4). But Paul emphasises in Romans 6:4, in discussing the significance of baptism, that he was raised by the "*glory of the Father*". But why? The point that Paul is making was that he was his Father's son, not merely by birth, but in *character*. He was the perfect reflection of his Father's glory. Christ's resurrection was not, therefore, just an awesome act of power. It was a *moral* issue. The grave could not hold him and he was raised to eternal life. As Peter says in Acts 2:24: "God hath raised [him] up, having loosed the pains of death: **because** it was not possible that he should be holden of it." Again Paul says: "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, *even the death of the cross... wherefore* God also hath *highly exalted him*, and given him a name which is above every name..." (Philippians. 2:9)

While Christ was subject to the consequences of sin like us, sharing our dying sin-prone nature, he was sin-less with regards to transgression. The grave had no hold over him and, therefore, God, who "judgeth righteously" raised him from the dead.

God's righteousness was declared in Jesus' life in that he overcame the impulses that lead to sin. *God's righteousness* was declared by the mode of his death as he submitted to a sacrificial death upon the cross, in a ceremonial condemnation of sin. *God's righteousness* was declared in his resurrection from the dead for an innocent man was not left in the grave.

The great significance of the work of God in raising Christ from the dead, and the reason for the scriptures emphasis upon it, becomes evident when considering the verses below:

- (1) It was a demonstration of the *power of God*:
He liveth by the **power of God** (2 Corinthians 13:4)
- (2) It declared the *righteousness of God*:
To declare, I say, at this time **his righteousness**: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. (Romans 3:26)
- (3) It displayed the *glory of God*:
God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name...that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, **to the glory of God the Father**. (Philippians 2:9,11)
- (4) It confirmed that Christ was truly the *Son of God*:
Declared the Son of God with power... according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead... (Romans 1:4)
Thou art **my Son**, this day have I begotten thee. (Hebrews 1:5)
- (5) It confirmed him as *King*:
Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, **crowned with glory and honour**. (Hebrews 2:9)
- (6) It opened up the way for *salvation*:
Being made perfect, he became the **author of eternal salvation** unto all them that obey him. (Hebrews 5:9)
- (7) It gives us the *assurance* of our salvation:
Being **now** justified by his blood, we shall be **saved from wrath through him**... If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, **much more**, being reconciled, we shall be **saved by his life**. (Romans 5:9-10)
- (8) It makes us put our *hope* in God and gives our *faith* substance:
God... raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; **that your faith and hope might be in God**. (1 Peter 1:21)
- (9) It declared us *guiltless* and free from condemnation:

Who was delivered for our offences, and was **raised again for our justification** (*Gk: 'the act of God declaring men free from guilt; acceptable to him'*) (Romans 4:25)

- (10) It demands a *response* from us in bringing us to God:

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, **that he might bring us to God**, being put to death in the flesh, **but quickened by the Spirit**. (1 Peter 3:18)

- (11) It justified the faithful lives of saints of old and established Christ as **Lord of all**:

I am the God of Abraham...God is not the God of the dead, **but of the living**. (Mark 12:26-27)

For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, **that he might be Lord both of the dead and living**. (Romans 14:9)

- (12) It makes our **preaching** powerful and **releases us** from the bonds of Sin:

But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is **our preaching vain**, and **your faith is also vain...ye are yet in your sins**. (1 Cor. 15:13-14, 17)

- (13) It was a **foreshadowing** of the resurrection to come:

Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the **firstfruits of them that slept... Christ the firstfruits**; afterward **they that are Christ's at his coming**. (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23)

- (14) It is our **example** by way of our baptism and personal walks making our baptisms relevant:

We are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, **even so we also should walk in newness of life**. (Romans 6:4)

- (15) It enabled Christ to enter God's presence as our **High Priest**:

The **hope we have** as an anchor of the soul, **both sure and steadfast**, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, **made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec**. (Hebrews 6:19-20)

Everything that Jesus had ever said and done would be tested by this one act of power. It was also the divine seal of approval upon his teachings, works and his sacrifice. It declared God's victory over sin and death. It was the outpouring of God's Love, evidence of His care and an extension of His Grace in that he made provision to save sinners from death... And it made our baptisms relevant!

Notes:

- a* Hebrews 4:15
- b* 1 Peter 3:18
- c* John 1:14
- d* 1 Timothy 1:15 — In the Christadelphian 1958, Bro. John Carter wrote the following: "Jesus was saved out of death. He needed redemption; he needed salvation from death... He was there to be our Saviour, and but for our needs we may reverently say he would not have been there."
- e* Romans 8:29
- f* 2 Corinthian 5:19
- g* Genesis 1:26
- h* Isaiah 59:2
- i* 2 Corinthian 5:19
- j* Romans 2:4; 1 Peter 3:18
- k* Matthew 8:17
- l* Hebrews 4:15; cp. Matthew 4, Luke 4
- m* John 6:63
- n* John 16:33
- o* Colossians 1:22; Hebrews 2:14
- p* Romans 6:23
- q* Hebrews 11:25
- r* Hebrews 2:9
- s* Philippians 2:8; cp. Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:22



5

Our Hope In Christ

We have seen how Christ's life, death and resurrection was a demonstration of certain facts and truths which declared the righteousness of God and forms *the basis* for our reconciliation to God.

We have also seen that there was another very important reason why Christ had to die. Christ was the "captain (or 'leader') of our salvation." Not only was he our leader through the maze of temptation and sin, being the first of the human race to lead a perfect life of obedience, but *he was our leader out of the death-state into the life-state. He was the first to benefit from his death.* He was the first to pass "from death unto life" ^a opening up the gates of iron and brass ^b that had kept so many in the graves for so long. It was because of Christ's *resurrection from the dead* that men and women have the hope and assurance of life everlasting. This principle is demonstrated in a dramatic way in scripture, for Matthew records that after the resurrection, "the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves... and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many" (Matthew 27:52-53).

Christ died as a sacrifice for the "purging" or "cleansing" of *our sins* (CP. Hebrews. 1:3, 2 Peter 1:9), thereby, "purging our



"Christ's was the first to benefit from his death."

conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (Hebrews 9:14). But it was only by being resurrected from the dead that he could be saved out of death and “changed”^c from corruption and mortality to incorruption and immortality, and, thus, lead others of Adam’s race to victory in doing so. Christ was “the firstfruits of them that slept”.^d *He was the first member of Adam’s race to benefit from his sacrificial death*, inheriting “eternal life” and the redemption of his body.

Clause 8 of the Statement of Faith says that:

Jesus Christ... was to obtain a title to resurrection **by perfect obedience**, and, **by dying**, abrogate [or abolish] the law of condemnation **for himself and all who should believe and obey him**.

God had determined to redeem Mankind. But it was only “through death” that Christ could be saved and represent the whole of Mankind in the process. Without Christ’s resurrection, God’s purpose could not have been fulfilled. The gates of the grave would have remained closed and the “bringing of many sons unto glory” would not have been achieved. We can, therefore, see how *the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ are inseparable elements of the redemptive work of God*. Again, this is another fundamental principle of the Atonement.



“Christ’s death and resurrection are inseparable elements of the Atonement”

Consider how this balanced principle of the sacrificial work of Christ is expressed in the following New Testament passages:

If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; **ye are yet in your sins**. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

(1 Corinthians 15:17-19; Cp. Proverbs 13:12)

Jesus... **delivered for our offences, and was raised again** for our justification.

(Romans 4:25)

We were **reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more**, being reconciled, we shall be **saved by his life**

(Romans 5:10)

Since by man came **death**, by man came **also** the **resurrection of the dead**. For as in Adam all **die**, **even so** in Christ shall all be **made alive**.
(1 Corinthians 15:21-22)

For though he was **crucified** through weakness, **yet** he **liveth** by the power of God.

(2 Corinthians 13:4)

He humbled himself, and became obedient unto **death, even the death of the cross**. **wherefore** God also hath **highly exalted him**, and given him a name which is above every name..."

(Philippians 2:8-9)

Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have **crucified and slain**: Whom God hath **raised up**, having loosed the pains of death: because **it was not possible that he should be holden of it**.

(Acts 2:22-24)

Baptized into Christ

So far, we have seen that the ‘Atonement’ is about God’s method of reconciliation and the steps that lead to divine acceptance. The central figure in God’s redemptive process is the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ’s life, death *and* resurrection was *Step One* in God’s process of reconciliation and redemption. *Step Two* was to extend salvation to other members of Adam’s race as well. However, Step Two would have not been possible had it not been for Step One, because it was “through Christ” as our mediator that Step Two could be accomplished.

A mediator is one who represents two or more parties (1 Timothy 2:5). As we have seen, Christ represented both God and Man. Christ is, therefore, the instrument, channel or medium through whom God has agreed to extend salvation to us as well. As Jesus said “I am the *way*, the truth and the life” (John 14:6).

Step Two, therefore, is about *our identification* with the Lord Jesus Christ — his life, death and resurrection — and the

benefits that we receive from that identification. The way that we identify ourselves with the work that he came to do is through *baptism*.

In the last chapter we looked at Romans 3:25 where Paul says that God sent Christ to “declare His righteousness *for* (or, *as a basis for*) **the remission of sins**.” In Mark’s gospel we learn that “John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for **the remission of sins**” (Mark 1:4). In the Acts of the Apostles we are told that believers of the First Century were: “baptized... in the name of Jesus Christ for **the remission of sins**” (Acts 2:38). It is evident, therefore, that *Christ’s death and resurrection* and *our baptisms* are intricately linked together.

But how? In Romans 6, Paul explains the great significance of baptism when he says:

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into ***his death***? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: **that like as** Christ was ***raised up*** from the dead by the glory of the Father, **even so we also** should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together ***in the likeness of his death***, we shall be **also in the likeness of his resurrection**.

(Romans 6:3-5)

Baptism is about our participation in Christ’s death. It is also about our participation in Christ’s resurrection from the dead. Just as the death and resurrection of Christ are inseparable elements of the redemptive work of Christ, so, too, are *there two inseparable elements of baptism*. There is our ‘burial’ *into the water* and our ‘resurrection’ *out of the water*. Baptism is about the *death* of the old man of the flesh with his sins of the past. It is also about the *birth* of a new man of the spirit who “walks in newness of life.” When we are baptised and go under the water, our “old man” with his sins of the past are washed away in a symbollic act of death. As Peter says, he is “purged (or cleansed) from his old sins” (2 Peter 1:9). When we rise out of the water, a new spiritual man rises out of the water in a symbollic act of resurrection, “born again” unto a “newness of life.”

Baptism, therefore, is not only about going down into the water. If it were, then baptism would only be about participating in the *death* of Christ. But baptism is about our identification with both the death *and* resurrection of Christ. It is only by our participation in both the death *and* resurrection of Christ that we “put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27). If we have “put on” the name of Jesus Christ then we have identified ourselves with him, and God, “for Christ’s sake”,^e is willing to extend those same benefits to us, as members of the divine family — but upon certain terms and conditions. “So we, being many, are one body *in Christ*, and every one members one of another” (Romans 12:5). In other words, if we have been baptised we are one with Christ. The one God really sees, therefore, when he looks at us, is Christ! We can now understand why the Apostle says that “if Christ be not risen *ye are yet in your sins*” and that “he was raised *for our justification*.” If Christ had only died and not been raised from the dead, our baptisms would be meaningless. We would “be dead in our sins”. We would be without justification and without hope because we would not be “in Christ”. Christ would be dead and buried. And so would we! God is not interested in dead bodies. But He *is* interested in righteous lives!

Baptism is, therefore, not merely about identification with Christ’s death, but about identification with his life *out of death*. Our baptisms were not just about the death and burial of the old man with his sins of the past, they are about “walking in *newness of life*... in the likeness of his *resurrection*.” As Paul goes on to explain in Romans 6:

Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, **but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord**. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: **but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead**, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

(Romans 6:11-13)



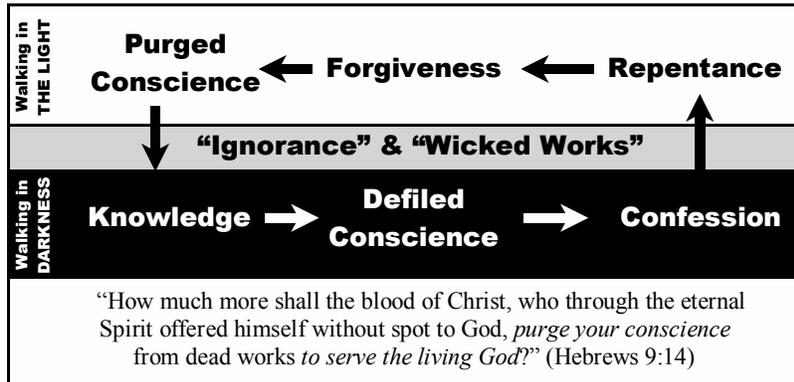
“Baptism is about our participation in the death and resurrection of Christ.”

So being baptised is not simply about going down into the water and getting wet, just as sacrifice is not merely about killing an animal. It is designed to teach lessons to the one who is being baptised. It is about the death of the natural man (or old man) with his impulses that lead to sin, and the birth of a spiritual man (or new man) who is led “by the spirit”^f or “word of God.”^g Peter describes the birth of this new man as being similar to the birth of a new born child. It is not fully developed when it is born. It needs nurturing, caring for and educating. In a literal sense, as long as we are “flesh and blood” creatures, we are still “in Adam”^h until after Judgment when, by God’s grace, we will be *changed* from being mortal and corruptible creatures into immortal and incorruptible creatures. But baptism is the beginning of a new spiritually-infused life. The old man is dead in the water and along with him the sins of the past. A new man who is now “in Christ” rises to life as “living sacrifices” to the glory of the Father, and remains “in Christ” while he is “walking in the light”ⁱ

The conditions of forgiveness

The forgiveness of sins has been extended to us by God upon certain terms and conditions. One of those terms and conditions was the “declaration” or ‘demonstration’ of certain facts and truths which brought glory and honour to the Father. These facts and truths were demonstrated through the faithful life and sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ which *forms the “basis” of our reconciliation to the Father.*

Two other conditions of our reconciliation to the Father, are *confession* and *repentance*. It is our “sins” that separate us from God. We desire forgiveness. Sacrifice does not forgive sins. But it is upon the basis of Christ’s sacrifice that we can receive forgiveness of sins. “If we *confess* our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). “Whoso *confesseth* and *forsaketh* them shall have mercy” (Proverbs 28:13). So it was that Mark records that the people came to John who “preached the baptism of *repentance* for the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4) and that they were “baptized of him in Jordan, *confessing* their sins” (Mark 1:5).



When we are baptised it is a *confession* or ‘*declaration*’ to God that we are sinners; that we are in need of forgiveness; that we have a dying nature with impulses that cause us to sin; that our natures are not fit to live forever and must be mortified and put to death; that God was right and the serpent was wrong; that God was right and just to condemn Man to the grave; that He is supreme and deserving of our loyalty and obedience. It is also a *confession* that God is “a just God and a saviour” because He did not leave a righteous man in the grave to see corruption and that He is willing to save those who wish to be saved.

Baptism is also about *repentance*. It is about turning one’s life around. The word means ‘to change a course in completely the opposite direction.’ It is about reflecting the “glory of the Father” in our lives as the Lord Jesus Christ did in his. This principle goes right to the very heart of God’s purpose with the Earth, which is to develop men and women who reflect in themselves His character.

So baptism has great significance for a number of reasons. It is a *confession* and *demonstration* of certain facts and truths:

- (1) It is a “confession” that we are deserving of death, and a voluntary act of submission to the will of God that identifies us with the death of Christ.
- (2) It is a declaration that God was right and the serpent was wrong!
- (3) It represents the death and burial of the “old man” of the

flesh with his sins of the past.

- (4) It represents the birth of a “new man” dedicated in service to God, and thereby, identifies us with Christ’s resurrection to a “newness of life”.
- (5) It is an act of faith whereby we demonstrate our belief in God, His plan and purpose with the Earth, our acknowledgement of His plan of redemption through Christ, and our acceptance of the terms and conditions that form the basis of our reconciliation to Him.
- (6) It is a demonstration of our Faith in Him since only He has the power to save.
- (7) It places us “in Christ” in a figurative sense. We remain “in Christ” as long as we are “walking in the light”.ⁱ
- (8) It gives us access to forgiveness of sins by means of petition to the Father through prayer.
- (9) It gives us the status of becoming “children of God... heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:14-17) “according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29).

The significance of the bread and wine

This now brings us to the significance of the bread and wine that we share in ‘common-union’ or ‘fellowship’ with each other. When the Lord instituted the feast of remembrance for the first time, he introduced *two* memorials, the first being the *bread* and the second being the *wine*:

The Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do ***in remembrance of me***.

(1 Corinthians 11:23-24)

After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, ***in remembrance of me***.

(1 Corinthians 11:25)

Both the bread and wine were memorials to be consumed “in remembrance” of him, but each had its own significance.

The first represented “his body... broken”. It was a memorial or reminder of Christ’s *perfect life of obedience which culminated in his sacrificial death laid down in submission to the will of His Heavenly Father* .

The second represented “the *new testament*” or ‘covenant’ in his blood. Clearly, the wine is a memorial of Christ’s ‘shed blood’ (or death). But what is this *new testament* or covenant that Christ was speaking of?

It is evident that the Lord was using language designed to take the disciples back in their minds to Jeremiah 31: “This is the *covenant* that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws *into their hearts*, and *in their minds* will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Hebrews 10:16-17). Under the ‘first covenant’ or ‘Old Testament’ Law, animals were sacrificed routinely. But it was “not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (Hebrews 10:4). Animals are amoral creatures. A man could not, therefore, completely identify himself with that animal being offered. But under the ‘new covenant’ or ‘new testament’ a man *could* identify himself with the one being offered, and through his personal identification with that perfect sacrifice, the Lord Jesus Christ, he could receive forgiveness of sins.

The significance of the ‘new testament’ or ‘covenant’ now becomes evident. Under the ‘old covenant’, many offerings were made. Under the ‘new covenant’ Christ was THE perfect sacrifice offered ‘ONCE’. Under the ‘old covenant’ animals died never to live again. By contrast, the Lord Jesus Christ died and was raised again from the dead and lives *for ever* becoming the “author of eternal salvation.”^j The ‘first covenant’ (Mosaic) came to an end; but the ‘new covenant’ (Abrahamic) is an ‘*everlasting covenant*’ efficacious for all. No other covenant is required. Christ “died unto sin once.”^k He is everlasting. It is everlasting!

The wine is, therefore, not only a symbol of Christ’s death, but it is a symbol of his life ‘out of death’. It is a symbol of the ‘*everlasting covenant*’ in the hearts and in the minds of those who choose to believe and identify themselves with him as our ‘*new and living way*.’

This is picked up in the somewhat curious comment that the Lord makes when he says: “But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it **new** with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Matthew 26:29). The word “new” means ‘fresh’ or ‘of a new constitution’. It is the same Greek word used where we read about the “**new** testament”. It is the same word used by Paul in Ephesians 4:22-24 where he says that we should “put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the **new** man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

We have seen that Christ died ‘as a basis’ *for the remission of sins*. We have also seen that we are baptised *for the remission of sins*. The bread and the wine are also symbols instituted by our Lord designed to serve as reminders of the life that we now have in him, and the fact that we have that life in him because of his sacrificial offering *for the remission of sins*, “For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for **the remission of sins**” (Matthew 26:28). Bro. H.P. Mansfield writes:

In the ordinance of the Last Supper, Christ set forth the significance of his sacrifice (Luke 22:19–20). ***The unleavened bread represented his body that had never sinned; the wine represented his blood (or life) that had been given in complete dedication to God.*** Now both were to be offered in sacrifice for the redemption of the family of God. The one (***the bread***) ***was the token of a negative offering, the denial of flesh***; the other (***the wine***) ***was the token of a positive offering, the manifestation in life of the principles of God.***

The memorials are, therefore, not only reminders of the sufferings of our Lord and his submission to the death on the cross for “the remission of our sins”, but they are also reminders of his resurrected life from the dead. They are reminders of our new life “in him” and our dedication to walk after the example of our resurrected Lord, mortifying the old man of the flesh and living a new life to the glory of our Heavenly Father.

The price of redemption

The principles of *redemption* are closely related to the principles of *reconciliation* that we have been looking at. We need *reconciliation* with the Father because of our sins. But we also need *redemption* from our death-stricken, sin-prone nature. But why? Because “flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God.”

The basic meanings of the Greek and Hebrew words used in scripture for ‘redemption’, have the idea of rescuing or delivering someone from harm or the paying of a price for a ransom. For example, sometimes we may hear on the news that an individual has been kidnapped and the captors are demanding a ‘ransom’ in order to ‘redeem’ or ‘deliver’ the individual unharmed. The Bible uses this word in a similar way. It is often used to describe those who have been ‘redeemed’ or ‘ransomed’ from slavery and given their freedom. The Lord uses the same word when he said that “the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a *ransom* for many” (Matthew 20:28). Paul uses the same word in 1 Timothy 2:5-6 when he said that “there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a *ransom* for all.” And the Apostle Peter also picks up this theme in 1 Peter 1:18-19 where he says that we “were not *redeemed* with corruptible things, as silver and gold... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

The point is, of course, that our reconciliation to the Father and our redemption comes at a great price. That price was the death of a righteous man — the Lord Jesus Christ. It was a price that we cannot pay ourselves. But it was a price that was paid by God in giving His only begotten son. “For *God so loved the world*, that he gave *his only begotten Son*, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Does that mean that Christ died as the penalty or a ransom *instead of us*, or to appease the insatiable appetite of the Devil? **Absolutely not!** But in the truest sense, God paid a great price in allowing Christ to be sacrificed, as was so dramatically demonstrated in type two thousand years earlier when Abraham took his ‘*only son*’ Isaac to be sacrificed on Mount Moriah (CP. Genesis 22). In avoiding the false doctrine of *Substitution* taught by the

Churches around us, we must not become blinded to the fact that the great work of deliverance accomplished by God, was an incredible act of love towards Mankind so that we could be delivered from sin and death. (A lesson that becomes even more graphic for those of us who have children of our own). But Christ was “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29) and was, therefore, a willing participant in God’s method of reconciliation and redemption and has given us the hope of redemption from sin and death.

The first occurrence of the word ‘redeemed’ in scripture is found in Genesis 48 when Jacob blessed Joseph’s sons and describes how God sent His angel to *redeem* him from ‘all evil’. The next two occurrences found in the book of Exodus are not without significance as it relates to the work of God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

In Exodus 6 we read how God *redeemed* all *Israel* from bondage and certain death in Egypt with “stretched out arm, and with great judgments.”^l But in Exodus 13 it was only after the first born was “redeemed” by the death of a lamb that Israel were led to salvation.^m The parallel is most significant.

Israel was redeemed from the bondage of slavery and death, but *not before* the first born in Israel were redeemed by a lamb.

So, too, will we be redeemed from the bondage of sin and death and led to salvation, *but not* before Christ, “the lamb of God” and “the firstborn of every creature”,ⁿ was redeemed through “his own blood [or death]”^o to receive eternal life.

It is because of the work of “the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ”^p that we are *redeemed* from “transgressions”,^q *redeemed* “from the power of the grave”,^r *redeemed* “from all iniquity”^s and will receive “the *redemption* of our bodies”^t in the Age to come.

So it is that we receive *reconciliation* for our *sins* through the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. But when Christ returns, we will receive *redemption* from our death-stricken, sin-prone nature when our bodies will be “fashioned like unto his glorious body”^u and we, too, by God’s grace, will inherit eternal life and reign with him for ever.

A Brief Review

By way of review then, what have we understood so far?

- (1) God's purpose was to create a world which would one day be inhabited by men and women *who reflect in themselves His heart, will and mind.*
- (2) His purpose is eternal and His kingdom will last '*for ever*'.
- (3) To achieve His purpose, God created Adam and Eve who were of the same substance as the animals, but made with the same *bodily shape* and *mental capacity* as the angels.
- (3) They were created as *fully formed human beings but without a character* which had to be developed through a process of *divine education.*
- (4) To help man develop his character, God placed man into a *purpose built garden* or park which contained all kinds of trees that were both useful and beautiful.
- (5) He also placed *two trees* in the garden that represented to Adam and Eve what they were being offered – one tree able to lengthen life indefinitely; the other able to shorten life very quickly.
- (6) He gave them a commandment not to eat from the *tree of knowledge of good and evil.* If they did, then the punishment was that *they would "surely die"*.
- (7) Man did disobey God's commandment and he and his wife were *condemned to die.*
- (8) We are told that *their eyes were 'opened' and able to discern between 'good and evil'.*
- (9) As a consequence of their disobedience or sin, there were physiological, emotional and mental changes that took place. Not only did they become dying creatures, subject to death. They also had an inherent tendency towards sinning.
- (10) The 'Atonement' is not about an event — it is about God's process of reconciliation which contains certain terms and conditions that lead men to divine acceptance.

- (11) God intervened to redeem Mankind. He provided Adam and Eve clothing made from animal skins. The killing of this animal of itself could not take away their sins or give them life. Rather it was an act that taught them a series of lessons: (i) that there was nothing that they could do of themselves to save themselves (ii) that flesh and blood is rightly subject to death, and (iii) without the shedding of blood there could be no forgiveness of sins.
- (12) The lesson of the slain animal was that one day God would provide an offering to take away the 'Sin of the world' by the sacrifice of His only begotten Son.
- (13) As a consequence of Adam's disobedience, they were banished from the Garden with a new vocabulary – fear, pain, suffering, hostility and death.
- (14) It was Adam's sin, or disobedience which brought suffering and death into the world. Consequently, all Mankind have inherited Adam's dying nature and inherent tendency to sin.
- (15) Christ was sent to deal with the root of the problem which was sin. He was "made of a woman" but "the son of the highest". While he was His Father's son by way of His character, he inherited the same condemned nature as Adam and Eve, with its inherent tendency towards sinning. He, too, was "tempted in all points as we" and was also subject to death.
- (16) Christ never sinned. He never disobeyed his Father and was obedient "even unto the death of the cross", such death being a ceremonial, but very necessary, condemnation of sin.
- (17) Because he shared our same dying sin-prone nature with its inherent tendencies towards sinning, but never sinned, he was able to die a sacrificial death as the perfect offering 'as a basis' for "the remission of our sins".
- (18) As one of Adam's race, Christ came to save sinners. It was for this purpose he came into the world. He acted as a representative man — He represented us to God and God to Man

- (19) Christ's life, death and resurrection was a declaration of certain facts and truths about God and Man which formed the basis of our reconciliation to God. When he died, he openly declared the righteousness of God and that God was right in condemning flesh and blood to death, and represented the whole of Mankind in doing so.
- (20) Because he was a condemned member of Adam's race and subject to corruption and death, he, too, needed saving out of corruption and death. Thus, it was "through death" that he obtained redemption. He led a perfect life and had committed no sin. He declared God's righteousness, and ceremonially condemned sin by the mode of his death. God, therefore, raised him from the dead, and gave him eternal life free from the corruption of human nature and death.
- (21) The death and resurrection of Christ are inseparable elements of the Atonement.
- (22) Those who believe the Gospel of the One Faith identify themselves with the Lord Jesus Christ's faithful life, sacrificial death and resurrection. They do this by submitting to baptism into Jesus Christ "for the remission of sins." When a believer is baptized, symbolically their "old man" dies and with him the sins of the past. A "new man" rises out of the waters to a "newness of life." They become "heirs of the kingdom" (James 2:5) "according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29).
- (23) They strive to follow the example of Jesus, by submitting to the will of God and trying to overcome the fleshly impulses that lead to sin in their own lives, just as Jesus did in his. As believers, they have access to forgiveness of sins through prayer to the Father. Forgiveness is conditional upon *confession* and *repentance*.
- (24) One day the Lord Jesus Christ will return to the Earth. Those who come to a *knowledge* of the Gospel of the One Faith, whether baptized or unbaptized, God *will* raise to judgment. Those who have been baptized and judged faithful, God will

reward with eternal life. Those who have rejected the call to the knowledge of the Gospel of the One Faith, or have been baptized and judged unfaithful, God will condemn to everlasting death.

Notes:

- a* John 5:24; 1 John 3:14; cp. 2 Timothy 1:10
- b* Psalm 107:16
- c* 1 Corinthians 15:51-52
- d* 1 Corinthians 15:20
- e* Ephesians 4:32
- f* Romans 8:14
- g* Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12
- h* 1 Corinthians 15:22
- i* 1 John 1:7; Romans 12:1 — Having been baptised, we cannot become ‘unbaptised’ if we have submitted to the gospel in truth. We cannot, therefore, move in and out of Christ in that sense. However, morally, if we are not “walking in the light” we are no longer walking “in Christ” (cp. 2 Thessalonians 3:6; Colossians 2:6).
- j* Hebrews 5:9; According to Vines, righteousness is defined as (i) that which is right or just conforming to the revealed will of God; (ii) that which is appointed by God to be obeyed by Man
- k* Romans 6:10
- l* Exodus 6:6; Deuteronomy 26:8
- m* Exodus 15:13
- n* Colossians 1:15
- o* Hebrews 9:12
- p* Titus 2:13
- q* Hebrews 9:15; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14
- r* Psalm 49:15
- s* Titus 2:14
- t* Romans 8:23
- u* Philippians 3:21



Part Two:
**Understanding
The Extremes**



1

The First Extreme: “Clean-Flesh”

In Part One we looked at how man was created, why he was created, how sin came into the world, the consequences of sin, and God’s plan of reconciliation and redemption through the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Through the centuries, the Truth, as it was once understood and taught by the early Apostles, has become corrupted by Man’s fallible way of thinking. No subject has been more misunderstood than the nature and sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is because of misunderstandings on this very subject, that many of the apostate doctrines that the Churches believe today came to exist. It is also one of the reasons why so many brethren and sisters left the apostasy of the churches around them, as their eyes were opened to the simplicity of the Truth.

Central or ‘Amended’ Christadelphian teaching on the subject of the nature and sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ is distinct compared with the teachings of the Churches, and has remained consistent throughout the history of the brotherhood. Yet over the years this subject has been the cause of more contention within our

community than any other. This in itself is quite ironic since the very purpose of the work of God through the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ was to bring about *unity*, not to create *division*. The Truth of the gospel concerning the things of the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ is simple to understand. Rather, it is when Man's ideas come into conflict with the with the mind of God, that the simplicity of the Truth becomes complicated and difficult to understand. Inevitably, contention arises and confusion ensues.

