



Biblaridion

The language of atonement

"Examining soteriology, hamartiology and semasiology"

Introduction

In a previous article we examined the church doctrines of "penal substitution" and "satisfaction" and rejected them as atonement theories. [1] Although a complete atonement theory was not presented the ideas of "representation" and "solidarity" were examined and found to be more Scriptural. Aulén stated that: *"It is in some conception of the nature of God that every doctrine of the Atonement has its ultimate ground."* [2] To this we might add that it is in some conception **of the nature of Christ** that every doctrine of the Atonement has its ground." Scholars are at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to understanding the reconciliation achieved by Christ if they operate from *a priori* assumptions of "Persons in heaven", hypostatically pre-existent before all time that enter history by assuming or indwelling human nature, rather than as a man who stood in a unique relationship to God. [3] It is not the intention of this article to produce a systemized theory of atonement, if that is at all possible, [4] but simply to examine the semantics of atonement.

Biblical language and human language

What do we mean by Biblical language and human language? The two are obviously not distinct fields but overlap considerably. Moreover, Biblical language has been shaped by the socio-cultural setting of its time. However,

the Bible is unique not in that it employs the language, metaphor and myth of its milieu, but in that it transforms it and infuses it with new meaning, thereby producing its own distinctive idiom. This increases the difficulties for exegetes, who are already operating through the medium of ancient languages that have also evolved through time. Of course, good textual criticism combined with responsible exegesis can overcome many of these difficulties – but the exegete must beware of imposing meanings and theories on texts that they cannot bear.

Flesh and Blood

There are, broadly speaking, four atonement theories, [5] they are derivative; that is to say, they attempt to interpret and systemize what Scripture teaches on sin and atonement. Perhaps the best known is Augustinian with its concepts of “original sin” and concupiscence. All these theories have elements of truth but often they operate at extremes of the spectrum –offering different views of human nature, sin and atonement. They also develop their own, often unbiblical, conceptual language such as depravity, degradation and so forth, particularly Augustinian theory which holds to ontic degradation. Here then is an attempt, *not* to offer a complete working atonement theory, but to examine the Biblical language afresh and to offer tentative conclusions and possibly new perspectives.

We commence with the expression “flesh and blood” as this is used to describe the nature of man and the nature of Christ: “forasmuch then as the children (those whom God hath given him; v.13) are partakers of flesh and blood, he took part of the same (flesh and blood)...he also shared....he also himself likewise shared the same flesh and blood” (Heb.2:14). The author to the Hebrews could hardly be more emphatic in his declarations that Jesus shared the same nature as us. In fact it becomes the touchstone of true Christianity; “Every Spirit [6] that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist” (1 John 4:3). Most

commentators suppose that John is contesting a Docetic-like Christology whose closest parallels are the earliest forms of Gnosticism proper which probably emerged round about the turn of the first century AD (cf. I John 4:2f; 5:6 with Ignatius, *Magn.*1:2; *Smyrn.*1-3; 5:2). [7] Whatever false doctrine was being refuted, it is clear, that Jesus' nature is the same as ours – "*flesh and blood.*" This was not someone "playacting" at being human, nor was it a temporary participation in humanity by being "clothed on" with human nature, a pre-existent "spirit" foregoing divine privileges and being "incarnated" as flesh. [8]

What then does "flesh and blood" mean in Scripture? In the N.T. it is usually idiomatic for human nature. It is the antithesis of Spirit; "*the flesh lusteth against the spirit*" (Gal.5:7) it is weak (Matt.26:41) unprofitable (John 6:63) perishable (1 Pet.1:24) sinful (Rom.8:3) judgmental (John 8:15) and limited (Mtt.16:17) and therefore it cannot please God (Rom.8:8) or inherit the Kingdom (John 3:5-8). The primary idea is one of weakness and of pleasing self rather than of ontological depravity. Describing Paul's use of the word "flesh," for instance, James Dunn writes: Translations like "unspiritual nature" and "sinful nature" give a misleading and falsely dualistic overtone to Paul's usage. Flesh for Paul was neither unspiritual nor sinful. The term simply indicated and characterized the weakness of a humanity constituted as flesh and always vulnerable to the manipulation of its desires and needs as flesh. [9]

During his ministry Christ was approached by a rich young man, who introduced his question to Jesus with the words "Good Master." The rich young man was no doubt sincere in asking his question of Jesus as the "Master" (*didaskalos*), or teacher – He recognized Jesus as a fundamentally "good man", therefore it was natural to ask this "good teacher" what "good things" he ought to do; "*what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?*" Christ responded with; "*Why callest thou me good (agathos)? There is none good but*

one, that is, God" (Matt.19:17). This allows us to view Jesus' perception of his own humanity, he no doubt had the penitentiary Psalm 25 in mind; "*Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will **He teach sinners in the way***" (v.8). God was therefore the "teacher" and even Jesus himself could do nothing that had not first been taught or observed from the Father: "*The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel*" (John 5: 19, 20). Jesus identifies himself totally with the "sinner" who needs teaching by God – Hebrews says that he "**learned obedience by the things which he suffered**" (5:8). Jesus acknowledges that his own nature is not "good", (yet, there is still a manifest difference see note 21) but can this bear the weight of ontological depravity – a metaphysic of sin? The word "good" is used as an assessment by God after each of his creative acts and "very good" for the completed work in Genesis 31:1. However, this was pre-fall; the assessment of whether something in creation is "good" or not, rests ultimately with the creator. The divine verdict on the Son at the commencement of his ministry was; "*houtos eimi ho huios egO ho agapEtos en hos eudokeO*" – "this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt.3:17). However, this was not a pronouncement on his nature but on his conduct.

The prominent Protestant reformer, Martin Luther, taught that the prophets of the Old Testament foretold, "*that Christ should become the greatest transgressor, murderer, adulterer, thief, rebel, and blasphemer, that ever was or could be in the world.*" He alleged that the Lord lost his innocence at Calvary, and died as a sinful being. [\[10\]](#) This interpretation has Jesus virtually *becoming* a sinner on the cross (and therefore a substitute for us) and is usually supported by passages such as 2 Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 9:28, and 1 Peter 2:24. The next section will examine some of these difficult passages before proceeding with our investigation.

Made sin or made a sin-offering?

God made him who had no sin to be sin **[a]** for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Footnotes: NIV translation: **[a]** 2 Corinthians 5:21; "Or be a sin offering"

ΤΟΝ	ΜΗ	ΓΝΩΝΤΑ	ΑΜΑΡΤΙΑΝ	ΥΠΕΡ	ΗΜΩΝ	ΑΜΑΡΤΙΑΝ	ΕΠΟΙΗΣΕΝ
ho	mE	ginOskO	hamartia	huper	egO	hamartia	poieO
THE-One	NO	KNOWING	missing	OVER	US	missing	DOES
			sin	for-the-sake-of		sin	he-makes
t_Acc Sg m	Part Neg	v_2Aor Act Ptcp Acc Sg m	n_Acc Sg f	Prep	pp 1 Gen Pl	n_Acc Sg f	v_Aor Act Ind 3 Sg
ΙΝΑ	ΗΜΕΙΣ	ΓΕΝΩΜΕΘΑ	ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣΥΝΗ	ΘΕΟΥ	ΕΝ	ΑΥΤΩ	
hina	egO	ginomai	dikaioSunE	theos	en	autos	
THAT	WE	MAY-BE-BECOMING	JUSTice	OF-God	IN	Him	
			righteousness				
Conj	pp 1 Nom Pl	v_2Aor midD Sub 1 Pl	n_Nom Sg f	n_Gen Sg m	Prep	pp Dat Sg m	

Can this verse bear the dogmatic soteriology often inferred from it?

