

ple to those who read, those with a sincere mind and in whose hearts there is no guile. As God forgave David so great a sin, how great is His forgiveness to all men if they truly repent! When David numbered the people (1 Chron. 21) God was displeased, and, because of this sin, seventy thousand men fell through pestilence. David and the elders clothed themselves in sackcloth, and David confessed his sin and pleaded that the blame be put on himself and on his father's house. To the prophet Gad he says: "I am in a great strait: let me fall now into the hand of the LORD; for very great are His mercies: but let me not fall into the hand of man" (v. 13).

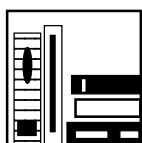
How well David knew that from man he would have received no mercy! Only with God is there true forgiveness. In the Lord's prayer we pray, "forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us" (Lk. 11:4). As we forgive so shall we be forgiven. We usually find that those who suffer most wrong forgive the most. There is no place for bitterness in the hearts of those who are true followers of Christ.

David was forgiven much, and he himself forgave those who wronged him. He had many

enemies; indeed, his life was a troubled one on all sides. However, those troubles kept him close to God. He was a lovable man. We remember the lovely friendship with Jonathan, his love for his children, and his deep, abiding love for God, which earned him the title of 'a man after God's own heart'. We can go forward with hope and faith that, no matter how many times we fall, God knows how frail we are; and, if we truly repent, He will cast our sins for ever behind His back, to be remembered no more.

May this short poem (by Hilda Murton) help us to meditate on the measure of our weakness and the magnitude of His grace:

"Just how bereft of good we are, how prone to sin,
Thou knowest even better than ourselves.
If we should know our sin in its entirety
We must abandon hope, must cease to strive.
We cannot comprehend Thy love or know
the magnitude
Of mercy and of pardon at Thy hand;
But, limitations freed and in a holier sphere,
E'en in Thy Kingdom, we shall understand".



Reviews

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Combating error on the atonement*

Russell Ebbs

THE BOOKLET entitled *The Slain Lamb* is an amended transcript of a lecture given by Brother Roberts on 29 July 1873. It was a reply to a lecture given the previous evening by Brother Edward Turney, in which he had set forth the 'renunciationist' heresy, which was having a serious and adverse effect on the Brotherhood at this time, only some two years after the falling asleep of Brother Thomas. Brother Roberts' strenuous efforts to contend against this doctrine had caused his health to suffer. He had intended to take questions after the lecture, but was unable so to do after his exertions, offering to return another evening, health permitting, to fulfil that commitment.

The origin of the heresy

The 'renunciationist' teaching originated most likely from a Pentecostalist sect. Brother David Handley, a former elder of that sect, held the view that Jesus did not share the condemned nature of Adam's descendants because God had

* *The Slain Lamb: an exposition on the true nature of the sacrifice of Christ*, Robert Roberts. Published by Menorah Publications, South Australia, and obtainable from Brother Peter and Sister Wendy Talbot, 6 Ridge Lane, Radcliffe-on-Trent, Nottingham, NG12 1BD. Tel./fax 0115 9333683; e-mail TalbotPJ@aol.com. Price £1.70, including postage and packing.

given him life directly as He had also to Adam—hence the use by the ‘renunciationists’ of the term ‘free life’, the appropriateness of which Brother Roberts refutes several times in his lecture. Brother Handley appears to have convinced Brother Edward Turney of this view, who then ‘renounced’ (hence the term ‘renunciationist’) his previous views on the atonement in 1873.

Brother Turney stated: “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”.¹ Therefore, according to the theory, Jesus shared our human nature without being in need of redemption from the condemnation of Adam’s descendants. It further stated that the fall introduced death into human nature, but “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”.² It was not until the twentieth century that such ideas were called the ‘clean flesh’ doctrine.³ As Brother Roberts pointed out, this heresy presents God as doing wrong, since, if Christ had this ‘free life’, and was, of course, sinless, then it was wrong that Christ should die according to His predetermined plan.

Brother Roberts’ lecture

Having highlighted how the heresy employed invented phrases to contain invented fallacies rather than express itself in words that the Holy Spirit teaches, Brother Roberts makes his first major point: that the Father is the great initiator and operator in the matter of the atonement—a point he was later to make in similar words equally forcibly in his booklet *The Blood of Christ*⁴ some twenty-two years later in 1895. In this section of his lecture many scriptures are cited, including 2 Corinthians 5:18,19: “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”. He adds the point that Jesus always set forth the Father as the great instigator and operator in the case.

