

The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 76

March 1986

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Editorial

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Warm Greetings to you all in Christ Jesus and to our reader friends.

We have been experiencing a bitterly cold spell of weather here in the United Kingdom and no doubt when Spring does eventually arrive we shall all appreciate it the more, especially those who are adversely affected by these extremes of weather.

Events around the world keep our minds focussed on the nearness of our Masters return. The Arab Israeli conflict is still very much alive and will no doubt continue to be until the final show down and as each month passes by we can say "Now is our Salvation nearer than when we believed."

The recent destruction of the American Space-Ship Challenger sent shock waves around the world and of course it was very sad for the relatives of those who perished on board, but one wonders if it was not, sent by God as a warning against further intrusion into space, for did not God say "the heavens are the Lord's the earth is mans inheritance" and His instruction from the beginning was to "fill the earth and subdue it", should man therefore venture into forbidden territory?

We thank all those who have communicated with us since the last issue of the Circular Letter and those who have contributed towards the work in this corner of the Vineyard.

In this issue there is a further instalment of Bro. Brady's booklet "Too True to be Kew" and an article by Bro. Phil Parry entitled "If thou hadst known the things which belong to Thy Peace: The time of Thy Visitation. Luke 19:4-44".

We pray for the welfare of you all and remain your Bro, and Sis. in the Master's service.

Harvey and Evelyn Linggood.

I know not the way that's before me,
The joys or the griefs it may bring;
What clouds are overhanging the future,
What flowers by the wayside may spring.

But there's One who will journey beside me,
Nor in weal nor in woe will forsake;
And this is my solace and comfort,
"He knows the way that I take."

continued from February

Too True To Be New

When about ten years ago these facts “began to be clear to me, I circulated a humble little leaflet explaining the position as I saw it and suggesting that something might be done to remedy it. One result was the action of the President of the Mutual already referred to. Another was that two managing “brethren were deputed to interview me. One was the late H.W. Warre and the other was L.C.Jennings whose address at the M.I.S. Conference was the occasion of these thoughts. We met on the appointed day and, in order to clear the ground, I asked them if they understood the issues I had raised. Bro. Warre replied that he not only understood them but had himself held the same views for more than 50 years; “but under the Constitution he was precluded from expressing them. Bro. Jennings replied that he neither understood them nor did he wish to do so, being quite satisfied with what he had always believed. In these circumstances little purpose was to be served “by discussion and I simply stated that I could not feel that either attitude was quite right. It did not seem to me consistent for one who “believed that Jesus was in every sense holy and whose sacrifice was solely on “behalf of sinners to join fellowship with those whose professed basis was the “belief that He was defiled, condemned by His nature and His death necessary for His own salvation. Nor could I feel it right to know the truth of these things and refrain from expressing them. Bro. Warre has since passed beyond the range of human judgment and we may hope that his obvious sincerity and good intention will justify what appears to us to have been a mistaken policy. Neither could I feel that in this life we shall ever attain the point where we can afford neither to know nor to wish to know anything which has to do with the things concerning the Name of Jesus Christ. Bro. Jennings is still with us and in view of these things I was particularly interested to hear that he was speaking on this vital subject in the Midland Institute. It was with regret we have to conclude from what we heard that his self-satisfaction is scarcely justified. The upshot of the interview was that I received a letter telling me that my name had “been removed from the ecclesial roll for “absence from the meeting.” It has “been suggested that the intention behind this strangely dishonest piece of work may have been to spare my feelings, but I am bound to confess that if I am to be condemned I would rather be condemned for the heretic I am than for the backslider I am not. Subsequently I requested permission to explain to my ecclesia the true reason for my expulsion but this was politely refused, as was a similar request to the Preaching Union, of which I was a member. When I was a Christadelphian I was always convinced that what we believed was unassailable - there is a saying “Truth sees no lion in the path” - but it is evident that on this subject at any rate there is more confidence in suppression and “hush hush” than in earnestly contending for the Truth.