Does it speak of sin in an ontological or cultic sense? Is it a substitutionary – penal exchange imputed to Christ as developed by Anselm’s satisfaction doctrine, [\[11\]](#) or is it of a representative-symbolic character? The translation "a sin offering for us" suggests a substitutionary exchange, but this is no more than a translator’s paraphrase of 'huper egO harmatia poieO.' Although the Hebrew MT does not differentiate between 'sin' and 'sin offering' the Greek LXX used "peri hamartias" (ie, 'concerning sin' or 'for sin') to indicate a 'sin-offering.' The N.T. most probably follows the Septuagint method of differentiation [\[12\]](#) and the revisers were therefore justified in changing "for sin" to "as an offering for sin" in Rom 8:3, and wherever else "hamartias" is found with the preposition "peri" to indicate a 'sin-offering.' The more direct 'made sin' is therefore preferable; particularly as it would be incongruous to render hamartias in two different senses in the same verse (sin and sin-offering). It would also upset the symmetry of the verse as "made sin" is the antithesis of "made (or becoming) righteous."

N. T. Wright, in his paper "*On Becoming the Righteousness of God*" observes that; "The verse has traditionally been read as a somewhat detached statement of atonement theology: we are sinners; God is righteous, but in Christ what Luther called a "wondrous exchange" takes place, in which Christ takes our sin and we his "righteousness." He suggests that the righteousness is God's own, rather than a righteousness that he gives, reckons, imparts, or imputes to human beings" rather than a status or quality which, though relating to God in some way, is predicated of humans. "The righteousness does indeed remain God's; but this "righteousness" never leaves behind the all-important sense of *covenant faithfulness*. There is thus, I contend, an excellent case to be made out for reading the phrase as a clear Pauline technical term meaning "the covenant-faithfulness of [Israel's] God." Wright contextualizes the argument and places it firmly in Paul's larger defence of his apostolic ministry, acting as an ambassador of the New Covenant. [\[13\]](#)

Wright's suggestion to read "*righteousness*" as "covenant faithfulness" is reinforced by the O.T. use of "*mercy and truth*" as technical terms for the covenant (Micah 7:20). With this understanding in view, it is possible that "made sin" should be understood in the sense of "being made a curse for us" (Gal.3:13). [\[14\]](#) The contrast is then between the law-covenant that brings sin and death (and made Jesus accursed) and the Abrahamic covenant that imputes righteousness. God *does* impute righteousness but sin is never imputed. [\[15\]](#) This fits with Paul's broader theology – it is essentially the law that makes sinners; "*for without the law sin was dead*" (Rom.7:8). Jesus therefore represents sin (made sin) in the same way that the lifted up serpent represented human sinfulness. [\[16\]](#)

So 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. (Heb.9:28)

This verse also purports to support substitutionary atonement, moreover, the last clause seems to suggest that the second appearance of the Messiah will be "without sin." However, the thrust of the argument in the previous verses point the reader to the absolutely unique character of the Lord's sacrifice; "*now once in the end of the world*" (v.26), this in contrast with the repeated need for propitiation under the law; "*every year with blood of others*"(v.25). Hebrews is stressing the matchless **one off** – distinctive **once for all** nature of the event. It is the definitive sacrifice, the one that places all the others in context, the one that the law pointed towards and foreshadowed. The same argument is continued in verse 28; "**once offered**" - - in other words sin has already been dealt with - - defeated definitively and completely in Christ's first advent. Hebrews assures the reader that the Messiah's second-advent is about salvation, not to deal with sin (without sin). Most of the modern translations follow the same contextual argument when they paraphrase the verse:

So also Christ died only once as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again but not to deal with our sins again. This time he will bring salvation to all those who are eagerly waiting for him. (NLT)

So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation. (NKJV)

So Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without {reference to} sin, to those who eagerly await Him. (NASB)

So Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. (RSV)

Despite protestations to the opposite, this verse says nothing about the nature of Christ and everything about his mission. The Lord Jesus Christ put away sin permanently by a sacrifice which needs no repetition. How did Jesus “bear the sins of many”? In Pauline theology it points towards Jesus bearing the curse of the law, fulfilling all the types and shadows of animal sacrifice, all the consequences of sin (pain, humiliation, separation from God and finally death); bearing Adamic nature and therefore becoming a new federal head. He is a new creation, a new representative man and the fulfillment of covenant faithfulness for all those who associate themselves with him.

Who his own self bare our sins in his body [a] upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, should live unto righteousness. (1 Pet.2:24)

Footnote RSV: [a] *carried up..... to the tree*

The formulaic expressions in 1 Peter 2:24 are almost creedal in their presentation. They bear resemblances with the Pauline theology of 2 Colossians 14, where it is not the “body” but the “*handwriting of ordinances*” that is nailed to the tree:

Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances (Grk. *dogma*) that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross. (Col.2:14)

The apostle employs the unusual expression “*airO ek ho mesos*” – literally, “has lifted out the midst” (translated as; took it out the way). It is obviously intended as a play on **Moses**. The law (tables of stone) was preserved inside the ark under the mercy seat (in the ‘midst’ of the cherubim) – which was sprinkled with blood on the Day of Atonement in order to blot out the peoples sins. For Paul (and for Peter), “*baring our sins in his body*” is the equivalent to nailing the law to the tree. The argument seems to be that although he fulfilled the law perfectly he was nevertheless condemned (accursed) by that same law –thus demonstrating its deficiency and its inability to save. In other words

Jesus exposed the flaw in the law, but this was only possible because although he shared our nature he was "sinless." On this one occasion (and only on this occasion) was the law exposed – and therefore it was invalidated and abolished. Contrary to this we have the expression (in Peter); "*living unto righteousness*" - again, covenant faithfulness (the Abrahamic covenant) is in mind, namely the righteousness imputed to Abraham. It is therefore unlikely that these passages have anything to say about ontological depravity or substitution theology. However, we stand on firmer ground with Romans 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 as an offering for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. (Rom.8:3 RV)