Early Challenges

The growth of the brotherhood in the early years was quite rapid as many brethren and sisters left the Churches around them to join the community. One of the most challenging issues that took hold of the brotherhood during these early years was the question of the nature and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

One such controversy came up in the late 19th Century and became known as the "Free-life" or "Renunciationist" theory. Evidently, the 'Renunciationist' teaching originated with Bro. David Handley from Maldon, a former elder of a Pentecostal sect, who held the belief that Jesus did not share the same condemned nature of Adam's descendants because God had given him life *directly* just as He had given life to Adam. In other words, he reasoned that Jesus had the same nature as Adam did *before* he sinned, and was, therefore, free from mortality and the consequences of Adam's sin. He was, therefore, Bro. Handley argued, *always entitled to life*, hence the term 'Free-life'.

Bro. Handley appears to have convinced Bro. Edward Turney of Nottingham of this "Free-Life" theory, who, subsequently, 'renounced' his previous beliefs on the nature and sacrifice of Christ. In 1873 Bro. Turney issued an eight-page pamphlet containing "Thirty-two Questions and Answers concerning Jesus Christ." He acknowledged his indebtedness for the ideas he was promoting to Bro. David Handley. The first lines of the concluding paragraph of this pamphlet read as follows: "Brethren and friends, Whatever I have taught by mouth or pen contrary to the views of Jesus Christ herein set forth, *I now renounce.*" Hence the terms

“Renunciationist” and “Renunciationism” were born (latterly becoming known in the 20th Century as the theory of ‘Clean Flesh’.) Unfortunately the things that he “renounced” were true, and the new things that he was now teaching were false, containing the hallmark of apostate Christianity which many brethren and sisters had left behind.

In Bro. Turney’s pamphlet of Questions and Answers, he reasoned that “Every human being has been born of *two human parents*” (Q&A.9) but Jesus was not. While Jesus had an Earthly mother, his Father was God. He said that this was an “essential difference” between “Jesus and the *posterity of Adam*” (Q&A.11) He said that being of “the posterity of Adam” required that both parents needed to be of Earthly origin and, therefore, concluded that “Jesus Christ was *not a son of Adam*” (Q&A.13). He reasoned that because “God gave life to Jesus directly from Himself, *as he did to Adam*” (Q&A.18), “the body of Christ was not under condemnation” (Q&A.19) but possessed a free, unforfeited life. Consequently, he concluded that Christ himself did not benefit from the sacrifice of himself (Q&A.24, 27 & 29) and “might himself alone have entered into possession of life eternal”! Many similar misstatements were also made.

On the evening of July 28th 1873 Bro. Turney gave a lecture at Temperance Hall in Birmingham to explain his new beliefs under the Title: “The Sacrifice of Christ”. He set out his beliefs as follows:

The last Adam... came into the world **as free as the first Adam, not under condemnation to death...** that (free) life was the price or ransom that had to be paid for those who had lost their’s by Adam’s transgression...

That **the body of Jesus did not inherit the curse of Adam**, though derived from him through Mary; and was therefore **not mortal**; that his natural life was ‘free’; that in this ‘free’ natural life, he ‘earned eternal life,’ and might, if he had so chosen, have avoided death, or even refused to die upon the cross, **and entered into eternal life alone**; his death being the act of his own free will, **and not in any sense necessary for his own salvation**; that **his sacrifice consisted in the offering up of an unforfeited life, in payment of the penalty incurred by**

Adam and his posterity, which was eternal death; **that his forfeited life was slain in the room and stead of the forfeited lives of all believers of the races of Adam.**

(The Sacrifice of Christ – Edward Turney, 1873 – p.9)

...(Another man has said) that for 15 years he has not been able to understand what Dr. Thomas meant by 'sin in the flesh.' That is the fixation of sin in the flesh which he speaks of in 'Elpis Israel' pg. 126, ...and I confess to you without reserve, neither have I been able to understand it. But still I have many a time taught it. I have taken the 15th article of the book of common prayer and pulled it to pieces, and said that Christ came in flesh full of sin; for, said I to the people, what can 'sinful flesh' mean, but flesh full of sin? Well now, since my mind has been more especially directed to the study of this subject, I have arrived at this conviction that **there is no such thing as flesh full of sin, and never was, nor can be.**"

("Sacrifice of Christ," – Edward Turney, 1873 – pg. 16.)

There was **no sin in the 'nature' after it had transgressed.** There was mortality. There was man destined to die; **but sin was not a fixed principle in man's flesh.**

(The Sacrifice of Christ – Edward Turney, 1873 – p.21)

In summary, Bro. Turney taught that Christ:

- (1) Did not inherit a nature like ours, but, rather, was like Adam before he transgressed...
- (2) Was not, therefore, under condemnation to death...
- (3) Did not have a nature with an inherent tendency that leads to sin...
- (3) Was always entitled to eternal life...
- (5) Did not, therefore, benefit from his own sacrifice...
- (6) But died as a substitute paying the penalty due to Adam and his descendants 'as a ransom' while forfeiting his free-life in a self-less act for others.

When Edward Turney renounced his previously held beliefs regarding the nature and sacrifice of Christ, he essentially renounced *Clause 5* of the *Birmingham Statement of Faith* which states:

That Adam broke this law, and was adjudged unworthy of immortality, and sentenced to return to the ground from whence he was taken — **a sentence which defiled** and became a physical law of his being, **and was transmitted to all his posterity.**

Where did Bro. Turney go wrong?

Unwittingly, Bro Handley had returned to the old heresies of the Apostasy which John had warned against in his First Letter. John said that such reasoning was “the spirit of antichrist” because those who teach such doctrines “confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh” (I John 4:3).

The reason why this false teaching was so wrong was because, as Brother Roberts pointed out, it called into question the *righteousness of God*. It presented God as being unjust. For if Christ did in fact have ‘free life’ and, therefore, did not share our nature as Bro. Turney was teaching, and was, of course, sinless with regards to personal transgression, then there was no reason for Christ to die. It was, therefore, an act of injustice for God to allow Christ to die and suffer on the cross.

The evening after Bro. Turney gave his lecture on “The Sacrifice of Christ”, Bro. Roberts gave a lecture in response, which was subsequently published under the title: *‘The Slain Lamb: An Exposition of the True Nature of the Sacrifice of Christ’*. In his lecture he laid out his arguments to withstand Bro. Turney’s false teachings.

- (1) The first point that Bro. Roberts made was that Adam was NOT the same as Christ. As we saw in Part One, Adam was created “very good” suffering no evil, no pain, no weakness or grief, was not subject to death and did not have an inherent tendency towards sinning. Christ, on the other hand, “took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses”^a was “in *all points* tempted as we are” and *was* subject to death.

- (2) Secondly, he showed that God's purpose was to manifest his name in Mankind. Adam had not manifested God's name in his life. On the other hand, God was manifest in the life of Christ.
- (3) Thirdly, it was not Christ's entitlement to 'free-life' that caused Christ to be raised from the dead, but his personal righteousness and obedience to his heavenly Father, and the righteousness of God in that His law demanded that a righteous man could not be left in the grave.
- (4) According to Bro. Turney, because Christ had a body which was not under the curse of Adam, free from the corruption of sin and not subject to death, he could have received eternal life without dying. But Bro. Roberts argued that Christ had been *commanded* to die the death of the cross and if he had not done so, he would have sinned.
- (5) Bro. Turney had also stated that "There is nothing evil in the flesh" and that "Sin is not in the flesh but in the character". But Bro. Roberts showed that the impulses that are native to the flesh are what causes us to disobey God and, therefore, reveals our dependence upon the mercy of God. Thus he showed that such a teaching is the same doctrine taught by the antichrist system "who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh" (2 John 7).
- (6) Finally, Bro. Roberts showed that Christ did not die "instead of us" as a substitute, but "for us" as our representative. Again, this idea of substitution came right from the very heart of the apostate system of the Church itself, which teaches that the penalty was paid by Christ, who died *instead* of us.

In conclusion, Bro. Roberts summarized his position in opposition to this false teaching by stating:

Begotten of God in the channel of Adamic and Mosaic condemnation, he [Christ] died on our account, that we might escape, but on his own account as the first-born of the family as well; for, ***in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren.***

Changes to the Statement of Faith

Our early brethren recognised the detrimental effect that these false teachings of Bro. Turney could have upon the brotherhood and consequently, made three changes to the *Birmingham Statement of Faith (BSF)*. All three changes were to the ‘Doctrines to be rejected’ (DTBR). The first is *Clause 4* which rejects the belief *That Christ was born with a “free life.”* The second is *Clause 5* which rejects the false doctrine that *Christ’s nature was immaculate*, and *Clause 27* which rejects the false teaching *That there is no sin in the flesh.*

While there were those who followed Bro. Turney’s teachings and, subsequently, separated themselves from the main body of Christadelphians, the controversy over this teaching soon faded away.^b That was until in the 1890’s when a new theory on the nature and sacrifice of Christ was promoted by Brother John Andrew from London, UK, who agitated for its wider acceptance. It was this particular controversy that led to the amendment of the BSF to form the BASF which is used widely within the Christadelphian community today.^c

Notes:

^a Matthew 8:17

^b Those who separated themselves from the main body of Christadelphians called themselves the ‘Nazarene’ Fellowship

^c In the early 20th Century a similar controversy sprang up bearing some of the hallmarks of the Renunciationist theories from the 1870’s. (For more details please see Appendix B).



2

The Second Extreme: “Andrewism”

The Renunciationist theory was one extreme regarding the nature of Christ’s sacrifice. At the other extreme, was another false teaching promoted by Bro. John Andrew from London, UK.

Historically Bro. Andrew had worked side by side with Bro. Roberts to oppose the false teachings of Bro. Turney, and had been a great asset to him in this regard. However, Bro. Roberts started noticing that Bro. Andrew had gone to the opposite extreme regarding the nature and sacrifice of Christ, and was using legalistic language to express his views which were quite contrary to the simplicity of the Truth.

Bro. Andrew’s rather complex theory was called ‘Adamic Condemnation’ sometimes referred to today as ‘The Violent Death Theory’ or ‘Inherited Legal Condemnation’. Bro. Turney had said that ‘sin’ was *only moral* and as a result of Adam’s transgression, there was no change that took place in Man and that there was no inherent tendency within Man towards sinning. Bro. Andrew argued from the other extreme saying that there were two ‘*forms*’ or ‘*categories*’ of ‘sin’: (1) sin which is *moral* – ie. disobedience or transgression, and (2) sin which is *physical* – ie. our physical flesh

and blood natures. He reasoned that Mankind has inherited Adam's sin in a physical 'form' (our flesh and blood natures) which he called 'Adamic Sin', 'the offense of Adam', 'inherited sin' or 'sin-in-the-flesh'. He went on to reason, that while a man is not *personally* responsible or guilty for this 'form' of sin inherited from Adam, *federally* or *racially* Man is guilty on account of the nature that he bears, since Adam was the 'federal head' of our race and all men were in Adam's loins when he sinned. Consequently, he reasoned, we are 'alienated' from God and "sinners", not just by our actions, *but by the mere fact that we are born.*^a In other words, Bro. Andrew taught that it is as much of a sin for us to have been born as it is to transgress God's law!

He also saw the 'law of sin and death' spoken of by Paul as being the *pronouncement* or "Divine decree" of God's Law of Condemnation in the Garden of Eden, ie. "Thou shalt not eat", rather than the language of Scripture used to describe the "law within our members" which came as a result of Adam and Eve sinning.^b In order to be released from this Law of Condemnation, he reasoned that a man requires 'justification' from *both forms* of sin — 'moral' *and* 'physical'. This, he argued, was accomplished as a result of "*reconciliation, atonement, purging, cleansing, remission, redemption, purification, and forgiveness*" *by Christ's blood*. Consequently, because our moral *and* physical sin had been atoned for, covered, reconciled by the blood of Christ, baptism brought about a change in our *legal status* before God. No longer are we under the (legal) condemnation of the Law in the Garden of Eden (ie. liable to an immediate and, therefore, violent death). Rather, we move from being "in Adam" to being "in Christ" and our 'legal' status changes from being under 'the Law of Sin and Death' to coming under 'The Law of Spirit of Life'.

The following quotations are taken directly from Bro. Andrew's pamphlet, '*The Blood of the Covenant*', and express his teachings on this subject:

- (1) "The Edenic Law [given to Adam in the Garden of Eden] is... termed '**the Law of Sin and Death**'."
- (2) "By disobeying the Edenic law Adam and Eve incurred **immediate** [and, therefore,] **violent death**" because God had said: 'In the **day** [literally] that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.'

- (3) “When Adam disobeyed, all his descendants were in his loins... They were [therefore], ‘made sinners’ (Romans 5:19) **without any exercise of will on their part**. That is to say, God, by accounting them to be in Adam when he sinned, and by defining their evil desire to be ‘sin,’ has constituted them **‘sinners by birth’**.”
- (4) “‘Sin-in-the-flesh’ [the evil desire of the flesh] was the result of the ‘offense’ of Adam...” “Through the possession of ‘sin-in-the-flesh’ men bare the ‘offense’ of Adam...” **“Sin has thus two aspects, or forms, moral and physical...”** “A violent death is the punishment due to the one as well as to the other.”
- (5) “Just as Adam’s descendants were in his loins when he partook of the tree, so were they in his loins when he was judged and condemned...” Therefore, like Adam “they deserve, whether actual transgressors or not, a violent death in the execution of the Edenic law...” and **“are liable as soon as they are born to be cut off by death.”**
- (6) **“Man is a sinner by birth and by deed**, and needs sacrifice to cover his sin...” “Justification from **the ‘offense’** of Adam [ie. sin-in-the-flesh] is, therefore, necessary as well as justification from **individual sins...**” “Blood-shedding is needed **to cleanse from physical**, as well as from moral defilement...” “Sacrifice is as essential to take away sin in its physical, as in its moral, aspect.”
- (7) “Justification from individual sins... as well as justification from the ‘offense’ of Adam... is provided for in the sacrifice of Christ...” “Animal sacrifice, circumcision and baptism, being representations of Christ’s death, have been appointed, in conjunction with that death, as a means of **legal justification** [ie. the nullification of God’s **pronouncement** or “Divine decree” upon Adam to death].”
- (8) “As soon as Adam was clothed with animal skins he was justified... from **the ‘offense’ he had committed and the ‘sin-in-the-flesh’** which it had produced...” “The death of the animal... averted a violent death thereby prolonging his life, and giving him a second probation.”
- (9) **“Christ only possessed sin physically**, not morally, but all who are sprinkled with his blood possess sin **in both forms...**” **“He died to cleanse himself from Adamic sin;** and this is accepted by God as the means of cleansing others from Adamic sin and also from their own sins. Thus the same death takes away **personal and inherited sin.**”

- (10) "When he came out of the grave he was 'justified from sin' though still flesh and blood..." "Christ's resurrection was the result of justification from **inherited sin**, and the resurrection of his 'church' is the result of justification from **inherited sin and individual 'wicked works'** (Colossians 1. 21)."
- (11) Before baptism men "are still "sinners" in Adam" and "**the 'offense' of Adam... is imputed to them.**" But when believers are baptized they have "been transferred **out of Adam into Christ...**" They are "justified by his blood" (Romans 5:9) from 'sin in the flesh' as well as from their previous 'wicked works'..." They are "freed from the condemnation arising out of Adam's offense..." No longer are they "under the 'law of sin and death'" but come "under the 'law of the spirit of life'..." and "**the righteousness of Christ is imputed to them.**"
- (12) "Physical sin is as powerful to keep closed the gates of the grave as is actual transgression..." "**Christ will bestow eternal life only on those who have been 'washed' from all sin [ie. moral and physical] by 'the blood of the covenant';** and he will, in like manner raise only those who have been justified by the same blood from **inherited and committed sin** prior to probation. To extend his resurrection power outside the scope of his shed blood is to open the door for his life-giving power to be also applied where his blood has had no efficacy."
- (13) "Having decreed that all who live under 'the law of sin and death'... '**perish**'...it necessarily follows that when they pass into the grave... they must, in the grave, remain forever..." "The law of sin and death' contains no provision for justification from sin, and consequently no element, which counteracts the reign of death. **All under it, are by birth, "children of wrath"** (Ephesians 2:3)..." They "die in their sins and therefore '**perish**'."

This theory of Bro. Andrew has many doctrinal consequences, not least of which, it calls into question the *righteousness of God*, (as did the 'free-life' theory of the Renunciators at the opposite extreme.) For why would God hold us responsible for something which we have received by inheritance and was our misfortune and not our fault? Ironically, the doctrine that Bro. Andrew was trying to defend the Truth against, the doctrine of *Substitution*, was the very same doctrine that he ended up teaching

but in a different form! It was akin to the Catholic doctrine of *Original Sin* (See Appendix A) which itself had led to other false doctrines of the Apostasy such as *Infant Baptism*, *Mariolatry* and the *Immaculate Conception*.

In summary, Bro. Andrew taught that:

- (1) As a consequence of Adam sinning, his sin or ‘offense’ was transmitted to his descendants as a physical form of sin called ‘Adamic sin’ or ‘inherited sin’ or ‘sin-in-the-flesh’. We are, therefore, “alienated” from God not only on account of “ignorance” and “wicked works”, but on account of the nature that we bare.
- (2) Man requires a covering or justification (defined by Bro. Andrew as reconciliation, atonement, purging, cleansing, remission, redemption, purification, and forgiveness) from both his *personal sins* and from *physical sin* inherited from Adam.
- (3) We receive a covering or justification for both our personal sins *and* from physical sin by Christ’s shed blood (ie. sacrificial death);
- (4) Thus, when we are baptised, we also receive a covering or justification for both moral and physical sin.
- (5) If we have received a covering or justification for *both* moral and physical sin, no longer are we “children of wrath” and under threat of a “violent death”. Rather “legally” we change in status from being “in Adam” to being “in Christ” and move from being under “the Law of Sin and Death” to “the Law of the spirit of Life.”
- (6) Only those who have been baptised for *both* moral and physical sin will, therefore, be raised to judgment.
- (7) All those who reject the calling to baptism remain “children of wrath” under condemnation of “the Law of Sin and Death” and are “perishing” and will *not* be raised to Judgment.

The subtlety of this teaching was that it taught that man is not merely separated or “alienated” from God on account of “ignorance” and “wicked works” as the Scriptures teach, but we are also separated or “alienated” from God on account of our *physical nature* which we have inherited from Adam. He reasoned that Adam’s original transgression or “offense” was transmitted to his posterity as a ‘*form*’ of ‘sin’ (ie. ‘physical sin’ or ‘sin-in-the-flesh’). If we have, therefore, inherited “physical sin” from Adam, and sin separates us or alienates us from God, he reasoned, quite logically, that we require reconciliation on account of our inherited natures. Thus, until we have been baptized we remain in a state of legal alienation from God!

The tip of the iceberg?

Because of the change made to Clauses 24 and 29 of the BSF in 1898, it is often perceived that the controversy surrounding Bro. Andrew had only to do with the issue of *Resurrectional Responsibility of enlightened rejectors*. But the truth is that Resurrectional Responsibility was only *the tip of the iceberg*. Sometime between 1873 and 1894 something occurred to cause him to change his mind on Resurrectional Responsibility. Although he resisted the idea that he had changed his mind, he eventually had to agree. He produced ‘The Blood of the Covenant’ and agitated for its acceptance. While much of the booklet dealt with Resurrectional Responsibility, it must be remembered that the booklet was to do with *the nature and sacrifice of Christ*. In other words, what Bro. Andrew had done was *invent a new theory on the Atonement*. This fact is attested to by the following brethren:

The fact is, brother Andrew has involved himself in contradictions by inventing a new theory of the matter to sustain the non-resurrection of rejectors... He has decreed the non-resurrection of those who “believe not” the credibly-presented gospel, as they are not “justified from all sin” ... The tendency of the new contention [is] to twist justification into the unscriptural thing confessed: “the imputation to us of the righteous actions of Christ”, as also, “the imputation to us of a sin we never sinned.” Such ideas belong to the theological fogs from which the truth cleared us nearly fifty years ago.

(Bro. Robert Roberts, *The Christadelphian* : Volume 33. c1896.)

In the latter-day history of the Truth there have been several divisions caused through the introduction of a false doctrine. As Brother Roberts pointed out not long before his death, the main divisions were caused by attacks on the fundamental truths of Christ's redemptive work. The 'no will' theory was in effect a denial of Christ's trial and perfect obedience. The 'renunciation' theory was in effect a denial that 'Christ came in the flesh.' The 'theories of inspiration' attacked the Word and therefore made a direct attack upon Christ. **The divergent views regarding resurrectional responsibility were never treated as serious until in an attempt to formulate a coherent theory it became plain how closely the matter was connected with the redemptive work of Christ.**

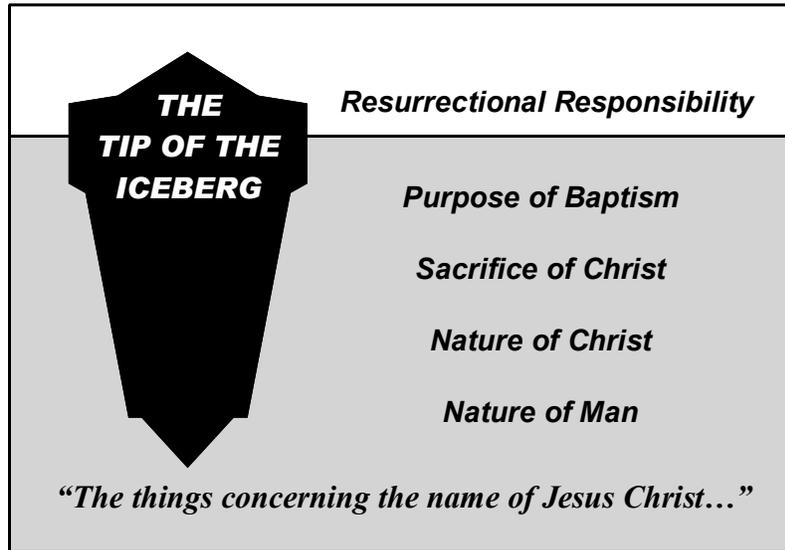
(Bro. Islip Collyer, *The Christadelphian*, 1923, p. 261-262)

About 1893 the doctrine that only those in covenant relationship to God were amenable to resurrection was forced upon the ecclesias in this country by J. J. Andrew; **but the issue concerned more than resurrectional responsibility, other features of equal importance being involved.** In arguing that enlightened disobedient men and women who had not been baptized would not be raised, **J. J. Andrew based his case on a doctrine that men and women were involved in a personal condemnation by descent from Adam which would hold them in the grave unless it was removed by baptism into Christ.** Similar views were entertained by Thos. Williams, who from the 1880s had edited a magazine in America called 'The Christadelphian Advocate'.

(Bro. John Carter, *The Christadelphian* : Volume 90. c1953.)

It is over fifty years ago that the division occurred in U.S.A. which led to the formation of the 'Advocate' fellowship. The division is by many supposed to concern Resurrectional Responsibility, but this is only partly correct: the issue was deeper than that. **The denial of resurrectional responsibility was based upon a theory of Adamic Condemnation and of the sacrifice of Christ in relation to it. This is seen by the very title, The Blood of the Covenant, which J. J. Andrew gave to his pamphlet setting forth similar views. This theory of Adamic condemnation leads logically to the conclusion on resurrectional responsibility.**

(Bro. John Carter, *The Christadelphian* : 'A Letter on Sin'. c1953.)



Bro. Andrew’s theory was a direct challenge upon the truth regarding “the things concerning the name of Jesus Christ.” It challenged Bible teaching on *the Nature of Man, the Nature of Christ, the Sacrifice of Christ, the Purpose of Baptism, and Resurrectional Responsibility*.

- (1) *The Nature of Man* — First of all, Bro. Andrew described Adam and Eve’s condemned nature as a ‘form’ of sin, and since we inherit that same sin-nature by birth, we have inherited Adam’s sin or ‘offense’ in a physical form. We are, therefore, “sinners by birth” and separated or alienated from God “with no exercise of will on our part”...

But the truth is that we inherit from Adam and Eve a physical law of decay, which works out dissolution and death and which gives us, where it is left unrestrained, a tendency in the direction of sin.

- (2) *The Nature of Christ* — Because Christ shared our nature, Bro. Andrew said that he, too, inherited ‘physical sin’ and, therefore, required a covering, reconciliation, atonement, purging, cleansing, remission, redemption, purification, for-

givenness or justification for the offense of Adam, and that he, too, was separated or alienated from God by birth...

But the truth is that Christ inherited our same condemned nature, was never alienated from God on account of the physical nature that he bore, but like us, required redeeming from mortality and death, and that he was redeemed “through death”.

- (3) The Sacrifice of Christ — He taught that Christ did not have any moral sins. But because he inherited ‘physical sin’ from Adam, he required an atonement, a covering, reconciliation and justification *for* his nature. Only once his nature had been cleansed by the shedding of his blood, could he be an offering that had any efficacy for others in cleansing them from moral sin *and* their inherited sin-nature...

But the truth is that he shared our same dying sin-prone nature and his sacrifice upon the cross was an act of self-less obedience that “declared the righteousness of God” which condemned sin and forms the basis for the forgiveness of sins and our reconciliation to the Father.

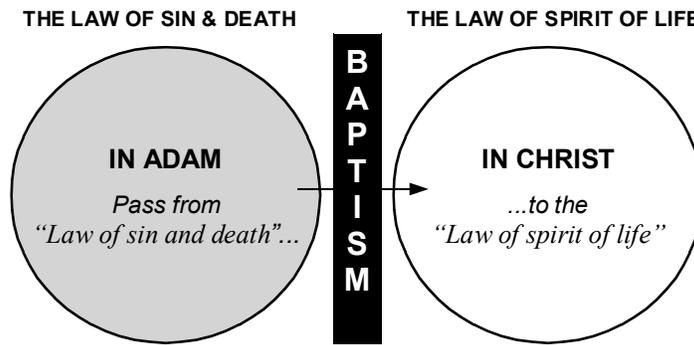
- (4) The Purpose of Baptism — He saw baptism as being an act that takes us from being “in Adam” to being “in Christ” with the three-fold effect that: (i) it, *primarily*, serves as a covering, atonement, justification or reconciliation for *inherited* or *Adamic sin* (ie. ‘sin-in-the-flesh’) and (ii) it removes our *moral sins* or transgressions and (iii) because inherited or Adamic sin and our moral sins have been covered, atoned for and received justification, *legal condemnation* that came upon Mankind as a result of Adam’s transgression is removed...

But the truth is that baptism is about identification with Christ. It is about the *death* of the “old man” with the sins of the past and the *birth* of a “new man” to “newness of life” (see pages 69-70).

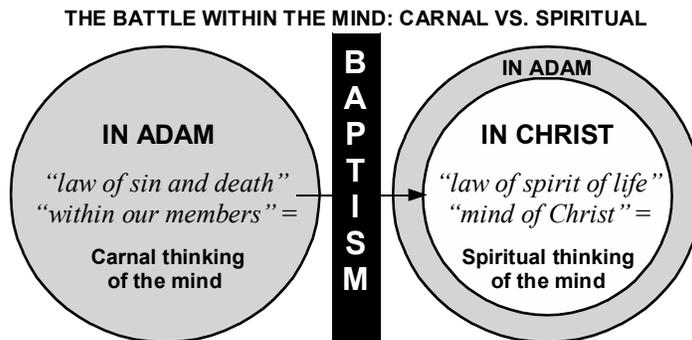
- (5) Resurrectional Responsibility — Only those who have been baptised for their moral sins *and* for their inherited sin-nature will be raised from the dead to Judgment. If we have

not been baptised or received a ‘covering’ or ‘justification’ for both moral and physical sin, then God, according to His own Law, *cannot* raise a man from the dead. Only those who are baptised will be raised and judged. Those judged ‘Faithful’ will receive eternal life. Those judged ‘Unfaithful’ will perish, condemned to eternal death...

But the truth is that those who come to a knowledge of the revealed Word of Truth, whether baptised or unbaptised, will be raised to Judgment to give account, and receive judgment accordingly, as a demonstration of the *supremacy* of God.



Bro. Andrew's Teaching regarding 'the law of sin & death':
 In a Legal sense we move from being 'in Adam' to being 'in Christ' after baptism.
 Only those who are 'in Christ' will be raised from the dead.



Bible teaching regarding 'the law of sin & death':
Physically we remain 'in Adam' until being changed to immortality after baptism.
 After baptism morally our relationship changes so that we are 'in Christ' and 'heirs to the grace of life' as long as we continue 'walking in the light' (see p.45).

The Debate

One of the touchstone events in this controversy on the nature of man and the sacrifice of Christ, was a debate between Bro. Roberts and Bro. Andrew in April 1894 at Essex Hall in London, UK. The proposition which Bro. Roberts defended was as follows: “*That resurrection to the judgment-seat of Christ will comprise some who have not been justified by the blood of Christ.*” While the title of the debate gives the impression that the issue debated was about the basis for resurrection to judgment, the following extracts from the debate will make it clear that, in fact, the Resurrectional Responsibility question (as it came to be known), was only a *symptom* of the underlying problem. Bro. Andrew is asking the questions. Bro. Roberts is answering:

281. **JJA:** Does it (sin in the flesh) require the shedding of blood in order to cleanse us from it?

RR: The blood of Christ was shed in order **to declare God's righteousness**. So Paul teaches (Rom. 3:25).

282. **JJA:** In order to cleanse us from sin in the flesh?

RR: I gave you the apostolic definition.

283. **JJA:** Give me yours.

RR: It was to declare God's righteousness as the foundation upon which He would grant the remission of sins through His forbearance. It was a vindication of God's dishonored majesty, for us to submit to as a condition of His favor, and **not a mechanical process to cleanse us**.

284. **JJA:** I perfectly recognize all you quote; the question is as to its meaning. ***Did Christ require to die for himself?***

RR: ***In view of the work he came to do, Yes; but if there had been himself only, No.***

285. **JJA:** He would not have had to die for himself?