Since the events just related, whether there be any connection or not, the Suffolk Street Ecclesia have abandoned the Statement of Faith containing much of the old rubbish and have adopted a simplified one. As far as it goes this is a good thing, but it is not enough; the errors have been omitted but the truth has not been put in; the evil spirits have been swept out but good spirits have not been invited in; the last state of that house may be worse than the former. This was painfully evident in the address given by L.C.Jennings on June 2nd to which I now turn. He referred to the sacrifices appointed under the Law of Moses and said, rightly of course, that their blood could not take away sin. He then spoke of the death of Jesus and explained that His sacrifice was acceptable to God because He was a willing and understanding victim, submitting Himself consciously to His Father’s will, whereas the animals were without intelligence and completely passive. All this was true enough as far as it went but not specially profound; it was ‘merely a statement of simple scriptural facts which everyone accepts. It throws not the least glimmer of light on the central’ and most interesting and important question which everyone wants answered - and that is WHY? Why could the death of Christ do what the death of animals could not do? Why in fact did God require sacrifice at all? Obviously, for the reasons which the speaker gave – and others which he appears to know nothing of Jesus’ sacrifice was acceptable to God, but, and this is the real point, being acceptable, how and why could it take away sin? This is the real question, which anyone who elects to speak upon the subject ought at least to attempt to answer. Why in the purpose of God is the forgiveness of sin associated with Blood-shedding and sacrifice; why in other words was the death of Christ necessary for the salvation of sinners? We may speak for 20 minutes or for 20 years about the reasons for His sacrifice being acceptable, but if we have no conception of why it had to be,

why Jesus chose to be a willing and submissive victim, or what God intends us to learn from it, we may as well save our breath.

Some years ago I wrote a pamphlet called “The Question Christadelphians Cannot Answer,” in which I quoted from many writers to show the unanimity of opinion that we cannot understand, nor, some say, are we intended to do so, why Christ had to die. That effort gave much offence and John Carter labelled me “a renegade,” but it had the beneficial effect of inducing some speakers and writers to concentrate on the question and try their hand at answering it. I leave it to the reader to judge the success which has attended their efforts but it would be a good test to ask oneself whether, in his own mind and in harmony with his general beliefs he has any clear idea of why Jesus died. Perhaps I should have called my pamphlet “The Question Christians Cannot Answer,” for it is equally true; I do not think there is or ever has been a sect able to put forward a clear explanation of the Atonement, for the reason that all alike go wrong from the very first step - in believing that natural death, or corruptibility, is the penalty of the sin in Eden. As I sat and listened to Bro. Jennings in the Midland Institute and saw a hall full of people being fed with stones instead of bread I can only confess that I felt sick at heart and sad that I had been able to accomplish so little to enlighten them. Here I would say that what measure of success has attended our efforts under the grace of God, has been almost confined to the Temperance Hall Section, a result which I attribute to the fact that they lay greater emphasis upon the traditional doctrinal basis and do not scruple to give expression to any arguments to uphold their belief in filthy flesh. Thus their very efforts to defend their false doctrines are doing more today than we can do to awaken people to the horrid things they are supposed to believe. An example of this is the occasion when John Carter in opposing our contention that Jesus suffered what was justly due to sinners, wrote “Jesus did not suffer the penalty of sin; He merely suffered death.” Surely the man who can apply the adverb “Merely” to the Crucifixion has never thought out his position. Many people have contented themselves with the thought that the Sacrifice of Christ is too deep for them and it is in vain for them to try to understand it. This is absolutely wrong; the complications arise because people will not put aside their misconceptions long enough to consider it impartially. Start correctly from the beginning and it is comparatively simple and certainly within the capacity of anyone of average intelligence to understand it clearly. I have said, and I repeat, given a reasonable familiarity with the Bible, and a willingness to listen and learn, I will undertake, in one hour, to impart to anyone an understanding of the Sacrifice of Christ which will transform his outlook.

I have already affirmed that the basic error which makes it, I do not say difficult, I say impossible to understand the meaning of the Cross, is the nearly universal belief that natural death was the penalty and direct result of the sin in Eden. The full reasons for rejecting this belief are inseparable from the explanation of the death of Christ and no one will appreciate their full force until they can bring themselves to consider the events of Eden and Gethsemane as part of one enthralling problem. Nevertheless, there are a number of points which carry weight independently. All will agree that natural death results from man being corruptible; and it follows that man was either corruptible when he was created or his nature was changed to make him corruptible when he sinned. Christadelphians are supposed to believe the latter, as defined in Clause III of their Creed already quoted “A sentence carried into effect by the implantation, of a physical law of decay, etc.” It is certain that there is no mention in Scripture of any such process of implantation, and if it took place it must mean that before he sinned man was of some superior nature. Yet there are only two natures known to the Bible, the natural, with the life in the blood, and the incorruptible, with the life in the spirit. The actual fact is clearly that man was created exactly as he is now, scripturally a living soul,” and that means a living person of the same “breath of life nature as all other orders of animal life. It is a remarkable thing that Christadelphians are at pains to emphasise this truth when they are refuting the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, yet they never notice that the arguments they use for that purpose knock the bottom out of their belief that corruptibility and its consequence, natural death, is the penalty of sin. In one of the last articles written by Dr. Thomas, entitled “Our Terrestrial System before the Fall,” the following passage occurs: -