James Dunn comments as follows; "To fill out the picture of Paul's Adam Christology which is clearly emerging we need only briefly refer to Rom. 8.3 and the earlier passages Gal.4.4 and II Cor.5.21 (cf. Eph.2.14f). Romans 8.3 – 'God sending his own Son in the precise likeness of sinful flesh (*en homoioma sarx hamartia*) and as a sacrifice for sin (*peri hamartia*) condemned sin in the flesh....' It is generally agreed that 'flesh' in Paul is not something evil in itself, but denotes man in his weakness and corruptibility. 'Sinful flesh' means therefore not sin-committing flesh, but flesh under the dominion of sin (cf.6.6; 7.14) –that is, man in his fallenness, man dominated by his merely human appetites and desires and in bondage to death (cf.7.5). So whatever *homoioma* means exactly, the phrase 'precise likeness of sinful flesh' must denote Jesus in his oneness with sinful man, in his complete identity with fallen Adam. Likewise there is widespread agreement that *peri hamartia* alludes to the sin offering in the OT, so that again we most probably have a reference to Jesus' death. We have here therefore a form of Adam Christology merged with an understanding of Jesus' death in sacrificial terms. And once again it is specified that the way in which Jesus resolved the plight of sinful man was by or through his death – and again (8.4) it is indicated that his death made it possible for the Spirit to shape man according to God's intention (expressed in

law). In short, what we have here is an Adam Christology in which the later half is tacit (the risen Christ, the last Adam), and in which the emphasis falls on the first half, the oneness of Christ with the first Adam, fallen man." [\[17\]](#)

Privation theology

In privation theology sin is not a *constitutive* aspect of fallen human nature. Sin is not attached to our nature as an alien substitute in the vacuum of lost righteousness. Sin is deprived human nature acting out of itself, rather than out of the Spirit. Without the Spirit, every human expression is bent; bent away from God and toward self. Leon O. Hynson observes; "Methodists usually denominate original sin in terms of positive corruption, the apparent addition of an ontic degradation. Arminius never doubts the corruption of every human being, but he expresses it in ethical and relational categories. Fallen man is without original righteousness, or the Holy Spirit (or sanctifying grace). To say that man is without the Spirit/sanctifying grace/original righteousness is not identical with the assessment that man is depraved, corrupt, diseased or degraded. The language of Arminius leads us to seek the soteriological answer in relational terms. That of the Reformers and Wesley requires a solution expressed more in ontological language." [\[18\]](#)

This approach has much to commend it, but once again it is only partly true. It is simply not the case that privation of the Spirit causes sin. The Lord had the Spirit without measure, yet was able to be tempted and therefore the possibility existed for him to sin (although he did no sin). Similarly, it was possible for those who had received the Spirit to apostatize (Heb.6:4-8). The Spirit, when applied to fallen man is always in opposition to the flesh (Gen.6:3). However, the relational –ethical aspect of man’s sin does require closer investigation.

The Eden myth as a relational paradigm

Human beings are made in the image of God, and are animated by his breath, they share something of the divine but they are also earth (*adamah*) – a play on the Hebrew for redness (*edom*) and blood (*dam*). To be made in the image of God means that in some way we reflect his glory. After a similar fashion Eve was made to reflect the glory of her husband (1 Cor.11:7). She was made to alleviate his loneliness (Gen.2:18), So God created persons, male and female (Gen.1:27). In Luke's record we are informed that the *elohim* have no need to procreate, this indicates that gender is not part of that which their "image and likeness" portrays (Lk.20:35). However, Karl Barth believed that the purpose of creating them male and female is the definitive explanation of the image of God. This duality is a vital part of their being: humans are made for relationship, to compliment each other in love and fulfil each others deepest needs. "*Let us make man in our image...and let them have dominion*" (Gen.1:26). This connection is supported by Psalm 8 where human greatness is directly related to dominion over all the animals. It is not clear though whether the image consists of dominion itself, or whether dominion is that for which men and women are uniquely suited by virtue of this image. [\[19\]](#)

Ultimately their dominion over creation and the impulse to give themselves in love one to another speaks of man and woman's higher end; to love their creator. Persons are made ultimately to praise God and to love him and to find their highest end in that relationship. This end is the supreme meaning of creation in the image of God. Human relationships are meant to reflect divine love just as human dominion reflects divine Lordship over creation. God identified man's need for a partner; "*it is not good that man should be alone*" (Gen.1:18) – this statement speaks to us not only about man's situation, but about also about the divine character. It demonstrates His concern for and empathy with his creature – how did the creator recognise this need? Is man's feeling of solitude a reflection of the divine requirement to be loved...*thou shalt love the Lord thy God..?*

Love is a gift freely given or withheld – it can therefore only be offered by a creature with the ability to exercise freewill. The Rabbis expressed it with the saying, *"Everything is in the hands of heaven, except the fear of heaven."* Or, as Franz Rosenzweig expressed, *"Man should learn to trust his freedom, to believe that, though he is limited in all forms of existence, he is totally free in his relationship to God."* The creation of the woman as a life partner for Adam was in some way an intrusion on the fellowship that man enjoyed with God: *"He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord...he that is married careth for the things of the world, how he may please his wife"* (1 Cor.7:33, 34).

God pronounced that a man would leave his mother and father (in Adam's case God was both 'mother and father' to him) and cleave to his wife. The covenant of marriage implies a distancing and independence from ones origins and the forging of a new relationship. The creation of Eve was in some way the first step in Adam's separation from God, and this is undoubtedly how Adam perceived it;

*"The woman whom **thou gavest** to be with me, she gave me of the tree"* (Gen.3:12).

The disloyalty and betrayal characterises so much of interpersonal behaviour throughout human existence pales into insignificance once it is realised that Adam is actually accusing God himself of causing the breach by giving him a wife. This needs to be contrasted with the words of Christ; *"I have manifested thy name unto the men **which thou gavest me** out of the world: thine they were and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word"* (John 17:6). There is no sense of separation or alienation between Jesus and his followers or between Jesus and his God, for love of God and love of neighbour are not in conflict. John chapter 17 stresses the unity between the Father and the son and those that had been "given him".

As if to counter the accusations Adam directed at God (for creating Eve) and at Eve (for tempting him) God graciously mediates the promise of salvation ***through her!*** The creation of the woman may well have been the first step in Adam's separation from God, but God made her the first means of reconciliation. Henceforth she would be the "mother of the living"; through her labour pangs the messiah would be delivered and the serpent destroyed (Gen.3:15); the earth would eventually be populated with the Sons of God.

