

The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter

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Editorial

At the time of writing this editorial the COP26 conference is taking place in Glasgow, UK. It is the 26th time this Conference of the Parties has met since 1994, and so far these meetings have been noted for many promises and little action. This time there is a greater sense of urgency than ever before and it has been estimated that up to 100,000 protesters are on the streets of Glasgow demanding more must be done 'to save the world' - while at the same time many other large groups around the world have gathered to give their support – actions, not words. This time is supposed to be different.

Now, more than half way through the Conference there have been many reports on the damage done so far by rising temperatures in past decades but also of the urgent need for more rapid action to deal with the problems that the whole world is facing. Most of these reports make awful reading. Appalling new analysis shows that the world is racing towards catastrophic warming of 2.4°C. This could mean a world in which more than a billion people would be forced to find cooler climates in which to survive - and then there would be severe famine due to devastated crops. Add to this a world of desolation caused by floods and fires.

This is more than the nations of the world can cope with and 2,000 years ago Jesus Christ foretold of these times and events when talking to the people, which we can read in Luke 21 verses 24 to 28, "...Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." (New Revised Standard Version).

After Jesus' resurrection the Apostles continued to teach these things and in the Acts of the Apostle we read in chapter 3 verses 19 to 24, (NRSV), where Peter said, "Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah appointed for you, that is, Jesus, who must remain in heaven until the time of universal restoration that God announced long ago through his holy prophets. Moses said, The Lord your God will raise up for you from your own people a prophet like me. You must listen to whatever he tells you. And it will be that everyone who does not listen to that prophet will be utterly rooted out of the people. And all the prophets, as many as have spoken, from Samuel and those after him, also predicted these days."

In Mathew 24 verses 3 to 7 we read “Now as He (Jesus) sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places...”.

We earnestly pray for the Kingdom to come and God’s will to be done in all the earth, and it is comforting to be told “See that you are not troubled;” and again, in Luke 12:32, Jesus said, “Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

With Love in Jesus to all our readers, Russell.

Romans Chapter Seven

This chapter is much quoted in defence of the theory that Adam’s nature was changed at the fall and unhappily, this is believed by most professing Christians. But if due regard is given to the context it should be seen that from verse 5 of this chapter a digression is made by Paul from the main theme of the previous chapter that the believer has been made free from the law of sin and death by faith and baptism; they have in symbol been crucified with Christ and raised to newness of life and been given a sure and certain hope of eternal life, having by faith in Christ’s loving sacrifice escaped sin’s wages of eternal oblivion.

In the first four verses of chapter seven Paul speaks to Jews like himself and uses the simile of their relation to the law of Moses as that of a wife to a husband, the death of whom would release the wife and give her freedom to marry another - in like manner they had become dead to the law by the death of Christ and were free to marry another, even the incorruptible risen Christ.

From verse 5, as in parenthesis, Paul recounts his own experiences and feelings as a Jew under the law and those of like position saying, “When we were in the flesh,” which obviously does not mean their physical flesh, but an opposite position to that which they now had of being “in the spirit,” or “in Christ” - when Saul (as he was previously) came to an understanding of the law of ordinances that it was indeed a ministration of condemnation and of death from which he sought vindication by a meticulous keeping of the ‘letter,’ he failed to see in the endless sacrifices of animals, whose blood could not take away sin, a type of one who could, the promised seed of the woman, who would fulfil all the types. And although he realised that the law was holy, just and good,” it condemned him as a sinner to death from which there was no escape, therefore he found no real incentive to strive against sin and allowed his ‘members’ to perform things contrary to his better judgment, thus making him wretched, alluding to the law of Moses, which incorporated the Edenic law of sin and death, as a body of death from which he now thanked God that Christ had delivered him, when, in his fanatical zeal for the law he went in pursuit of Christ’s followers to Damascus but was brought to a halt on the road by a vision of the risen Christ so bright in glory as to strike him blind for three days, during which time no doubt he was able to fit in all the missing pieces which a true knowledge of the sacrifice of Christ supplied (for he was no doubt well versed in his knowledge of the Scriptures, being a Pharisee brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, who was an eminent scholar but was blind as they were to the spirit of the law) so that after he was baptised he was able to preach the gospel to others.

The 8th chapter may now be seen to be a continuation of the 6th and 7th to verse 4. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus,” The third verse is supposed to teach that sin is in the flesh, and because Jesus was flesh He had to die to save Himself, and us as a representative man. This view is a complete violation of the truth, because, properly understood and in harmony with other Scripture concerning our Lord, this verse is a keynote to the Atonement.