“Death and corruption then is the fundamental law of the six days; seasons of decay and death were institutions existing before the fall. Adam and Eve, and all the other animals born of the earth with themselves, would have died and gone to corruption, if there had been

no transgression, provided that there had been no further interference with the physical system than Moses records in the history of the six days.”

Presumably Dr. Thomas did not realise how this conclusion conflicts with that given in Elpis Israel and defined in the Statement of Faith, but as they are directly contradictory it is impossible for both views to be correct, and we are therefore faced with the obligation of deciding where the Truth lies. It is our conviction that had he lived long enough Dr. Thomas would have seen the need to revise some of his earlier conclusions; and we believe that if he were alive today he would be where we are. Some of its readers might sit up and take notice if they found in the Intelligence of The Christadelphian “We regret to report that Dr. John Thomas has accepted views contrary to the Statement of Faith in regard to the nature of man and therefore ceases to be in fellowship.”

to be continued.

The Word Of Truth

The word of truth is like a stained glass window rare,
We stand outside and gaze, but see no beauty there.
No fair design, naught but confusion we behold;
'Tis only from within the glory will unfold,
And he who would drink in the rapture of the view
Must climb the window stair, the portal enter through.
The sacred door of Truth's cathedral is most low,
And all who fain would enter there the knee must bow
In deep humility. But once inside, the light
Of day streams through and makes each colour heavenly bright,
The Master's great design we see, our hands we raise
In reverent ecstasy of wonder, love and praise!

“If Thou Hadst Known The Things Which Belong Unto Thy Peace!”

The Time of Thy Visitation

Luke 19:41-44.

During the pagan Christmas festival which the Roman Apostate Church wrongly chose to relate to the birth of Christ, I was in a contemplative mood on account of many expressions used and thought to “be involved with the reasons for Christ's birth, but in fact, when examined in the Light of Scriptural revelation, are completely out of context. Expressions like for example, “This is the season for good will toward our fellow men,” “A time for giving,” “A time for Christmas cheer,” “a time to think of peace on earth and loving one another in the spirit of good will.” I thought of what really happened after the message of the Angels to the shepherds when a multitude of the heavenly host joined in praise to God, and saying “Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.” The shepherds went to Bethlehem and found Joseph, Mary and the “babe, as they had been informed, and also they conveyed the message of the Lord which was told them through the Angels concerning this child. All that heard it wondered, but Mary pondered them in her heart. History has again shown that following the birth of Jesus, the degenerate and worldly conception of peace by which the unlawful desires of the flesh might be satiated and appeased unhindered, is not the peace which was embodied in the message of the Angels, and that particular and worldly conception of peace did not follow Christ's birth and rightly

so; being the sort of peace governments past and present talk about and discuss when their representatives meet together at one table. Their deliberations are more in the form of a truce than lasting peace, therefore we look for the context and real meaning of the word “peace” of which the Angels spoke in relation to Christ’s birth. There certainly was no good-will in King Herod’s heart as a result of the question, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews?”