The synoptic and epistles saw the marriage relationship as typifying the mystical union between Christ and his ecclesia (Eph.5:31-32), like Adam, Jesus was the gardener (John 20:15; Gen.2:8) who fell into a "*deep sleep*" with the ecclesia metaphorically formed by the wounding of his side (John 19:34; Gen.2:21). The biblical picture of Adam and Eve implies what Martin Buber has taught us to call the 'I-thou' relationship between two equal persons who are one flesh (Gen.2:24). That is to say, while man is two, yet he is one. Nay, more. The word '*adamah*' comprises the conception that man is perhaps three before he is fully man. Adam and Eve are not complete in the biblical story until Adam really 'knew' *yadha* ' his wife (Gen.4:1;5:3), and a child is born of that knowledge. Both the knowledge, and the child which results there from, are therefore necessary aspects of that total complex of being which receives the name of '*adamah*' or '*adam*' in Hebrew thought. There is a further aspect of the Hebrew noun, '*adam*', which we must also take into account, as we seek to understand what man made in the image of God can be. And here again we are presented with another polarity of thought. We are now to deal with the two conceptions (a) that the word '*adam*' means all humanity as such, and (b) that '*adam*' may be used of an individual man (or woman, for that matter), belonging to the genus man. For example, in the priestly legislation we read that if an '*adam*' shall have a skin disease, he shall show the diseased limb to the priest (Lev.13:2). Man is thus both the individual and the race. Man is both one, and he is many. Thus man is not merely a number of isolated individuals. Men are somehow interrelated with one another. They have a common ancestry in one particular Adam, and they have a common flesh (Job 14:22)

and a common destiny in death (Isa.40:7). Yet each individual man or woman in the OT is truly an individual person. We have no doubt of this when we see the originality of outstanding personalities such as David or Jeremiah. Therefore man is like a finger on a hand. Each finger is an individual finger. Yet all the fingers have a common root in the hand that carries them. If we would know something of the nature of God as revealed in the OT then we must constantly bear in mind the paradoxical oneness yet plurality of man- for it is this individual, yet '*organic*' creature who is made in the image of God.

Some theologies make a distinction between the punishment meted out in Eden and 'natural death' or corruptibility. They reason that Adam along with all the organic creation was mortal from the beginning. The penalty imposed on Adam was therefore not 'natural death', the death that all humanity suffers, but 'judicial death'. God had pronounced that Adam would *surely die* but he was allowed to live out his natural life because the 'juridical death sentence' was postponed and fulfilled by Christ in acting as a substitute. This convoluted theory fails on two levels, it is mechanistic-legalistic and it forces literalism on the Eden myth that is not intended. It epitomises a certain kind of spiritual blindness which requires a neatly engineered answer to a very complex problem and offers facile and ultimately unsatisfying solutions.

Adam, who was mortal from the very beginning, was kept alive by his fellowship with God. While he lived in the garden which represented God's sanctuary, he lived in the idyll of complete and intimate communion with his creator. This is represented by his access to the tree of life. God is the wellspring of life, he is the source of light, God is spirit and man is earth. He keeps man alive by his very breath. Whoever has fellowship with God has life. Separation and alienation from God is death. Nor is the death that God mentions necessarily a threat or punishment – as it stands before us in the Hebrew text it is merely a statement of fact. It clearly does not mean that on the very day they eat they shall die, for first of all they do not do so, and anyway the Hebrew idiom should not be taken literally. Something in the eating of the fruit changed their awareness of the death that is ultimately

theirs. We are informed that Adam and Eve were *both naked and were not ashamed* (Gen.2:25). It was only after their sin when *their eyes were opened* (Gen.3:7) that they realised their nakedness and were ashamed.

What does this nakedness mean? Throughout the OT all the instances where different versions of the word *eyrumim* (nakedness) are used, its principal emphasis is not sexual but something quite different. It is used of captives being taken away naked into slavery (Isa.20:2-4); of the hero running naked from the field of battle on the day of defeat (Amos 2:16); of the helplessness of a child (Hos.2:5) and the nakedness of a newly-born infant (Ecc.5:14). Its primary sense is the helplessness and weakness of human beings. That is what they discovered when they ate the fruit and their eyes were opened and they saw for the first time their situation as God had already seen it, as God had tried to protect them from seeing it- that they were naked and helpless and dependant. Henceforth they are aware of their utter vulnerability – they will live with the knowledge of the inevitability of death, of the finiteness of their life. In fear and despair they try to cover their nakedness, because clothes give not only covering and protection, but also identity and significance to a person. [20] The first humans sewed fig leaves together, [21] but ultimately this proved to be an inadequate covering and therefore God provided them with animal skins – *he clothed (covered) them* (Gen.3:21).

The Eden story demonstrates that alienation from God had far reaching consequences. Man desired equality with God, but instead of enlightenment his exercise of self-will and self-determination brought home consciousness of his mortality and vulnerability. The struggle for equality continues to be mirrored in the battle between the sexes. Henceforth the relationship between man and woman would never entirely recover from that sense of loss and betrayal. Psychologically man has become aware of the negative emotions of shame, guilt and fear, to this we may add anger, resentment and envy from the story of Cain. Modern medicine is still dealing with harm caused by illnesses such as depression and anxiety which form such an integral part of our characters.

Even his relationship with the natural world irrevocably changed; driven out of Eden, ending humanities primordial innocence and life of ease and plenty. Henceforth his harmonious dominion over nature would become a struggle, characterised by rapacious exploitation and cruelty. The breakdown of man's relationship with God caused the subsequent breakdown of every subsidiary relationship, whether between man and wife, man and brother, or man and his environment. In this current state it is impossible to please God, it is also impossible for man to find his way back to Eden, it is therefore providential that *God kept the way open to the tree of life* (Gen.3:24).

Representation versus Substitution

Whereas substitution does not necessarily imply identification with the object that it stands in for, representation, particularly the concept of agency does. [22] Jesus Christ was therefore uniquely qualified in this aspect –related to fallen man and to God. This alone suggests that solutions should be sought in relational paradigms rather than legalistic-mechanistic theologies.

A good case for representative Christology can be made from the baptism of Jesus; an event which remains an enigma to many exegetes. [23] Did Jesus require baptism because of a metaphysic of sin – “ontological depravity” (‘original sin’ is the reason often used to justify the paedobaptism of innocents) or was it because of forgiveness for personal sins? G. R. Beasley – Murray discusses various options and rejects the notion of personal sin (even before his ministry) [24] as do most exegetes. He also rejects that it anticipated his general baptism for the sins of the world (i.e., Jesus being baptized into his own death) but offers the following insightful perspective: “Here it is needful, in the face of current exegesis, to distinguish between the concepts of solidarity and substitution. When the baptism of Jesus is included in the later category, Jesus is thought of as taking the place *of* the sinner; when the former category is employed, Jesus is viewed as taking a place

alongside the sinner. Admittedly there is a vicarious aspect even in the idea of Jesus establishing a solidarity with people, but this is inherent in the very notion of a Messiah who acts on behalf of his people. We have already observed that the Messiah is a representative person. This is fundamental to the messianic concept in the Old Testament. The real concern of the Old Testament is the relationship between God and His people. The Messiah appears comparatively little in its pages, but the mediatorial function is present from first to last; whether the Messiah is accorded a major or minor role, His significance lies in representing God to the people and the people to God. The dominant messianic figure of the King-Messiah of David's line appears in Isaiah chiefly as the ruler appointed as Yahweh's representative (e.g. Is.9.11), but in Jeremiah (30.21) and Ezekiel (chs.45-46) he acts as the representative of the people towards God; moreover in the latter two books the personal Messiah has been replaced by a line of kings. The present inclination to find the origin of this conception in an institution of sacral kingship in Israel is of note here, for on such a theory the king is viewed as essentially a mediatorial figure, with whose person and destiny the fortunes of Israel are bound. The majority of scholars, however, dissociate the Servant from the traditional messianic figure, even where they incline to see him as an individual rather than a group. From our point of view it is noteworthy that the Servant notion hovers between the plainly corporate concept (as in Is.44.1) and the apparently individual application (as in Is.52.13 ff). In both cases the function of the Servant is representative, first as the servant of the Lord, and then as the Servant of his fellow men (see especially Is.49.5 ff)." [\[25\]](#)

As Dunn remarks; "One of the most striking features of Matthew's Son of God Christology is his clear identification of Jesus with Israel (Matt.2.15; 4v3, 6). Jesus fulfills the destiny of God's Son in Israel....the Matthean account of the temptation takes the form of a midrash on Deut.6-8." [\[26\]](#) Jesus therefore represents the true vine, for his baptism is the baptism of Israel in the "sea and the cloud" (after which the 70 elders received the Spirit at Sinai), his temptation, the wilderness wanderings, and his death is the "final baptism"

in Jordan before entering the kingdom (note that it was at this point that the Abrahamic covenant of circumcision was re-established). Jesus, is the “second Adam”, and as such represents, not only the true vine, but also the true image of God.