Now all Scripture points to Christ “without blemish and without spot,” as a sacrifice for the sin of mankind just as the typical animals offered had to be perfect to be acceptable. “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh (being in the Adamic bondage) God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of Sin’s flesh (ie., flesh belonging to sin) and (by an offering) for sin condemned sin (while He was) in the flesh,” “being made a little lower than the angels that He might taste death for every man.” The ransom price of our redemption, for Jesus Himself never needed redemption, not being generated by any man of Adam’s stock, but by the Holy Spirit power of God.

Keeping in mind that the condemnation was not physical but legal it may be seen that Mary the mother of Jesus, being a Godly Jewess, believed in a coming Saviour, she was God’s redeemed handmaid as testified in what is now known as the ‘magnificat,’ how could any doubt her faith upon reading those wonderful words.

Usually there is no difficulty in seeing the federal principle regarding the ‘Body of Christ’ (one head with many members) into which body the believer enters by an act of faith, without any change of our physical nature, why then should it be so difficult for some to see that upon enlightenment, one is “in Adam” in a similar way?

The believer has now “put off the old man” (Adam) and “put on the new man” (Christ) by baptism and is typically clothed with a garment of righteousness, not our own, but that of Christ. We are now redeemed, or bought back from the dominion of sin – the tree has been made good and God looks for its fruit to be good - to fulfil the law of loving God first and our neighbour as ourselves, knowing that our High Priest is working as intercessor with the Father.

This proves that believers are being judged now, and if we repent of our sins we can be forgiven as we are assured in 1 John 1:9. We must expect chastening for our faults and as a test of faith, but if we have true faith and keep it to the end, eternal life will be ours and our standing at the judgment seat of Christ will be for rewards of works of faith, but eternal life is the free gift obtainable by faith only. How simple then, to see that the first resurrection is for those “in Christ/’ who will be raised incorruptible and will not come into judgment (condemnation) reserved for the unbelievers and unfaithful at the end of the Millennium (if they have died before Christ comes - Revelation 20:5,6). But the living unfaithful and unrepentant will be dealt with at Christ’s advent, as many Scriptures predict.

The nation of Israel was a miniature or type of all who have knowledge of God’s law, therefore accountable or responsible. The Mosaic law was their schoolmaster designed to bring them to a knowledge of Christ through the various types and ordinances. It was added to the Edenic law and the promises as a measure of educating and making known again the need of redemption by making the offence (of Eden) to abound (Romans 5;20) but when (the object of) faith came in the person of Jesus Christ they were no longer under a schoolmaster and could, by faith in His sacrifice, be made free from the law of sin and death.

It is clear that natural death, the result of a corruptible body, is not alluded to here. Animal sacrifices were slain, or put to death as Christ the Antitype was and Adam should have been in the day he sinned (Genesis 2:17), had not love and mercy prevailed. Paul could not have been speaking of himself as a Christian in Romans 7 using such terms as, “I am carnal, sold under sin” (verse 14), for he had been bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ. It would have been a complete negation of all that he had said in the previous chapter and elsewhere - Paul, as a Christian, said “I can do all things through Christ that strengthened me,” also “Be ye followers of me as I am of Christ.” If Paul was a follower of Christ he would not be in the double-minded state as depicted in verses 14 to 23, for did not James say “a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways”? - (James 1:8). Was Paul unstable? He said, “I keep under my body lest I who have preached to others should myself become a castaway.” (1 Corinthians 9:27). Even Dr. Thomas wrote that Paul in this chapter was “seeing himself as an unenlightened son of the flesh” so that any who think to excuse themselves on the on the strength of this chapter should think again.

Sister Evelyn Linggood

* * *

Editor's note: The teaching of Sin literally dwelling in the flesh is not found in the Old Testament and neither is it in anything Jesus taught, but it can only be found in Paul's writings and the one time we read of 'sinful flesh' in the Bible we find it is not a proper translation of the Greek! The Greek means "Flesh belonging to Sin" and here Sin is personified as a ruler who owns slaves. "Sin's flesh" would be the better translation..

Russell Gregory.

Part 5

Veritas and his Friends

"I CANNOT shut my eyes," said Pietas, "to the fact that a great change has come over the mind of Christendom on the subject of future retribution, but I don't know how far it may have arisen from what our friend calls 'the recoil of reason,' or from a better understanding of the language of Scripture."