RR: I have answered the question. He came as the representative of our condemned race to lay a foundation for our salvation, and for that reason it was needful he should take our nature and ***stand as our representative, and die as one of us, and we die with him in being baptized.***

286. **JJA:** If he did not die for himself, did he not die purely as a substitute
RR: **By no means**. He was of exactly the same stock and inherited the same consequences of Adam's sin as we.
287. **JJA:** Was the shedding of his blood not necessary for himself apart from others?
RR: Since ***we cannot contemplate him apart from others***, it is no use putting the question. He was one of the whole race.
288. **JJA:** You put it, if there had been no others his death would have been unnecessary?
RR: That is putting an abstract question which it is not convenient to discuss.
289. **JJA:** It may be inconvenient, but it is necessary.
RR: Since you cannot separate him from others, we cannot so consider him. Had he stood by himself—a new Adam—his position would have been totally different.
290. **JJA:** But did he not fulfill the Aaronic type of offering for himself and then for the sins of the people?
RR: No doubt.
291. **JJA:** What was it in relation to himself for which he had to shed his blood?
RR: He stood there as ***bearing the sins of his whole brethren***.
292. **JJA:** Did he have the sin-nature himself as well as the sins of his brethren which required the offering of himself as a sacrifice?
RR: **He had no sin except the possession of a nature which leads to sin**; but which in him did not lead to sin.
293. **JJA:** Did it not require blood-shedding to ***cleanse him*** although it did not lead to sinning?
RR: In order to declare God's righteousness is Paul's explanation which to me is the all-sufficient explanation, and to me profoundly philosophical. ***Any other is so much cloud of dust***.
294. **JJA:** We do not want to take a surface view of matters; that is why I ask

these questions as to whether ***Christ's own sin-nature required the shedding of blood to cleanse it?***

RR: I have answered the question.

295. JJA: I insist upon a yes or no.

RR: What is it you ask me to say yes or no to?

296. JJA: Did Christ's own sin nature require blood-shedding in order that he might be cleansed?

RR: As you cannot put him apart from others, it is no use asking the question.

Notice how Bro. Andrew tried to lead Bro. Roberts to acknowledge a secondary 'form' of sin, 'sin-nature', that requires 'cleansing' or an offering made for it. Instead, Bro. Roberts recognized that Bro. Andrew was trying to get him to separate Christ's nature from the work that he came to do. Christ came to "save sinners" and in the process "condemned sin" by his death, thereby, "declaring the righteousness of God."

391. JJA: What was the object of his shed blood?

RR: It was to declare God's righteousness **as the basis of reconciliation.**

392. JJA: That is fully recognized. The question relates to the basis. Did not Christ enter into the most holy place or immortality on the basis of the shedding of his blood? Does not that mean that he could not enter in without? Does it not also mean that the blood cleansed him individually from corruption which was an impediment to his obtaining eternal life?

RR: I do not deny that.

393. JJA: Why did you say that Christ did not die for himself, apart from others?

RR: Because you were asking me to consider him in his individual capacity, detached from the human race, and I refuse to consider him in that capacity.

394. JJA: Is it impossible to conceive of the Aaronic high priest offering for his own cleansing in the first instance?

RR: No.

395. JJA: Then is it not equally possible to consider Christ offering for his own cleansing apart from the cleansing of others?

RR: What is the use of discussing a case that does not exist?

396. JJA: It does exist.

RR: ***His work is the saving of Mankind, and you cannot discuss him apart from that.***

397. JJA: If we have two things presented in type, can we not look at the two things separately in the antitype?

RR: That is a matter of intellectual enterprise; ***it does not determine the truth of the case.***

398. JJA: Is it not of the understanding of this question?

RR: It may be, but you do not help it by introducing it.

399. JJA: I do. We both recognize Christ did not commit transgression, and that his blood was not required in regard to himself for anything of that kind. Yet he did shed his blood for himself. What was it then for which he shed his blood for himself?

RR: I have answered that several times, Bro. Andrew. He was a mortal man, inheriting death from Adam.

400. JJA: You have answered it by evading it.

RR: By no means. I have not answered it in your precise terms, which conceal meanings.

401. JJA: Did he not require to shed his blood to cleanse himself from his own sin nature, and ***has not God made that the basis by which those in him may be justified from the sin of that nature, and have forgiveness of sins?***

RR: I prefer the Scripture description of what was done by the death of Christ. **The Scriptures never use the word cleanse in that sense.**

402. JJA: Never use the word cleanse in regard to physical sin?

RR: Not in that connection.

Bro. Roberts makes it clear in his responses to Bro. Andrew that Christ *did* benefit from his death and *was* involved in his own sacrifice. But he makes it clear that Christ did not need to make an atonement or make a sacrifice *for* his physical nature. Bro. Roberts had already shown in *'The Blood of Christ'* that his 'blood' was synonymous with Christ's 'body' and his 'death'. Only by fulfilling his Father's will in "being obedient, even unto the death of the cross" ^c could Christ benefit from his own death, since a faithful life (which included his own death as an offering "to bear the sins of many" ^d) would be rewarded with life from the grave.

704. JJA: What is the antitype of making an atonement for the holy place in regard to Christ?

RR: Cleansing and redeeming him from Adamic nature ***utterly***.

705. JJA: Shedding of his blood and raising him from the dead?

RR: ***The whole process.***

706. JJA: In relation to himself, personally, apart from his position as a sin-bearer for others?

RR: ***You cannot take him apart from that position.***

707. JJA: Have you not taken him apart from that position formerly?

RR: Never.

708. JJA: Not in the argument with Renunciators?

RR: That is too general a question altogether. There never would have been a Christ if there had not been a sin race to be redeemed. If he had been by himself, he would not have required to die at all, if he had been disconnected from our race.

709. JJA: What do you mean by that?

RR: I mean if he had been by himself—a new Adam—having no connection with the race of Adam first; not made out of it.

710. JJA: But if as a descendant of Adam, he had been the only one to whom God granted the offer of salvation, would he not have had to die before he could obtain that salvation?

RR: I refuse the question in that form, because it is an impossible "if."

He was not sent for himself, but for us.

711. **JJA:** Is it not clear that Christ, as a necessity, must offer up for himself for the purging of his own sin nature?

RR: As a son of Adam, a son of Abraham, and a son of David, yes.

712. **JJA:** First from the uncleanness of death that having by his own blood obtained eternal life himself, he might be able to save others?

RR: Certainly.

713. **JJA:** Then he died for himself apart from being a sin-bearer for others?

RR: I do not admit that: I cannot separate him from his work.

714. **JJA:** Was he not so separated 20 years ago to refute the free life theory?

RR: Not by me, it might be by you.

715. **JJA:** 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?

RR: He could not.

716. **JJA:** Then he offered for himself as well as for us?

RR: Oh, certainly.

717. **JJA:** Is it not clear then from this that the death of Christ was necessary to purify his own nature from the sin power?

RR: Certainly.

718. **JJA:** That was hereditary in him in the days of his flesh?

RR: No doubt of it.

719. **JJA:** And he as the first one had to undergo purification **through his shed blood and resurrection?**

RR: **Certainly**, I have never called that in question in the least.

720. **JJA:** Did you not say on Tuesday night that he did not need to shed his blood for himself?

RR: That is upon your impossible supposition that he stood apart from

us, and was a new Adam altogether.

721. **JJA:** I never introduced that position.

RR: You are unfortunate in not conveying your ideas to me.

722. **JJA:** I never introduced that idea to you.

RR: You asked me to consider him apart from us.

723. **JJA:** Apart from us, but still a descendant of Adam?

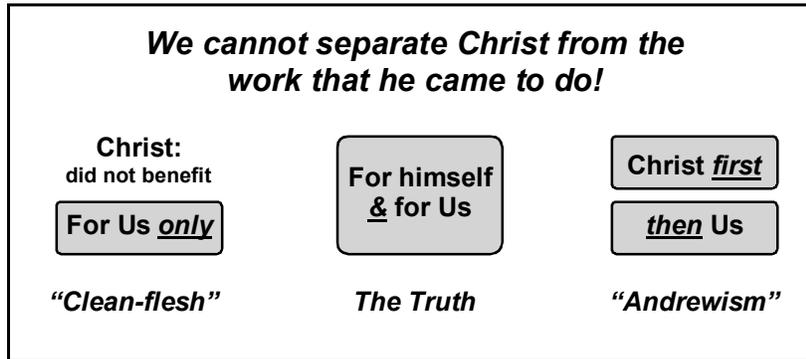
RR: That is my point, that ***you cannot separate him from the work he came to do. There never would have been a Christ at all if he had not been for that work.***

724. **JJA:** Then as a descendant of Adam, it was necessary for himself to shed his blood in order to obtain eternal life?

RR: I have already answered that question several times.

Notice how Bro. Andrew tries to accuse Bro. Roberts of believing in the doctrine of ‘substitution’ which was the same heresy promoted by the Renunciationist brethren and ‘clean-flesh’ theory? Ironically, it was Bro. Andrew who was teaching aspects of ‘Clean-flesh’ because the whole premise of Bro. Andrew’s teaching was that unless Christ’s nature was cleansed or atoned for, his sacrifice would have had no efficacy or benefit to us!

It is also important to notice Bro. Robert’s response to Q.706 where he makes the statement that “you cannot take Christ apart from his work in coming to save sinners.” This is important because both of the extreme teachings of ‘Clean-flesh’ and Bro. Andrew separate Christ from his work. ‘Clean-flesh’ says that Christ *did not benefit from his sacrifice for us*, and Bro. Andrew said that Christ required a *separate sacrificial cleansing for himself first before he could be of benefit to us*. The truth says that Christ was THE sacrificial offering for us, but benefited because he, too, required redeeming from mortality and out of death because he shared our same dying, sin-prone nature.



Further changes to the Statement of Faith

About 1894, recognising the potentially damaging effect that Bro. Andrew’s new teachings could have upon the brotherhood, and their inconsistency with the doctrines of truth set forth in Scripture, ecclesias in the UK started withdrawing from Bro. Andrew’s ecclesia. It should be noted that Bro. Roberts was quite resistant to making Resurrectional Responsibility a question of fellowship, but when it was recognised how closely related Bro. Andrew’s new teachings were to “the things concerning the name of Jesus Christ”, withdrawal was inevitable.

In 1898, the Birmingham Central ecclesia amended Clauses 24 and 29 of their Statement of Faith, thereby, removing any ambiguity regarding the false teaching that responsibility to judgment is tied to covenant relationship. Subsequently, many other ecclesias in the UK and North America did the same and became known as ‘Central’ (after the name of Birmingham *Central* ecclesia) or ‘Amended’ Christadelphians, and the Statement of Faith became known as the Birmingham *Amended* Statement of Faith (BASF). Ecclesias that did not embrace the Amendment continued to fellowship on the basis of the BSF and found themselves out of fellowship with Amended ecclesias as a result (even though unquestionably many of them did not disagree with the Truth as expressed in the BASF). The sentiment of many ecclesias in response to the new teachings of Bro. Andrew can be seen from the following correspondence from the Christadelphian published in 1902:

“A number of Christadelphian ecclesias in the Dominion of Canada, whose position, doctrinally and otherwise, is identical with that represented by ‘*The Christadelphian*’, having decided to co-operate for mutual assistance and encouragement in the work of the truth, by inter-visitation, the interchange of speaking brethren, etc., consider it advisable to make known their attitude in relation to current controversies, for the information of the brotherhood, and as a basis for future co-operation among themselves.

They have resolved, therefore, as a dutiful recognition of the fact that God has revived the light of the truth of the Gospel in this their day and generation, and has also in His kindness, favoured them with a knowledge of this saving truth, whereby He has invited them to the unending life, honour, and glory of Christ’s Kingdom; and being strongly impressed with a sense of the responsibility which the possession of such knowledge and privilege entails, that they will do their utmost for the preservation of this truth inviolate in their midst.

The members, individually and collectively, of the undermentioned ecclesias, here unitedly set forth their attitude in relation to certain unscriptural doctrines which are being persistently advocated and disseminated on this continent; said anti-scriptural dogmas being to the following effect:—

UNSCRIPTURAL DOCTRINES CURRENT

1st.—That the light of the knowledge of the Gospel does not bring responsibility and amenability to the judgment seat of Christ, apart from, at least, a partial submission to its claims; in other words, that believers of the Gospel are exempt from the resurrection to condemnation and punishment so long as they refuse to render obedience in baptism.

2nd.—That the penalty or sentence against Adam for his sin in Eden was a ***violent death***; that the sentence was suspended in Adam’s case by Edenic sacrifices, and afterwards (4,000 years afterwards) was carried out in his descendant Jesus; that this sentence of a ***violent death rests upon Adam’s race by virtue of having his sin and guilt federally or racially imputed to it.***

3rd.—That, ***federally, we are all under Adam’s sin***, and are ***baptized to remove the condemnation that came thereby***; that is, ***Adam’s sin placed the whole race in a state of alienation***, and ***baptism removes this inherited alienation.***

4th.—That the justification of believers is effected by the imputation of Christ's righteous actions to them when they are baptized.

WHAT WE BELIEVE THE SCRIPTURES TEACH

1st.—That ***the light of the Gospel discerned is the ground of responsibility to a resurrection judgment***, and that, therefore, men and women who have been brought to a knowledge of God's will and pleasure concerning them as revealed in the Gospel and refuse to obey, ***will be raised from the dead*** (should they die before the Lord's return) for condemnation and punishment in the epoch of resurrection and judgment.

2nd.—That with reference to the "resurrection of condemnation," unfaithful saints and enlightened sinners are on the same status, the common ground of their condemnation being that they knew the will of God and did not obey it. ***We consider that those who affirm the contrary deny one of the first principles of revealed truth, and also represent God as an unjust being***; punishing believers who have commenced well and afterwards lapsed into disobedience, while allowing the presumptuous and altogether disobedient to go free.

3rd.—That personal condemnation comes as a result of personal transgression, ***for which alone men are held personally responsible***; and that condemnation to the second death is the result of personal sin of a kind specially offensive to God—namely, that of ***refusing to obey when specifically commanded to do so***, whether on the part of those who have made a commencement (as in baptism) or of those who have refused to make any effort whatever.

4th. — That when men and women who have attained to an affectionate understanding and belief of the Gospel submit to its demands in baptism, God forgives their past sins; they are justified, as Abraham was, by having their obedient faith counted to them for righteousness. ***There is no intimation in the Word that believers are forgiven "Adamic sin" at baptism.***

5th.—That "our inheritance from Adam is a matter of blood relationship only; that we are 'in Adam' by fleshly descent, and therefore die; that the one flesh of men is sinful flesh (flesh full of sin), and always regarded as unclean in the sight of God."

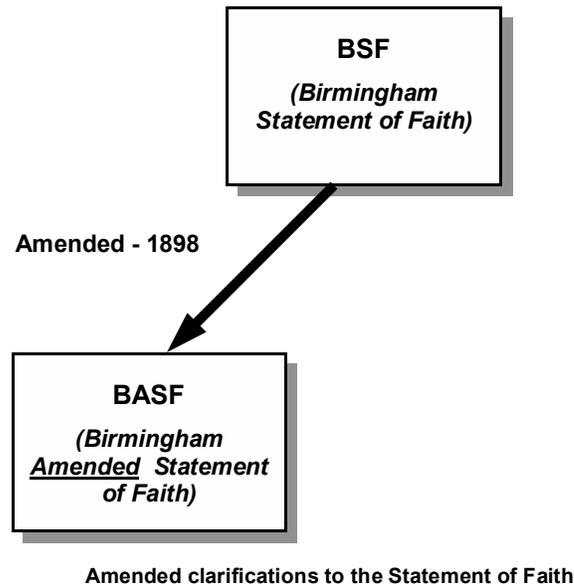
6th.—That God justifies believers of the Gospel in the remission of their past sins when they “put on” the name of Christ in baptism; and that their blood relationship to Adam **remains unchanged until the change to incorruptibility on the part of the accepted at the return of Christ**; but that their **intellectual and moral alienation from God** is removed, through His kindness and forbearance, when they believe and obey the truth; but that, notwithstanding the removal of this intellectual and moral alienation, **the “law of sin and death” is still operative in their members**, and that freedom from this law is not present, but prospective, and to be attained in the day of the “manifestation of the sons of God,” on the part of those who “walk after the spirit.”

7th.—That the apostolic phrase “in Adam,” found once only in the Bible, is expressive **of physical mortal relationship and nothing else**; and that the phrase “in Christ,” found frequently, is expressive first, of **intellectual and moral relationship** through an obedient faith, and ultimately **of the incorruptibility and sinlessness of the spirit nature**.

It is therefore resolved that we do hereby affirm our faith to be in harmony with the thirty propositions known as the “Birmingham Statement of Faith,” inclusive of the amplification recently given to Proposition XXV [BASF XXIV], in reference to responsibility. We approve this statement, not because it is of Birmingham, but because, to our minds, it sets forth in suitable language the doctrines constituting the Christadelphian basis of association and fellowship.

It is further resolved that we withhold fellowship from all who believe and teach the unscriptural doctrines referred to above, and likewise from those who countenance such teachings, whatever may be their expressed individual convictions.”

The underlying issue behind the Resurrectional Responsibility issue was a false teaching regarding the doctrine of the Atonement which led to the amendment of the BSF. But the amendments to Clauses 24 (BSF Clause 25) and 29 were not the only changes made to the BSF. Another change was made in North America which brought into existence another statement of faith, the Birmingham *Unamended* Statement of Faith, or BUSF.



The Teachings of Thomas Williams

At the same time that Bro. Andrew was teaching his new theory on the Atonement and Resurrectional Responsibility in England, another brother by the name of Thomas Williams was teaching very similar ideas in North America. Bro. Thomas Williams was from the Chicago ecclesia and was the editor of the *Advocate Magazine*.

The following selections taken from the writings of Thomas Williams demonstrate just how close his teachings were to those of Bro. Andrew regarding the nature and sacrifice of Christ.

Bro. Williams taught:

- (1) That we were in Adam when he sinned and as a consequence of Adam sinning, his sin or 'offense' was transmitted to his descendants as a physical form of sin called 'Adamic' or 'inherited sin':

We are said (in Rom. 5:12, see margin) to **have sinned in Adam**. Does sin need forgiveness? ANS: Yes ... **to remit that which placed us in a condition needing reconciliation is to forgive the sin.**

(Advocate, Vol. 9, p. 233)

To put the matter still more clear: Let me ask you (Bro. Roberts) if an infant lived to be an adult without committing an act of sin, would it not be necessary for it to be baptized in order to be saved? Since baptism is for the remission of sin, **what sin would it remit in this case from your standpoint, since you deny that Adam's sin is imputed to his children.**

(Advocate, June 1894, Vol. 10.)

That 'if men are not partakers and **guilty of Adam's sin** (apart from its effects of evil and death), but require only forgiveness of their actual sins and personal wickedness,' it is not clear 'how the death of Christ ... can help them'.

(Advocate, Vol. 9, p. 234)

(2) That there are two forms of sin — moral and physical:

Adam's sin "**must be removed, remitted, pardoned**, or whatever term is thought most expressive, before reconciliation to God can be accomplished.

(Advocate, Vol. 9, p. 10)

The grounds of guilt are first Adamic sin, and second, an aggravation of Adamic sin by the **wickedness of his descendants.**

(Advocate, Vol. 9, p.233)

The redemption Christ wrought out was **not simply from individual sins of our own, but from the sin [ie. inherited or Adamic sin] and all its consequences** of Adam the first.

(Advocate, Vol. 9, p. 11)

(3) That man is alienated from God on account of both moral and physical sin and requires a covering, cleansing, atonement, reconciliation, justification from both his personal sins and from physical sin inherited from Adam:

If it is this sin (that is, Adam's) **that has placed us in alienation**, does it not follow that it (i.e. Adam's sin) **must be removed, remitted, pardoned**, or whatever term is thought the most expressive, before reconciliation to God can be accomplished.

(Advocate, Vol. 9, p. 10)

I believe that **federally and racially we are held guilty of original sin.**
(Thomas Williams, from *Sin and Sacrifice* by W.M. Smallwood, p. 84).

Christ was born under and died to remove Adamic condemnation.
(*Self Defence, Chicago Ecclesia*, pg. 1)

- (4) That Christ required a covering, cleansing, atonement, reconciliation, justification for *physical sin* and we require cleansing, atonement, reconciliation, justification for both our *personal sins* and from *physical sin* by Christ's shed blood (ie. sacrificial death).

Christ's blood was shed for the remission of sins. (1 John 1:7) It was shed for himself, and he being without personal sins, the ***sin remitted, cleansed, pardoned, or covered must be of necessity Adamic.***
(*Advocate, Vol. 10, p. 334*)

An adult devoid of personal transgression would, ***upon being baptized into Christ, be forgiven Adamic sin.***

(*Advocate, Vol. 9, p. 9*)

- (5) Baptism is for the removal, pardon, remission and justification for both moral and physical sin.

Baptism removes original sin (racial sin)...

(*Advocate, Jan 1895*)

Be baptized for the remission of sins ***Adamic and individual.***

(*Advocate, Vol. 9, p. 62*)

Now, if a child is born under the same condemnation that Adam brought upon himself, does it not follow that he is born under the bondage of that which causes alienation, and that before he can 'enter as a probationer' to 'run for eternal life' he must be freed from that bondage by passing out of Adam into Christ? ***And is not that what baptism primarily is for? Although it includes the remission of individual sin.***

(*Advocate, Vol.9*)

That baptism is primarily for the remission, removal or pardon of Adam's sin, although it includes the remission of personal sins, which latter remission ***is only an incident.***

(*Advocate, Vol. 9, p. 9*)

It is evident that if an infant could become an adult without committing a personal sin, **baptism for the remission of sin (Adamic) would be necessary.**

(Advocate, Vol. 9, p. 234)

- (6) If we have received justification for both moral and physical sin, no longer are we under the condemnation of ‘the Law of Sin and Death’, alienated from God and the ‘children of wrath’. Rather we change in status from being “in Adam” to being “in Christ” and now come under ‘the Law of the spirit of Life.’

The passing out of Adam into Christ changes our relationship, but does not change our nature. Therefore since the design of baptism is for this purpose **its root is to be found in the Adamic sentence of death and burial**; and **its effect is the removal of this** so that the sentence may be deprived of its power to hold us in death and dust, and thereby the resurrection becomes the means of final physical escape from the results of Adam’s sin”.

(Adamic Condemnation, page 14)

That **“the condemnation, the alienation, the frowns of Jehovah upon the race by reason of Adam’s sin” were removed from Christ at baptism.**

(Advocate, Vol. 9, p. 63)

The first thing for us to consider here is the discrimination between the sentence and the execution of the sentence. Why is it important to distinguish between the sentence and its execution? Because we claim that the sentence is the “condemnation”, known as “Adamic condemnation;” and the execution is the physical effect of the sentence, Here is our first issue, and it is an important one in its bearing upon the doctrine of baptism; for if the “sentence” or “condemnation”, is not distinguished from the physical effects, the design of baptism to remove the sentence, yet leaving us to wait for the “redemption of the body”, cannot be understood.

(Adamic Condemnation, p.3)

The **passing out of Adam into Christ** changes our relationship, but does not change our nature. Therefore, since the design of baptism is

for this purpose, its root is to be found in the Adamic sentence of death and burial: and **its effect** is the removal of this ***so that the sentence may be deprived of its power to hold us in death and dust***, and thereby the resurrection became the means of final physical escape from the results of Adam's sin.

We are not personally responsible for Adam's personal sin and are not therefore baptized for it in that sense; ***but federally we are all under Adam's sin, and are baptized to remove the condemnation which came thereby***, and to place us in Christ reconciled to God. Since it is known that we believe we are baptized for our personal sins, it is needless to state it.

Adamic condemnation brings a physical disability inherited from Adam, ***We are freed from this federal condemnation and reconciled to God at baptism***, but we are not freed from physical disability till the change of body.

(Adamic Condemnation, pages 14, 15)

Is not the first Adam a state of sickness, sorrow, pain and death; and if a death state a condemned or alienated state? ***If Jesus was included in the Adamic race then he must have been estranged from God as a mere flesh and blood being.***

(Advocate Supplement 1900).

He (Jesus) must die according to God's law. To die according to law is legal; and to die legally is to be "worthy" of death in the legal sense. He was not "worthy" of death legally for any personal sin of his own. What sin was it, then, that made the death of Christ just? ***Racial sin or personal sin? Federal sin or individual sin? Racial and federal is the only answer the case will admit of***, and that is to say that ***primarily Christ died to redeem himself from the sin and its effects that was committed by Adam***, "in whom all — Christ included — have sinned." When he met the demands of God's law and drank that cup that no righteous law would allow to pass from him, ***he paid the demands of that law and its penalty***, and being a righteous man he was free — led captivity captive and thus purchased gifts unto men, who could not purchase them for themselves.

(Chicago Defence, p. 72)

- (7) Only those who have been baptised for both moral and physical sin will, therefore, be raised to judgment and a man can avoid resurrection to judgment by disobeying God's commandment to be baptized:

Another man is more careful. He counts the cost and concludes the way is too straight for his weak nature; and he decides not to identify himself with the name that he fears he may disgrace and he stands back; ***here is prudence. Now it does not seem right that this man should be raised from the dead to be punished at the tribunal of Christ for his prudence.***^e

(Advocate, Vol. 9, p. 202)

- (8) All those who reject the calling to baptism remain under condemnation of 'the Law of Sin and Death' and are "perishing" and the "children of wrath".

Christ was no exception to the rule, 'Ye must be born again' and 'born of a woman'; he was born of the flesh; and 'that which is born of the flesh is flesh.' The latent mental and moral powers implanted in him by divine begetter had to be operated upon by the spirit of truth and produce a new creature, mentally and morally; and at baptism in his case as in ours, that new creature came to the birth, and with that God declared Himself well pleased. This was Christ born again. ***Had he remained where his birth of the flesh placed him he would have racially continued a child of wrath, alienated as Adam left him and all others.***

(Advocate 1894, p. 388).

Death is an effect; there is no effect without a cause. The cause, one man; the effect, death. What is the antithesis of this? 'By man came also the resurrection of the dead.' The second man was the cause of the resurrection. Some will say, That means He was the cause of eternal life. That is true, but Paul does not say that here; let us stick to the word, as we say to 'orthodox' people when they say that means something else. Stick to the law and the testimony. 'By man came death'; then man was the cause, death was the result. 'By man came also the anastasis, 'standing again'; He was the cause, anastasis was the effect. If the first man had not come, the death would not have come. If the second had not come, the anastasis would not have come, unless you can have an effect without a cause.

(Advocate, Dec. 1907)

After spending some considerable time reviewing the writings of Thomas Williams, Bro. John Carter wrote the following:

The first thing that shook me badly in reading Thomas William's writings, was his misuse of the word "law"... Now Thomas Williams, like JJ Andrew, but I think before JJ Andrew did it, interpreted the "law of sin and death" as the Edenic commandment, and then, after the habit of his boyhood worked out the federal principle concerning our being in Adam and our transfer to Christ, and he put all in Adam under the law of sin and death using 'law' in the sense of the Edenic edict, and not at all in Paul's sense. He speaks of man passing from the "law of sin" to the "law of the spirit of life" as though they had transferred from one edict to another edict. ***This again is quite contrary to Paul's use of the words. When I realized this basic slip on the part of Thomas Williams I began to see that there was a system of thought in his teaching which went wrong at point after point.***

A new statement of faith

A misconception among some is that there is only one Statement of Faith — The BASF. This is simply not true. There are a number of Statements of Faith used by ecclesias throughout the worldwide brotherhood, including the BSF. Our pioneer brethren went to great lengths to ensure that brethren understood that a Statement of Faith is a convenient (yet very necessary) expression of common beliefs held by those of "one mind and one judgment" regarding the First Principles of the Truth.

Another misconception is that the BUSF or 'Unamended' Statement of Faith is the *original* unchanged BSF. Again, this is not true. The BUSF is a *modified* version of the BSF. It was modified in 1909 by Bro. Thomas Williams which resulted in the creation of Birmingham Unamended Statement of Faith (BUSF) used predominantly by the 'Unamended' or 'Advocate' Christadelphian community today. Unfortunately, the name 'Birmingham *Unamended* Statement of Faith' does not make this clear.

In his book, *Christadelphians, The Untold Story*, Bro. Richard Pursell writes:

In response to Birmingham's 1898 'amendment', the Unamended community, seeing a direct connection between the amendment, the Nature of Man, and its relation to the Sacrifice of Christ, made some minor alterations **to help preserve its own understanding on these issues...**

The Articles in the Statement of Faith regarding the Nature of Man (Clause 5) and the Sacrifice of Christ (Clause 8)... **have been specifically altered** by the Unamended community in 1909 apparently **to help preserve their two part understanding of 'Adamic Condemnation' (both legal and physical)... and to maintain the doctrine's corollary 'atonement for sin-nature'.**

The first change was made to *Clause 5* where the phrase "in effect" was added. Bro. Richard Pursell observes:

Bro Williams notes ***the importance of discriminating between the 'sentence' and the 'execution of the sentence.'*** He explained that the 'sentence' was a 'pronouncement' and the 'execution of the sentence' was the reality of 'sorrow and death', that is, the physical ***effects*** of the sentence. Thus he argued that the original Statement of Faith described ***two parts*** to the condemnation on Adam, firstly the pronouncement, and secondly, the effects of that pronouncement... ***Thus, two different understandings of what constituted 'Adamic Condemnation' were evident early on.***

A second change was made to *Clause 8* where the phrase 'of the condemned race of Adam' was inserted. Again Bro. Richard Pursell's explanation for this is as follows:

Bro Williams and others logically interpreted the word 'sentence' in Clause 5 ***in a legal sense*** and extended that understanding into the 'law of condemnation' in Clause 8. So, the Unamended, even today, see the law of condemnation' ***as something from which one is delivered in a present, legal, and positional sense in baptism...*** The new wording clearly traced the condemnation of all Mankind to Adam. Punctuation was also changed which redirected some of the emphasis away from salvation by 'perfect obedience' ***and more towards the sacrificial description 'by dying' as the means of abrogation [or abolishment] of the 'law of condemnation'*** which Christ accomplished...