Antitype and Representation

The Christology developed in the epistle to the Hebrews employs the function of the high priest on the Day of Atonement in antitypical fashion; most noteworthy is the emphasis on the need of the priest to make atonement for *himself* as well as the people. The high priest, as representative and mediator for the people, could not hope to make atonement on their behalf unless he was himself sanctified. Earlier studies have demonstrated that the sin of Nadab and Abihu necessitated the institution of the Day of Atonement in order to re-consecrate the tabernacle and the priesthood. On the Day of Atonement the altar of incense was also atoned for as its mediatorial function had been compromised by the ‘strange fire’ offered by the rebellious priests. [\[27\]](#)

For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that **he himself** also is compassed with infirmity. And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also **for himself**, to offer for sins. (Heb5:1-3).

But 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. (Heb.9:7)

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.** (Heb.9:12)

The original Greek of Hebrews 9:12 simply states that he, 'obtained eternal redemption' (*aiOnios lutrOsis heuriskO*) – '**for us**' is a translator's addition. In similar fashion Hebrews 1:3 adds the preposition '**our**' thereby distorting the meaning; "Having made purification for **our** sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high." The translators were obviously uncomfortable with Jesus benefiting from his own sacrifice. According to Hebrews, Jesus himself was raised '*through the blood of the everlasting covenant*' (13:20, 21) – signifying that just as the sin of Adam had consequences *for himself* and *his descendants*, so the righteousness of Jesus had consequences *for himself* and *his descendants*. Although Matthews gospel, recognized as the most 'Jewish', has Jesus paying the atonement price demanded by the law whenever the people were **numbered** (Mt. 17:24-27 cf. Ex.30:12-16), it carefully distinguishes between Jesus and his disciple; "That take and give unto them **for me** and **for thee**" (not for 'us'). Jesus' atonement is therefore qualifiedly different from ours because he had no *personal sins*, but necessary nevertheless because he bore the nature of fallen humanity. This does point towards a metaphysic of sin and not purely towards a ritual cleansing; Jesus was, after all, under the same sentence of death as Adam (*For as in Adam **all die**...I Cor.15:22*). He was then truly "**numbered with the transgressors**" (Isa.53:12).

The problem of original sin and morality

In his article on Original sin Mark M. Mattison summarizes the problem as follows: "Charles Grandison Finney (A.D. 1792-1875), the noted evangelist of the Second Great Awakening in the United States..... carefully distinguished between "physical" depravity and "moral" depravity. He argued that every human person is born with a depraved *physical* nature, but not with a depraved *moral* nature. To confuse the two would absolve individuals of personal responsibility for their own sins. It would also complicate the Scriptural definition of sin as "moral transgression." In other words, if sin is

simply *wrongdoing*, then it is not an ontological state of existence into which a person can be born. Hence Finney denied the doctrine of "original sin." Also at issue is the question of humankind's free will, or capacity to choose good as well as evil." [\[28\]](#)

The problem is not just an abstract theological digression, it is question also addressed by science; ultimately it lies at the heart of what it means to be human. Whereas theology speaks of original sin, science speaks of genetic determinism. Are we simply the sum total of our genes? Do our inherited traits determine our behavioural outcomes? It is well known, for example, that a predilection towards alcoholism runs in families. However, human beings are not simply genetically programmed robots – a complex interaction occurs between nature and nurture – our genetic make up and our environment. What makes us truly human is the ability to chose and the dignity of bearing the responsibility for those choices. It is an oversimplification to believe that we have a "genome for alcoholism" or, for that matter, one for sin.

How does Scriptures resolve the problem? In many ways it doesn't directly address the problem; it simply allows the dialectic tension between ontological sin and personal responsibility to stand. However, Pauline theology seems to offer a unique answer with the principle of election. On one side of the equation stands 'original sin' and 'freewill' and the other side the equation is balanced by 'election' and 'freewill.' Essentially the theologian faces the same dilemma –how can the operation of freewill be explained in the context of seemingly pre-ordained outcomes? We might almost declare (along with Paul's opponents) that in the end no one can resist God's will –so why does He then find blame? On the question of predestination Paul answers, 'God says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion" ', and goes on to cite the case of Pharaoh whose heart God hardened and concludes 'So then He has mercy on whomever he wills and he hardens the heart of whomever He wills', and when the objector expostulates, Paul simply replies 'Who are you, a man, to answer back to God?'. There is obviously an inter-relationship between ontological sin,

election, and freewill – but easy answers are not forthcoming, as we only see “*through a glass darkly*”, but God, who knows the end from the beginning, and whose thoughts are far above our mortal comprehension, does not need to justify himself to his creatures – it is enough to have faith in his self-revelation; that he is both just and merciful.

Conclusions

It has become obvious during our analysis that verses are often de-contextualized in order to support certain atonement hypotheses. Through a process of reductionism and rationalization the mythopoetic, idiomatic language of Scripture (particularly the OT) is forced into a rigidly systemized legalistic soteriology rather than the relational paradigms that form the bedrock of the Old and the New Testaments.

Although Jesus bore the nature of fallen humanity, unlike Adam (and his descendants) he was not estranged from his Father – there was no personal sin to form a barrier; no guilt, fear, anxiety or shame. Somewhere in the Spirit of man Jesus displayed the love towards God that we are incapable of, the love that Adam should have displayed. This is however, not a ‘bottom-up’ model of atonement, from man reaching upwards to heaven, but a ‘top down’ model, for “*God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life*” (John 3:16). God loved us, *while we were yet sinners*; the victory is then first and foremost down to the sovereign grace of God –who takes the first step towards reconciliation in order that no flesh might boast in his presence – but secondarily the victory becomes that of man, who has been enabled and empowered by God. Through identification with Jesus Christ the believer shares in the joint victory of God *and* man over sin. The wisdom of God does not destroy the old creation that has become alienated from Him; rather it is redeemed and transformed, the old is made new and placed in a new relationship with the creator.