"I think," said Veritas, "that no single explanation will account for this change; that is, several things will have to be said to make the explanation complete. Many may have come to see that the Scriptures do not teach endless sin or endless torment, while others have been affected by the teachings of Universalism, captivated by the rose-colour of that philosophy; and others again have simply shrunk back from the dogma as too hideous for belief but have no definite view upon the subject."

"I confess," said Pietas, "that just describes my own mental condition I feel that an infinite rolling on of endless ages of pain and anguish can't be true for any creature God has made; but what the truth is I hardly know."

"My own opinion," said Mentor, "is that the Creator has made nothing in vain, and that He will find means by which all the fallen and erring will be brought home to Himself at last."

"If human opinions were worth anything at all on the subject," Veritas replied, "I think I should come to very much the same conclusion. As a philosophy, a good deal could be said for Universalism, but as an interpretation of the Scripture, it won't bear examination. Take the short and simple statement in Philippians 3:19, where it is said concerning the enemies of Christ, 'whose end is destruction.' How impossible it would be to extract universalism out of those few words."

"Yes," said Mentor; "perhaps it would; but there are many texts where the love of God is seen effecting the recovery of the world, and triumphing over sin; and your own canon requires you to take all the teaching into the reckoning."

"One thing at a time," was the answer. "No interpretation is the true one which can't find a place for all the testimony; and in dealing with retribution, the first thing to do is to ascertain all that is said about it before passing on to inferences from texts about the love of God."

"As far as I understand it," remarked Pietas, "the love of God' is as surely illustrated in the punishment of the impenitent as in the salvation of the believer. To make God incapable of destroying anything is to contradict Scripture, to contradict the teachings of Nature, and to put forth a doctrine that pules and whines."

"You are quite right," Veritas chimed in, "and furthermore, the 'restitution of all things,' referred to by our friend Mentor, which will make at last a triumphant display of the love of God, is a restitution which will be accomplished in part by the weeding out of the bad elements of society, leaving the rest to the educating action of truth."

"If that's it," broke in Dubitas, "then I can't understand why all this has not been done before. If the world is simply waiting for some supernatural power to step in, to put it right, why has not that power operated long ago?"

“For the simple reason,” Veritas responded, “that every process takes time, and moral processes are no exception. Time conditions all finite things. The surgeon does not set a broken bone the moment after the fracture. The father waits for the passion to subside before reasoning and remonstrance with his child begin. It was ‘in the fulness of time’ that God sent forth His son. It will be when ‘the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled’ that the kingdom of God will come.”

“But,” said Dubitas, “when you are apologising for miracles, you tell us how God is able to cut short these processes of nature, and bring his own fiat and the wished for result together. I want to know if God knew of no miraculous short-cut to produce a sinless and a happy race of men.”

Veritas said that if Dubitas would give him time he would answer on every point.

“The miracles you speak of in which God is seen shortening the processes of nature, are all in the realm of material things in which nothing exists but what is the product of force - the dynamic force of the universe. Now this force, all of it, is centred and focussed in God, so that by those waves of energy, called in the Scriptures ‘Spirit,’ it is easy for God to perform all he wishes or wills. But the problem how to work a miracle in the moral world is not so simple. Of the apparent metaphysical impossibility of there being moral creatures who should be under the compulsions of God in the way miracle implies, I will not speak, as being out of my depth, but I may point to the fact that if God could have miraculously shortened the world’s probation, one of the main purposes of that probation would have been missed. I cannot perhaps illustrate this better than by referring to that process by which, when at school we used to shorten our exercises in arithmetic. I mean, cancelling. That was very useful in turning a long sum into a short one. But we were not permitted to ‘cancel’ until by the ‘long-hand’ arithmetic we had thoroughly mastered the reasons that underlay our ciphering. Now our probation is for the purpose of grounding us thoroughly in the reasons of existence. Much experience and reflection are necessary to this knowledge. It is not only an individual experience, but a national one, that will be required.

Veritas paused here to take a drink of lemonade, and Pietas remarked “I think Veritas would have made a good parson, don’t you?”

(To be continued).

Sinful Flesh Assumption

We have seen the simple trivial test of Adam and the great test of Jesus.

Now compare the popular belief – Adam with the supposed superior nature failed the test; Jesus with the supposed inferior nature, accomplished and passed a much greater test.