Although not specifically stated, this revised phraseology in the 1909 Christadelphian Unamended Statement of Faith incorporated the necessity of change of pronouncement, status, or position, that is, ***it taught 'atonement for sin-nature' and corresponded to the differentiation between sentence and the execution of the sentence..***

The third and most significant change was to *Clause 9* where the following statement was added:

...and thus he destroyed in his own mortal nature that having the power of death, which is the devil; and will finally destroy the devil, ***or sin in the flesh***, in all its forms of manifestation.

Again Bro. Richard Pursell writes:

Bro Williams In the November 1909 *Advocate* stated that: 'In the entire Statement there is not a word about the devil... We suggest that these few words be added to Clause 9 – and thus he destroyed in his own mortal nature that having the power of death, which is the devil; and will finally destroy the devil, or sin in the flesh, in all its forms of manifestation...' ***Thus, the definition of the secondary aspect of 'sin' found its way into the Unamended 'Christadelphian Statement of Faith,' a positive statement comprehending 'sin in the flesh'.***

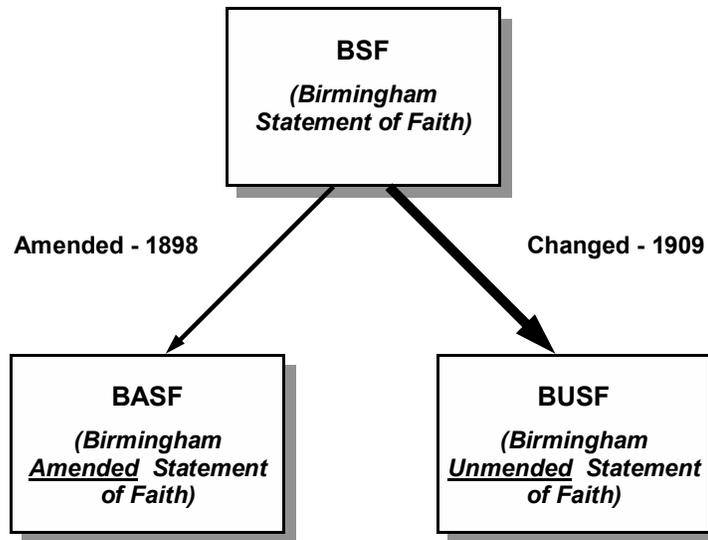
The changes made to the BSF to create the BASE were never made to create a *new* basis of understanding, but to clarify the same understanding that had always existed within the community until the controversy with Bro. Andrew arose regarding the nature and sacrifice of Christ. This is made clear from the following written by Bro. Roberts from Australia in 1898:

We cannot publish a rescindment of our resolution on Responsibility (the Clause 24 Amendment) on the understanding that it means the fellowshipping of those who deny that disobedient knowledge of the will of God renders a man liable to resurrectional condemnation. ***This is a first principle of the revealed system of truth.***

The BUSF, on the other hand, was really a *new* statement of faith, not merely because of the modifications made, but because the *intent* of those modifications was to teach “another gospel” not supported by the BASF or BSF, namely atonement for sin-nature and inherited legal condemnation.^f

In 1953 a prominent brother from the Advocate/Unamended fellowship wrote to Bro. John Carter suggesting that Bro. Carter “lend aid to reunion with the *Advocate* [or Unamended] brethren.” Bro. Carter responded in an open letter as follows:

There is a difference in the position with you and with the Bereans [See Appendix B]. Both Central and Berean ecclesias recognize the same Statement of Faith: you appear to oppose some items of our Statement, and ***these matters therefore require clarification***... It is over fifty years ago that the division occurred in U.S.A. which led to the formation of the *Advocate* or *Unamended* fellowship. The division is by many supposed to concern Resurrectional Responsibility, ***but this is only partly correct***: the issue was deeper than that. ***The denial of resurrectional responsibility was based upon a theory of Adamic Condemnation and of the sacrifice of Christ in relation to it.*** This is seen by the very title, *The Blood of the Covenant*, which J. J. Andrew gave to his pamphlet setting forth similar views. This theory of Adamic condemnation leads logically to the conclusion on resurrectional responsibility.^g



Unamended changes to create a new Statement of Faith

Challenging the Truth

Inevitably, changes made to the fundamentals of the Truth, can lead to other doctrinal errors and practical consequences. The first and most important consequence of both the 'Clean-flesh' teachings and 'Andrewism' is that they called into question *the righteousness of God*, and, therefore, the very character of God. They called into question His supremacy and justice. The Truth on the other hand declares God's righteousness and upholds His supremacy and justice.

The Churches around us today bear the evidence of how Truth was mixed with error throughout the centuries, as Man's ideas came into conflict with the simplicity of the Truth as revealed in the Word of God. History teaches us the lesson that we must "search, and ask diligently; and, behold, if it be truth, and the thing certain" (Deuteronomy 13:14) "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). History and Scripture attest to the fact that false teaching "doth eat as a canker (or gangrene)" (2 Timothy 2:17), resulting in the dimming of God's light in a dark and degenerate age.

In the same letter written by Bro. John Carter to a brother in North America in 1953, he warns how not recognising falsehood for what it is, inevitably leads to the false teachings of the Churches around us:

The truth has freed us from the "much foolishness that has been written upon **original sin**" **but this language takes us back to the papal doctrine of original sin and guilt** [ie. the 'language' of Thomas Williams]. For how can we be forgiven something **unless we are held guilty**; and how can we be redeemed from the sin of Adam and its effects **unless we are involved in both his sin and its effects**... Our appeal to readers... is to abjure the errors that were introduced... and get back to the truth set forth in the writings of Dr. Thomas and Robert Roberts. It is a serious matter for each one; for if we are only baptized for Adam's sin, how can we expect the forgiveness of our own sins which God has made to depend "upon baptism for the remission of sins"? In this retracing of your steps we shall find the harmony that makes unity not only a possibility but a duty.

Notes:

^a See note ⁱ on Page 38

^b CP. Page 45 — Bro. John Carter on the ‘Law of Sin & Death’

^c Philippians 2:8

^d Hebrews 9:28

^e This idea was particularly offensive to brethren and sisters because the use of the word ‘prudence’ gave the impression that one can exercise foresight, and in a calculated fashion avoid God’s righteous Judgment.

^f It is understood that while Bro. Andrew and Bro. Williams shared the same beliefs and teachings regarding the nature and sacrifice of Christ and shared the same conclusions regarding who would be raised to Judgment (ie. only those who have entered covenant relationship through baptism), Bro. Williams also said that God would raise *whosoever he chooses* ‘according to his independent will and power’, but not on the same basis as those who have been baptised. The emphasis of both Bro. Andrew and Bro. Williams was upon resurrection on the basis of *covenant relationship*. Resurrection of some outside of ‘covenant relationship’ was considered to be “an arbitrary act of God” and not on the basis of ‘knowledge’. (Ref: Bro. John Carter correspondence 6th Feb. 1957 and other docs.)

Also, it is a characteristic of other fellowships to accuse Central Fellowship of believing ‘Clean Flesh’, not because Central harbours the teachings of Bro. Turney, but because Central does not ‘officially’ teach “atonement for sin-nature” (as documented in Bro. Richard Pursell’s book “Christadelphians—The Untold Story” cp. Pages 85-90 ‘The Vital Issue’).

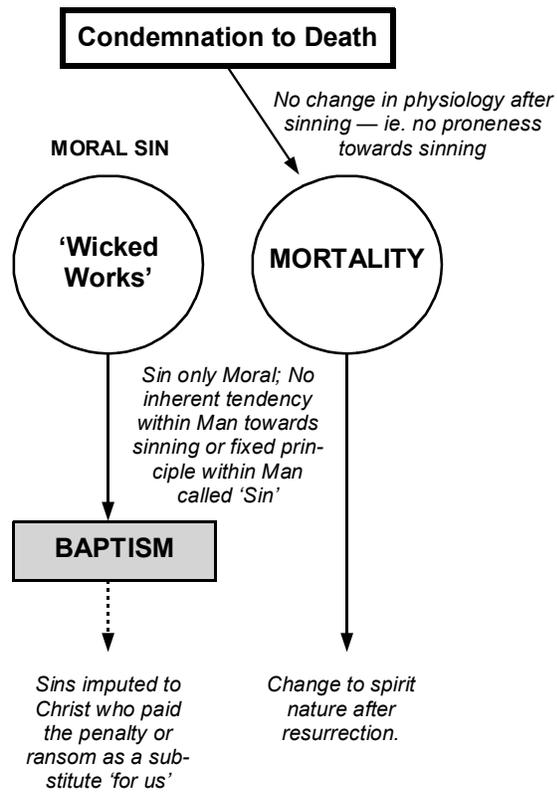
It was suggested by Bro. John Carter that Bro. Williams taught his views on the atonement some considerable time before Bro. Andrew did, having learned some of his legalistic arguments in his youth from the Calvinist Church, before being baptised as a Christadelphian.

^g It has been widely publicized that the reason for JJ Andrew coming up with his theory regarding *Resurrectional Responsibility* was due to his family circumstances. While the early deaths of JJ Andrew’s sons before they had committed themselves through the waters of baptism were tragedies, these unfortunate set of circumstances, while perhaps the driving force, are irrelevant when it comes to the theories which he espoused in the ‘Blood of the Covenant’ and other writings. His theory did not just say that those who are not baptized will not be raised; he developed an entire theory regarding *sin, sacrifice and baptism* which is contrary to ‘sound doctrine’ to support his theory of Resurrectional Responsibility. Before his departure from the Truth, Bro. Andrew had been a great asset and close companion of Bro. Roberts in the work of the gospel writing helpful booklets such as *The Real Christ* and *The Doctrine of the Atonement*.

Teachings on the Atonement Compared:

| | Renunciationist "Clean Flesh" Teachings | Central "Amended" Teachings | JJ Andrew/ Thos. Williams Teachings |
|---|---|---|---|
| Adam's Nature After Sinning: | No Change | Dying with impulses that lead to sin | Dying with physical 'form' of sin styled 'sin-in-the-flesh' nature; legally alienated |
| Sin: | 'Moral' only | 'Moral' & 'Physical' (related as cause & effect) | "Two forms" 'Moral' & 'Physical' |
| Christ's Nature: | Same as Adam before sinning | Dying with impulses that lead to sin | Dying with physical form of sin styled 'sin-in-the-flesh' |
| Christ's Death: | Paid penalty due to man as a 'substitute for us'; Our sins were laid upon him; He did not die for himself or benefit from his death | Condemned sin by mortifying the impulses that lead to sin, thereby, declaring the righteousness of God which forms the basis for forgiveness of sins. | Died as a sacrificial offering to atone for his physical 'sin' nature AND to atone us from both 'our sins' AND our physical 'sin' natures => legal condemnation removed |
| Resurrection: | Always entitled to eternal life; was, therefore, raised to life having paid the penalty due to man | Declaration of God's righteousness; He was 'cleansed' from mortality & corruption by being 'changed' to spirit nature | Having been cleansed from physical sin ('sin-in-the-flesh') by his sacrificial death he was changed to immortality which was incidental to Christ's death |
| Baptism: | Forgiveness of moral sins only | For 'remission of sins' (moral) and symbolic death of 'old man' of the flesh and resurrection of 'new man' to a newness of life | First a 'covering' or 'atonement' for physical sin ('sin-in-the-flesh') and secondly, for moral sin bringing about a legal change from being 'in Adam' to being 'in Christ' |
| Resurrection To Judgment: | Baptised or Unbaptised who have 'knowledge' of God's Truth | Baptised or Unbaptised who have 'knowledge' of God's Truth | Only those who have been baptized for BOTH moral AND physical sin ^f |

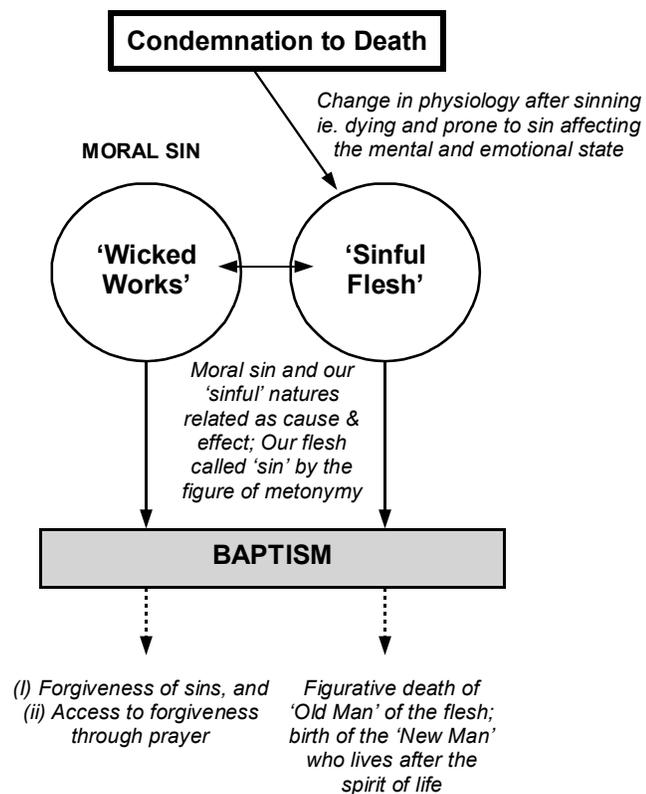
“Clean Flesh” / Renunciationalist Teaching



Sin is ONLY moral.

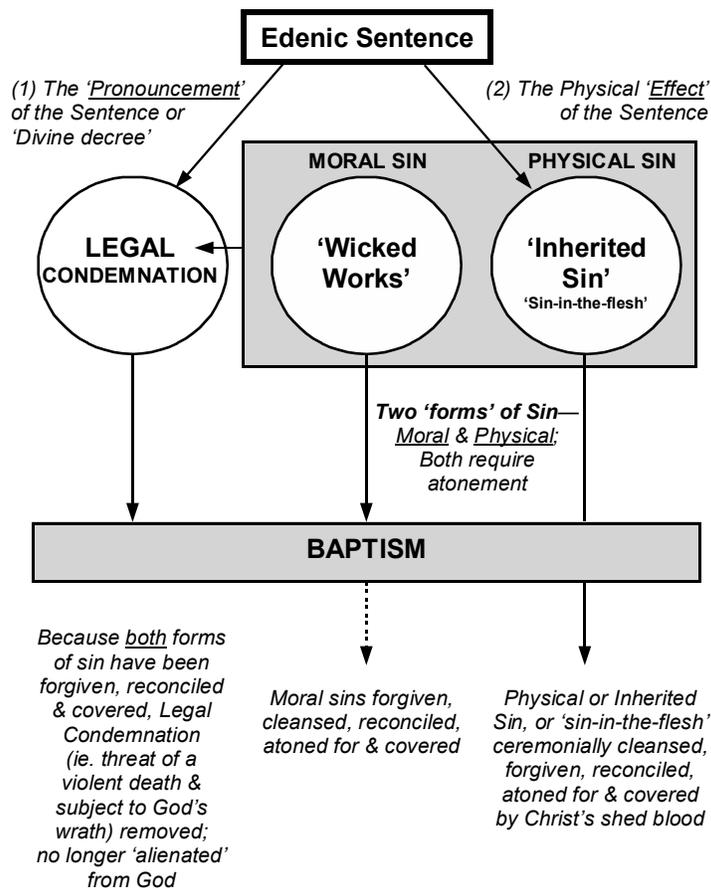
* Please note that charts on this page and following pages serve to express the historical differences, and are not intended to be exhaustive representations of the teachings of each group regarding sin, sacrifice and the purpose of baptism.

Central “Amended” Teaching



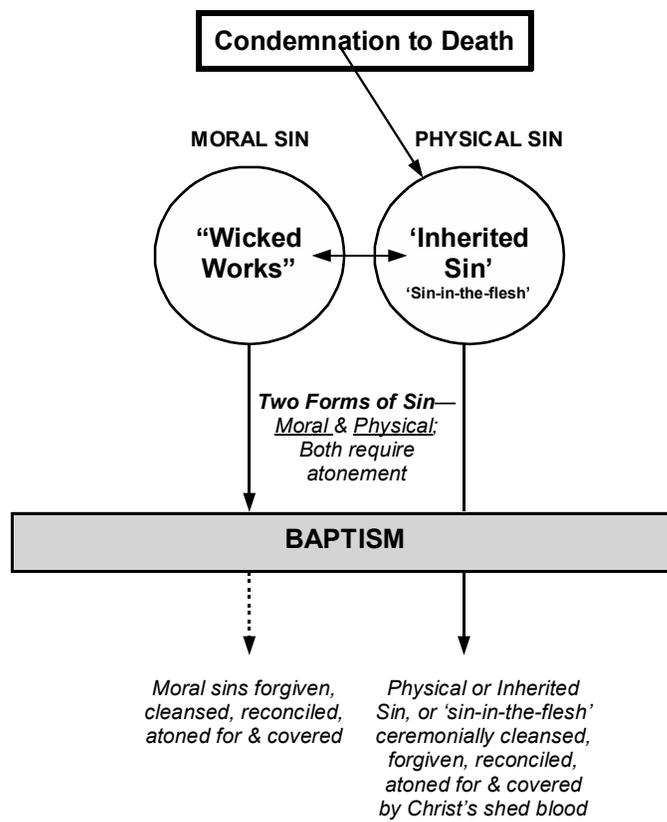
Our moral sins related to our physical flesh, by cause and effect. The flesh is called 'Sin' by metonymy. We are “in Adam” until change to immortality. We remain “in Christ” while “walking in the light”

JJ Andrew / Thomas Williams Teaching



Because both "forms" of sin receive an atonement or covering, condemnation removed and 'legal' status changes from being "in Adam" to being "in Christ"

Berean / Dawn / Old Paths Teaching



No legal change, but both “forms” of sin require an atonement or covering



Part Three:
Understanding
The Differences



1

What is 'Sin'?

When we take a closer look at the extreme teachings considered in Part Two, it becomes evident that these false teachings were predicated upon a misunderstanding of how the word 'sin' is used in Scripture. It was this misunderstanding which led to erroneous beliefs concerning the nature of man, the nature of Christ, the sacrifice of Christ and Resurrectional Responsibility. So then, how *is* the word 'sin' used in Scripture?

(i) Moral transgression:

First of all, the Bible uses the word 'sin' to describe our *moral transgressions* — acts of disobedience which are in opposition to the will of God. For instance, John says: "sin is the *transgression of the law*" (1 John 3:4). He also says that "All *unrighteousness is sin*." (1 John 5:17). And James says that, "To him that *knoweth to do good*, and doeth it not, *to him it is sin*" (James 4:17). Paul says that "*whatsoever is not of faith is sin*" (Romans 14:23).

The word 'sin' literally means 'to miss the mark' which we all do in one way or another, for "all have sinned," says Paul, "and come *short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). Sin, therefore, in its *primary* sense, is the manifestation of a will which is in opposition to the will of God whether in thought, in word or in deed.

(ii) Personification:

Another way in which the word ‘sin’ is used in Scripture is by way of *personification* — a grammatical term or expression used to make an often difficult concept tangible so that it can be more easily understood.

Examples of this grammatical form are found all over Scripture. For instance, *Riches* are personified as “a master” in Matthew 6:24. *Wisdom* is personified as a beautiful and gracious ‘woman’ in Proverbs 3:13, 15; 9:1. *The Spirit of God* is personified as “the Comforter” in John 16:7, 13.

The first time in Scripture that we find ‘sin’ personified is in Genesis 4:7. Cain was angry because of Abel’s “more excellent sacrifice” (Hebrews 11:4). We read that “the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted. And if thou doest not well *Sin lieth at the door...*” (Genesis 4:6-7).^a The word for ‘lieth’ almost always is used of an animal. In fact, the very next time this Hebrew word is found is in Genesis 29:2 where we read that Jacob looked into the field and saw “three flocks of sheep *lying* by a well.” In Genesis 49:9 we read: “Judah is a lion’s whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he *couched* as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?”

Sin is intangible; it cannot crouch or lie down like an animal. However, by personification the Scripture describes sin as being like a wild animal crouching down, ready to spring and devour us. To use the language of James 1:14-15, first Cain was “drawn away of his own lust, and enticed” (his passion was inflamed in anger); “then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin” (sin was ‘crouching at the door’); and “sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (Cain murdered his brother Abel in a jealous rage).^b

Again, in the New Testament there are many examples of ‘sin’ being personified. Consider the Lord’s personification of ‘sin’ in John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11 where he describes sinfulness as being the “*prince of this world*”. In Romans 5:21 Paul personifies sin as being a *monarch* where he says that “Sin hath *reigned* unto death”. Sin is not a King. It is intangible. But Sin, on the other hand, does reign when human nature is left unrestrained and uninfluenced by

the Word of God, leading to death. Again, in Romans 5:14 Paul says that “death *reigned*” because of sin. And again, in Romans 8 Paul personifies Sin as being on trial in a court of justice where it is condemned, and other examples. (CP. Romans 5:21; 6:6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23; 7:7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 17, 20; 8:3.)

(iii) *Metonymy*

A third way in which the word ‘sin’ is used in Scripture is by another grammatical form called ‘metonymy’. Bro. CC. Walker explains: “Metonymy (*meta*, change, and *onoma*, a name, or in grammar, a noun) is ‘a figure by which one name or noun is used instead of another, to which it stands in a certain relation.’ *There is metonymy of cause, of effect, of subject, and of adjunct. Thus ‘sin’ and its synonyms are put for the effects or punishments of sin.*” (C. C. Walker ‘Atonement: Salvation Through the Blood of Christ’).

There are examples throughout Scripture of metonymy. For example, the angels told Lot, his wife and his daughters to hurry out of Sodom, “lest thou be consumed in the *iniquity* (Marg. ‘punishment’) of the city” (Genesis. 19:15; cp. Psalm 7:16; Jeremiah 14:16). ‘Iniquity’ was the cause of punishment. In Zechariah 14:19 “This shall be the *punishment* (marg., *sin*) of Egypt.”

Again, in Deuteronomy. 9:21 Moses says, “I took *your sin*, the calf which ye had made, and burnt it with fire, and stamped it and ground it very small, even until it was as small as dust; and I cast the dust thereof into the brook that descended out of the mount.” In Exodus 32:20 we read that God “strawed it upon the water, and *made the children of Israel drink of it.*” Sin cannot be stamped on, ground very small, strawed upon the water and eaten. However, the *cause* of Israel’s sin — the golden calf — could be stamped on, ground up and strawed upon the water and eaten. Clearly, the words ‘sin’ and ‘calf’ are related as cause and effect as a figure of speech. The golden calf was the cause of their sin.

In Exodus 17:6 “the brook” which flowed from the smitten rock, “was Christ” (cp. 1 Corinthians 10:4). Did Christ literally flow out of the rock? Of course not! In John 7:37 the Lord says, “If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink”. The water flow-

ing out of the rock represented *life* to the children of Israel who were thirsty, just as Christ represents the giving of life to the sinner — the one stands related to the other.

In Hosea 10:8 we read that “the high places of Aven, *the sin* of Israel, shall be destroyed.” Beth-Aven used to be called Beth-el. After Jeroboam made the golden calves and placed them in Dan and Beth-el (1 Kings 12:29), Beth-el (which means the house of *God*) became known as Beth-Aven (the house of *sin*) as it had become synonymous with idolatrous worship. Was it ‘sin’ that Hosea was saying would be destroyed or was it the calf, the *cause* of Israel’s sin, which was destroyed? It was the calf which was destroyed, which was the *cause* of them sinning.

Take as another example the word ‘death’. Primarily, death means the state to which a living man is reduced when his life ceases. But in 2 Kings 4:38-41 one of the sons of the prophets is recorded as saying, “there is *death* in the pot”. Does this mean there was literally a dead body in the pot? No, of course, not! But there was *poison* in the pot which would lead to *death*. In this case, the *effect* of the poison (death) is put for the *cause* of death (poison) by way of metonymy. To say that ‘death’ was in the pot, literally meant that there was something in the pot which would lead to *death*.

Similar language is used elsewhere. Paul says in Romans 5:12 that “death passed upon [RV: ‘through to’] all men” meaning that a *condition* that leads to death has passed upon all men. Again, in Luke 9:60 the Lord said, “let the dead bury their dead” which means ‘Let those *who are destined to die and perish*, bury those who are *actually* dead.’ Again in 1 John 3:14 John says that “we have passed from death unto life”, meaning that we have ‘passed from a *relationship that ends in death, to one that leads to life*.’

All these are figures of *metonymy*.

In his lecture ‘The Atonement: The Bible Doctrine of The Reconciliation to God’ Bro. C.C. Walker explains the importance of understanding how these figures of *personification* and *metonymy* are used in Scripture and comments as follows:

Sin is “lawlessness”—that is the primary meaning of the word as given by the beloved disciple (1 John 3:4). But there are secondary meanings, **by figures of speech** such as **personification** and **metonymy**; and **unless these are recognized confusion will result**.

Bro. Roberts comments in *‘The Slain Lamb’*:

A disregard of **metonymy** and ellipsis in such statements, **has led to most of the errors of the apostacy**, and is leading some back to them who had escaped.

(The Christadelphian, Vol. 11, Page 88, 1874 – Renunciationism – Bro. Robert Roberts)

A misunderstanding on how the word ‘sin’ is used in Scripture and ‘disregard of metonymy’, as it relates to the use of the word ‘sin’ in Scripture, is fatal and leads to many false conclusions regarding God’s redemptive work through Christ. It is this misunderstanding which has become the seed-bed for so many false teachings of the Churches and, if misunderstood by ourselves, can also lead us into error as well.

‘Sin’ in the New Testament

So if our understanding of how the word ‘sin’ is used in Scripture is so important, how *is* it used in Scripture as it relates to the work of God through the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ?

We must remember that it was *sin* or *disobedience* which was the *cause* of suffering and death coming in to the world. As a consequence of Adam’s sinning, we are now dying creatures — subject to death and prone to sin. Christ first came to deal with the *root* of the problem which is ‘sin’. When he returns to the Earth he will deal with its *symptoms* — suffering and death.

It is “our iniquities” or our *sins* that separate us from God (Isaiah 59:2). In Colossians 1:21 Paul says that we are “alienated and enemies in our minds by *wicked works*”. Again, in Ephesians 4:18 Paul says that we are “alienated from the life of God through the *ignorance*.” It is our sinful way of thinking, or “*carnal mind* which is enmity against God” (Romans 8:7). We possess flesh and

blood natures with an inherent tendency towards sinning. Sometimes we find that our flesh and blood natures are referred to as ‘sin’, not because flesh and blood is a ‘form’ of sin or it contains something called ‘sin’, but by the principle of *metonymy* where “the flesh” and “sin” are related as *cause* and *effect*.

There are many occurrences in the New Testament where this principle of *metonymy* is found and where the word ‘sin’ is put for the flesh. Here are some of those examples:

Example Number 1:

The first example is Romans 8:3 where Paul says: “God sending his own Son in the likeness of **sinful flesh** (Mg: ‘sin’s flesh’), and for (RSV: ‘by a sacrifice for’) **sin**, condemned **sin** in the flesh...”

The margin in the KJV says Christ came in the likeness of ‘sin’s flesh’. In other words, the flesh and blood nature that we have now, with its tendency towards sinning, came about as a result of sin. It is the *product* of sin. The phrase ‘sinful flesh’ or ‘sin’s flesh’, therefore, is not referring to a literal physical substance within us called sin or the propensities within us (styled ‘sin-in-the-flesh’). It is a figure of metonymy whereby the *cause* of us disobeying God (our flesh) is related to its *effect* (our sinning).

Physically, we were created of the same substance as the animals. But we are different from the animals because we have been given a mental capacity that has the ability to reason. We are, therefore, intellectually and morally quite different, motivated to either serve ourselves, or serve God, as directed by our consciences. As a consequence of Adam’s sinning, a *physiological* change took place that affected his *mental* and *emotional* state. We have within us an inherent tendency that causes us to sin. Because this inherent tendency is a fixed principle of our being, the Scripture, therefore, uses the word ‘sin’ to describe our flesh and blood nature by metonymy.

In 1965 Bro. L.G. Sargent wrote the following Editorial in the *Christadelphian* in response to a reader’s comments regarding “sin”:

It is abundantly established in our literature (Christendom Astray, for instance) that **the Devil is sin**. That is a different proposition from saying that the Devil is “human nature”, and still further from identifying human nature with the “blood”... and from this equation arguing that in the pouring out of the blood there was a destruction of “human nature” = “sin-in-the-flesh” = “the Devil”. **Human nature is prone to sin; it is not “sin”**.^c

One of the great truths of Scripture, which makes Christadelphians distinct from the Churches around us, is that we believe that Christ shared our same condemned flesh and blood nature with the same inherent tendencies towards sinning. “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of **flesh and blood, he also himself likewise** took part of the same” (Hebrews 2:14). He was “**touched with the feeling of our infirmities**” and “was in in all points tempted like as we are...” (Hebrews 4:15) ...” “He is despised and rejected of men; **a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief... he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows...**” (Isaiah 53:3-4). Bro. Roberts comments on this verse in Romans 8 as follows:

The phrase “sin in the flesh” is **metonymical. It is not expressive of a literal element or principle pervading the physical organization.** Literally, sin is disobedience, or the act of rebellion. The impulses that lead to this, reside in the flesh, **and therefore come to be called by the name of the act to which they give birth.** In determining first principles, we must be accurate in our conceptions.

(*The Christadelphian*, Vol. 6, Page 85, 1869 – *The Relationship of Jesus to the Law of Sin and Death* – Bro. Robert Roberts)

Example Number 2:

A similar passage where we find this figure of metonymy is in Romans 7:18-20 where Paul says: “I know that in me (that is, **in my flesh**,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but **sin that dwelleth in me.**” Again, Bro. Roberts comments on this verse as follows:

The word “sin” is here used by him metonymically for those impulses of the flesh which, obeyed, constitute sin, which is “the transgression of the law.” These *impulses* are referred to by Paul as “**the motions of sins**”; hence he says of himself, “I delight in the law of God after the inward man (the mind which has been renewed in knowledge is thus styled— Col. 3:10); but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to THE LAW OF SIN **which is in my members** .”