Ontological sin is implicit in the text rather than explicit and the use of terms such as 'depraved' and 'defiled' are counterproductive and unhelpful. Jesus exhorts his followers to "*eat his flesh and drink his blood*" – to become fully human like him. Indeed Jesus is the only man who is truly fully human for he fulfills the promise of what God intended man to be – in His image. Jesus' "*flesh and blood*" was a human nature in which self-will was mortified and completely surrendered to the Father; "*thy will be done.*"

The motivational force behind atonement is not the appeasement of wrath or penal satisfaction but love. The means behind achieving atonement is a representative Adam; a man that stands in the middle and therefore manifests the character of **God to us** and ***in turn also manifests the love of man towards God*** – the perfect mediator. God's strength was made perfect in weakness. In order to become a representative man, Jesus had to bear the infirmity of fallen man; in order for us to benefit from his obedience, he himself had to first benefit. Death is the seal that God places on a life that has become estranged from Him; it is the final separation. For Jesus, who had lived in complete harmony and fellowship with his Father, this terrible forsaking was not allowed to stand – he was raised to newness of life; triumphing over sin and death, both for himself and also for all those who become the righteousness of God in him.

Finally, this article appeals to understand the atonement with the heart as much as with the intellect. Atonement models are all lacking in some respect and we must approach the divine outworking of redemption with humility and an awareness of our own limitations in understanding God's ways. The language of atonement often employs the language of metaphor, which Frederick Ferre has defined as an expression of man's finitude and God's freedom: "Surely it is meaningful for each man to hope that the metaphors he adopts as his own...are not without a basis of similarity.... The rest he must hold only as a hope and a constant reminder of the finitude of the knower...."

The rest...he must be content to 'leave in God's hands.' [29] We should be careful when we replace God's language with our own. We must also be careful not to institutionalize the hermeneutic of atonement. The words of Willem A. Vangemeren on the fixation of the "meaning" of the canonical writing is equally valid for the systemization of soteriology; "The danger of stability and tradition lies in *closure* to new revelation or to a new understanding of that revelation. It is also *reductionistic*, as tradition picks and chooses certain beliefs and practices from the great variety and riches of meaning and relationships." [30]

For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found

(Lk.15:24)

Notes

[1] See the *Biblaridion* article on Substitution; *Soteriology and Atonement theory*@ http://www.biblaridion-online.net/pdf_archive/2005q1/substitution.pdf

[2] Gustaf Aulen, *Christus Victor*: an historical study of the three main types of the idea of the atonement, (MacMillan Publishing Company, 1969). Walter Wink sums it up as follows: "The real issue behind atonement is whether our anthropology is commensurate with our Christology. If we have a high Christology in which Jesus is divine, but a low anthropology in which we see ourselves as weak, sinful, and incorrigible, we will deny ourselves the powers that we see in Jesus. But if we have a high Christology and a high anthropology, as in Orthodox tradition, we will be inspired, by our image of Jesus, to develop our God-given powers. Similarly, if we have a low Christology in which Jesus is fully human, and a matching anthropology that acknowledges the possibility of our becoming more fully human as well, then that low Christology is also valid. But a low Christology and a high anthropology will lead to arrogance and inflation and the unreflective assertion that we are gods. The inescapable relativity of Christologies, their number and variety, are eloquent witness to the high degree of subjectivity involved. You get the Jesus you need. Our needs change over our life span. Our development stage will predispose us to the appropriate Christological type. The Holy Spirit

will be our guide.” Walter Wink, *The Human Being: Jesus and the Enigma of the Son of the Man*, (2002, Minneapolis: Fortress), p. 111

[3] See the *Biblaridion* article on *Phanerosis Theology* @

http://www.biblaridion-online.net/pdf_archive/2005q4/phanerosis.pdf

[4] Is there one Scripture which settles down to explain in a readily understood fashion the How and Why of this great redemption? Yet there are not lacking those who would assert confidently their own complete (sic!), Euclidean proof of the wonders of this divine salvation. Alas, going further than this, there are those who most dogmatically require that their brother in Christ who cannot bring himself to give assent to each separate step in a specific theology of Atonement is really no brother at all but a renegade from absolute truth. [H. A. Whittaker, *7 Short Epistles*, (North West Print, LTD), p.14]

[5] **Liberal** – Adam’s sin has no bearing on me:

The Moral influence view of the atonement is a doctrine in Christian theology related to the meaning and effect of the death of Jesus Christ and, while originating in the Middle Ages, has been largely taught in liberal Christian circles. Drawing primarily from the works of Pierre Abélard, the Moral influence theory teaches that Christ's death on the cross served for humankind as an example of God's great love and Christ's obedience.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberal_Christianity

Pelagian- Adam’s sin affected only himself:

Pelagius (c.354 - c.420 /440) was a monk and reformer who denied the doctrine of Original Sin from Adam and was declared a heretic by his opponents. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pelagius> Pelagius taught that the human will, tempered in good deeds and rigorous asceticism, was sufficient to live a sinless life. He told his followers that right action on the part of human beings was all that was necessary for salvation. To him, the grace of God was only an added advantage; helpful, but in no way essential. Pelagius disbelieved in original sin, but said that Adam had condemned mankind through bad example, and that Christ’s good example offered us a path to salvation, not through sacrifice, but through instruction of the will. Pelagianism never vanished completely from Christian history; it survived in variations like [Semi-Pelagianism](#), which was born during the 19th century evangelical American revival movement and by its defenders, with the theology espoused by [Charles Finney](#). Similar atonement theories to that of Finney are often called “clean flesh” in opposition to the “total depravity” of Augustinian theology.

Arminian – Adam’s sin weakened my will but does not prevent me from being righteous:

Arminianism is a school of soteriological thought in protestant Christian Theology founded by the Dutch theologian Jacobus Arminius. Traditionally, Arminians have held to the governmental theory of the atonement. A substitutionary view, this

doctrine says that Christ suffered as a propitiation in order to demonstrate the seriousness with which God views sin. This is in opposition to the Calvinist *penal-satisfaction* theory which maintains that Christ died in the sinner's place and stead bearing the punishment due the Elect. Arminians generally have believed that if Christ took humankind's punishment, then forgiveness would not be possible; they believe that punishment and forgiveness are mutually exclusive. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arminianism> According to Arminius actual sins are committed because of the corruption of nature, a result of the privation consequent upon original sin. God's covenant with Adam and Eve, through their obedience, would result in God's gifts being passed on to their posterity. But in disobedience they could not perpetuate those blessings, being unworthy.