The only answer that popular belief can give is to get into a greater muddle by saying God gave Jesus extra power. Without labouring this point God is to blame in Adam’s case, and there is no honour to Jesus if this is the answer - which is absurd.

Let us look at Abraham. When he was asked to offer his only begotten son in whom the promises of God actually depended, Abraham could have, from natural reasoning as well as from offering human sacrifice, refused to obey and had a reasonable excuse, as it was wrong upon the face of it.

He did not so reason, but was strong in faith as it is recorded of him “Accounting that (if he had slain his son) God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from when he received him in a figure” (Hebrews 11:17).

Here is a direct challenge to the sinful flesh assumption. Just stop and think; Abraham with supposed changed flesh and a far more severe trial than Adam; accomplished what Adam, with the unchanged flesh and simple test, failed to do.

But far worse than this it makes God a monster for punishing all for what they could not help doing because of the desires of their sinful flesh, which made obedience to God's commandments impossible.

One more thought; only God could have put sin into human flesh. But if God had put sin into His Sons flesh and then demanded that He should have to endure a violent death because of it makes would surely have made God a cruel Father.

Anon.

Hosea 6:1 to 3,

“Come, let us return to the LORD. For He has torn *us*, but He will heal us; He has ¹wounded *us*, but He will bandage us. He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day, that we may live before Him. So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; and He will come to us like the rain, like the spring rain watering the earth.”

O Jesus I Have Promised

'O Jesus, I have promised
To serve Thee to the end;
Be Thou forever near me,
My Master and my Friend;
I shall not fear the battle
If Thou art by my side,
Nor wander from the pathway
If Thou wilt be my Guide.

Oh, let me hear Thee speaking,
In accents clear and still,
Above the storms of passion,
The murmurs of self-will;
Oh, speak to reassure me,
To hasten, or control;
Oh, speak, and make me listen,
Thou Guardian of my soul.

Oh, let me feel Thee near me;
The world is ever near;
I see the sights that dazzle,
The tempting sounds I hear;
My foes are ever near me,
Around me and within;
But, Jesus, draw Thou nearer,
And shield my soul from sin.

O Jesus, Thou hast promised
To all who follow Thee
That where thou art in glory
There shall thy servants be.
And Jesus, I have promised
To serve Thee to the end;
Oh, give me grace to follow,
My Master and my Friend'.

(J E Bode)

Baptized in the Spirit

To be baptized in the spirit means firstly in the New Testament to become a Christian by responding with intelligence to the Gospel as originally preached by Jesus who demanded that his followers “see, hear, understand and then repent and be forgiven” (SHURF!).

To be baptized in the spirit is to be drenched in the spirit. Paul made this quite clear in his famous “baptized in spirit” saying: - (1 Cor. 12:12-13). “For 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. For 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.”

Indeed as Paul said in Galatians 3:3, “you began in the spirit.” One enters the Christian life by receiving the spirit via the Gospel as Jesus preached it.

Sir Anthony F. Buzzard

Matthew 16:24 to 28

“Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life? “For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done.”

WHY DID CHRIST DIE - seeing He was not a sinner?

Part of this question can be answered in a very simple way; He died to save me from my sins. A person that makes this statement at least acknowledges the fact that they need saving from sin. This is the first essential truth; it is quite likely that God will save many whose only explanation is that they need a personal Saviour because they know that they are sinners, yet wish to be something different.

On the other hand, if we gather together all the sayings of Jesus concerning His death, we can discover why He died as a sacrifice; the outstanding reason is seen in His saying "He came to give Himself a ransom for many." Ransom means far more than deliverance - it is a Price paid for deliverance we are told that we were all sold under sin (sold to sin as a master), and it came about by disobedience.

When Adam was created in a mortal, or earthy body, he was given a chance to choose between good and evil, obedience would be for his good, disobedience to God's command would mean death. I think we could all admit Adam and Eve could have obeyed without any hardship to themselves; they had all they needed for an enjoyable natural life, but they desired more and began to doubt whether God really meant what He said - and eventually decided they knew best.

On the other hand. God who created them "knew what was in man." We are also told it was never in man "to direct his ways;" God knew he would need guidance and it would be for his good that he should be obedient to law. He put them to a test of obedience by placing before them desirable fruit - with a command not to take and eat of it; they failed, giving way to natural desire.