Bro. H.P. Mansfield also comments upon these verses in Romans as follows:

Paul describes the desires of the flesh in this way, as a law dominating his members, and bringing him into captivity inasmuch as he gives way to it. **There is no such thing as a physical substance called ‘sin’ in man, but the lusts of the flesh.** This desire of the flesh to assert itself against the law of God is described as ‘sin’ **which is therefore metonymical for human nature.** The word ‘metonymy’ is used of the practise of giving a descriptive word to something: as ‘the bottle’ instead of ‘strong drink’. But in such a use of language the words must be related, as in our illustration. Why then, is human nature called ‘sin’? Because it was manifested in its present form (mortal and sinful) as the result of sin in the beginning.

(‘Human Nature Styled Sin’ - Bro. HP Mansfield)

Example Number 3:

Another passage which uses the principle of *metonymy* to describe the relationship between the *flesh* and *sin*, is Romans 6:6: “Our old man is crucified with him, that the **body of sin** might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin”. Notice the similar language used by Paul in the next chapter where he describes his own body as a ‘body of death’? “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from (Mg: this ‘**body of death**’) the **body of this death?**” (Romans 7:24). In Romans 6:2 Paul is emphasizing that (i) we have a body which is made of flesh and blood with *impulses that lead to us sinning*. In Romans 7:24 Paul emphasizes that (ii) it is a body that is decaying and dying because it is *subject to death*. Both of these pervading principles of our bodies are summarised in Romans 8:2 as ‘the law of *sin* and *death*’.

In an article written for the *Christadelphian*, Bro. CC Walker addressed the question “What is Sin?” He says:

What is sin? We have the apostolic answers concerning transgression and knowing rebellion. But is that all? No, for ***Bible usage speaks of “sin” in other connections by metonymy, whereby the term is applied to the flesh and to objects connected with sin.*** And this must be borne in mind.

(*Christadelphian*, Vol. 44, Page 124, 1907 – What is sin? – Bro. CC Walker)

Two principle acceptations

There are *not* two different ‘forms’ or ‘categories’ of sin (ie. ‘moral’ sin and ‘physical’ sin.) But “the word sin *is* used in two principle acceptations.” There is a world of difference between these two ideas. Misunderstanding the difference leads to all kinds of errors. In *Elpis Israel* Bro. Thomas writes:

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. It is that in the flesh “which has the power of death” and it is called sin, because the development, or fixation, of this evil in the flesh, was the result of transgression. Inasmuch as this ***evil principle*** pervades every part of the flesh, 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.

(*Elpis Israel* – P100 – Chapter 4)

It is most important to recognise the language that Bro. Thomas used. He did not say that “there are two forms of sin”. He said that “the word sin is used in *two principle acceptations*.” He did not say that ‘sin... is the substance called man’. He said that the word ‘sin’... “came to stand for the substance called man.” This language is entirely consistent with other language that he used in this paragraph such as ‘represents’, ‘principle’, ‘is styled’. This is an important differentiation to make because saying that ‘physical flesh’ is ‘sin’ or contains ‘sin’ is completely different from saying that the *word* ‘sin’ came to ‘represent’ or ‘came to

stand for' something. Such teaching would be completely inconsistent with Bro. Thomas' teaching on the nature of man elsewhere throughout *Elpis Israel*, and other writings such as *Eureka* etc. as can be seen from the following quote:

The primitive sense of the word 'sin' is **the transgression of law**; and the **derived sense** that of **evil in the flesh**. Transgression is to this evil **as cause and effect**; which **effect** re-acts in the posterity of the original transgressors **as a cause**, which, uncontrolled by belief of the truth, evolves transgression in addition to those natural ills, disease, death, and corruption, which are inherent in flesh and blood. Because he transgressed the Eden-law, Adam is said to have sinned. **Evil** then evolved in his flesh as the punishment of his **sin; and because the evil was the punishment of sin, it is also styled sin.**"

(Bro. Thomas, *Clerical Theology Unscriptural*, p9)

This is entirely consistent with Bro. Robert's, Bro. John Carter's and Bro. HP Mansfield's teachings on metonymy:

Adam was driven out of Eden because of disobedience. He was therefore thrown back upon himself, so to speak, and he soon found in himself and his progeny how weak and evil a thing the flesh is, for his first son was a murderer. And **because** disobedience or sin, **was the cause** of his expulsion, **and that sin was the result** of the desires of the flesh, **and because** all the desires that are natural to the flesh organisation are because of native ignorance, in directions forbidden, there is no exaggeration, no high figure in talking of **sin in the flesh**. It is Paul's **figure**. He speaks of "sin that dwelleth in **me**" and as he defines 'me' to be "**my flesh**", 'Sin that dwelleth in me' is "sin in the flesh" — **a metonym for those impulses which are native to the flesh**, while knowledge of God and of duty is not native to the flesh.

(*The Slain Lamb – Robert Roberts*)

But how could Paul speak of these impulses which were latent in him, which sprang to life as he said, when the commandment came? How can he speak of them as sin? **By a well known figure of speech; the figure of speech of metonymy is that where a word which stands related to another as cause or effect**, or a mere adjunct maybe, is put for that to which it stands related. And **sometimes we find brethren speaking of two aspects of sin**. It might be permissible to use the phrase, providing it is understood. But I want to enter here and now a

mild caveat against the use of that phrase, “**two aspects of sin.**” **There are not two aspects of sin, there are many aspects of sin.** Sin is what? Well you have a list of the works of the flesh; Adultery and all the abominations with a list of other things such as ill-will, bitterness, wrath, anger, strife, sedition and so on. All these are aspects of sin. **They are all aspects of something that comes within the one category.**
 (“The Atonement” – John Carter - Malvern Town Hall, Melbourne, 1958)

His [Christ’s] flesh was crucified, so that he died. But figuratively he had crucified his flesh day after day, as he put to death its desires and refused to submit to them (Luke 22:42). He taught that sin came from within (Mark 7:21–23), and **is therefore used as a metonym for the flesh**, so that it is said, “He died unto sin once” (Rom. 6:10). In that crucified body, the desires of the flesh were rendered inactive, teaching his followers what they must do figuratively: “For they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections (RV: ‘passions’) and lusts” (Gal. 5:24). His blood was poured out, as a symbol of a dedicated life. The Law taught that “the life of the flesh was in the blood” (Lev. 17:11) and in sacrifice this had to be smeared upon the altar, as a token that the person’s life would be dedicated to doing God’s will.

(Key to Understanding of the Scriptures, 1997– HP Mansfield)

This secondary use of the word ‘sin’ in Scripture by metonymy does not mean that our nature is treated in the same way as transgression. *Transgression needs forgiveness. But our physical natures require changing.* Our physical nature does not need forgiving, covering or atoning for as our transgressions do. The idea that the impulses or desires within us need to be cleansed, forgiven, covered or atoned for is a concept quite foreign to Scripture. Human nature is the *source* of sin because when the unlawful lusts of our nature are excited, lust conceives and brings forth sin (James 1:14-15). Rather, our flesh and blood natures, with those impulses that lead to sin need to be sacrificed, mortified and put to death and ultimately *changed*, as was clearly demonstrated by Christ’s life, death and resurrection.

Notes:

- ^a The word 'sin' is the word 'chattah' in the Hebrew and is used throughout Scripture to describe both the act of transgression or trespass, and under the Law, the 'sin offering'. On the other three occasions that the word is used in Genesis the word is used to describe an act of transgression or trespass. There is no question that when Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden, God implemented a system of faith and worship which included sacrificial offerings *before* the Mosaic Law was implemented (cp. Abraham: Genesis 22; Noah: Genesis 8—both performed 'burnt offerings'). Evidence may, therefore, suggest that the word 'sin' in Genesis 4 refers to a 'sin offering' similar to that offered under the Law.
- ^b Genesis 4:5,8
- ^c Bro. L.G. Sargent, *The Christadelphian* magazine, March 1965



2

A Sacrifice For Sin

So we have seen that flesh is not *literally* sin, but rather the *word* sin is used in Scripture to describe our flesh and blood natures because of the fixed principle within our members that causes us to sin.

So how was it that sin was condemned in the flesh of Jesus? To answer this question we need to consider two key passages more closely.

The *first* is Romans 8:3 where Paul states that “God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, *condemned sin* in the flesh.”

The *second* is Hebrews 2:14 “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*.”

Now the question is this: ‘Are these passages speaking about the physical removal of the impulses to sin through sacrificial purification or cleansing, or are they speaking of something else?’

First of all, we need to define the term ‘condemned’ used by the Apostle in Romans 8:3 The Greek word means “to give judg-

ment against, to judge worthy of punishment, to condemn”. Secondly, the R.V. replaces “for sin” with “as an offering for sin” to denote a sin-offering which is consistent with Isaiah 53:10 which reads “thou shalt make his soul *an offering for sin.*”

The condemnation of sin

In what sense, therefore, was “sin” *condemned* in the flesh of Jesus? In chapters 5-7, Paul has been describing the battle between the thinking of the flesh with its natural impulses to sin with the moral and intellectual desire to do the will of God. For men and women, “Sin” (personified) had always won the battle and consequently, “Death (personified) reigned” (Romans 5:14).

But in Christ, ‘Sin’ was defeated and received its final death warrant. It was ‘judged worthy of punishment and condemned’. Sin was openly condemned by Christ during his *life* of perfect obedience to his Father’s will by “mortifying the deeds of the body” (Romans 8:13; cp. Colossians 3:5). It was openly condemned in his *death* because when he died upon the cross those impulses that lead to sin were rendered powerless, and died. It was *for this very reason* that he was able to die as a sacrifice for sin. Bro. John Carter wrote in his commentary on Romans:

(Christ) condemned sin, *in the flesh**... Sin is condemned by God the judge, and the issue is decided in Christ. Since Christ has not yielded to sin, Sin has lost his claim in the very domain that he regarded as his own—the domain of the flesh. So Paul’s figure runs. ***But the force and significance of “in the flesh” now emerges. The conflict takes place in the flesh—there Sin is overcome,*** and then as the final act, the very climax of the conflict, Jesus lays down his life as a sin-offering. In this was shown the fitness of the flesh for the divinely decreed end of death, and God’s righteousness was declared; but in this very way Christ provides the conditions upon which sins are forgiven (he is the sin offering) and so Sin loses its hold on forgiven and redeemed men and women.

Bro Carter goes on to say in his notes on this verse: “*Not “sin-in-the-flesh” as a compound term, but “Sin, in the flesh”, as the italicized words show.”

This brings us to Hebrews 2:14. In *Elpis Israel*, under the heading 'The Works of the Devil' (page 99), Bro. Thomas states:

There are not two powers of death; but one only. **Hence, the devil and sin, though different words, represent the same thing.** "Sin had the power of death," and would have retained it, if the man, who was obedient unto death, had not gained the victory over it.

The *devil* is defined as "him that had the *power of death*." In Romans 6:23 we learn that "*sin* has the *power of death*". The devil must, therefore, evidently be *sin*. But the *cause* of sin is the unlawful lusts that exist in the natural mind, or as Jesus expressed it: "from within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts" (Mk. 7:21). Hence to destroy sin implies the defeat in battle of a will which is in opposition to the will of God. Christ partook of flesh and blood with all its inherent weaknesses and publicly declared that human nature, as the cause of sin, was rightly related to death. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up" (John 3:14) Even though he himself was sinless, he willingly submitted to the death of the cross as a final act of obedience. There was no longer any possibility that he could yield to temptation. *When Christ died, the devil or sin, also died. A dead man cannot sin!*

So, we can conclude that crucifixion didn't of itself 'cleansed' the body or physically remove the impulses to sin as some form of sacrificial purification. Rather, it was the public condemnation of 'Sin' in the final act of obedience in the life of a righteous man.

To render our impulses *inactive through death* is completely different from somehow removing these impulses through sacrificial cleansing. A body that is dead is incapable of reacting to any desires of the flesh. *But that does not mean that a body that is dead has been physically cleansed of those same impulses.* The idea of 'condemning' is to defeat those unlawful desires which are inherent in human nature. This was achieved morally throughout the Lord's life of perfect obedience, with the crucifixion of his body being the final demonstration of what was rightly due to flesh, and, finally, by his resurrection and change to spirit-nature. Thus, it was "through death" that he destroyed "the devil". These principles do not even come close to suggesting the physical removal of fleshly impulses by sacrificial cleansing.

On page 26 of 'The Blood of Christ' Bro. Roberts says:

It pleased God to require the **ceremonial condemnation** of this sin-nature in crucifixion, in the person of a righteous possessor of it, as the basis of our forgiveness.

The condemnation was "ceremonial" which means that it was a public declaration and this concept excludes any idea of physically cleansing the body by sacrifice.

Again, in *The Christadelphian* in 1876 p42 speaking of death and cleansing Bro. Roberts says:

It [cleansing] was not used in the sense of the removal of physical blemish in the living person. In that sense death would be a strange mode of cleansing: cure a mortal man of his mortality by killing him! **Immortalisation is the physical cleansing.**

Bro. Thomas also wrote this in *Eureka* (vol 3, p587):

Passing through the grave cleanses no one. They who emerge thence come forth with the same nature they carried into it; and therefore their coming forth is *Re*-surrection.

In 1901, *The Christadelphian* magazine published an article called 'The Seed of the Serpent and the Seed of the Woman'. The following is an extract from that article:

The same apostle describes these two seeds respectively as "the children of God," and "the children of the devil"; the latter term having for its scriptural signification what the apostle Paul describes as "sin in the flesh"; and which he said dwelt in him, for, said he, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing. . . . Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me ." ***The word "sin" is here used by him metonymically for those impulses of the flesh which, obeyed, constitute sin, which is "the transgression of the law."*** These impulses are referred to by Paul as " the motions of sins"... ***How was sin in the flesh condemned in him?*** By his crucifixion, **in the nature under condemnation**, "sinful flesh." But although he had upon him the same nature which we possess, he, unlike us, was without sin (personal transgression). **He could thus suffer the consequences of sin, and survive those consequences by resurrection**

from the dead, which no other man could, for the simple reason that all have sinned—“there liveth not a man that sinneth not.” And when thus raised from the dead to eternal life, the law of sin and death was destroyed in his own person; concerning which, Paul says: “Forasmuch 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 ” (Hebrews 2:14). If we look at Christ as he now is, we shall see what is meant by the destruction of the devil; for that word is simply **a personification of sin** as it exists in human nature.

(Christadelphian, Vol. 38, Page 325, 1901)

It was because Christ shared our condemned sin-affected nature with its condemnation to death and proneness to sin, that he could die as *the* perfect sacrifice for sin. He destroyed sin in his own life by overcoming the lusts that lead to sin, and thereby, represented the whole of Mankind in doing so. As a consequence of him leading a sin-less life, the grave could not hold him and he was raised from the dead and given eternal life.

Christ’s sacrifice was a self-less act of obedience to fulfill the will of his Heavenly Father “to take away the sin of the world”. Some may say that Christ needed to make a cleansing or purifying offering for himself after the pattern of the high priest in the tabernacle, on account of physical sin that he possessed in his nature. If this is the case, then Christ’s sacrifice became *first* about himself and *then* about us. Christ was sent on account of *sin*. His death declared the righteousness of God which formed *the basis* “for the remission of sins”, and he shared our same condemned nature in doing so. Yet he benefited because the grave could not hold him. He was raised from the dead as the “firstfruits of them that slept”^a and now enjoys eternal life. As the Apostle Paul says, we have been “reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present us holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight” (Colossians 1:21-22). Any theory or idea that separates his work from his mission, calls into question the very character and righteousness of Christ. Christ came *first* to fulfill His Father’s will. He came to save sinners, declaring the righteousness of God, but benefited himself as the “firstborn from the dead” (Col. 1:18).

Made sin for us

The language of the New Testament sometimes seems to imply that our sins were somehow ‘laid upon Christ’ or ‘imputed to him’ as he hung on the cross. We read that he “*bare our sins* in his own body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:24) and that he “came to *bare the sins* of many” (Hebrews 9:28). However, this is the substitutionary idea of the extreme teaching of ‘Clean Flesh’. Our sins are intangible and could not have been placed ‘upon him’ on the cross. But the *responsibility* for achieving the work that he was sent to accomplish was laid upon him. And he “bare” this responsibility by being “made sin for us” (2 Corinthians 5:21) and submitting to His Father’s will.

Now in what sense was Christ “made to be sin for us”? Some have suggested that the word “sin” should be rendered as ‘sin offering’. But in this case, this cannot be sustained from the Greek. The answer is that he was “*made to be sin* for us” in the sense that he was made of flesh and blood with impulses *that lead to sin*. This language is the language of *metonymy* similar to those examples that we considered earlier. To say that he was “made sin” is to say that he was made of the same substance as us, that he shared our nature and was subject to temptation and sin like us. He bore a huge responsibility as the representative of Mankind to rise above temptation and sin, and manifest God perfectly in His life as a basis for our reconciliation to God, without which neither he nor we could be saved.

The antithesis of this idea is found in the book of Hebrews where we read that: “Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time *without sin* unto salvation” (Hebrews 9:28). To say that when Christ returns to the Earth he will be “without sin” is to say that when he returns, he will return with a physical constitution not made of flesh and blood, but made of spirit-nature and, therefore, not subject to temptation and sin, and not subject to death.

Notes:

^a 1 Corinthians 15:20



3

How Did Christ Benefit?

Imagine for a moment that we are standing on a beach. All of a sudden the sound of a man in distress echoes across the bay. The man is crying for help and in danger of drowning. The lifeguard springs into action. In no time he is in the water and ploughing through the waves in the hope of reaching the man before he drowns. Standing on the beach are two observers. The first turns to the second and is heard to say: “I wonder! Do you think he will save himself *first* or the man who is drowning?”

One cannot but see the folly of such a question. The very point of the lifeguard jumping into the water in the first place was to save a helpless victim. But without saving himself, it would be impossible for the victim to be saved!

It is the same with the work of God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ did not come to save himself *first* or to save us *first*. He came to do the will of His Heavenly Father *first*! “I come to do thy will, O God!” (Hebrews 10:9) We are told that the reason the Lord Jesus Christ came was “to save sinners”.^a But Christ benefited from his own death because he, too, shared our nature and was under the dominion of death^b and, therefore, needed saving from mortality and death.

This leads us to an often debated question which is: *How did Christ benefit from his own sacrifice?*

We have seen that the ‘Renunciationist’ or ‘Clean Flesh’ theory taught that Christ *did not benefit from his death because he was always entitled to eternal life*, but gave up his life voluntarily in a self-less act of obedience and paid the penalty due to Man.

On the other hand, we have also looked at the theory of ‘Inherited Legal Condemnation’ which taught there are two *forms* of sin, moral and physical, *and that Christ benefited because he needed a covering, sacrificial cleansing or purification of his physical sin-nature* which was accomplished *by* the personal sacrifice of himself.

The truth is that Christ needed redeeming just as much as we do. But Scripture does not teach that there are two different *forms* of sin that need to be *covered, atoned for, purified, reconciled by sacrificial cleansing*. Rather, Scripture uses the **word** ‘sin’ in two different *ways* (i) primarily, to describe our *moral* transgressions – ie. disobedience, and (2) secondarily, to describe our *physical* flesh and blood natures by a figure of speech called metonymy (where the *flesh* is related to *sin* by **cause and effect**) or by personification.

If then, there are not two ‘types’ or ‘forms’ of sin, but rather the ‘word’ sin is used in Scripture in two different ways, then naturally we might ask ourselves: ‘How *was* Christ involved in his own sacrifice?’ and ‘Did he need to die for *himself*?’

Well, as we saw from the Debate, the answer to this question really depends on what one means by the phrase “for himself”.

If the question is being asked in the sense of “Did Christ need to die as a *sacrificial offering to cleanse himself, atone, or make reconciliation for his flesh and blood nature because it was a form of sin or contained sin*”, then the answer is **NO**, he did NOT need to die “for himself”.

However, if the question is being asked in the sense of “Did Christ need to die in order that he himself would benefit from his own death?” then absolutely, **YES!** Christ needed redemption and saving out of death, just as much as we do.

It was “*through death*” that he was saved, not because he

made a sacrificial offering to atone or make reconciliation *FOR his flesh and blood nature*. He was saved ‘out of death’ because of his life of perfect obedience and the obedient act of laying down his life as a sacrificial offering as a basis for the remission of *our sins*, which declared the righteousness of God and condemned Sin, all in accordance to the will of His Heavenly Father.

His death was an integral part of the plan and purpose of God. *And so was his subsequent resurrection. These two aspects of the work of God through our Lord Jesus Christ are inseparable elements of the doctrine of the Atonement.* He mortified the deeds of the flesh in his life and literally nailed that flesh with its fleshly desires to a cross at his death. But the ‘cleansing’ aspect of the atonement came *after* his resurrection when he was “changed” from mortality to immortality, from corruptible to incorruptible.^c *Christ’s death was not a sacrificial cleansing FOR his nature. His death was the ‘ceremonial condemnation’ of sin in the body of a righteous man. It was the final death-blow to sin as he laid down his life in obedience to His Father’s will. It was “through death” that his nature was cleansed by his subsequent immortalization after his resurrection when he was changed from human nature to spirit-nature. Bro. Thomas makes this distinction between the need for the ‘cleansing’ of our transgressions and the need for cleansing of our natures when he writes:*

To say that a man is purged, purified, or cleansed is the same as to affirm that he is justified, or constituted righteous, and sanctified or made holy. It is sin that makes unclean — unclean by nature, because born of sinful flesh; and unclean by practice because transgressors in the sight of God. ***The cleansing process is therefore intellectual, moral and physical . . . But the cleansing of the soul needs to be followed by the cleansing of the body*** to make the purification of man complete. If the spiritual cleansing have been well done (and if the word of truth have done it, it will) ***the corporeal cleansing [ie. physical] will be sure to follow.***

(*The Herald of the Coming Age*, 1855, page 202)

Spiritual cleansing must come before *physical cleansing* — not the other way around! **Christ did not die FOR his nature. He died BECAUSE HE SHARED our nature.** There is a big difference! The first idea suggests that Christ was alienated, guilty or required reconciliation on account of how he was born. The second teaches that Christ was one of us, shared our nature and in need of redemption from a body under condemnation of sin and death, as much as we are. He “laid down his life for us” (1 John 3:16) in perfect obedience^d to the will of His Heavenly Father as **THE** perfect sacrifice to “purge our sins” (Hebrews 1:3).

Baptism does not deal directly with our natures... But as he [Christ] bore no moral accountability for his mortality, **he did not have to make an offering for the nature he received at birth.**

(Bro. Michael Ashton, Editorial, p 467 *The Christadelphian*, December 1993)

Since the “wages of *sin* is death”, it is evident that it is *sin* that has the “power of death”. But the cause of us sinning is the flesh with its inherent tendencies that lead to sin. Christ destroyed ‘sin’ in his own life, because when he died, after a faithful life of obedience, those tendencies within him that lead to sin, died. The final moment of conflict represents Christ’s entire life — the conflict between sin and righteousness. Sin was condemned and God’s righteousness was declared. Consequently, he was raised to life and redeemed from corruption and death. Thus, the basis for men and women to receive forgiveness of sins was established through the mercy and forbearance of God, and all who choose to identify themselves with, and participate in, Christ’s sacrificial life, death and resurrection can share the same benefits that God, for Christ’s sake, is willing to offer.

Notes:

^a 1 Timothy 1:15

^b Romans 6:9

^c 1 Corinthians 15:53-54

^d Philippians 2:8



4

Types and Shadows

Imagine for a moment that you are standing in an open field and that the field is completely surrounded by trees. The sun is setting on the horizon and in the distance is the silhouette of the trees. But as hard as you try, because of the failing light, you cannot see the individual trees or the leaves or the branches or the blossoms on the trees. All you can see is their outline and shadows.

You then turn around 180° and look completely in the other direction towards the opposite tree-line. With the sun now shining at your back, rather than seeing just shapes and shadows, you now see the trees in great detail, and bushes and shrubs as well. You can see the contrasts and colours, shapes and sizes. You can even tell what kind of trees they are, their sizes and whether they are in bloom.

This analogy is helpful when it comes to our understanding of the work of God through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Law was a 'shadow'. It was NOT the real thing. It contained only *types* and *shadows* that gave an outline or silhouette of the real thing. *The Lord Jesus Christ is the **REAL** thing. He was **THE** real sacrifice that the Law pointed forward to in type.* This is a most important

principle for us to understand. If we do not understand and accept this principle, we can get ourselves into all kinds of trouble when trying to understand the saving work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul says that the Law was “*a shadow* of good things to come, and *not the very image of the things*” (Hebrews 10:1); that it was a “*schoolmaster* to bring us unto Christ” (Galatians 3:24); that it was “*a figure* for the time then present” (Hebrews 9:9). In other words, it was a teacher, teaching principles and lessons about God’s work through the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As a result of his perfect life of obedience and the laying down of his life by sacrificial death, he was saved out of death and raised to life by the power of the Father. His sacrificial death was an open declaration for all to see, of what is due to sin and that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 15:50). His resurrection and subsequent change to immortality was God’s stamp of approval on his life of obedience and sacrificial death. God was vindicated. His righteousness was declared. Hence, in Acts 1 we are told that he “shewed himself alive”^a for forty days, and Paul says that he was “raised for our justification.”^b All of these principles were outlined by *types and shadows* in the Old Testament Law as they pointed forward to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Order of Mechizedec

Passages sometimes used to prove that Christ had to make an offering, or atonement, ‘for himself’ in the sense that he needed a sacrificial purification or cleansing of his nature in order to make reconciliation *for himself* to God, are found in the book of *Hebrews*. However, upon closer examination of the text, it is evident that concept is completely contrary to the very lesson that the Apostle is trying to teach!

First of all, the introduction to the Apostle’s argument commences in Hebrews 7 where we are asked to consider Melchizedec the priest *as a type of Christ*, not by way of comparison but rather, as a *contrast* to the Levitical Priesthood of Aaron (cp. Psalm 110).

Consider the following:

- (1) “*Melchisedec*” (v.1) means “king of righteousness”; **but** the Aaronic priesthood was corrupt.^c
- (2) “*without father, without mother, without descent*” (v.3): Melchisedec had no Jewish genealogy recorded and was a priest *before* the Aaronic priesthood was formed; **but** the Aaronic priesthood could be traced back for generations, and was limited to just one family in Israel.
- (3) “*No beginning of days, nor end of life*” (v. 3): There was no record of a beginning or end of Melchisedec’s role as a priest; **but** the levitical priests had *finite* periods during their lifetimes that they could serve as a priest.
- (4) “*Made like (Gk: ‘resembling’) unto the son of God*” (v.3): The character of the Melchisedec priesthood is described as reflecting that of God; **but** the Aaronic priesthood was purely of human descent, exposing man’s sinfulness and need for forgiveness and redemption.
- (5) “*Consider how great this man was*” (v.4): He was shown in the Genesis record to be greater than Abraham who was the *father* of the nation of Israel from whom the Aaronic priesthood descended!

And so we can see the point: Christ was after the “*order* (character) of Melchisedec”.^d He was taken from among men and, therefore, qualified to be a priest, *but* he was righteous in all his ways. He was made of a woman, *but* he was also the son of the Father, who was himself “*without beginning of days, nor end of life*”. He was subject to “the law of sin and death” (ie. prone to sin and subject to death), *but* he was a reflection of the character of God. He was a high priest in the typical sense that a priest under Aaron was ordained, *but* he was a high priest to gentiles as well, outside of the Israelitish constitution of things.

Having introduced us to a *new* priesthood “after the order of Melchisedec”, the Apostle goes on to make a number of other significant contrasts between Christ, as a high priest under this *new order*, and the Aaronic priesthood under the *Mosaic order*.

The first *contrast* is in Hebrews 7:23-24:

They [Aaronic High Priests] truly were **many** priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: **But** this man, because he continueth ever, hath ***an unchangeable priesthood***.

The second *contrast* is in Hebrews 7:26-27:

For such an high priest became us... ***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 third *contrast* is in Hebrews 9:7-12

The first tabernacle... was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices... which stood ***only*** in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them ***until the time of reformation***. **But** Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and ***more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands***, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into **the holy place**, having obtained eternal redemption for us

The fourth contrast is in Hebrews 9:14-15:

For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to ***the purifying of the flesh***: **How much more** shall ***the blood of Christ***, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, ***purge your conscience from dead works*** to serve the living God?

The fifth *contrast* is in Hebrews 9:6-7,26-28:

Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. ⁷But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered ***for himself, and for the errors of the people... but*** now **once** in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself... So Christ was **once** offered ***to bear the sins of many...***"

Notice the language used by the apostle such as 'once', 'but' and 'for'. This is not language of *comparison* but of *contrast*.

- (1) *Unlike the Aaronic Priesthood*, there is now no succession of the high priest because of mortality. Christ is immortal and, therefore, a high priest ‘forever’!
- (2) *Unlike the Aaronic Priesthood*, there is now no need to continue to make daily sacrifices for sins! He did this by the sacrifice of himself ‘once’!
- (3) *Unlike the Aaronic Priesthood*, Christ entered into *the* real ‘Holy Place’ not the ‘figure then present’ which had been ‘made with hands’, and he entered it *once*!
- (4) *Unlike the Aaronic Priesthood* which killed animals for the ceremonial cleansing ‘to the purging of *the flesh*’, the death of Christ ‘purges *our consciences* from dead works’!
- (5) *Unlike the Aaronic Priesthood*, there was no need for him to make two separate offerings! He did this by the sacrifice of himself ‘once... to bear the *sins* of many’!

So the question might be asked: ‘Why *two* separate entrances into the Most Holy Place?’ Because the *figure* or *shadow* of the Law was *typical* of the process of redemption for *himself* and for *us*. He has gone into the Most Holy Place to be with His Father in an immortalized state wearing “bells” (‘good words’) and “pomegranates” (‘good deeds’) ^e. When he appears a second time he will do so “without sin” (not bearing a nature that exists as a consequence of sin entering the world — subject to death and prone to sin) and will bring everlasting salvation to us.

A covering

At the beginning of our study we saw that the word ‘atonement’ does not appear in the New Testament Greek. Rather, the word should be translated as ‘reconciliation’. In order to restore Mankind to a position of true fellowship with the Father, moral and physical changes need to take place. Such changes, as we have seen, will be accomplished through God’s method of reconciliation and redemption.