He continues by showing that, whilst God created the earthy Adam as the beginning of the Divine plan, yet there was a great difference between him and Christ, for God was manifest

in Christ, “the Lord from heaven” (1 Cor. 15:47), something in effect denied by the ‘renunciationist’, although professed in words. The latter’s parallel between Adam’s period of innocence and Jesus’s probation is revealed as false by the fact that Adam during that time suffered no evil, pain, grief or weakness, and did not therefore need to ask to be delivered from such evils. However, Jesus was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isa. 53:3), who approached God “with strong crying and tears” (Heb. 5:7); he bore our ‘Adamic’ nature and condemnation.

It is a fallacy to speak of Jesus’s life (or ‘free life’) as distinct from his nature, since this element of his existence cannot be considered abstractly by itself. Thus his sacrifice is variously expressed in Scripture as the laying down of his *life* (Jno. 10:17), the giving of his *body* (Lk. 22:19), the pouring out of his *soul* (Isa. 53:12), or the offering up of *himself* (Heb. 9:25). All these refer to his submission to death for the putting away of sin, and not the disentanglement of a so-called ‘life’ from his body for presentation to the eternal throne. The ‘renunciationist’s’ continual repetition of the word ‘life’ (and the invented phrase ‘free life’) in this context caused, says Brother Roberts, confusion to inexperienced minds. At this point Brother Roberts, referring to Jesus’s own words in Luke 24:44, “all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me”, lists a multitude of scriptures, particularly the Messianic psalms, to establish that Jesus took on our nature.

Adam sinned, and death came; but, says Brother Roberts, the ‘renunciationist’ again used

1. *The Sacrifice of Christ*, E. Turney, 1873, p. 9.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
3. In the Special Issue of *The Testimony* published in January 1984, entitled *The Atonement*, there is an article by Brother Reg Carr entitled “The doctrine of the atonement: the Christadelphian experience”. This is recommended as a concise and valuable treatise on how Brother Roberts had to contend for the truth concerning the atonement against the ‘Renunciationists’, then against Brother J. J. Andrew, and later against Brother George Cornish. Copies of this article are obtainable from the reviewer at 93 Mill Lane, Fordham, Ely, Cambs., CB7 5NH.
4. This booklet is highly recommended as a first class simple exposition of the doctrine of the atonement. It is available from the Christadelphian Office at 50p plus postage. It was reviewed by the present writer in *The Testimony* in August 1998 under the title, “Explaining the atonement”.

his own vocabulary rather than Scripture in saying that Adam's life was "forfeited", and "came unto pledge", incurring a "debt", described as "eternal death", which had to be paid. Thus, in order that this "debt" might be paid, the substitutionary concept of the sacrifice of Christ was brought in.

Brother Roberts then states an important issue: that it is our personal offences, not our hereditary mortality in Adam, which stand in the way of our resurrection to life; and likewise it was not a 'free life' that brought resurrection, but the personal righteousness and obedience of God's own anointed. Our condemnation in Adam means mortality in the physical organisation of our constitution.

Adamic and Mosaic curses

In a chart displayed during his address, and reproduced in the booklet, Brother Roberts showed Christ as being of the seed of Abraham, and subject to both the Adamic and Mosaic curse. Speaking of the Law, Romans 7:10 refers to "the commandment, which was ordained to life", and it would have given life if they had kept it (Lk. 10:25-28). If a Jew had kept the Law from birth to death he would have been in the very position of the Lord Jesus. By dying he would have cleansed himself from the Adamic condemnation and his righteousness would have brought about his resurrection from the dead. Indeed, it was by the righteousness of one that resurrection has come (Rom. 5:18; 1 Cor. 15:21), not by his "free life".

However, the Law was incapable of bestowing eternal life because it was weak through the flesh, which was incapable of keeping it. Both Jew and Gentile are under sin and dependent upon the mercy of God (Rom. 11:32), upon God's plan of redemption by Christ, who was "made under the law" (Gal. 4:4) as the seed of Abraham and David. Thus the praise and glory are to God, and no flesh can glory in His presence (1 Cor. 1:29).