It should be quite clear man's desire to please himself was there before he was condemned to death for disobedience. It is also true these desires can become very perverted. We cannot live in a family, a community, or a world free from sin if we do not consider one another. God, knowing this saw how necessary it was for us to be obedient to His will; it is not because He wants to show His authority because He is all powerful; He is also just and good, loving and long-suffering. He wants us to recognise this as well as his greatness.

We make a mistake if we think He has made man with only an animal mind; there is a spiritual side to man's make-up - we are not just like animal creation, for they were not made in the image of God as we are. They cannot reason as we can; they have no aspirations towards good and lovely things as we have. Man often does things quite against the mind of the flesh - the spiritual nature in man may cause him to rush to save another at the expense of his own life, but even this has not saved him from sin because the selfish part of him so often has the upper hand.

Paul was quite right when he said "in the flesh (or fleshly mind) dwells no good thing." Man, pleasing himself with his animal desires cannot do any good thing, but man desiring to become more spiritually minded can accomplish wonderful things; he has already in him the God-given capacity. Paul say in Romans "the Gentiles had altogether turned aside; there was none that understood" - they had forsaken God and His guidance, their natural desires had become perverted. A man who professes to be a Christian should see to it that his mind is not like this

The world to-day is learning to its sorrow its neglect of God's guidance and it should be quite clear from the Bible and things in the world, man needs redeeming and reconciling to God, and He has done it through Jesus. When God brought into existence His only begotten Son, He was made of our flesh with all its natural desires. He was to live in a world already cursed by Adam's, and other men's sins, and yet He was obedient in all things, even resisting sin when He naturally desired to live and not suffer such a terrible death. In doing this He more than declared God's righteousness in asking Adam to obey so simple a trial.

Previous to His death, Jesus had obeyed God's law in all its detail where every other man had failed. In doing so He honoured God. For three and a half years "He suffered the contradiction of sinners against Himself" without sin in thought, word or deed; and when we note carefully all the things He said in the last hour of His bitter trial, we see Him carrying out His new law of love in hopes of saving men - He was 'doing good to those that hated Him, praying for those who despitefully used Him, then dying to save them. Truly He was God manifested in flesh; holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners - and so He was not allowed to see corruption. As He died he said "It is finished" for He had finished the work God had given Him to do - redeem the world - He had done it by obedience to a law of Love. Men can now come to Him under Grace (ie. unmerited love) instead of the law of sin and death.

This was no blind obedience on the part of Jesus; He had understood His God - "The Father hath shown Me all things that He Himself doeth." The Things the Father desired Him to do He desired to do - it was this co-operation with the Father in the salvation of the world that made Him one with God. Now all men must "honour the Son even as they honour the Father;" He is our Lord and our God.

We may wonder how He was able to do all this. He certainly had a highly developed spiritual mind, full of compassion and sensitive to the evil He saw others suffering. This would give Him the desire to save; and God gave Him some wonderful promises - exclusive to Jesus - "All power is given to me both in heaven and in earth;" He would be the "Judge of the living and the dead;" He would have "life in Himself even as the Father hath life in Himself," in fact' He would be God's equal. All this was promised Him for enduring the Cross for us.

In His agony of mind just before He was about to suffer. He prayed that if it were possible the cup should pass from Him. Angels came to strengthen Him and there is no doubt they would remind Him in some way of the joy of being the Saviour of those He loved. If He were to be their Saviour the cup could not pass. He had previously told His disciples that the time had come that He might be glorified, but if a corn of wheat fall not into the ground and die it remains alone, but if it die it will bring forth much fruit.

There is one thing that I'm quite sure the angels did not say - that He was "sinful flesh" and "the flesh must be utterly destroyed" nor did they tell him "You must hang upon the Cross to show men what is due to sinful flesh," and many other such reasons given us as to why Christ died.

Fortunately, Jesus Himself tells us why He hung upon the Cross; "If I be lifted up I will draw all men unto myself." God had said of Himself long before that He would draw sinners with the cords and bands of love. Surely this is what Jesus was doing when He hung upon the Cross although it was not very evident at the time because He had not risen from the dead, but Jesus was quite certain it would happen; and having "loved His own He loved them to the end." "Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down His life for His friends." "I lay it down of myself, therefore doth my Father love me." "I have power to lay it down of myself, therefore doth my Father love me." "I have power to lay it down, and power to take it again, and no man taketh it from me."

God allowed this sacrifice for sin (or sinners) with the express purpose of "converting sinners from the error of their ways," and Jesus was "cut off, but not for himself" He saw of the travail of His soul and was satisfied" and said, "Behold me and the children that God hath given me."