There was the fear that his own power was in jeopardy being of course ignorant and unaware of what Jesus would say later on in life, “My Kingdom is not of this world.” That is, not of this order of corruptible and temporal duration in respect of power and Kingship. And again, “My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you,” we conclude then that this peace and goodwill toward men of which the Angels spake and glorified God was something God was introducing to men in the person of His only begotten Son, not a restored paradise or a restored Kingdom to Israel, but a means by which believers through faith might have right to the Tree of Life when that Paradise is restored. The barrier must first be removed. See Hebrews 9:1-15. Since the birth of Jesus history has shown there has been no peace of the world’s conception of the word, but continual strife, persecution, violence, bloodshed, wars and rumours of wars. In contemplating this I thought of the words of Jesus, a grown man, who knew His mission probably from the age of twelve, but whose spiritual stature was complete when He uttered the following words, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.” Matthew 10:54-56, Luke 12:51. Jesus also said to the people, and in retrospect His words are still applicable to the spiritually blind, “Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?” It was ‘this time’ which Zacharias and Elisabeth discerned at the birth of John the Baptist their son. ‘This time’ was discerned by the shepherds by reason of what the angels said to them; ‘this time’ was discerned by the wise men from the east who came to Jerusalem to enquire of his birth and whereabouts; ‘this time’ was discerned by Mary and Joseph, it was discerned by Simeon by reason of the word of the Lord revealed through the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had seen the Lord’s Christ; and he came by the Spirit into the temple and took up the child Jesus in his arms and blessed God and said, “Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes ‘have seen’ thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel.” Is not this ‘the time’ God speaks of through the prophet Isaiah 57:19 and also confirmed by Paul in Ephesians 2:11-17? Through Isaiah God declares, “For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth; for the Spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made - I have seen his ways and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near saith the Lord; and I will heal him. “But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked, but to this man will I look, even to him which is of a humble and contrite spirit and reverences my word.” The message is ‘Peace’ to him that is far off and to him that is near. It was a message for an appointed time for both Jew and Gentile who would discern ‘the time.’ Paul received that message and conveyed it to Jew and Gentile, those who were near and those who were far off, as we read in Ephesians 2, Who were dead in trespasses and sins - and were of those who constituted they who walked according to the course of this world - in accordance with the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience fulfilling the will of the flesh - being by disposition the children of wrath, even as others. But God who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith he loved us - despite our alienated position - Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace are ye saved); and hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.” Do we in any stage of this epistle detect any support for a theory that human nature is obnoxious to God, and has “been demonstrated in the lifting up of the brazen serpent by Moses and the lifting up of Jesus Christ, on the cross of Calvary? Definitely we do not, and shame upon those who dare to think it or teach it. Paul has shown in Ephesians chapter 1 that it is through the flesh and blood (human nature) of Jesus Christ, God has predestinated us unto the adoption of children to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His Will. On Paul’s part there is nothing but gratitude and a feeling of unworthiness, hence his exhortation to those who had become the recipients of

the grace of God in Christ Jesus, to be mindful and grateful also that they were no longer afar off. “Wherefore remember, that at one time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached ‘peace’ to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

We can be sure that when Paul penned these words he was doing so by the same Spirit that moved the Prophet Isaiah when he declared the word of the lord God of Israel in chapter 57 v. 19, “Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near; and I will heal him.” For, says Paul, “It pleased the Father that in Jesus should all fullness dwell; And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him (Jesus) to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have; heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister - to fulfil the word of God; even the mystery which hath been hid from, ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: to whom God would make known, what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Colossians ch. 1.

From the foregoing we learn that formerly the Gentiles had been excluded from the privileges enjoyed by the Jewish commonwealth in covenant relationship with God as His chosen and peculiar people, this exclusion being spotlighted in the types of clean and unclean animals as directed under the Law of Moses and designed to show what was acceptable to God and what was unacceptable. As to its reference being to Jew and Gentile we have a Divine given clue in Acts 10:10-44. Peter in vision saw heaven opened and a large sheet knit at the four corners wherein was all manner of four-footed beasts and creeping things and fowls of the air. And there came a voice unto him, “Arise Peter, kill and eat.” But Peter said “Not so Lord for I have never eaten anything common or unclean.” And the voice spake again unto him the second time, “What God hath cleansed that call not thou common.” We know from the chapter this had all to do with Cornelius and also the signs pointing to the bringing in of the Gentiles through the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon such as believed the gospel, and we know that Peter was the one to whom Jesus had given the keys of the Kingdom on the basis of Peter’s statement, “Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God.” There is no chaos nor substitutionary methods in the Divine order of things, everything is done decently and in order, therefore the opening of the door of the Kingdom must be left to him who had the keys, this man was Peter, see Matthew 16:18, if ever we needed proof of Divine inspiration of the scriptures we have it in God’s immutability in His dealings with man and also His promises, thus Peter declared, “Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as He did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.” This declaration by Peter came about as a result of some Jews claiming that there was no salvation without circumcision and the keeping of the Law of Moses; as a result many of the epistles, if not all, have been devoted to showing how the sacrifice of Christ introduced an Atonement, a breaking down of the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain (Jew and Gentile) one new man, so making peace.”

