

How was Christ "made sin for us?" Certainly not by actual transgression. The solution of this question has sometimes been sought by rendering the phrase "made sin for us" by "a sin-offering for us" a blessed Scripture truth, but it is inadmissible to attach that idea to the phrase in this verse for the simple reason that it destroys the Apostles' antithesis. There is no sense in which you can interpret this phrase in harmony with its context which does not regard Christ as the voluntary vicarious representative of our race. And as such God laid on Him the awful judicial consequences of the sin of mankind. Peter gives us the same idea: "Who his own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." How did Christ bear sin? He was not a sinner. He was never personally displeasing to God, but as our representative he so bore the penalty of sin as to meet the demands of the law on the original offender.

There was no transfer of the sinners' guilt to Christ in the sense of blameworthiness, but if you use the word guilt to express a liability to suffer for sin, then there was such a transfer from man to Christ. This is the very core of the teaching by which the work of Christ was kept before the minds of the Jewish Church. Under that dispensation the offender was required to bring the animal appointed as the sacrifice for sin. His appearance at the altar with the victim was an acknowledgment that he was under obligation to die for his sin. But the innocent victim took the sinner's place, and its life was taken instead of that of the sinner himself. The animal was regarded as the representative of the wrong-doer. So Christ as our representative bore the penal consequences of sin instead of us. His death was substituted for ours. He stood in our place as transgressors of the eternal law of righteousness. He represented us to God as the Administrator of that law. His death, on account of the infinite dignity of His person, was accepted as answering all the claims of justice, as maintaining unblemished the rectitude of the Divine government, while it secured the exercise of mercy toward the sinful. Christ did not die to induce God to be merciful—that is a caricature of the atonement and a blasphemy against God—but to make the exercise of mercy consistent with justice. "That He might be just (not merciful) and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus," is the Scripture way of stating this truth.

Sometimes it is objected to the principle that I have laid down concerning the representative character of Christ's sufferings and death that it is flagrantly unjust for the innocent to suffer for the guilty. This objection comes from two different classes of men; those who ignore the truth of Christianity altogether, and those who admitting

the truth of Christianity deny that the sufferings and death of Christ are to be regarded as an atonement for sin. To reply to the latter class first: Is it more unjust for the innocent Christ to suffer instead of the guilty than it is for Him to suffer as an example to the guilty? On the theory that the sufferings of Christ are not to be regarded as an atonement for sin—endured by "the just for," or instead of "the unjust"—our faith in the righteousness of God is sadly shaken. If the unparalleled sufferings of the Son of God were not necessary in order to honour the law man had broken, then they were manifestly unjust; but if they were required of Him as the sinner's representative, and He assumed His representative character voluntarily, and had the right so to do, then the injustice vanishes as the mist before the morning's sun. And this is our answer to the other class of objectors: the voluntary character of the sufferings of Christ removes everything like injustice. If Christ had not been a voluntary victim He would never have been a victim at all. There is a marvellous difference between the *imposition* of the penalty of the law upon an innocent being, and the *voluntary assumption* of that penalty by the innocent party, especially when you remember the absolute right Christ had to dispose of his own life. It has been well remarked that "We may defy the human mind to devise any other plan of pardon and salvation which is not unworthy of God, nay, unworthy of man, and consequently inefficacious and illusory."

6. But there is another aspect of the atonement which we must consider. As the federal head and representative of mankind Christ met the requirements of the eternal law of righteousness by enduring its penalty in His own person, His own infinite dignity making His death a satisfaction for the sins of all mankind. We have now to consider Him as the representative of God to man. Christ is as truly God as the Father. "In Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." But He took our nature into union with the Divine that He might reveal the Deity to humanity. A large number of texts show this. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst, and we beheld His glory (the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth." "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father—He hath declared him." God does not send a messenger to mankind; He comes Himself to show us what He is in His relation to us. Man's heart yearned for this the wide world over. With the light men had concerning God before the advent of Christ they could not be satisfied as to the dispositions the Divine Being cherished towards them. Philip's request, "Show us the Father and it sufficeth us," was not a solitary instance

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