After a lifetime of doing good among the people, men through envy and lust of power, put Him to death. "They saw no beauty that they desired" and the leaders of the Jews had utterly failed in their understanding of God; and when Jesus came as God manifested in the flesh they did not recognise Him; their eyes were blinded by their own traditions. Paul says of them, "They had a zeal for God but it was not according to knowledge" so they delivered Jesus up demanding that He should be crucified, hung upon a tree; thus having Him cursed by their own law. Jesus having borne this penalty not due to Him is said to have redeemed them from the law which was given them to make sin manifest, bringing sinners to repentance.

Jesus, having honoured the law, having fulfilled it through perfect obedience, took it away, nailing it to the Cross and replacing it with Grace and Truth that came through His sacrifice.

The taking away of the law of sin and death rendered sin powerless and it delivered those "who through fear of death were all their lives subject to bondage." (Hebrews 2:14,15).

Grace demands love in return for love shown but the law demands obedience or death. Grace forgives - law condemns. Love and pity is shown in all this action for what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh - that is justify men - God has done for us by allowing Jesus to be made a sacrifice for sin, and we are freely justified through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

The same death that redeemed the Jew and the transgressions under the law, redeemed the Gentiles also from their sins and condemnation in Adam. Here again the death of Jesus was brought about by sinners of the Gentiles. It is true that Pilate found no cause of death in Him yet fearing he would lose authority as a ruler, he delivered Jesus up to be crucified. The condemned thief crucified with Christ, confessed condemnation was due to him and then he said "This man hath done nothing amiss." This confession of his own guilt and seeing Jesus bearing unmerited condemnation, saved the thief who had faith in Jesus.

The prince of this world came and found nothing in Him. We should see in these men who brought about the death of a perfectly innocent man a warning to us against uncontrolled selfish desires, and yet Jesus said "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." The centurion beholding all that was done confessed, "Truly this man was the Son of God."

The Son of God "being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself and became obedient unto death even the death of the Cross" for "He came not to be ministered unto but to minister" and knowing the time had come for Him to manifest in Himself the doctrine He had been preaching, went deliberately up to Jerusalem knowing they would condemn Him. In doing so He fulfilled His Father's will that He should be the Saviour of the world - "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" which saved Adam from dying in the day he ate the fruit; for no sooner had God condemned Adam to death, mercy was shown and a promise of life after death if men would turn to God and live as His children. and a promise of life after death if men would turn to God and live as His children.

We may ask, what has the Cross of Christ done for us? Do we reap any benefit today? We most certainly do. If we have seen the need to put to death all our natural desires when they are in conflict with the way of Love (1 Cor:13). In mercy we are allowed to die with Christ a figurative death, in baptism, and we rise from the waters a justified creation - sanctified and clothed with His righteousness; not under condemnation in Adam's race even though we die naturally. "Behold, says Paul, all things are new, old things have passed away" "Christ has redeemed us. It is God who has justified us, who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died for us and will present us faultless before the presence of His Glory with exceeding joy.

Sister Maud Warre

Note: There is not a passage in the whole of the New Testament that cannot be fitted into Christ's own testimony as to why He died, and I am convinced all who add to His explanation are doing wrong.

Sister Maud Warre – 1967

WHY WAS JESUS BAPTIZED?

The best reply that can be given to this question is contained in the Lord's own words in answer to John, saying, "Suffer it to be so now for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." (Matthew 3:15). "That is" (as Parkhurst remarks in his Lexicon for explaining the words of the Greek Testament,) "to perform all the works and submit to all the ordinances appointed by God." Exact conformity to all the requirements of the Deity, according to the order of things under which he lived, was characteristic of Jesus throughout the whole of his career.

It was his meat to do his heavenly Father's will – His law was within his heart. He was obedient in all things, and always did those things that pleased God. And his submission to John's baptism was an eminent example of his obedience at the very commencement of his public ministry. His earnest desire that the Scripture should be fulfilled to the very letter is brought prominently into view on numerous occasions, and that it might not be broken he meekly submitted to every insult and every indignity. "He hid not his face from shame and spitting."

John's proclamation was addressed to the Jewish nation, and in response thereto we read (Matthew iii. 5, 6.) "Then went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." As one of that nation, it was incumbent on Jesus likewise to render obedience by being immersed, not because he had any sins to confess, or anything of which to repent, for, being absolutely without sin, he needed no repentance, but for the reason already mentioned, namely, "to fulfil all righteousness."