However, in the Old Testament, the Hebrew word ‘kaphar’,

often translated as ‘atonement’, does appear some 102 times. It is a word that gives the idea of ‘covering’. It is used most frequently in the Law of Moses and is used in connection with both people as well as inanimate objects used in service by the priesthood. Because the meaning of the Hebrew word gives the idea ‘to cover’, and because the Old Testament rituals of the Law are types and shadows, it is sometimes argued that *we* require ‘atonement’ or ‘a covering’ for our physical natures. The root of this idea is found in Genesis 3 when Adam and Eve were clothed with animal skins by God.

In Part One, we considered what was achieved when God clothed Adam and Eve with skins. Since Genesis 3 does not provide a specific reason, we have to depend upon the context and other Scriptures to understand the significance of the slaying of the Lamb at the foundation of the world. In John 1:29 – “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world,” John believed that Jesus was the Lamb of Genesis 3 who would take away *transgression*. There is no mention of anything else such as a covering for fallen human nature. In Romans 4:7 Paul quotes from a Psalm of David (Psalm 32:1) and says: “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose *sins are covered*.” David believed that *to cover sins* correlated to *the forgiveness of sins*. He did not mention a covering or atonement for fallen human nature.

The covering of their nakedness was a covering of their shame, something that came about as a direct result of their transgression (Genesis 3:10-11; cp. Isaiah 47:3; Revelation 3:18; 16:15). To cover that shame was to indicate that its *cause* (their transgression) was forgiven. God condemned their transgression (Genesis 3:17). The consequence of their transgression was a nature which was under condemnation of death.

The clothing of their nakedness was a symbol of the forgiveness of their sins. There is nothing in Scripture that says that human nature needed to be covered before sins could be forgiven. Scripture speaks about the forgiveness of sins. If the doctrine of covering of nature was a crucial part of apostolic teaching, would we not expect a number of unambiguous Scriptural quotations to support these ideas? But the fact is that they are conspicuously ab-

sent from the record. If we build scriptural arguments upon the interpretation of *types*, then we are building upon a very shaky foundation.

Atonement in the Old Testament

So how are we to understand the way in which the word ‘atonement’ is used in the Old Testament?

Well, it is used to describe the physical covering of inanimate objects. For example, in Genesis 6 Noah is told to ‘pitch’ the inside of the ark with ‘pitch’. In Exodus 25 Moses was told to place a ‘mercy seat’ (Hebrew: ‘kapporeth’) above the ark as a lid or a covering. In Lamentations 3:16 the Hebrew word ‘kaphash’ is used where we read that “He *covered* me with ashes.”

But, while, it is used to signify a physical ‘covering’, this is not always the case. In fact, of the 102 times that the Hebrew word ‘kaphar’ is found, it is translated ‘atonement’ 76 times, ‘purge’ 7, ‘reconciliation’ 4, ‘reconcile’ 3, ‘forgive’ 3, ‘purge away’ 2, ‘pacify’ 2, ‘atonement...made’ 2, ‘merciful’ 2, ‘cleansed’ 1, ‘disannulled’ 1, ‘appease’ 1, ‘put off’ 1, ‘pardon’ 1, and ‘pitch’ 1. These examples show how the word is used in a non-physical way:

- (1) **Genesis 32:20** – “I will *appease* him (Esau) with a present.” Jacob did not physically cover Esau with the droves of animals he was bringing.
- (2) **Exodus 32:30** – “And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto Yahweh peradventure I shall make an *atonement* for your sin.” What was the nature of the covering of sin that Moses sought? Did he seek to somehow physically cover their physical sin-nature with some physical substance? The record goes on to say in the next verse that Moses prayed for their forgiveness – “Yet now if thou wilt *forgive* their sin (v31-33).” The word “forgive” is “nasah” “to lift up, bear away.” *To make an atonement is equated with forgiveness.* There is no hint of a physical covering for their fallen nature – it is a request for the forgiveness of their transgression. Note, too, that the word “forgiveness”, even

though it is used of bearing things away, it is not pressed into some literal application. Why then is the word “atonement” pressed into a literal meaning? There is no consistency in this approach.

- (3) In the days of Hezekiah in **2 Chronicles 30:18-19** we read: “For a multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim, and Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good LORD *pardon* every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary.” The word “pardon” is “kaphar.” Was Hezekiah expecting a physical covering? Was he expecting God to cover their fallen nature? Or was he asking for the forgiveness of their sins? The next verse (v.20) tells us what God did – “And Yahweh hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people.” Atoning is paralleled with healing and restoring. This healing is the forgiveness of their iniquities.
- (4) **Proverbs 16:14** – “The wrath of a king is as messengers of death: but a wise man will *pacify* it”. The word “pacify” is “kaphar” and cannot refer to a physical covering. (The same word is translated “pacify” in Ezekiel 16:63 where once again it cannot refer to a physical covering).
- (5) **Isaiah 28:18** – “And your covenant with death shall be *disannulled* (Hebrew – kaphar).” How can you put a physical covering over an agreement with death? It is impossible.

There are other passages outside the Law of Moses which parallel the forgiveness of sins with the covering of peoples’ iniquity or the atonement of their *sins* (cp. Isaiah 6:7, Jeremiah 18:23, Daniel 9:24).

So the word ‘atonement’ is used in Scripture in a physical or non-physical way. The context must determine whether the passage of Scripture is talking about a *literal* physical covering of an object or the covering of our *sins*. If we insist on reading a *literal*

physical covering every time we see the word “atone”, then we can fall into the danger of imposing an interpretation of Scripture which is not there. The truth is that there is not one Scripture that teaches that Christ’s nature was literally cleansed, purified or atoned for *by* sacrifice, or that our fallen nature needs to be *covered* before we can approach the throne of grace. If we start from the incorrect premise that Adam and Eve required a literal covering or atonement for their physical nature before their transgression could be forgiven, (because it is a ‘form’ of sin), then naturally, we would be forced to impose an interpretation upon Scripture to support that false conclusion.

Cleansing

Many of the occurrences of the word ‘atonement’ in the Old Testament have to do with atoning or covering the *sins* of the people, either collectively or individually. But ‘atonement’ was also made for inanimate objects as well. In Hebrews 9:22-23 we read that: “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; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.” The word ‘purged’ is translated elsewhere in the New Testament as “cleansed”. For instance, in 2 Corinthians 7:1 Paul says that we should “*cleanse* ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” In Ephesians 5:25-26 Paul instructs husbands to love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and *cleanse* it with the washing of water by the word.” And again in 1 John 1:9 we are told that: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to *cleanse* us from all unrighteousness.” The question we need to ask ourselves in the context of the atonement and cleansing, is: ‘Were the cleansing rituals of the Law *ceremonial* cleansings or *literal* cleansings?’

Of course, in one sense, the instruments and vessels of the tabernacle needed cleaning daily as part of the priestly service. But the idea of cleansing had great spiritual significance.

Leviticus 16 records the activities and preparations for the Day of Atonement. We read that “on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your *sins* before the LORD” (v30). So on the Day of Atonement, atonement was made for the ‘sins’ of the people. But it was not only the people that required ‘atonement’ or ‘cleansing’. The ‘holy place’ itself also needed atoning (v16). But why? Well the reason is given: “*because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins*: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness.” The holy place was unclean *because of the sins of the people*.



“Christ’s blood is not a ‘cleansing agent’ for sin.”

Similarly, in Exodus 29:36-37 we read that Israel were instructed to: “*cleanse the altar*, when thou hast made an atonement for it, and thou shalt anoint it, to sanctify it. Seven days thou shalt make an atonement for the altar, and sanctify it; and it shall be an altar most holy.” Again, the altar was an inanimate object. It had no sins to be atoned for or forgiven. But the altar had become polluted or ‘defiled’ because of the *sins* of the people, and consequently, it required cleansing.

However, these figures run deeper than simply teaching us that the altar was polluted because of the sins of the people. Christ, like us, was himself ‘defiled’ and ‘unclean’ because of the nature that he shared with us. He required redeeming just as much as we do. But it was “through death” that this was accomplished when he was changed to spirit nature after his resurrection from the dead. Christ was defiled or made unclean because “he bore our sins” in the sense that he shared our dying sin-prone nature. He needed redeeming from mortality and death just as much as we do.

A somewhat curious comment is added to the record in Exodus 29:37 where we are told that “*whatsoever toucheth the altar shall be holy*.” As we have seen, the things of the Law were types and shadows pointing forward to the Lord Jesus Christ. They were representations of Christ himself. He was the *altar*; he was the *mercy-seat*; he was the *shewbread* etc. The lesson of the altar

teaches us that the Lord Jesus Christ shared our same death-stricken nature with an inherent tendency towards sinning, and needed ‘cleansing’ in the sense that he needed redemption by being ‘changed’ from flesh and blood to spirit nature. But it also teaches us that we, too, can be ‘cleansed’ by our association with Christ as our altar, *firstly*, from the unrighteousness of our sins, and, *secondly*, by God’s grace, from mortality and death after the resurrection. Christ was the first to benefit from his death. If we ‘touch’ Christ as our altar, we, too, can also benefit, for he is able to “present us holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight” (Colossians 1:22).

The fact that Man is physically ‘unclean’ because he has a death-stricken nature with an inherent tendency towards sinning does not mean that he is morally alienated from God on account of his nature. It is our transgressions that separate us or ‘alienate’ us from God.

Clause 5 of the BASF reads as follows:

That Adam broke this law, and was adjudged unworthy of immortality, and sentenced to return to the ground from whence he was taken — **a sentence which defiled** and became a physical law of his being, and was transmitted to all his posterity.

The BASF uses the term “defiled” in Clause 5 referring to the fact that we have a nature in need of redemption. The original Christadelphian Statement of Faith arranged by Bro. Thomas and published by Bro. Roberts in 1869 states:

“That Adam broke this law, and was adjudged unworthy of immortality, and sentenced to return to the ground from whence he was taken; (1) a sentence carried into execution by the implantation of a physical law of decay, which works out dissolution and death; (2) and while a man is yet alive, gives him, where it is left to its uncontrolled operation, a tendency in the direction of sin.” This is all embraced by the term “defiled” in the BASF.



**“Sin in the flesh
cannot be atoned
for or reconciled
to God. ”**

In Conclusion

If we cannot see the difference in language used between literal cleansing and ceremonial cleansing, we can get ourselves into all kinds of trouble. *Christ's blood is not a literal cleansing agent for sin.* The 'blood' represents the *death* of the Lord Jesus Christ, just as his 'body' is synonymous with his *death* (cp. *The Blood of Christ*, by Robert Roberts). Yet, the *sacrifice* of Christ is not merely about the death of Christ. It is about the *entire process* — his life, death and resurrection. If we fail to see these principles, we can easily slide into error as the Churches did years ago.

Bro. H. P. Mansfield wrote this (Logos, volume 43, number 8; May 1977):

The bias in the flesh to please itself rather than God is styled "sin in the flesh", because it was developed through sin, and is the root cause of sin. **Sin in the flesh cannot be atoned for, reconciled to God, or redeemed, though its possessors may be.** It must be "mortified", "put to death," "crucified," and the nature "changed" (1 Cor 15:51), by the individual being clothed upon by his "house from heaven" defined by Paul as "mortality being swallowed up of life" (2 Cor 5:4).

The Truth is beautiful in its simplicity:

- (1) Christ shared our same *physical* dying sin-prone nature.
- (2) He was *morally* perfect and did no sin.
- (3) Because he was *morally* perfect but shared our same *physical* nature he died as **THE** perfect sacrifice for "the purging of sins" (Hebrews 1:3). In laying down his life he declared the righteousness of God, condemned sin and demonstrated that flesh and blood cannot be redeemed or saved. Rather that it must be mortified and put to death, and the carnal thinking of the mind must be harnessed and not allowed to reign.
- (4) He was the first to benefit from the sacrifice of himself, for as a member of Adam's race and our 'leader' he had to be saved out of death and "changed" from mortality to immortality. This happened when he was "changed" (1 Corinthians 15) to spirit-nature after his resurrection.

- (5) The work of God through the Lord Jesus Christ forms the basis for the forgiveness of sins. We are baptized into Christ for the remission, or forgiveness, of our sins, “becoming heirs to the covenants of promise.” Symbolically, the old fleshly man with his sins of the past dies, and a new spiritual man is born to newness of life, remaining “in Christ” so long as we “walk in the light”.
- (6) Those who come to a knowledge of the Gospel of the One Faith, whether baptized or unbaptized, God will raise to judgment. Those who have been baptized and judged faithful, God will reward with eternal life. Those who have rejected the call to the knowledge of the Gospel of the One Faith, or have been baptized and judged unfaithful, God will condemn to everlasting death

This is the simplicity of the Truth as it is expressed in the pages of Scripture.

Notes:

- ^a Acts 1:3
- ^b Romans 4:25
- ^c cp. Malachi 2
- ^d Hebrews 6:20
- ^e Exodus 39:25-26



5

False Conclusions

Bible teaching is that we have received the genetic effects of Adam’s transgression — Man is (i) ‘subject to death’ and (ii) has an inherent tendency towards sinning (together described in Scripture as: ‘the law of sin and death’ or the ‘law within our members’). We also find that the word ‘sin’ is used throughout Scripture in its *primary sense* to describe our moral transgressions and, in a *secondary sense*, to describe our physical natures by commonly used figures of speech such as *personification* (where something tangible is put for something intangible) or *metonymy* (where the cause is put for the effect.) While we need to be reconciled to the Father on account of our *transgressions* (which are the cause of our separation from God), our physical natures DO NOT require a *purifying* ‘sacrifice’ or ‘atonement’ in order to ‘cleanse’ or ‘make reconciliation for’ our physical natures. Rather, our flesh and blood natures require mortifying and putting to death and “changing” to spirit-nature after the resurrection and Judgment.

In Part Two we saw that early on in the history of the brotherhood, the Truth was challenged by two extreme views regarding

the redeeming work of God through the Lord Jesus Christ. At one end was the idea of *Clean Flesh* (or 'Free-life') which said that Christ did not share our nature, was not under condemnation of death, and, therefore, died *instead of us* as a penalty for what was due to us because of our sins, but was not involved and did not benefit himself.

At the other extreme was the belief of *inherited legal alienation* that taught that we are not only alienated from God because of our sins, but we are alienated from Him by birth "without any will on the part of our own", because the very nature which we bare is a 'form' of sin, or contains something called 'sin', (sometimes referred to as 'sin-in-the-flesh') which requires a purifying or a cleansing 'sacrifice' or 'atonement'. Only when both physical *and* moral sin has been 'atoned for' or 'covered' can *inherited legal alienation* or *Adamic condemnation* be removed.

These fundamental differences regarding the understanding of the nature and sacrifice of Christ have been the *root cause* of division between the various Christadelphian fellowships that have come into existence over the years. Bro. Richard Purcell in his book '*Christadelphians— the Untold Story*' observes:

While the dividing doctrine may not be exactly the same as 1873, the conclusion and result of that dividing issue is identical. And although there are variations of expression, **the whole matter boils down to one doctrine, "The nature of Man and its relationship to the Sacrifice of Christ"**... There are now four fellowships that have sprung from these controversies. Three of these fellowships (Berean, Old Paths, and Unamended) officially proclaim the same position on this doctrine, **whereas Central officially proclaims another.**

Both of these extremes call into question the *righteousness of God*. The doctrine of *Clean Flesh* calls in to question the righteousness of God because if God is a just, wise and merciful God then why would he allow a man to pay the penalty due to others? The doctrine of *inherited legal alienation* calls into question the righteousness of God because if God is a just, wise and merciful God then why would he hold man responsible (individually *or* federally) expecting him to seek reconciliation for what he is by birth?

The problem with *false teachings* is that, while they often seem logical, they lead to *false conclusions*, remove *faith* and inevitably lead to *wrong practice*. The Churches are pregnant with the reality of this truth. For example, take the doctrine of *immortality of the soul*. If we believe in the doctrine of Immortality, then we deny a fundamental truth regarding the Atonement that God was right and the serpent was wrong! If we believe the doctrine of the *Trinity*, then we deny the fundamental truth that God is *supreme* and deserving of all *honour* and that God was “in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.” If we believe in the doctrine of *Substitution*, then we deny the fundamental truth that we are deserving of death and need saving from it. It is incumbent upon us to sharpen our minds to the possible extremes that we can end up at if we fail to recognise the errors of these false teachings.

There are many doctrinal errors that result from these extremes as can be seen from the few that are listed below:

The doctrine of Clean Flesh or ‘Free-life’:

- (1) Teaches that Christ died as a *substitute* instead of us. We can, therefore, do what we want to because the ransom has been paid for our sins. But a righteous man dying instead of a guilty man does not declare the *righteousness of God*.^a In fact, it would be an act of *injustice* and might well be construed as being the unrighteous act of a vengeful God. Christ was, however, a representative offering for us. He demonstrated to the world that flesh and blood is rightly subject to death; that it was necessary for flesh and blood to be destroyed with its lusts and affections towards sin; and that we need to manifest God’s character in our lives. God does not absolve us from our responsibility to Him and the need to manifest His name in our lives.
- (2) It calls into question the *supremacy* and *majesty* of God who demands reverence and obedience. But if the penalty or ransom has been paid for us, then we are not involved in the redemption process. God now owes us salvation as our right because of what has been done for us.

- (3) It is akin to the doctrine of *Substitution* which teaches that Christ died instead of us. It is this doctrine of *Substitution* which led to:
 - the false doctrine of the *Pre-existence of Christ*, for if Christ did not share our nature, then he “did not come in the flesh” then one might conclude that he is divine and always has been so.
 - the false doctrine of the *Immortality of the Soul* because if Christ pre-existed, then his spirit must have been eternal and literally God made flesh.
 - the false doctrine of a supernatural, personal *Devil* because if Christ did not share our nature and, therefore, did not condemn sin, or the devil, within his members, then the devil must be something extraneous to the body.
- (4) It makes salvation mechanical and transactional removing our *faith* and *love* for God.

The doctrine of ‘Andrewism’ or Inherited Legal Alienation:

- (1) Teaches that because Adam’s sin has been imputed to us, we are *federally* or *racially* guilty in the sight of God, born “sinners” and, therefore, in need of reconciliation for our nature that we bare through no fault of our own.
- (2) It teaches the doctrine of Substitution because the threat of violent death was removed when Christ suffered the penalty of a violent death for us by dying on the cross. If we have been baptised, the threat of a violent death is removed and we are no longer “children of wrath”.
- (3) It teaches that before Christ could act as an efficacious sacrificial offering for us, his physical sin-nature needed to be cleansed or purified *first*. Only once his nature had been cleansed could he then be an offering for us. In other words, ironically, it ends up teaching aspects of the doctrine of ‘clean flesh’ because before he could die as a sacrifice for

our sins, his flesh and blood nature had to be *cleansed* from inherited or Adamic sin! Until this was accomplished he was not a “lamb without blemish”.

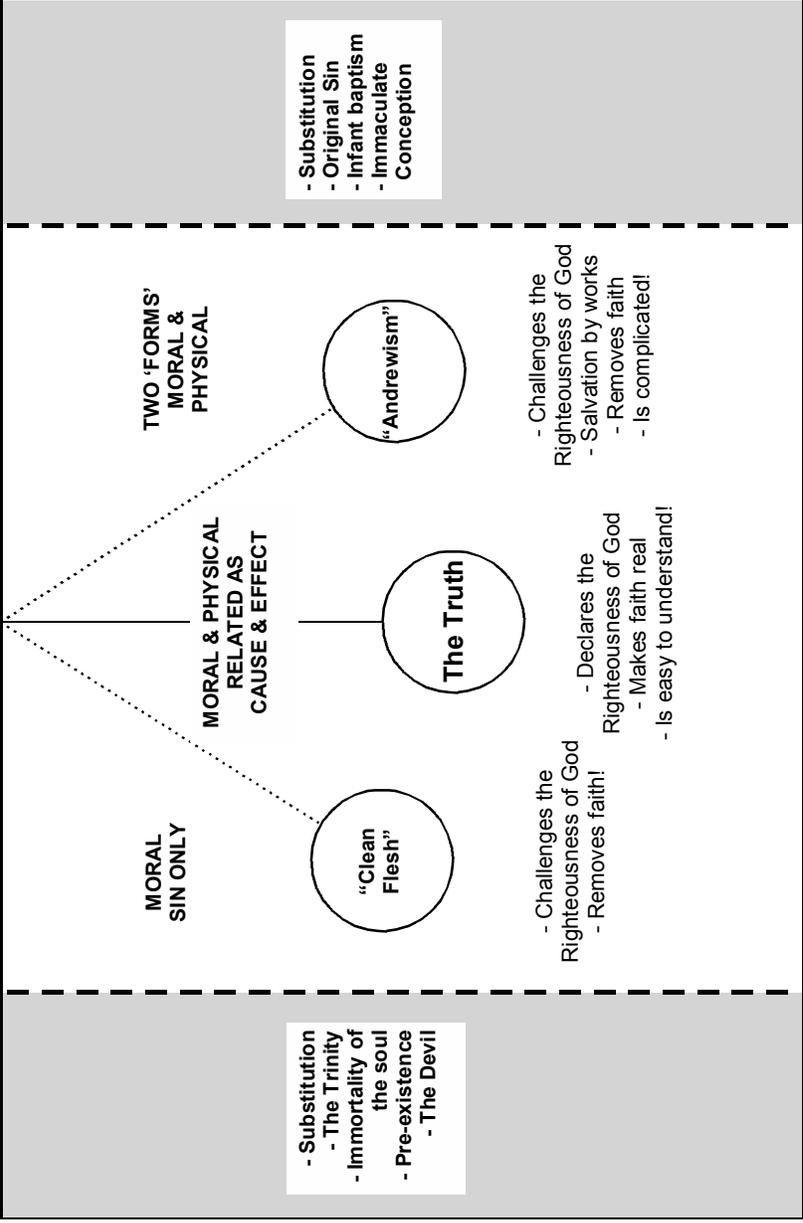
- (4) It is inconsistent with God’s purpose with the Earth. God wants men and women to live on Earth *for ever!* One of the fundamental principles and lessons of sacrifice is the destruction or mortification of the flesh. *The flesh cannot be saved atoned for or reconciled to God.* Figuratively, it must be brought into subjection and put to death. Physically it needs *changing*. To apply moral principles of reconciliation to the flesh implies that the flesh can be saved, which it cannot!
- (5) It demeans the work of Christ for it teaches that Christ’s life of obedience and condemnation of sin was not good enough to the Father as the basis for the forgiveness of sins. Rather, God required the ritual purification or cleansing of Christ’s nature *first*, before his sacrificial life was acceptable.
- (6) It calls into question the *supremacy* and *majesty* of God who demands reverence and obedience because if we choose not to get baptised, even though we have a knowledge of the gospel truth, then we can avoid judgment as a matter of ‘prudence’.
- (7) It makes salvation mechanical and a legal arrangement that removes our *faith* and *love* for God teaching the doctrine of ‘Salvation by Works’ by the imputation to us of the righteous works of Christ through baptism.
- (8) It separates Christ from the work that he came to do. Christ came to “save sinners”. But he, too, needed saving from death.
- (9) It teaches that baptism is a covering for our inherited sin-nature *and* for our moral sins, thereby, affecting a ‘legal’ change in status in the eyes of God from being “in Adam” to being “in Christ”. But the truth is that we are still ‘in Adam’ after baptism being subject to ‘the law of sin and death’ (ie.

‘the law within our members’), but we are also ‘in Christ’, becoming “heirs to the covenants of promise”, having access to the forgiveness of sins and hope of the resurrection to life.

- (10) It limits the power of God by saying that God *cannot* or *will not* raise those from the dead who have not been justified for both moral *and* physical sin.
- (11) It is akin to the doctrine of *Original Sin* (see Appendix A) which says that Adam’s sin was transmitted to his posterity in physical form. It is this doctrine of *Original Sin* which led to:
- the false doctrine of *Infant Baptism* which taught that because our nature is a ‘form’ of sin or contains ‘sin’, then it requires justification or covering through baptism. Infants do not have any moral sins, but, it is reasoned, that they do need justification from ‘physical sin’. They, therefore, need to be baptised as soon as able so that they can be saved if they were to die.
 - the false doctrine of the *Immaculate Conception*, because it was reasoned that if Christ, being divine and the Son of God, had a ‘clean’ and ‘undefiled’ nature, of necessity, he could not have been born of a woman of the seed of Adam in the natural sense. Mary, therefore, had to be *immaculately* conceived to ensure that Christ was born ‘clean’ and ‘undefiled’ without the taint of original or inherited sin.
 - the false doctrine of *Mariolatry*, (the worship of Mary) because it was reasoned that if she was immaculately conceived (ie. without the taint of original sin), and Jesus was her son, and Jesus was God, then Mary being Jesus’ mother, must be the Mother of God and have pre-eminence over Him!

Notes:

^a Romans 3:23-25





Part Four:
Understanding
In Practice



1

Sin is Real

A man is standing in the dock awaiting his fate. The evidence against him is overwhelming. He has been found guilty as charged. His crime is a capital offence and the punishment according to the Law is *death*.

Standing next to the man is his lawyer. The lawyer explains to the judge that while it is true that the man is guilty as charged and deserving of death, the judge could extend mercy to the man without condoning the crime. The judge announces his decision: "Because of the man standing next to you, you have a choice. You can either go outside with these men and face execution by firing squad and your life will be over in a heartbeat. Or you can commit your life in service to your fellow man by working in hospitals and institutions, helping the old and infirm, helpless and diseased, telling them what mercy and kindness has been shown to you. You will receive no pay, no days off, no holidays and there will be no reprieve. Your entire life will be dedicated in service from this day forward. The choice is yours."

The choice that we have is the same. We are all guilty of sinning. We are all, therefore, guilty of death. But because of the work of our "advocate"^a and representative, the Lord Jesus Christ, we have a choice. We can either resign ourselves to permanent

condemnation of death, or commit ourselves in service to God in gratitude for what He has done for us through the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. God would be absolutely justified to let us rot in the ground. Every time that we sin we dishonour Him and call into question His supremacy and honour. But in His *wisdom, mercy and love* he has opened “a new and living way” (Hebrews 10:20). For what purpose? “The goodness of God leadeth... to repentance” (Romans 2:4). God’s purpose *will* be fulfilled. Men and women will one day reflect in themselves the heart, will and mind of God himself. As was demonstrated by Christ with the woman caught in adultery, God will never condone *sin*. But he does show mercy upon the *repentant sinner*.

The truth is that we all die one way or another. Either we die figuratively with Christ in baptism and a new man is born to a “newness of life”, or we die, literally, at the end of our mortal lives. Either way we are dead! The difference is whether we live unto God or live unto ourselves. This is the great challenge of the Truth in our lives.

Sin becomes us

Making the decision to dedicate our lives to God and serve Him is the easy part. The hard part is actually doing it! The root of the problem, of course, is *sin*. And sin is very real! It sticks with us and we are stuck with it, because we are intricately related to it by virtue of the nature that we bear. Left unrestrained, our flesh and blood natures are the cause of sin being manifest in our lives — in thought, in word and in deed. The problem is that we are habitual creatures. And the more we sin, the more immune we become to it and the less we are repulsed by it. It has a desensitizing effect upon us and becomes less of a burden in our daily lives. Ultimately, sin can end up blinding us and deceiving us, and what was once evil to us, becomes good!^b

When we sin, it becomes a part of us in the truest sense. We become an embodiment of sin. It affects our *emotions*, our *actions* and ultimately it affects our *character*. We become a slave to it and it directs our lives. Sin can, therefore, affect our lives in a very similar way that substance abuse can affect the lives of addicts.

This is because the physiological mechanism within the brain works exactly the same way. Our brains are wired in such a way to ensure that we will repeat life-sustaining activities by associating those activities with *pleasure* or *reward*. Whenever the *pleasure* circuit in our brain is activated, a chemical called dopamine is released into the brain and the brain then notes that something important is happening that needs to be remembered. This teaches us to do it again and again, without thinking about it.

Sin can act in exactly the same way in our lives. In Hebrews the writer speaks about the “*pleasures* of sin” (Hebrews 11:25). The ‘pleasures of sin’ naturally appeal to the flesh and, inevitably, become addictive in our lives. When we sin, the pleasure circuit in our brain is activated and a small amount of dopamine is released into the brain. Our brain is rewarded for a behaviour that may be wrong, but we remember to do it and become strongly motivated to do it again and again. It becomes a *habit* and a part of our lives. This is why practicing sin is something that we become experts in and learn to do very, very well! What may start as something insignificant can become an integral part of our lives through habit. “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death?” (Romans 7:24).

So while sin is intangible, in another sense, sin *is* quite tangible. We may not be able to touch it, feel it or hold it. But like the sound of the wind and the movement of the trees, evidence for its existence is all around us and manifest in our own daily lives.

Divine education

So what is the solution? Well there can only be one solution and that is the divine solution which is *divine education*.

Like with any kind of addiction, the first step is to recognise that we have a problem. First of all, we do not fully understand how sinful we are, and secondly, we do not fully understand God’s righteousness. We also have a natural tendency within us to do those things that we want to do, and we exacerbate those tendencies by our habits.

The Bible presents the Word of God to us in two ways.

First of all, James says that “if any be a hearer of the word,

and not a doer, he is like unto a man *beholding his natural face in a glass*: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straight-way forgetteth what manner of man he was” (James 1:23-24). So the Word of God is like a mirror showing us what we are *naturally*. But it can also show us what we can become with the influence of the spirit-word. Paul says: “*beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord*, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

So while we can see a reflection of the *natural man* in Scripture, we can also see the glory and *character of God* as well.

In the Bible Reading Companion, Bro. Roberts wrote:

Salvation depends upon the assimilation of the mind to the divine ideas, principles, and affections exhibited in the Scriptures. This process commences with a belief of the gospel, but is by no means completed thereby; it takes a lifetime for its scope, and untiring diligence for its accomplishment. ***The mind is naturally alien from God and all His ideas*** (Rom 8:7; 1Co 2:14), and cannot be brought at once to the Divine likeness. This is a work of slow development, and can only be achieved by the industrious application of the individual to the means which God has given for this purpose, viz, the expression of His mind in the Scriptures of Truth; Spiritual-mindedness, or the state of mind in accordance with the mind of the Spirit as displayed in these writings can only grow within a man by daily intercourse with that mind, there unfolded.