Therefore, wrote Arminius: This was the reason why all men, who were to be propagated from them in a natural way, became . . . devoid [*vacui*] of this gift of the Holy Spirit or original righteousness. This punishment usually receives the appellation of "a privation of the image of God," and "original sin."

http://wesley.nnu.edu/wesleyan_theology/theojrnl/21-25/22-14.htm

Augustinian- Adam's sin is imputed to his posterity:

Augustine of Hippo (354-430) pre-eminent Doctor of the Church according to Roman Catholicism, and is considered by Evangelical Protestants to be (together with the Apostle Paul and the Bible) the theological fountainhead of the Reformation teaching on salvation and grace. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustine_of_Hippo Roman Catholics and Calvinists follow St Augustine's teachings on original sin in believing that human beings inherit not only the tendency and urges to sin, but the actual guilt of sin as well. By interpreting sexual passion as concupiscence-the ascendancy of the senses over reason -Augustine made possible the physical and ontological associations which accompany his interpretation of original sin. A review of the major confessional positions suggests certain key analogies by which original sin is described: **1.** Genetic-such words as propagation, corrupt stock, conception and birth, inborn, hereditary, root. **2.** Disease-hereditary disease, corrupt infection, vicious, concupiscence. **3.** Descent-fall.**4.**Flaw-bent to sin, prone to evil. **5.** Deprivation-loss. http://wesley.nnu.edu/wesleyan_theology/theojrnl/21-25/22-14.htm Catholic: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11312a.htm>

[6] "Spirit" is used here in a synecdochal sense – the "spirit" refers to the person claiming to speak or instruct with the Holy Spirit's guidance see 1 Tim.4:1 and 2 Thess.2:2.

[7] Apparently the Docetists of primitive Christianity distinguished between the "heavenly Christ" and the earthly, human Jesus. Some believed that Jesus was born and lived like other human beings but was "indwelt" by Christ only temporarily from his baptism to his crucifixion, thus avoiding implicating the divine power or agent in the processes of human birth and death. Docetism shows correspondences with adoptionism. Gnosticism probably antedates Christianity but developed into a Christianized *gnosis* (knowledge) late in the first century; R. M. Grant speaks of "*a constellation of religious phenomenon*" as no particular term (philosophy, theology, or mysticism) suffices to

adequately describe what seems to be a fluid system of beliefs. Nevertheless the following common elements can be observed: **(1)** The True God, transcendent and unknowable, is utterly different from and not responsible for the visible creation, which is the work of the demiurge (some Gnostic systems identify the demiurge with the God of the O.T.). **(2)** Each person's true "self", the "I" of the Gnostic, is a "spark of the divine"; it is therefore unalterably immortal, but "fallen" and imprisoned in corporality by the powers of this world and, like gold in mud, unable on its own to attain freedom. **(3)** Only a divine "call" can arouse a person from material stupor, giving him or her "knowledge" (gnosis) of his true self, of the self's home in the transcendent realm, and of the true God. (4) This return of the self occurs at the end of each individual life, when the soul travels through the spheres, or at the end of the world, simultaneously with the relapse of materiality to its original chaos and impassivity; the return is therefore resisted by the evil spirits and powers of this world. [**Docetism** see *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments*, ed., R.P. Martin & P.H. Davies, 1997, IVP, pages:306-309, for Gnosticism see, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, R.N. Soulen, 1997, Lutterworth Press, pages 67-8]

[8] Although John 1:14 speaks of the pre-existent word "becoming" flesh (incarnated or embodied) as "flesh" it is an assumption to equate the Logos with a conscious, personal, pre-existent Christ (in whatever form), rather than an extension of wisdom categories and the conceptualization of agency. See the *Biblaridion* articles on "The word was God" and "Jesus the creator" [see note 22].

[9] James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.), 1998, p. 70.

[10] Luther on Galatians, Chapter 3:13, London Edition, 1838, pp. 213-215, as quoted by Albert Barnes, "2 Corinthians & Galatians," Barnes Notes on the New Testament, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1955, pp. 334-335.

[11] *Satisfaction-Doctrine*, also known as "Vicarious Atonement" or "Substitutionary Atonement", is usually credited to St Anselm of Canterbury who formulated the idea into a cohesive systematic theology around 1000 AD. It is not necessarily, as we will see later, a reflection of what the Apostles or the early church believed, but was primarily a theory developed in the middle Ages - a thousand years *after* the Apostles. Satisfaction Doctrine is a systematic theory of the cross based in legal framework and centering in the idea that God must be appeased or satisfied before he can forgive. Satisfaction-Doctrine focuses on legal terms like *God's law, punishment, justice, payment, and debt*. In the middle Ages rationalistic theories and judicial systems were considered the highest way of thinking, whereas relational issues like *love, passion, and sacrifice* were considered "weak" because they were connected with what was considered feminine qualities. Thus the early church's understanding of the cross as illustrating the drama of God's passionate love struggling to liberate us from the power of sin and death was considered too "emotive" and thus "inferior" and was replaced with their legal model. Gustaf Aulen, the author of the classic work *Christus Victor*, writes: *"There lies behind this criticism a particular view of theology: an implied demand that the Christian faith must be clearly expressed in the form of rational doctrine"*. **Vicarious Atonement vs. Christus Victor; understanding the Cross from the perspective of grace rather than legalism**, 2000 Derek Flood @ <http://www.sharktacos.com/God/index.shtml#articles>

[12] Examples of this phrase in the LXX are found in Num 7:16 and Psa 40:6; and in the Greek New Testament in Gal 1:4 and Heb 10:6,8, 18, 26 -- as well as Rom 8:3. (Cp WJ Young, "Sin and Sin-Offering", Xd 50:531.)

[13] Wright comments; "This conclusion may initially appear striking, even startling. However one must insist that Paul has himself prepared the way for 5:21 with his metaphor of "ambassador" in the preceding verse. The whole point of the ambassadorial system, in the ancient as in the modern world, is that the sovereign himself (or herself) speaks through the agent. Paul stresses this: "God is making his appeal through us." It should therefore be no surprise

that in his summing-up he should refer to himself as “becoming” the “righteousness,” that is, the “covenant faithfulness,” of God. If that covenant faithfulness was revealed climactically in the death of Jesus Christ, as Paul says in Romans 3:21-26 it is natural that the work of one who speaks “on behalf of Christ” (5-20 [bis]) should also be such a revelation, especially when the one so speaking is also acting out, in his own physical body, that same death (4:10, etc). If Paul as an ambassador has any inadequacies, they are dealt with in the death of Christ; if he has a message to deliver, it is because he has become, by the Spirit the incarnation of the covenant faithfulness of God. Indeed, it is Paul’s strong pneumatology, coming on top of his strong *theologia crucis*, that rescues this striking idea from being in any way triumphalistic, except in the (highly paradoxical) sense of 2:14.”

N.T. Wright, On Becoming the Righteousness of God, 2 Corinthians 5:21, (Originally published in *Pauline Theology, Volume II*, ed. D. M. Hay: Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis, 1993, 200–208.) http://www.ntwrightpage.com/Wright_Becoming_Righteousness.pdf.

[14] F.F. Bruce observes; “To be born under law, as he was (Gal.4:4), involves no curse, if one keeps the law. And this Christ did according to Paul (2 Cor.5:21), by his lifelong obedience (cf.Rom.5:19) he remained immune from the curse of the law, yet the circumstances of his death brought him unavoidably under that curse. The text which Paul quotes to this effect had reference originally to the exposure of the corpse of an executed criminal: ‘if a man has committed a crime punishable by death, and you hang him on a tree [pole], but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is accursed by God; you shall not defile your land which Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance’ (Dt.21:22f).” Bruce refers to the OT instances of Baal-peor (Num.25:4) when the chiefs of the people were hanged for covenant –violation and the hanging of the seven sons of Saul before Yahweh (whose displeasure on this occasion had been manifested by a famine).