On this passage Macknight on the Apostolic Epistles (vol. i. essay i.) remarks, "The son of God, in prosecution of the purpose for which he took on him the human nature, came to John at Jordan and was baptised. To this rite he submitted, not as it was the baptism of repentance, for he was perfectly free from sin, but as it prefigured his dying and rising again from the dead, and because he was on that occasion to be declared God's beloved Son by a voice from heaven, and by the descent of the Holy Ghost upon him in the view of the multitudes who were assembled to John's baptism."

On Matthew iii. 15, Adam Clarke observes, "To fulfil all righteousness." That is, every righteous ordinance: so I think the words *πασαν δικαιοσυνην* should be translated, and so our common version renders a similar word. (Luke i. 6.) The following passage quoted from Justin Martyr will doubtless appear a strong vindication of this translation: "Christ was circumcised, and observed all the ordinances of the Law of Moses, not with a view to his own justification, but to fulfil the dispensation committed to him by the Lord, the God and Creator of all things." Wakefield.

But was this an ordinance? Undoubtedly it was the initiatory ordinance of the Baptist's dispensation. Now as Christ had been submitted to circumcision the initiatory ordinance of the Mosaic dispensation it was necessary that he should submit to this, which was instituted by no less an authority, and was the introduction to his own dispensation of eternal mercy and truth. But it was necessary on another account. Our Lord represented the High Priest, and was to be the High Priest over the house of God: now as the High Priest was initiated into his office by washing and anointing, so must Christ, and hence he was baptized, washed, and anointed by the Holy Ghost. Thus he fulfilled the righteous ordinance of his initiation into the office of High Priest, and thus was prepared to make an atonement for the "sins of mankind." For so it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness; i.e., to own every divine institution, and so to show my readiness to comply with all God's righteous precepts, and to justify God and approve his counsel (Luke vii. 29), and celebrate his wisdom in sending thee to prepare his and my way, by calling men to repentance, and by so doing to fit them for the blessings of my kingdom and the avoiding of the wrath to come. So the Apostolic Constitutions (lib. 7. ch. xxii.) say that Christ was "baptized, " not that he needed any purgation, but to testify the truth of St. John's baptism, and be an example to us." - Whitby.

All righteousness. "There was no particular precept in the Old Testament requiring this, but he chose to give the sanction of his example to the baptism of John, as to a divine ordinance. The phrase "all righteousness" here is the same as a righteous institution or appointment. Jesus had no sin. But he was about to enter on his great work. It was proper that he should be set apart by his forerunner, and show his connection with him, and give his approbation to what John had done. Also, he was baptized that occasion

might be taken, at the commencement of his work, for God publicly to declare his approbation of him and his solemn appointment to the office of the Messiah.” - Barnes.

All the above authorities are agreed on this question of baptism, Further, it may be remarked that it was by this act of obedience that Jesus was made manifest to Israel. He then “came by water.” (1 John v. 6.) And then it was that the spirit of God descended upon him, and a voice from heaven was heard saying, “This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.” It was thus made the occasion of his anointing or Christing, and moreover, by that same act of obedience he left an example that all believers in him should follow in his steps, and “be baptized into his name.”

“I knew him not,” (says John) “but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not; but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw and bare record that this is the son of God.” (John i. 31-34.)

In the article before alluded to in the Christadelphian, the writer, while admitting that it was necessary for Jesus to undergo this rite (of baptism), and that otherwise he would not have fulfilled all righteousness, or in other words would have sinned, contends that, inasmuch as the baptism of John had relation to sin, and as a consequence to death also, which is the wages of sin; that there must have been some reason for (Jesus) having to undergo a ceremony which had relation to sin and death. He then asks, “What could that (reason) be but the sentence of death inherited from Adam?” He then goes on to say that the Jews generally in submitting to the baptism of John practically confessed that they were worthy of death on account of their iniquities; and that Jesus in going through the same ceremony thereby acknowledged that he was under sentence of death on account of the sin of the first man. Unable himself to see any other reason why Jesus submitted to the ceremony than the one he suggests, he rather hastily comes to the conclusion that none other can be given! The fallacy of this is apparent. Surely it is possible there may be another and even more satisfactory reason which has escaped the notice of the writer above referred to!