Changing the body so that it is fit for the Kingdom takes “the twinkling of an eye”.^c But changing the *character* takes a lifetime. And that change can only come about by *divine education*.

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were subject to a process of *divine education* before they sinned. But their disobedience left a question mark upon God’s method of education.

The Lord Jesus Christ also underwent a process of *divine education* during his life. But he demonstrated by his obedience that divine education does work. The fact that Jesus was the son of God by genetic descent does not mean that he automatically had the character of His Father. He had the *capacity* to develop that character, but that does not mean that he automatically possessed

the characteristics of the Father. These needed to be developed. He, like us, needed to go through a process of *divine education* to enable that character to develop (i) *by studying God's word and learning His ways* as "morning by morning" (Isaiah 50:4) "the Lord GOD opened [his] ear" (Isaiah 55:3), and (ii) *through the experiences of life* for "he learned obedience by the things which he suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). It is only through the application of these *two processes* that we can hope to develop the qualities of love, patience, loyalty, honour, mercy, longsuffering, honesty, justice and peace and, therefore, manifest the character of God Himself. This is the divine method of education.

The Fours Stages of Competence

It is a requirement in most countries for commercial pilots to complete a course on "Human Dynamics and Performance". Part of the syllabus covers "The Four Stages of Learning" or sometimes referred to as "The Four Stages of Competence". This theory was put forward in the 1940's by the psychologist Abraham Maslow and describes how a person learns a skill. It describes the progression of learning through four stages, from (1) *Unconscious Incompetence* (ie. you don't know that you don't know something), to (2) *Conscious Incompetence* (ie. you are now aware that you are incompetent at something), to (3) *Conscious Competence* (ie. you develop a skill in that area but have to think about it), to the final stage (4) *Unconscious Competence* (ie. you are good at it and it now comes naturally). Obviously, for pilots this is a very helpful exercise which helps them become aware of deficiencies and 'blind spots' in their knowledge and skill-sets, ultimately leading to improved aviation safety.

While the above example can be applied to all kinds of vocations and tasks in our daily lives, these same four stages of development can perhaps be applied to the development of the spiritual man as he tries to manifest Christ and battle sin.

The *First Stage* of development of the spiritual man is not knowing what we do not know! Paul says that before we learned the truth, we had "the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because

of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. *But ye have not so learned Christ*” (Ephesians 4:18-20), and that we were “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: *but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ*” (Ephesians 2:12-13).

Until we look into the ‘mirror’ of the Word of God, we cannot fully understand what we are by nature. Nor can we understand what we can become. This is because of ‘ignorance’ and ‘being strangers to the covenants of promise.’ Instead, we do what comes naturally to the natural mind, driven by a conscience of our own making rather than a conscience which is developed by the divine.

Once we become aware of the things of the Truth we reach the *Second Stage* in our spiritual development. We now become *consciously* aware that we lack a knowledge and understanding of God and His plan and purpose, and seek to learn. While we may still be alienated from God by “ignorance” and “wicked works” we diligently search the Scriptures knowing that “whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

The *Third Stage* in the development of the spiritual man is “continuing... in the things which we have learned and have been assured of, knowing of whom we have learned them; and that... the holy Scriptures... are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:14-15). At this point we are *conscious* of what we need to do to develop the spiritual man. Because we believe it to be true, we confess it or demonstrate it by our actions in our daily lives. We may not be very good at it. But we strive to manifest God’s character as best as we can and battle the temptations of sin.

The *Final Stage* of development of the spiritual man follows the resurrection to life when our bodies shall be “changed like unto his glorious body”^d in the age to come. No longer will we be prone to sin. No longer will we be subject to death with all of the

weaknesses inherent to the flesh. We will in the truest sense be *unconsciously competent*. In other words, we will be a true and complete reflection of the Father and the Son. We will be one with them “in character” and “in substance”.^e

The same analogy of the Four Stages of Spiritual Development or learning in the life of the believer can be applied to the battle against *sin* in our lives. For instance, until we read Scripture and start assimilating the mind of God with ours, we cannot understand naturally what sin is, or how to manifest the Father in our lives. For “the natural man *receiveth not* the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). Only a spiritual mind can discern spiritual things. Without the enlightenment of the Truth, the natural mind will always lack discernment.

Once we start reading and studying God’s word we become aware of sin and learn about God’s character. As Job said: “How many are mine iniquities and sins? *make me to know my transgression and my sin.*”^f And as the Proverbs says “Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err *from the words of knowledge.*”^g Our knowledge and understanding of the things of God is essential in our battle against those things that “causeth to err”.

Actions produce habits, and habits develop characters — for better or for worse. We will never become an ‘unconscious competent’ when it comes to the battle with sin and the development of God’s character in our lives this side of the Kingdom. But it should be our objective to strive to develop characters “fitly framed”^h for the Kingdom of God as best as we can. Our goal is that in some way we might develop the mind of God: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus... Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others” (Philippians 2:5, 3-4). “Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us *in the flesh*, arm yourselves likewise *with the same mind*: for he that hath suffered in the flesh *hath ceased from sin*; that he no longer should live the rest of his time *in the flesh* to the lusts of men, *but to the will of God*” (1 Peter 4:1-2).

The *Fourth* and final stage in our battle with sin is when Christ returns and it is over. When we are changed from flesh and blood to spirit nature, we will no longer be able to “fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition” (1 Timothy 6:9). Rather, we “shall be delivered from the *bondage of corruption* into the glorious liberty of *the children of God*” (Romans 8:21). At that point we will be spiritually-minded because we will be made of the spirit. No longer will we do our own will, but we will do God’s will as it will come naturally to us.

Notes:

- ^a 1 John 2:1
- ^b Romans 7:11; Isaiah 5:20; Hebrews 3:13; Isaiah 42:18; 1 John 2:10-11
- ^c 1 Corinthians 15:52
- ^d Philippians 3:21
- ^e Hebrews 1:3
- ^f Job 13:23
- ^g Proverbs 19:27
- ^h Ephesians 2:21



2

Releasing The Angel Inside

(An Exhortation)

On March 6th, 1475 one of the greatest artists that the world has ever seen was born. So talented was he that by the age of twenty-one he had been commissioned by many of the crown heads of Europe to create dozens of marble sculptures, well-renowned throughout the world today.

One day, as he was chiseling away at a rather large piece of marble, a young lad came in to watch him work and sat down on the ledge. He asked the sculptor: “Why are you banging away at that piece of rock?” The sculptor replied, “Young man, it is because there is an angel inside of this rock, and I plan to set him free...” The statue was ‘David’. And the sculptor’s name — Michelangelo!

Like that piece of rock, naturally we are earthy creatures, spiritually without shape and definition. But the great commission to each one of us who has chosen to follow Christ is to “put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the *image* of him that created him” (Colossians 3:10).

We are each like that unchiseled piece of rock, but within each of us there is an ‘angel’ waiting to be released. We are the rock. And God is the sculptor.

When we are born as “newborn babes”^a through the waters of baptism, a new spiritually-infused life begins. But our *hope* is that one day we shall be “changed... in the twinkling of an eye”^b and made “equal unto the angels... the children of God, being the children of the resurrection” (Luke 20:36). But ‘releasing the angel inside’ and affecting the change from the *natural man* to the *spiritual man* can take a lifetime.

In this chapter, we want to step away from the more factual aspects of our study of the Atonement, and look more at the exhortational aspects of the Atonement and consider how it should affect our lives. For this reason we are going to use this achievement in the life of Michelangelo as a backdrop to draw out some exhortational points to help us understand the ‘Atonement in Practice’.

1. The commission

A little known fact about the statue of ‘David’ is that the commission was offered to some of the greatest artists of the time before it was offered to Michelangelo, including Leonardo Da Vinci. But all of them turned it down! The reason that they passed over the commission was because of the shape of the marble block. It had very odd dimensions. It was a thin nine foot long piece of marble. For fourteen years it sat gathering dust. That was until it was offered to Michelangelo who visualized what he wanted to create and set to work on his creation.

For many people in the world, the things of the Truth have an *odd shape*, and they cannot *visualize* the wonders of the age to come. Some who can, simply do not want to put the effort in to realising the end result. Paul says: “The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom... But unto them *which are called*, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the *power of God*, and the *wisdom of God*... For *ye see your calling*, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to con-

found the things which are mighty” (1 Corinthians 1:22,24,26-28).

Our commission is a “high calling of God in Jesus Christ”.^c It is a privilege and the “pearl of great price”^d that not everyone will choose to accept. But as we have seen, one of the fundamental principles of the Atonement is that God’s *supremacy* and *majesty* will not be dishonoured or treated with ‘prudence’. Rather, “every knee shall bow to Him, and every tongue shall confess... and *shall give account of himself to God*” (Romans 14:11-12). For the “things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: *that no flesh should glory in his presence*” (1 Corinthians 1:29). If we come to a knowledge of “the things concerning the kingdom of God, and *the name of Jesus Christ*”^e there is no escaping the judgment to come.

2. Visualization

Most of what we have considered so far in our studies has had to do with the name of Jesus Christ. The other half of the gospel message has to do with the things concerning the Kingdom of God. But the two are intricately linked together. Without Christ there can be no Kingdom. And when the Kingdom is established, those who make up the saints in the Kingdom Age, will really be one person, *Christ* made manifest in a multitude!

One of the first things that we learn when we come to a knowledge of the Truth is the great significance of the Promises made to Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and to David. Integral to these Promises is the hope of the Kingdom of God established on Earth. Because the Kingdom is something which is *tangible*, we can read Scripture and build a picture in our mind’s eye of what it will be like. We can visualize the return of Christ and the setting up of the Kingdom with Jerusalem as its capital. We can see Christ reigning in splendour and glory surrounded by immortalized saints, judging the world in righteousness. We can imagine poverty, famine and disease becoming a thing of the past as the ravages of sin and death are suppressed.

A while ago we had the opportunity to speak with some young people about the Kingdom of God over a series of classes. During one of those classes we invited the young people to share

their thoughts and give their answers to two questions. The first question was: ‘Who do you want to meet in the Kingdom and why?’ The second question was: ‘What would you look forward to the most in the Kingdom?’ Inevitably, a whole range of answers were shared by the group. But there was a fundamental difference between the answers that the younger ones gave compared with the answers given by the older ones. The younger ones looked forward to petting a lion or holding a snake or walking on water! But the older ones, predominantly those who had been baptised for a while, looked forward to a release from the bondage of sin and death.

While it is a Scriptural imperative that we must set our “minds upon the prize of the high calling of God”,^f we must not lose sight of the fact that the greatest prize is to be redeemed from our bodies of “sin and death”.^g

This takes us back to another one of the fundamental principles of the atonement — that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God”.^h Flesh and blood cannot be atoned for or reconciled to God. We must “mortify the deeds of the body”.ⁱ

When I was in my teens, I used to travel to the Alps to ski. One of the most remarkable ski runs in the world can be found at Les Arcs in France. The run starts at the peak of the mountain and finishes in the valley. And it is downhill all the way — literally! It is the ski run used for the world speed records.

A few years ago, a British man broke the world speed skiing record, which is an incredible feat in itself. But what made the record even more remarkable was that the man who did it was blind! He could not see. He was directed by someone in the valley who gave him directions through a radio receiver in his helmet. When he was asked how he did it, he replied: “You need to look at the end goal, the end product.” This coming from someone who is blind!

Paul says that: “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God... which the Holy Spirit teacheth; comparing spiritual

things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:9-14).

Our vision of *the Kingdom* comes from a discernment of God’s word and the many passages that speak of the future age. Our vision of *who we can become*, comes from a discernment of the life and character of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the “beginning and the end” of our faith, “the first and the last”.¹ He is central to everything that was, is and is to come.

3. Preparation

Before Michelangelo took his first blow of the chisel to the marble, he had to prepare. He had to place the marble the way that he wanted, select his tools, sketch out images and make outlines on the rock.



It is exactly the same for us. Before we are baptised we go through a period of preparation as we learn the Truth and get ready to give an “answer of a good conscience toward God” (1 Peter 3:21). After baptism, the preparation process does not stop. Paul exhorted Timothy to become “a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and *prepared* unto every good work” (2 Timothy 2:21). In the days of Solomon, when the temple was built, blocks of stone were ‘prepared’ and brought to the House to add to the building.^k If the block of stone did not fit or was improperly prepared, it was discarded and not used in the building of the House. It is the same with us. We are vessels being prepared for a work to do in the Kingdom. We are “lively stones... built up a spiritual house” (1 Peter 2:5). If we do not measure up or are improperly prepared, we will be discarded.

4. Commitment

By the time that Michelangelo completed ‘David’, it had taken him three years of intense labour, sometimes working 24 hours at a time with no break. No doubt it seemed to him like a lifetime. For us, our time of probation *is* a lifetime, 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

Paul says: “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain... Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, *and bring it into subjection*: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

Life in the Truth is a commitment — a lifelong commitment. It is a commitment to “bring the body into subjection” to not serve sin but to serve our fellow man to the glory of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. It means an absolute commitment to the Truth in practice — to Memorial Service, to Bible Classes, to Fellowship activities, to Sunday lunches, to our evening lectures, to our ecclesial duties, to our wives or our husbands, to our children, to our ecclesial families and to the brotherhood, near and far.

This is the principle of the Atonement. We cannot be half

baptised! We cannot be dead to trespasses and sins only half of the time and the other half do what we want to do. We cannot choose to be baptised upon terms and conditions of our own choosing. It is about complete and absolute burial and death of the old man, and the complete and absolute dedication of a new man to a life committed to the things of God.

5. Fighting the Goliath:

There have been many other statues made over the years portraying David by other renowned artists. Most portray David with Goliath's head in his hand *after* his victory over the giant in battle. But unusually, Michelangelo's portrayal of David shows him *before* his duel with Goliath with sling in hand and with his eye on the giant, ready to engage him in battle.

1 Samuel 17 records the words that David spoke to Goliath before killing him and taking his head to Golgotha. He said: "This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD'S, and he will give you into our hands" (1 Samuel 17:46-47).

David was the great type of our Lord Jesus Christ. David defeated the giant, and Christ defeated Sin. The great lesson from the battle between David and Goliath was that God "saveth not with sword and spear: for the *battle is Yahweh's, and he will give you into our hands.*" James says that "there is one lawgiver, who is able *to save and to destroy*" (James 4:12). Through Christ, God has defeated Sin and can save us: "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8).

The hard work has been done in what God has accomplished through Christ. But out of gratitude for what has been done for us, God asks that we "Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. *Fight the good fight of faith*, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a

good profession before many witnesses” (1 Timothy 6:11-12). For “the goodness of God leadeth... to repentance” (Romans 2:4).

God is not looking for an emotional response that leads us to do great things. He is looking for the quality of humility to submit to His word, become regenerated and converted in the *thinking of our minds* so that we “bring forth fruits meet for repentance” (Matthew 3:8) to His honour and His glory. The Churches are full of people who have responded to the emotional appeals to accept “the gospel”. They are experts in attracting these people with all of the marketing tactics, gadgets and strategies that appeal to the flesh. *But God wants us to become what “God is”*. “God is one” and wants us to be *one* with Him! (Deuteronomy 6:4; Galatians 3:20). “God is a consuming fire, a *jealous* God” and He wants us to be *jealous* for Him! (Deuteronomy 4:24; Hebrews. 12:29). “God is true” and wants us to be *true* and *righteous* and *honest* in all our ways! (John 3:33; 2 Corinthians 1:18). “God is spirit” and desires that we worship Him in *spirit* and in *truth*! (John 4:24). “God is holy” and wants us to be *holy* and *unblamable* in his sight! (Colossians 1:22). “God is light” and wants us to *walk in the light*! (1 John 1:5). “God is love” and wants us to manifest *love* in the way that we treat others and conduct our lives. (1 John 4:8). *What God is, we must become!* The emotional appeals might pluck at the heartstrings and move us to do great things — for a while. But a change in the mind brought about by the effect of the spirit-word on our minds motivates us to battle sin and become like God, the benefits of which are eternal.

6. Hands, feet & head:

One of the curious characteristics of Michelangelo’s David was that the size and dimensions of certain features of the body were inconsistent with the rest of the body. For instance, the head, the hands and the feet were a lot larger than one would expect. From a practical standpoint, there was actually a very good reason for this. What Michelangelo realised was that when an observer looked at the finished statue from ground level or from a distance, the head, hands and feet would seem too small for the body. This was the reason why he, therefore, increased their sizes! But there was perhaps another reason. He once wrote the following sonnet:

The marble not yet carved can hold the form
Of every **thought** the greatest artist has,
And no conception ever comes to pass
Unless the **hand** obeys the **intellect**.

What we *do* is as a direct result of what we *think* in our minds. What we *think* is directly related to what we put into it. In Proverbs 6:16-19 we are told that “these six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven *are* an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and *hands* that shed innocent blood, An *heart* that deviseth wicked imaginations, *feet* that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.”

Our *thoughts* affect our *emotions*, which affects our *actions* which develops our *character*. The development of our characters, therefore, is directly related to what we put into our minds! We, of course, start at a disadvantage, because we have within us an inherent tendency towards our way of thinking versus God’s way of thinking. But the exhortation of Paul is clear when he wrote: “be ye transformed *by the renewing of your mind*, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:2), and “put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Romans 13:14). If we really believe that we are mortal and sin-prone, then *we need to learn dependence upon God’s influences and methods*. This is a principle of the Atonement. It means that we need to confine our *environments*, control our *habits* and use *tools* that will help us discourage evil influences in our lives. “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things *put on* charity, which is the bond of perfectness” (Colossians 3:12-14).

7. Different Tools:

This leads us to the next spiritual principle that we would like to draw from Michelangelo's work. Just like Michelangelo had many different tools to accomplish his work, we, too, have different tools and instruments to help us develop the mind of God and release the angel inside.

No doubt when he started chiseling away at the marble, he used a fairly large hammer and chisel to cut away large chunks until he was ready to start giving the image some shape. He would then have used smaller hammers and chisels to cut away smaller pieces of marble until he was ready to use the smallest tools to shape the final definitions of the image.

It is the same with us. When we come into the Truth, we all come with different types of baggage, some large, some small. We each have *different personalities* and face *different challenges* in our lives. But we all want to develop the *same character* regardless of our past, that of the Lord Jesus Christ to the honour, glory and majesty of the Father. Sometimes it is hard to cut off and discard the old baggage; chisel off and discard those larger pieces of marble that are not required as part of the final image.

There are, of course, spiritual tools that help us achieve the end result that we have been tasked in creating. In Acts 2:42 we are told in the early days of the brotherhood, "they continued stedfastly in the *apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers...* And all that believed were together, and had all things common" (Acts 2:42-44; cp. Acts 4:32). Four of the most valuable tools that



"We demonstrate our beliefs by our actions. "

we have in our spiritual tool belts are: the ability to freely read daily from the *Word of God*, the opportunity to *fellowship* with those of like mind, the privilege to *break bread* with each other in common union, and access the Father through *prayer*.¹ If we neglect any one of these privileges, we are not utilizing the divinely ordained 'tools' that have been given to us to help us release the angel inside.

We demonstrate our beliefs by our actions, for "the just shall

live by faith” (Hebrews 10:38) and “as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead” (James 2:26). If we do not READ the Word of God daily, then we really do not believe that ‘assimilation of the mind to the divine ideas, principles, and affections’ can produce righteous thoughts and righteous actions. If we do not PRAY daily, we do not believe that we need God’s help and influence in our lives as Christ did in his, to develop the divine mind. If we do not FELLOWSHIP with those of “like precious faith”, we do not believe that we need to learn love, patience, forgiveness, understanding, longsuffering, loyalty, kindness and goodness in our lives. If we do not BREAK BREAD in remembrance of God’s work through the Lord Jesus Christ, we do not believe that we are dependent upon the grace and mercy of God.

8. Practice:

Achieving anything in life that does not come naturally to us takes time and practice. It is no different when it comes to transforming our minds and our lives. Athletes spend many hours every day practicing their skill. Pilots become safer pilots based upon many hours of experience. Doctors know how to save lives because of much study and education. Hobbyists, experts and professionals in any field become especially sought after because of the depth of knowledge and understanding that they have acquired over long periods of time. Most of these people have become ‘unconsciously competent’ not because the skills come naturally to them, but because they have learned to hone their skills and have practiced them over very long periods of time.

We know a sister who makes small sculptures. When she creates them, she often takes a piece of clay and practices carving away at that piece of clay before turning her tools towards the stone or rock she is working on. Michelangelo did the same thing. If he was working on the hand, he would create a hand from a lump of clay, first, before carving the stone.

Life is the same for us. The fact is that we are going to fail — daily. There is no avoiding this fact. The key is to keep on keeping on! “*Strive* to enter in at the strait gate” said the Lord (Luke 13:24). It will be a struggle. It will not be easy. But we must

try to do the best we can, no matter what life may throw at us. Our lives will not be defined by a single failure or a solitary success. Rather, they will be defined by the overall direction that we have taken in life. They will be defined by how we have demonstrated the divine principles of the doctrine of the Atonement in our lives in manifesting the Father to His glory and honour, and harnessing the thinking of the flesh. God knows our makeup. He knows our mortal frames. One of the great beauties of the Atonement is that “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:8). When we do fail, we know that we have sitting with the Father our “advocate... Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1) who can “sympathize with our weaknesses” (Hebrews 4:15—NKJV), who can “aid... those who are tempted” (Hebrews 2:18—NKJV) and who can “help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

9. The beauty is in its detail:

One of the most remarkable things about Michelangelo’s image of David that made it the masterpiece that it became, was not the size or the shape (although that was an amazing feat in itself). It was the incredibly small details that *together* made his statue one of the most amazing works of art that the world has ever seen.

The same can be said for life in the Truth. The Truth is not about standing on platforms giving great expositions of the Word of God (as valuable and necessary as they are). Nor is it about the great achievements that might be made in proselytizing the Truth. The Truth is about the effect of the “still small voice” ^m on the hearts and minds of the individual. It is about the quiet and seemingly trivial labours of love that so often go unnoticed but are essential to the welfare of the body. It is the sister every week playing the organ. The brother who arrives early to setup or consistently and faithfully perform his duties. It is the gentle word here, or the kind gesture there that some have the uncanny ability to deliver at just the right time. It is the hours of preparation that a brother spends in preparing a talk who in humility does not feel capable. It is the quiet brother or sister at Bible Class, who while shy and timid, knows that just by being there, they are ministering to the welfare of the body of Christ. “Do all things without mur-

murings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God” (Philippians 2:14-15).

The beauty is in the detail and together every part contributes to the image as a whole. “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the ecclesia of God: even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.” (1 Corinthians 10:31-33).

10. Sand and polish:

The final stage of preparation that the image would have gone through before Michelangelo would have put it on public display, would have been sanding and polishing. He would have used fine grains of sand mixed with oil or water to sand down the areas that needed smoothing over.

In spiritual terms we know that our transformation can only come about through the “washing of the water by the word”ⁿ for “the word is a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our paths”.^o No matter how hard we try, we simply cannot make our image shine or look like Christ’s image this side of the Kingdom. But our transformation is a journey that starts through birth in the waters of baptism and will be completed, by God’s grace, when he “remembers us for good”^p in that day when he selects his jewels.

Paul makes a similar analogy in Romans 12:1 where he exhorts us to be “transformed by the renewing of our minds.” The Greek word for ‘transformed’ is ‘metamorpheo’. It is the word from which the English *metamorphosis* is derived describing the process by which a caterpillar changes into a beautiful butterfly (cp. the ‘transfiguration’).

We are all cocooned in a body made of flesh and blood — ugly and earthy. But within us is a ‘new man’ being nurtured and developed ready to be released as a beautiful butterfly reflecting the nature and character of God Himself.

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be

raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:51-58).

Notes:

- a* 1 Peter 2:2
- b* 1 Corinthians 15:51-52
- c* Philippians 3:14
- d* Matthew 13:46
- e* Acts 8:12
- f* Philippians 3:14
- g* Romans 8:2
- h* 1 Corinthians 15:50
- i* Romans 8:13; cp. Colossians 3:5
- j* Revelation 22:13
- k* 1 Kings 6:7
- l* The four elements of Acts 2:42 are patterned after the work of service performed by the priesthood under the Mosaic Law. The ‘lampstand’ represented ‘doctrine’; the ‘mercyseat’ (the place of meeting between God and Man), represents ‘fellowship’; the ‘shewbread’ represents the ‘breaking of bread’; and the ‘altar of incense’ represents ‘prayer’. These were tasks performed daily in the tabernacle or temple and represents our personal daily priestly service in the presence of God.
- m* 1 Kings 19:12
- n* Ephesians 5:26; Titus 3:5
- o* Psalm 119:105
- p* Nehemiah 13:14,22,31



3

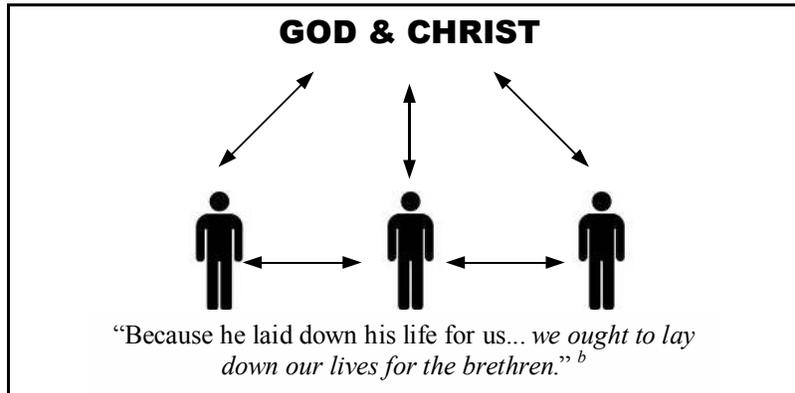
Unity of the Faith

The *Atonement* is not just confined to the work that God has done for us through the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is also about our *response* to that work as it affects our personal service to Him in our daily walks, and our *participation* in the sacrificial life of Christ .

One of the practical benefits and privileges of the Atonement, is the *change in relationship* that it fosters between ourselves, the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ and by extension — with each other. John says: “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, *that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ*” (1 John 1:3).

Our fellowship is *primarily* with “the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” But by extension our fellowship is also about our relationships with each other. These fellowship relationships with the Father, the Son and with each other are predicated upon “the things which we have seen and heard”.^a

The word ‘fellowship’ in the English language is defined as ‘*an association of people who share common beliefs or activities*’. In the KJV, the Greek word for ‘fellowship’ is ‘*koinonia*’ and is translated as ‘fellowship’ (12 times), ‘communion’ (4 times),



‘communication’ (once), ‘distribution’ (once), ‘contribution’ (once), ‘to communicate’ (once). As Christadelphians, our *fellowship* with each other is based upon our ‘shared common belief’ in the Gospel of the One Faith summarized as the “things concerning the kingdom of God and *the name of Jesus Christ*”.^c It is evident, therefore, that the privileges of fellowship are intricately linked with the Atonement and vice versa.

Perhaps one of the most helpful New Testament passages to help us understand the principle of the ‘Atonement in Practice’, is Ephesians 4:2-6 where Paul says: “With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the *unity* of the Spirit in the bond of *peace*. There is *one body*, and *one Spirit*, even as ye are called in *one hope* of your calling; *One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God* and Father of *all*, who is above *all*, and through *all*, and in you *all*.”

Paul’s exhortation is to “endeavour to keep the *unity* of the Spirit in the bond of *peace*” which he says can only be achieved through the practice of “*lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love.*” To emphasize this principle of ‘unity’ and ‘oneness’ he draws our attention to *seven* things that unite us: *one body... one spirit... one hope... one Lord... one faith... one baptism... one God and Father of all.* The order Paul lists these *seven* things is not without significance. Let’s take a look at each of these individually and see how they fit together in the context of the principles of the Atonement:

One body (of members)...

The significance of the ‘one body’ becomes clear when considering Paul’s letter to the ecclesia at Corinth. He says that: “As the *body is one*, and hath *many members*, and all the members of that *one body*, being many, are *one body: so also is Christ*” (1 Corinthians 12:12). In other words, Paul is saying that there are not ‘many’ bodies. There is only ‘one’ body. While we are *many* individuals belonging to many different ecclesias, collectively we form the “*one body*” of Christ. Not only that, but we are in fellowship with others who comprise the ‘body of Christ’ *regardless of time, place or fellowship groups*, but who have a ‘shared common belief’. Throughout history there have been many who believe the gospel of the One Faith concerning “the kingdom of God and... name of Jesus Christ” who have lived many years ago, across different continents and were not called *Christadelphians*. But they still comprise part of the ‘body of Christ’. This is one of the fundamental principles of the Atonement, that: “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever believeth in him* should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

One spirit (of the word)...

The next item on Paul’s list is the “one spirit” which takes us back to the Genesis record, reminding us how God originally made man “from the dust of the earth” and “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life”.^d Adam’s *body* was a life-less corpse until the spirit of God breathed into him to make him live. It was the *spirit* which gave him life. So it is that the *body* of Christ lives because the spirit of God is being breathed into the body. In John 6:63 the Lord draws a similar analogy when he makes reference to the method by which he would be raised from the dead: “it is the *spirit* that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the *words* that I speak unto you, *they are spirit*, and *they are life*” (cp. James 2:26).

It is the word of God which works in peoples’ lives to develop “an answer of a good conscience” towards God. Once a believer is baptized they form part of the ‘one body’ of which Christ is the *head*. When complete, *the body* and *the head* together will be in the “image” and “likeness” of God Himself. It will be this image

which will withstand the image of the man of Daniel Chapter 2 representing the kingdoms of men that will one day oppose God.

One Hope (of life)...

Once the spirit of God breathes into the body, it comes to life. Today the word of God is working through the lives of individuals to develop the image of the body of Christ. Our personal *hope* is for redemption and life everlasting, free from the bondage of sin and death. Job understood this when he said: “What is my strength, that I should *hope*? and what is mine end, that I should prolong my *life*?” (Job 6:11). Paul referred to the “*hope of eternal life*, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Titus 1:2). And that “being justified by his grace, we should be made *heirs according to the hope of eternal life*” (Titus 3:7).

One Lord (or head)...