F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians; A Commentary on the Greek Text* (1982, Paternoster Press), pp.165, 166.

[15] To “impute” is one of several renderings of the verb *logizomai* in the NT, others include “numbered, reckoned, counted and laid to the account of.”

Among all the occurrences we never encounter the imputation of sin, only the imputation of righteousness (i.e., to Abraham in Rom.4, Jas. 2:23; Gen.15:6) because of his belief in God's promises. Moses offered to make vicarious atonement for Israel at the golden calf incident; "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and made them gods of gold. Yet now if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me I plead thee out of thy book which thou hast written. And the Lord said unto Moses, Whoso hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. Therefore now, go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold mine Angel shall go before thee: nevertheless on the day when I visit their sin upon them" (Ex.32:31-34). God would not accept the Mediator of the Old Covenant as a substitute; his ways are "equal" – "the soul that sinneth it shall die" (Ezek.18) and Israel were rebuked by the prophet Ezekiel for misrepresenting divine justice.

[16] Jesus alludes in John 3:14, 15 to the incident in Numbers 21:9 and parallels this with his own lifting up. Note that those bitten by the serpents had to look upon the brass serpent (in faith one presumes) in order to reverse the effect of the bite – death. The "serpent" is obviously a metaphor for sin (Gen.3:15) Jesus' self-identification with the serpent demonstrates that he understood his death as the defeat of sin and as having a redemptive effect that would draw *all men* (irrespective of race) to him. The parallel between Jesus' body on the cross with the defeat of the serpent and the *proto-evangelum* in Genesis 3:15, suggests that we are dealing with ontological sin.

[17] James D.G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, (1989, second edition, SCM Press), p.111-112.

[18] ORIGINAL SIN AS PRIVATION; *An Inquiry into a Theology of Sin and Sanctification* by Leon O. Hynson

[19] See William Dryness, *Themes in Old Testament Theology*, (Paternoster Press, 1997) chapter 4 –Man and Woman.

[20] Jonathan Magonet, *A Rabbi's Bible* (SCM Press, 1991), p.111-122

[21] The fig tree is used by the synoptic gospels as a symbol for exclusivist Judaism and nationalism – Israel under the law (Mtt.21:19-21:24:32; Mk.13:28; Lk.13:6, 7 see also Rev.6:13).

[22] Agency –see the *Biblaridion* article: *An examination of the creative agency centred in Jesus* @ http://www.biblaridion-online.net/pdf_archive/2007q2/creator.pdf

[23] Jesus himself gives the following reason (in Mt.3:15) for his baptism: "*Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.*" The saying remains an enigma to most commentators, Murray writes; "A. Fridrichsen suggests that it is simplest to view this saying as a declaration of our duty to accomplish all that God asks of us; only in the application before us it is evident that Jesus has received an intimation that God desires Him to be baptized. Leenhardt agrees with this motif of obedience but pursues further the thought of the righteousness of God that leads Jesus to baptism....[p.49]..Oscar Cullmann interprets it as meaning that Jesus had to be baptized, because his baptism prefigured the event in which He was to achieve a righteousness on behalf of all [p.53]. However, considering the Matthean penchant for midrashic employment of Deuteronomy and Jesus' own use of the book during his wilderness temptation, it is possibly an allusion to Deut.24:12; "You shall in any case return the pledge to him again when the **sun goes down**, that he may sleep in his own garment and bless you; and **it shall be righteousness to you** before the Lord your God." The case in question is when a garment was taken from a poor man as collateral for a loan. The poor man must have the garment returned to him every night in order to sleep (the large garment was often used to carry their provisions, as well as wrap themselves in, in the day, and sleep in at night, it being their only substitute for a bed). The garment in the Matthean parable of the wedding feast signifies baptism (Mt.22:11) and is a metaphor for sanctification in the OT –'taking away the filthy garments' (Zech.3: 3, 4); God made the first garments to cover the nakedness of man and Jesus by his baptism demonstrates his solidarity with fallen man. If this is the case then the "righteousness" that Jesus fulfils is

that covenant righteousness of Gen.15:6; "And he (Abram) believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him **for righteousness.**" While Abraham is still in the sleep of death (horror of great darkness, v.12) at the going down of the sun – Jesus, *puts on the garment of covenant righteousness imputed to Abraham and fulfils it.* Abraham (the poor man) now sleeps in the garment of imputed righteousness and will be "clothed" permanently, *at the resurrection*, with the righteousness that Christ has fulfilled. Interestingly enough, it is in the very chapter where the Israelites accuse God of imputing the sins of the fathers to the children, that we find reference to this Deuteronomistic precept of righteousness: "Neither hath oppressed any, hath not withholden the pledge, neither hath spoiled by violence, but hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment" (Ezek.18:16).

[24] Murray writes; "Above all there is manifest in His words and deeds a unique relation to the divine sovereignty, by which He proclaimed its imminent coming and spoke and acted in its present power. In that consciousness He forgave sins (Mt.11.20 ff), demanded repentance of all (Mk.1.15) and proclaimed the higher righteousness (Mt.5-7), befriended publicans and sinners, but ever as a physician of the sick (Mk.2.17) and shepherd who seeks to save the lost (Lk.15.3 ff, 19.10). Jesus had a ministry to all, and we sense the distance He felt between Himself and those to whom He ministered; such a 'distance' is presumed in the way that Jesus addresses His hearers as, 'You, who are evil' (Mt.7.11), to which no counterpart exists in His teaching, 'We, who are evil'. Such features belonged, as far as we know, to the teaching and work of Jesus from the beginning of His ministry; they are seen in yet more impressive clarity as He advances to His death as a ransom for the many (Mk.10.45) and speaks in terms of being Assessor and Judge in the last day (Mt.10.32 f, 25.31 ff). He who so taught, lived and died, with a moral consciousness that did not falter from the baptism to the cross, was assuredly not baptised as a sinner seeking mercy of the Judge; if it was for sins, it was not His own."

G.R. Beasley Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (1962/1997, Paternoster Press), p.45

[25] *Ibid*, Murray, p.57-8. See further the whole of chapter 2.

[26] *Ibid*, Dunn, p.49 – see footnotes there: T. de Kruijf, *Der Sohn des lebendigen Gottes*, 1962, pp.56-8, 109 and B. Gerhardson, *The Testing of God's Son*, Lund 1966.

[27] See the *Biblaridion* article on Yom Kippur @ http://www.biblaridion-online.net/pdf_archive/2005q2/kippur-1.pdf

[28] See: *Original Sin? By Mark M. Mattison* for a good presentation of the issues involved @ <http://www.auburn.edu/~allenkc/openhse/original.html>

[29] Frederick Ferre, "Metaphors, Models, and Religion," *Soundings* 51 (1968) 345; Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982) 1-66.

[30] *Prophets, the Freedom of God, and Hermeneutics*, Willem A. Vangemeren: *Westminster Theological Journal* 52.1 (Spring 1990): 79-99.