Undoubtedly there was a reason, and a very cogent one, too, why Jesus submitted to be immersed by John, and what that reason was has been shown from the Lord’s own words, in answer to the Baptist who at first forbad him. Those words of his do not contain the slightest hint that he believed himself to be under sentence of death on account of Adam’s sin. Neither is there a tittle of evidence to prove that such an idea existed in the mind of John. On the contrary, the Baptist is surprised that the Lord should come to him for such a purpose. “I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?” (Matt. iii. 14.) Throughout his article the writer takes not the slightest notice of that most important fact, that Jesus was begotten by the Almighty, and consequently, not being in the loins of Adam when he transgressed, was not under sentence of death on account of the sin of the first man. This consideration is fatal to his argument, and shows it to be based on a fallacy and an assumption.

Would it not have been more logical on the part of the writer in the Christadelphian if he had first brought forward some proof that Jesus was under sentence of death on account of the sin of the first man, instead of trying to establish the point at issue by simply drawing an inference? But there was evidently no proof at hand, so he first enquires what the reason could be that Jesus was baptized but the one he suggests, and then assumes that Jesus acknowledged it by submitting to the ceremony! The facts of the case admit of a very different explanation, as already shown. It by no means follows because the Jews generally in submitting to the Baptism of John practically confessed that they were worthy of death on account of their iniquities, that Jesus, in going through the same ceremony, thereby acknowledged that he was under a like condemnation. At best it is but an inference, and on the face of it looks very like an attempt to find support for a preconceived theory, and unless some evidence of a positive kind can be found to prove that Jesus was under condemnation to death in Adam, the entire argument based on his Baptism falls to the ground as untenable.

The argument in opposition to the condemnation theory may be thus summarized. Jesus was baptized,

- 1st, To fulfil all righteousness.
- 2nd, To be made manifest to Israel.
- 3rd, To prefigure his death and resurrection.

4th, To leave an example that we should follow in his steps.

The circumcision of Jesus admits of a similar explanation. It was a sign or token of the Covenant which God made with Abraham, by which every man child was commanded to be circumcised on the eighth day. And the neglect of this peculiar rite was held by the law to be a breach of the covenant, which would result in the cutting off of that soul from Israel. "This is my covenant, which ye shall keep between me and you and thy seed after thee: Every man child among you shall he circumcised. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations. And the uncircumcised man child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people: he hath broken my covenant." (Gen. xvii. 10, 12, 14.) In this particular Jesus was precisely in the same position as any other male child in Israel.

The rigid observance of this legal ceremony was a necessity, and in harmony with this we find it recorded in Luke ii. 21, 27, that "the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him after the custom of the law." Again, like the Baptism, to which Jesus submitted, the ceremony was typical of a future cutting off and blood shedding, as well as a sign of circumcision of the heart. Paul's teaching is that all circumcised persons were debtors to do the whole law, (Gal. v. 3,) and that the law cursed them if they failed even in one point. Jesus discharged this debt to the full, and though cursed by the law because he was hanged on a tree, he was not cursed by that law as a transgressor, for he was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Phi. ii. 8.) The writer in the Christadelphian already referred to, states (p. 428 of that magazine) that circumcision was typical of the taking away of sin, and a mode of justification which could not be for individual sin, seeing that it was performed when children were only eight days old; it must, therefore have been on account of the condemnation inherited from Adam." This is precisely similar to the remark he makes when speaking of John's Baptism, so that, according to his argument, the sinless Jesus required to be justified twice over from the sentence of death he supposes he inherited on account of Adam's sin. And thus in both instances he assumes the point to be proved! It may be further remarked that even a criminal in being executed does not commit a breach of the law, but fulfils the law.

But Jesus was not a criminal. The curse of the law was borne by him to redeem those who had broken it. In a word, he died "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God."

Brother S. G. Hayes

Lord, Speak To Me

"Lord, speak to me that I may speak
In living echoes of Thy tone;
As thou has sought, so let me seek
Thy erring children lost and lone.

O give thine own sweet rest to me,
That I may speak with soothing power
A word in season as from Thee
To weary ones in needful hour.

O Lead me, Lord, that I may lead
The wandering and the wavering feet;
O feed me, Lord, that I may feed
Thy hungering ones with manna sweet.

O fill me with Thy fulness, Lord,
Until my very heart o'erflows
In kindling thought and glowing word,
Thy love to tell, Thy praise to show.

O use me, Lord, use even me,
Just as Thou wilt, and when, and when;
Until Thy blessed face I see,
Thy rest, Thy joy, Thy glory share

Francis Ridley Havergal