In Colossians Paul draws our attention to Jesus who “is the ***head of the body***, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; ***that in all things*** he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that ***in him should all fulness dwell***; And, having made ***peace*** through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile ***all things*** unto himself...”(Colossians 1:18-20). Collectively, we constitute the *body* of Christ. But the *head* that directs the *body* is Christ! He is our *Lord*. He is our *Master*. While we may all be individuals, we are united by ‘one hope’ and by ‘one faith’ “speaking the truth *in love*, [that we] may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself *in love*” (Ephesians 4:15-16).

One faith (of the gospel)...

In Philippians 1:27 Pauls says that we should “stand fast in *one spirit*, with *one mind* striving together for *the faith of the gospel*.” What is “***the*** faith of the gospel”? It is our ‘shared common beliefs’ in the “the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.” It is upon this foundation of the ***one*** *faith* in

the gospel that we have been brought together in Christ “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the *body of Christ*: till we all come in the *unity of the faith*, and of the *knowledge* of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12-13). It is the “unity of the faith” that binds us together.

The reality is that while we have been “redeemed... by the precious blood of Christ” we, too, form part of God’s redemptive work on the Earth. We are instruments in His hands, servants committed to the teaching of the things of the Truth to those with listening ears and humble hearts. We are continuing the work of Christ and the Apostles today, for as Luke records “The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus *began* both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up, *after that he through the Holy Spirit* had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen” (Acts 1:1-2). God does not use great miraculous works today to convert people to the Truth. He uses the “still small voice” to convert people’s hearts and minds, through the work of his saints. Like Paul, we are, therefore, “servants of God... apostles of Jesus Christ, *according to the faith of God’s elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness*” (Titus 1:1).

One baptism...

So after the ‘one spirit’ has had an effect upon our lives and we have come to a knowledge of the ‘one faith’ of the gospel, we then submit to the ‘one baptism’ ‘for the remission of our sins’. It is after our baptisms that we then walk together in newness of life “in Christ”. Paul says that “by *one Spirit* are we all baptized into *one body*, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into *one Spirit*” (1 Cor. 12:13).

Baptism is about the principles of *death* (of the old man) and the *life* (of the new man) who lives in Christ. In Matthew 20:22 Jesus asks his disciples: “Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” (Mark 10:38-39). Jesus was not talking about the physical baptism through the waters of baptism. His question ran much

deeper than that. It was a question which goes right to the heart of the *Atonement* itself. It is the same question that we must each ask our selves: ‘Are we absolutely committed to following Jesus and completely dedicated to a life of sacrifice and service for the Truth?’ Every day is a day of baptism as we “take up the cross and follow Christ” (Mark 10:21).

One God and Father of all

The overwhelming principle that comes from these few verses in Ephesians is that God is *one*. He is a unity. Because God is one, there is *one body*. This same body is given life by the *one spirit*. We have *one hope* of life. We have *one Lord* or Master who is Jesus Christ ‘our head’. There is only *one faith* of the gospel; and there is only *one baptism* into Christ.

Conversely, there are not *many* bodies, *many* spirits, *many* hopes, *many* Lords, *many* faiths and *many* baptisms!

Paul, therefore, brings us to this ultimate finale in God’s purpose reminding us that eventually, *all Mankind* will come to know and recognise that there is “*One God* and Father of *all*, who is above *all*, and through *all*, and in you *all*.” God will be “all and in all.” True ‘fellowship’ with the Father will be finally restored, and a divine family from among men and women reflecting His character will live on Earth *for ever*.

Was this not the lesson of Deuteronomy 6? “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is *one LORD*: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And *thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children*, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up” (v. 4-7).

God is developing a divine family from among men. This phrase goes right to the very heart of the purpose of God, for when everything is complete, there will be only “one LORD”—Yahweh — “He who will be” manifest in men and women and shall be “all, and in all”.^e As Zechariah says: “The LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be *one LORD*, and

his name *one*” (Zechariah 14:9). We are part of Christ’s ‘body’. He is the ‘head’. By the outworking of God’s ‘spirit’ in our lives we “grow up into him in all things”, and, thereby, the ‘body’ lives and grows to reflect the character of ‘Yahweh’ himself.

Walking in the light

John says that: “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But *if we walk in the light*, as he is in the light, *we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin*” (1 John 1:5-7). Fellowship with the Father and the Son and with each other is *conditional* upon “walking in the light”, that is, (i) believing the Apostle’s doctrine, and (ii) practicing godliness in our lives. As we have seen, those who “walk in the light” comprise the *one body* of Christ, having fellowship with the Father and Son and each other *irrespective of time, geography or fellowship groups*. Only God knows who forms the ‘body of Christ’ and it is not our place to judge the status of our fellow brethren and sisters before God. As Paul said: “judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts” (I Corinthians 4:5). There could be some who we receive in fellowship who, unknown to us, are *not* “walking in the light”. There may also be some who we *do not* extend fellowship to who *are* “walking in the light” and are, therefore, in fellowship with the Father and Son.

However, those in the light are commanded *not* to have fellowship with those who “walk in darkness.” “This ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God... *Be not ye therefore partakers with them*” (Ephesians 5:5,7). “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: *for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?* and what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14).

Scripture does not contain a concise list of the minimum beliefs necessary for salvation. But those teachings of Christ and the Apostles which we hold to be clearly proven Scriptural truths, have

been conveniently summarised in the BASF, as (i) *doctrines to be received*, (ii) *doctrines to be rejected* and (iii) *the commandments of Christ*. We use these Scriptural truths as the basis of our fellowship together and use them to implement the Scriptural principles of fellowship one with another.

Fellowship responsibilities

It is our ‘shared common beliefs’ or “one faith” that determines whether or not we are in the ‘one body’. *True* fellowship is based upon a *common understanding* of the Apostle’s doctrine *in principle* and *in practice*.

Our fellowship responsibilities are twofold. First of all, we are told to *receive in fellowship* those who believe and follow Christ’s and the Apostles’ teachings, both in doctrine and practice. We are, therefore, in fellowship with all those near and far whom we are willing to receive, irrespective of whether we are practically able to or not.^f

Bro Roberts wrote:

Fellowship is that recognised mutual relation of harmony that only waits the opportunity of personal intercourse for its fullest enjoyment. This harmony exists or does not exist quite irrespective of the opportunity of its practical illustration.

(Christadelphian page 328, 1887).

Secondly, we are told to *refuse fellowship* to those who deny Christ’s and the Apostles’ teachings *both in doctrine and practice*. “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us” (2 Thessalonians 3:6). “There be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But *though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed* (Gk: ‘set aside’). As we said before, so say I now again, *If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed*.” (Galatians 1:8-9).^g John says that we must not “receive into” the house, nor bid “Godspeed” (Greek: ‘chairō’ meaning ‘to

rejoice with, to greet with joyful welcome’) those who come to us for fellowship who are in error. To do this is to consent with, or be guilty of being a “partaker” (or fellowshipper) of their “evil deeds”. If we receive them, knowing full well of their error we become guilty of fellowshiping the evil deeds of others. Conversely, we are not responsible for the errors of others if: (i) the offence is not known to us, (ii) the offender deceives in order to have fellowship. In such cases, the responsibility rests with them, not the ecclesia, (iii) the process of Matthew 18 is still being applied, (iv) we have applied the principles of 1 John 4, and 2 John and genuinely did not identify them as an offender.

Scripture teaches us that matters of fellowship require our careful attention. But why? The reason is because “*walking disorderly*” and “*preaching another gospel*” threaten to dim the light of God’s Truth. For how can God call out a name for himself if we walk disorderly not reflecting His character and will in our lives? How can the light of His Truth be preserved if a man preaches “another gospel”? The Scriptural imperative to apply these principles is for the care of the ecclesias *that they might not be corrupted by wrong doctrine and improper practice*. It is also for the benefit of offenders who do err, so that they might ultimately be recovered to the truth in love, to the glory of the Father.^h

Bro. Islip Collyer writes as follows:

It would seem that this fellowship is a matter too sacred for the adjudication of man. Only the Lord can give the privilege, and only he can take it away. In the final sense this is certainly the case; but as custodians of God’s Truth, members of the Church of Christ are called upon to take such disciplinary measures as may be necessary for the preservation of purity ***in both doctrine and practice***, even to the extreme of refusing fellowship to offenders. We are given explicit instructions as to the principles by which we must be guided in these matters, but we are necessarily left with a considerable margin for judgment in the application of those principles. We are told to withhold fellowship from those who ***do not accept the full truth regarding Christ’s redemptive work***, and we are instructed to withdraw from those who are ***guilty of disorderly walk***.

Common union

The first occurrence of the word ‘fellowship’ in the New Testament is in Acts Chapter 2 where we read that after three thousand brethren and sisters were baptized “they had *all things in common*” and “they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and *fellowship*, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

Notice the order in which Luke lists these four things: (i) *the Apostles’ doctrine* (ii) *fellowship* (iii) *breaking of bread*, and (iv) *prayers*. In other words, Luke, under divine inspiration, is telling us that our ‘fellowship’ with each other is based upon sound ‘doctrine’ (or the one faith of the gospel); that our ‘breaking of bread’ together is an expression of our fellowship or ‘communion’ with each other based upon our ‘shared common beliefs’; that the unifying of our hearts and minds in prayer to our heavenly Father in remembrance of our absent Lord, is possible because of what Christ has accomplished for us in his life, death and resurrection. Each one is related to the other in its significance.

Again the connection between ‘fellowship’ and ‘the breaking of bread’ is apparent in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 where the translators have translated the same Greek word as ‘communion’, which is a compound of the English words ‘common’ and ‘union’:

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the **communion** of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the **communion** of the body of Christ? For we being many are **one bread**, and **one body**: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

Paul draws a connection between the ‘one body’ and the ‘one bread’, demonstrating that *we* are *also* represented in the bread and in the wine. So Paul is making the point that when we come together to share the bread and wine, not only are we ‘fellowshipping’ or declaring ‘common union’ with our Lord’s life, death and resurrection, but have ‘common union’ with each other as well. *Our fellowship with each other is a direct extension of our Fellowship with the Father and the Son.*

Our breaking bread and drinking wine together is a privilege and ultimate expression of the *common union* or ‘fellowship’ that we have with Christ and with each other. We share the memorials

together in acknowledgement that we are part of the *one body* with Christ as its *head*; share the *one hope* of life; share a common belief in the *one faith* of the Gospel; are committed to serving God as demonstrated by our submissions to the *one baptism*. The memorials are, therefore, reminders of the participation, fellowship or common union, that we have with Christ, with the Father, and by extension, one with another.

Bro. Harry Tennant wrote as follows:

The bread and wine speak of the believers themselves. They are **one in Christ**, and this is shown in the **one loaf** (the greek word for bread is also loaf). "We being many are **one loaf**." As the bread is shared among many, so **Christ's unity** is to be known in them because they are his body. The **one cup** pictures their one life in Christ. He is the true vine and they are the branches. The life of the branches comes from the tree: the tree of the believers comes from their life in him made effective by his death on their behalf. So it is that the believer is part of the act of remembrance. **He is one with Christ and with his brethren. Fellowship is unity.**

True unity

Scripture instructs us to worship God "in sincerity *and* in truth".ⁱ *True* unity can only be built upon a sound foundation of the first principles of *truth* described in Scripture as the 'one faith', the 'Apostle's doctrine' or the 'gospel of Christ'. 'Unity' that is not based upon the sound principles of the Truth is not unity at all.

But life in the Truth is not merely confined to the things that we believe *in principle*. It is about the righteousness and sincerity of the lives that we lead now. It is about the principles of the Atonement *in practice*.

True unity starts with us individually. Paul said: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in *the faith*; *prove* your own selves" (2 Corinthians 13:5). The children of Israel were instructed to "enquire...search...and ask diligently... if it be truth, and a thing certain" (Deuteronomy 13:14). Again, the Lord said: "*If* ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love... Ye are my friends, *if* ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14).

True unity starts with our relationship with the Father and the Son. The expression of the unity that we have with the Father and the Son is made evident by our attitudes and service towards each other: “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, *neither he that loveth not his brother*” (1 John 3:9-10). “Because he laid down his life for us... *we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren*” (1 John 3:16). “If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another... If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us*” (1 John 4:11-13). Our attitude towards unrighteousness and sin, and the love that we show in service towards our brethren and sisters is a practical expression of how the doctrine of the Atonement has affected our lives. Hebrews 1:9 says that we should learn to “love righteousness and hate iniquity.” But if we tolerate evil in our lives and allow Sin to reign, we will never learn to love righteousness and be manifest as the “children of God”.⁷ If we do not show “compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing” (1 Peter 3:8-9), we do not “love the brethren”, have not “passed from death to life” but “abideth in death” (1 John 3:14).

Appropriately, we conclude with perhaps one of the best summaries of the doctrine of the Atonement found in Scripture which are from the words of the Apostle Paul where he says in 2 Corinthians. 5:17-21: “If any man be in Christ, he is a *new creature*: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, *who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ*, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, *not imputing their trespasses unto them*; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ*, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. 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.*”

Notes:

- a* Acts 4:20
- b* 1 John 3:16
- c* Acts 8:12
- d* Genesis 2:7
- e* Colossians 3:11
- f* Hebrews 10:25; 3 John 5-11; Rom 15:5-7; Acts 2:42
- g* cp. Revelation 2:14-16; 2 John 9-10; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; Titus 3:10;
- h* 1 Corinthians 5:3-8, Galatians 5:9-10, 2 Timothy 2:15-18
- j* Joshua 24:14; cp. John 4:23-24
- j* 1 John 3:10



Keys to Understanding The Atonement

- The atonement is NOT an event. It is a process.
- There is only ONE method of reconciliation, not many!
- God is supreme and He is deserving of all honour!
- God is developing a divine family from among men.
- Unbelief is not believing what God has said is true.
- 'Sin' in its primary sense is 'transgression of the law' — the act of disobedience or rebellion.
- Adam and Eve's desires were not sinful in and of themselves. But when those desires were used in opposition to the will of God, then they are described as being sinful.
- Sin brought distance between God and Man.
- We are separated from God on account of 'ignorance' and 'wicked works'.
- Man is a dying creature and an inevitable sinner by birth.
- Human nature is NOT sin. Rather, it is 'prone to sin'. We are dying creatures with an inherent tendency that leads to sin.
- The Carnal Mind is the thinking of the mind that produces thoughts and actions that are in opposition to the will of God.
- The Spiritual Mind is the thinking of the mind which produces thoughts and actions that are in harmony with the mind of God.
- The word 'sin' is also used in Scripture to describe the flesh by figures of speech such as personification and metonymy.
- The flesh and sin stand related as CAUSE and EFFECT.
- There is nothing that we can do of ourselves to be saved.

- A key question in the Atonement is, 'How could God be a just God and a saviour?'
- We fail God two ways: We sin and we fail to manifest His character perfectly.
- Sacrifice does not literally remove sin. Forgiveness removes sin.
- Sacrifice is NOT forgiveness. It is the BASIS for forgiveness.
- Sacrifice is the demonstration of certain facts and truths which forms the basis of our reconciliation to God.
- Sin had to be condemned by a man who shared our same nature.
- Christ was sent in the divine wisdom of God, in an act of love towards Mankind, which demonstrated His righteousness and power.
- Christ represented both God AND Man.
- Christ's blood is NOT a cleansing agent for sin.
- Christ was THE reality that the Law pointed forward to in type.
- Christ did not die FOR his nature. He died BECAUSE HE SHARED our nature.
- Sin in the flesh CANNOT be atoned for or reconciled to God.
- Forgiveness was designed to lead a sinner to righteousness, repentance and reconciliation to the Father
- Christ came to do God's will FIRST — not to save himself or ourselves first!
- Christ is our 'leader' out of the death-state to the life-state.
- Christ was the first to benefit from his death in that he was raised from the dead and given eternal life
- Cleansing is first intellectual and moral. AFTER, it is physical.
- Christ's death and resurrection are inseparable elements of the atonement.
- Transgression needs forgiving. But our bodied need changing.
- Baptism is about our participation in both Christ's death AND his resurrection.



Appendices

Appendix A

From the The Council of Trent (1546) — “Decree Concerning Original Sin”:

“The sin of Adam, which in its origin is one, and being transfused into all by propagation, not by imitation, is in each one as his own...”

“The said merit of Jesus Christ is applied, both to adults and to infants, by the sacrament of baptism rightly administered in the form of the church”

“Infants, newly born from their mothers' wombs, even though they be sprung from baptized parents, are to be baptized; that they are baptized indeed for the remission of sins, and that they derive original sin from Adam...”

“For, by reason of this rule of faith, from a tradition of the apostles, even infants, who could not as yet commit any sin of themselves, are for this cause truly baptized for the remission of sins, that in them that may be cleansed away by regeneration, which they have contracted by generation...”

“Conferred in baptism, the guilt of original sin is remitted...”

From the Catechism of the Catholic Church: (Section headings are from the Roman Catholic Catechism)

Original Sin and Infant Baptism

402: All men are implicated in Adam's sin

403: Adam has transmitted to us a sin with which we are all born afflicted... Because of this certainty of faith, the Church baptizes for the remission of sins even tiny infants who have not committed personal sin

404: How did the sin of Adam become the sin of all his descendants? By this "unity of the human race" all men are implicated in Adam's sin... Still, the transmission of original sin is a mystery that we cannot fully understand... Adam and Eve committed a *personal sin*, but this sin affected the *human nature* that they would then transmit *in a fallen state*. It is a sin which will be transmitted by propagation to all mankind, that is, by the transmission of a human nature deprived of original holiness and justice. And that is why original sin is called "sin" only in an analogical sense: it is a sin "contracted" and not "committed" - a state and not an act.

405: original sin does not have the character of a personal fault in any of Adam's descendants... Baptism, by imparting the life of Christ's grace,

erases original sin and turns a man back towards God, but the consequences for nature, weakened and inclined to evil, persist in man and summon him to spiritual battle.

408: The consequences of original sin and of all men's personal sins put the world as a whole in the sinful condition aptly described in St. John's expression, "the sin of the world".

The Baptism of Infants

1250: Born with a fallen human nature and tainted by original sin, children also have need of the new birth in Baptism.

The Immaculate Conception

491: Mary, "full of grace" through God, was redeemed from the moment of her conception. That is what the dogma of the Immaculate Conception confesses, as Pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1854:

The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin.

493: The Fathers of the Eastern tradition call the Mother of God "the All-Holy" (*Panagia*), and celebrate her as "free from any stain of sin, as though fashioned by the Holy Spirit and formed as a new creature". By the grace of God Mary remained free of every personal sin her whole life long

494: Espousing the divine will for salvation wholeheartedly, without a single sin to restrain her, she gave herself entirely to the person and to the work of her Son; she did so in order to serve the mystery of redemption with him and dependent on him, by God's grace:

As St. Irenaeus says, "Being obedient she became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race." Hence not a few of the early Fathers gladly assert... "The knot of Eve's disobedience was untied by Mary's obedience: what the virgin Eve bound through her disbelief, Mary loosened by her faith." Comparing her with Eve, they call Mary "the Mother of the living" and frequently claim: "Death through Eve, life through Mary."

Mary's divine motherhood

495: the One whom she conceived as man by the Holy Spirit, who truly became her Son according to the flesh, was none other than the Father's eternal Son, the second person of the Holy Trinity. Hence the Church confesses that Mary is truly "Mother of God" (*Theotokos*).

**Recommended Reading: 'No Condemnation in Christ Jesus'
by Michael Ashton, The Christadelphian (p465), 1993**

Appendix B

In 1923 the Berean community split from the Central community over a controversy regarding the Atonement. Bro. Allen Strickler published a pamphlet on the Atonement called “Out of Darkness”, but some of the ideas that he put forward had quite definite similarities between the Renunciationalist teachings of Bro. Handley and Bro. Turney from the 1870’s. Brethren called into question a number of Bro. Strickler’s ideas on the Atonement which they considered to be inconsistent with scripture, such ideas being that *Christ’s offering was a substitutionary offering for man*; that *Christ suffered the punishment due to, or for sin*; and that Christ literally *bore our sins in his body*. Eventually, some ecclesias split from the Central community of Christadelphians to form the Berean fellowship.

In 1939, Bro. John Carter who was then the editor of ‘The Christadelphian’ wrote in the Christadelphian: “A criticism by bro. Strickler, of a pamphlet published by this office, led to a correspondence for about eighteen months — this led to the conclusion that he did not accept without reserve, some of the clauses of ‘The Statement of Faith’” (The Christadelphian, 1939). This paved the way for Reunion to be pursued in the 1940 and 1950’s when a large number of Berean Christadelphians rejoined the main body of Christadelphians on the basis of the BASF and the “Jersey City Resolution” — a three point statement which expressed the basis of fellowship. These two documents formed the basis of unity between Central and Berean ecclesias. The Jersey City Resolution read:

1. That we agree that the doctrines set forth in the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith are a true exposition of the first principles of the oracles of God as set forth in the teachings of Jesus Christ and his apostles, and that therefore these doctrines are to be believed and taught by us without reservation; the doctrine of the Scriptures on sin and its effects and God’s salvation from sin and death in Christ Jesus being defined in the clauses three to twelve of the Statement of Faith.
2. That we recognize as brethren and welcome to our fellowship all who have been immersed by whomsoever after their acceptance of the same doctrines and precepts, and that any brother departing from any element of the One Faith as defined in the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith is to be dealt with according to apostolic precept.

3. If any ecclesia is known to persist in teaching false doctrines, or to retain in fellowship those who do, other ecclesias can only avoid being involved by disclaiming fellowship.

At times, the suggestion has been made that the basis for reunion between the Bereans and Central was a Ten Point Statement that was drawn up by the Chicago ecclesia to clarify the doctrinal concerns that had existed regarding Bro. Allen Strickler's teachings. However, this statement was *not* adopted as part of the reunion process because it was recognised that some of its language resembled the language of Bro. Andrew's and Bro. Williams teachings on 'Inherited Legal Alienation'. In September, 1947 Bro Carter wrote an open letter entitled: "A Further Important Letter to All Christadelphians". It is of great value to hear what Bro. Carter had to say in the following extract taken from this letter:

Bro. A.D. Strickler took part in resisting the Andrew-Williams teaching. He did so by advancing arguments which contained the seed of his later teaching. In the intelligence from Buffalo in 1900 the error is there. In the contributions he made to "The Truth's Welfare" which was published to combat the teaching of Brethren Andrew and Williams, his ideas, which since have caused so much trouble, are to be found. The fact — and we are seeking facts — the fact is, that in resisting one error, he swung to the opposite extreme! But brethren did not notice it because his aim was to demolish the Andrew error. I have read as carefully as, perhaps, any other Brother, what Bro. A.D. Strickler wrote. In his writings he seeks to emphasise the moral issues involved in God's dealing with men, in opposition to the mechanical theories of J.J Andrew. He, however, contradicts certain aspects of the Truth, which we noted elsewhere, and which need not here take valuable time. Bro. A.D. Strickler is dead. ***But now, opposition by some Brethren to Bro. Strickler's views had led to a swing back to the position of Bro. Andrew...*** I have more than once been told by correspondents, who were not supporters of Bro. Strickler's views, that one of the difficulties of the position in the USA was that some Berean Brethren ***were themselves in an extreme position: an opposite extreme to Bro. Strickler, but still extreme.***

What became apparent from the reunion process between the Bereans and Central ecclesias in the 1940's and 1950's was that the BASF was an adequate document to define the first principles of the One Faith as long as *brethren were not giving an interpretation to it that was not intended or does not contradict Scriptural truths*. There were ecclesias

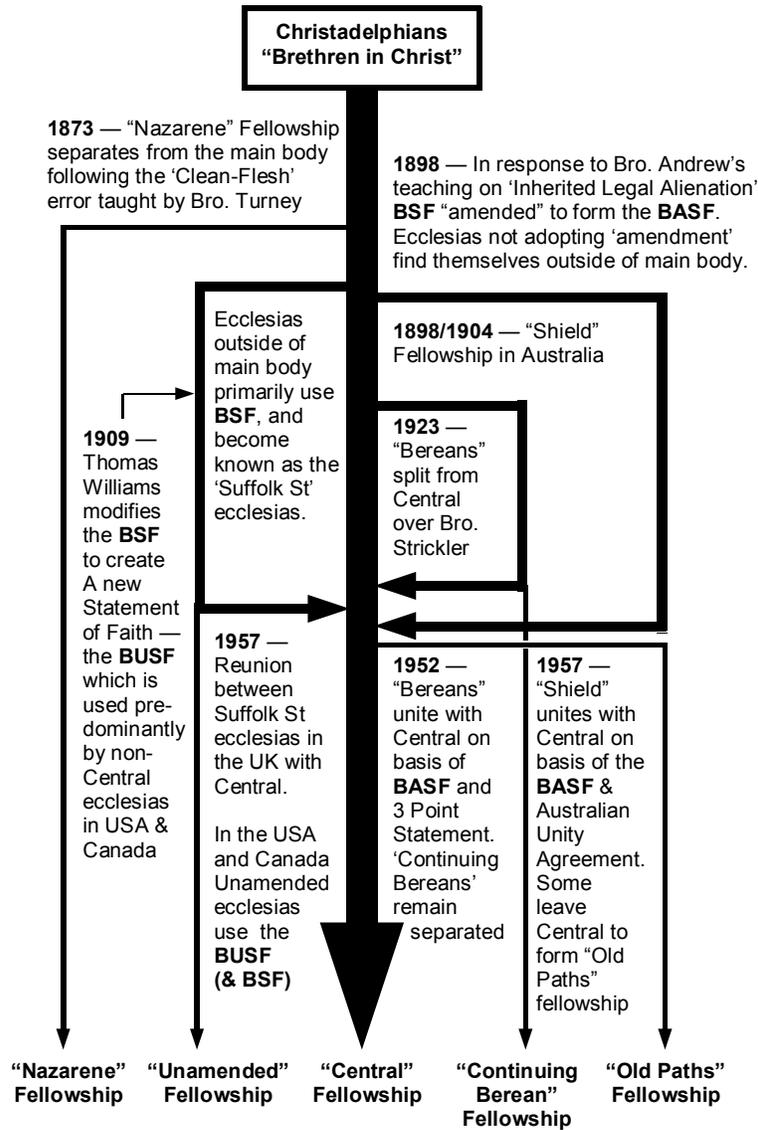
that did not rejoin Central at this time as they could not accept the Central community's understanding of Clauses 5-12 of the BASF, having "swung back to the position of Bro. Andrew". These ecclesias became known as the "Continuing Bereans".

A few years later Bro. Carter made reference to his 'Message to all Christadelphians' when he wrote:

A feature of the 'Berean' fellowship has been ***a leaning towards the teaching of J.J. Andrew*** which was controverted in the 1890's; not, be it said, to his views on resurrectional responsibility, but ***to those doctrines of condemnation and inherited sin and alienation*** which were the basis upon which he built the denial of resurrectional responsibility. This tendency was evident years ago in the U.S.A. and was pointed out in a 'Message to all Christadelphians' which was sent to a conference convened in October, 1947, when Detroit was chosen as the meeting place. In that 'Message' we sought to meet some questions to which answers were demanded by a brother in the Berean group, and who has again separated himself since reunion in England. In our reply we showed there was not only ***identity of thought but identity of language with that of J. J. Andrew.***

Similar controversies to the one that arose with Bro. Allen Strickler came about in the UK with Bro. Harry Fry, and in Australia with Bro. John Bell. Again, there were definite similarities between the teachings of these brethren and the Renunciationist teachings of the 1870's. In the UK, the errors of Bro. Fry were contained and did not have a large impact upon the Central community at the time. However, in Australia, while division did come about as a result of Bro. John Bell's teachings to form the 'Shield' fellowship, reunion was achieved with Central in the 1950's with the help and guidance of Bro. John Carter and Bro. Cooper. The result of reunion in Australia was that Central and Shield ecclesias were united upon the basis of the "Australian Unity Agreement" and the BASF. But a new fellowship formed called "The Old Paths" who themselves, like the "Continuing Bereans" in North America, had swung back to the extreme teachings of Bro. Andrew regarding the nature and sacrifice of Christ.

It should be pointed out that in the UK, again under the guidance of Bro. John Carter, those ecclesias which did not adopt the BASF in 1898, but continued to meet on the basis of the BSF, *did* unite with Central in the mid 1950's.



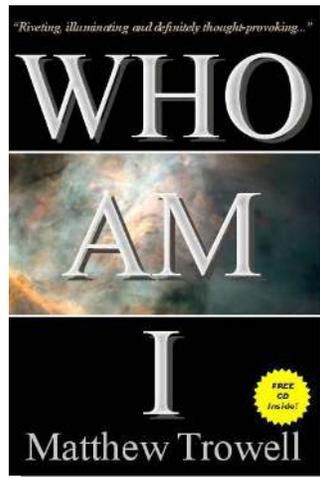
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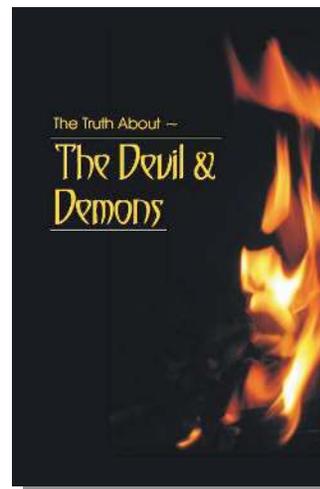
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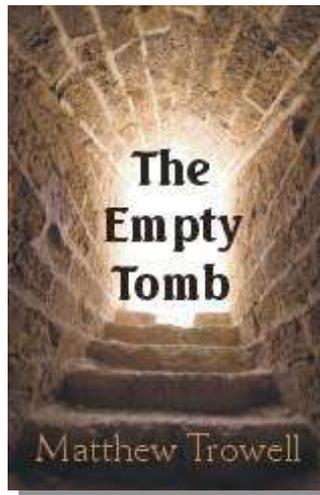


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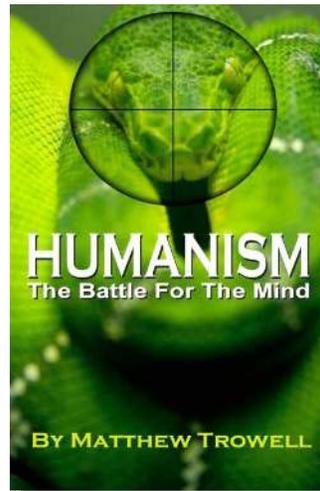
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