Brother Turney argued that, flesh being clean, it would have been possible for Christ to have entered eternal life alone, without dying. Brother Roberts makes the point that, in being cursed by the Law in hanging upon the tree, Christ was in fact showing his submission, and his obedience "unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). He had been commanded to do this, and had he refused the command this would have been sin. When God raised him because of his obedience, the Law had no further claim, and

hence Jesus bore away both the curse of the Law and the curse that came from Adam. Such was the work of the Spirit of God in Christ that "giveth life" (2 Cor. 3:6). As Paul said: "ye . . . are become dead to the law by the [slain] body of Christ" (Rom. 7:4).

Brother Turney's 'new' theory propounded that Jesus partook of the seed of Abraham without taking the curse inherent in it, but Brother Roberts shows that the days of Messiah were days of weakness (Heb. 5:8), and that he was "crucified through weakness" (2 Cor. 13:4).

In reply to the comments made the previous evening that "There is nothing evil in the flesh", and "Sin is not in the flesh, but sin is in the character", Brother Roberts wields the sword of the Spirit with a series of rhetorical questions, citing passages such as, "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom. 8:13), and, "For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:8). Thus he shows that "sin in the flesh" stands for those impulses which are native to the flesh, to make clear to us the purpose of God in revealing our native tendency to disobedience, and our dependency upon the mercy of God.

Sinful flesh

There follows a valuable exposition of Roman 8:3: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh". He shows that "the flesh of sin" would be a better rendering than "sinful flesh", and that, although Jesus took upon him the sinful nature of Abraham, it was the work of God through Christ that enabled Jesus to "destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14), that serpent principle, the death power in us.

God's Son had the same flesh as us, full of the same propensities, which were kept in subjection to the mind of God because the Father, by the Spirit, taught him and led him from the beginning. Christ is God manifest in the condemned flesh and justified in the Spirit, that the praise may be to God. This teaching is extremely important, as it is essential that we never adopt the teaching of the antichrist system, which denies that "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh" (2 Jno. v. 7).

Christ a representative not a substitute

Christendom believes that Christ died instead of us, using texts such as Hebrews 2:9, "that he [Jesus] by the grace of God should taste death for every man", an idea that is part of the 'renunciationist' theory. Brother Roberts contends against this by an examination of scriptures such as Luke 1:69: "[God] hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David". Obviously God did not raise up the horn instead of us, but for us.

There follows one of those succinct sentences typical of Brother Roberts, and also Brother Thomas: "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" (p. 23).

Conclusion

In the reviewer's opinion, this lecture is important for several reasons. In its historical context,

the outcome of controversy was a clearer understanding in the Brotherhood of the sacrifice of Christ. Thus *The Slain Lamb* contributes to our understanding of this matter, and prepares us against any similar attack on the Truth that might arise in our day.

It is a useful exercise to read through the *Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith* from time to time, and it is interesting to note how certain words and phrases were chosen to counter heresies such as those mentioned in this review. For example, Clause VIII reads: "That these promises had reference to Jesus Christ, who was to be raised up in the condemned line of Abraham and David, and who, though wearing their condemned nature, was to obtain a title to resurrection by perfect obedience, and, by dying, *abrogate the law of condemnation for himself and all who should believe and obey him*".

Finally, a consideration of Brother Roberts' grasp of the Scriptures and his continual exertions against error are a valuable exhortation to us all.



Science

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The stretching of the heavens*

Dennis Glover

A FEW YEARS ago, when searching for the answer to a Scripture problem, the writer had occasion to consult a commentary on Zechariah. Turning to chapter 12, he began to read the whole chapter, starting at verse 1: "The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, Which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him". The original problem was forgotten as the commentator's notes below the verse caused new and exciting thoughts to flood in, leaving the old to be dealt with another day. The comment of the author, A. R. Fausset, was read and reread, lest it had been misunderstood.

The words which had caught his attention referred to the second line of this first verse of

Zechariah 12: "the LORD, Which stretcheth forth the heavens". Fausset's comments on this line are simple but emphatic, as he writes in bold print: "**The LORD, Which stretcheth forth the heavens**": present: now; not merely 'hath stretched forth', as if God only created and then left the universe to itself". Fausset concludes by pointing out that these were God's own words, given to remove all doubts as to whether He could deliver Israel by reminding them, and us too, of His creative and sustaining power.

* Previous articles on the expansion of the universe have appeared in *The Testimony*. See "The Hubble Constant", Andrew McFarland, Jun. 1995, p. 190; "The stretching of the heavens", Nigel Bernard, Nov. 1995, p. 438.