Would to God some people would realise that the enmity was not in the flesh of Jesus, when they read this epistle, but that the enmity was the sin of the world which was made to appear exceeding sinful, by its magnitude through the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, and that men might see Jesus in the lamb slain from the foundation of the world – a death that did not condemn - but which

obtained eternal redemption for faithful Jew and Gentile, for there is no respect of persons with God. We read in Exodus 12:45-50 that there was to "be one Law to him that was home born and unto the stranger that sojourned among the children of Israel, so that although the Gentiles collectively were excluded from the commonwealth of Israel yet individually and through belief and faith in the precepts of the Law of Moses they could be adopted into that commonwealth, nevertheless until the fullness of time of which Paul speaks in Galatians chapter 4 it must remain - to the Jew first. Much can be learned from Exodus ch. 15 and Numbers ch. 5 concerning the firstborn males and the law of redemption, and we can appreciate what Peter meant when speaking of the sacrificial and redemptive efficacy of the blood of Christ in comparison with silver, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold - but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God," I Peter 1:18-21. As I have already stated in a letter sent to a member of a community obsessed with the theory that Jesus needed redemption; if this were a fact, then it would have shown itself in Luke chapter 2 verses 21-24, but nowhere in those records do we read of Mary offering the redemptive money for her Son, had she done so she would have disputed His Divine Paternity, but even so, had Joseph been His father He would still be holy to the Lord but subject to the redemptive price of silver if claimed by them. As recorded in verse 22 Joseph and Mary brought the child Jesus to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord in recognition of what was written in the Law concerning the firstborn male child and also to offer for her own cleansing, a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons; and it must be stressed here that Jesus was not unclean but holy to the Lord, and Mary was not unclean in the quality of her flesh but in the legal sense which stipulated a period of days for her purification and made no difference to her flesh, Leviticus chapter 12. The question "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? has no place or connection here. Mary was a chaste virgin of good character and chosen to be the mother of the Lord's Christ. Jesus emerged from her womb "Holy to the Lord", after which Mary became legally unclean for a period of days without any change of nature, and after fulfilling the requirements of the Law she was again legally clean; in fact a "clean thing" came out of a "clean," because such term does not describe the quality of the flesh. Simeon awaited the consolation of Israel as recorded in Isaiah 40:1-2 "That her warfare is accomplished, that is, her "appointed time," when the glory of the Lord (Jesus Christ) shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together - say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Simeon discerned 'This time' and was content to die with this peace of mind, knowing that while he slept, the purpose of God in Christ would go on until his resurrection from that sleep to share a greater glory. "Mine eyes have seen," (not an unclean condemned body of flesh, but) "Thy salvation which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel." As the apostle wrote, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin - for in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. Wherefore when he (Jesus) cometh into the world, he saith. Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body thou hast prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin which are offered by the law, thou hast had no pie-sure; Then said I, "Lo I come to do Thy will O God." By the which will (the offering of the body of Jesus once for all), we are sanctified. Hebrews chapter 10.

Anna the prophetess also gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of Jesus to all them that looked for redemption in Israel, and considering the description of her life and character to the age of 84 years this was not a light thing to do, she must have been clearly aware of what was involved in redemption and salvation. Carrying on through this second chapter of Luke we have the record of Joseph and Mary returning a days journey to Jerusalem having lost touch with Jesus, and they found Him at last in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking questions, being now twelve years of age and of exceptional understanding, the doctors being astonished at His understanding and His answers. Making Jesus of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord Isaiah chapter 11, did not give Jesus any extra strength in His fleshly nature, He suffered the bodily privations and the mental strains of this temporal life as much, and in some cases more, than other men, and add to this His agony before and up to His agonising death upon the cross the Just for the unjust, it only confirms His own words, "To whom much is given (responsible knowledge) much is required." It may strengthen the faith but it does not lessen the agony. How anyone can therefore formulate a clause which states that Jesus shared the death which passed upon all men believing it to be by natural decay as in all animal creation

Genesis chapters 1 and 2, is unbelievable and contradictory. How could Jesus suffer the death due to the sinner (by blood-shedding) and also partake of a death common to all men (by natural and gradual decay) the both being totally opposed in aspect and meaning? Nowhere can it be proved that Jesus shared His death with us. His was a total giving of His life – a Sacrifice - a price with which God could purchase or ransom us from the power of Sin - it was substitutionary - in no way does our natural death contribute or have any share, otherwise Baptism into Christ's death has no meaning or significance. But as we have been considering the Law of Moses which I believe Paul refers to as the law of Sin and death but not in a physical application, but contrariwise in a relative and legal application, we discover from his words in Romans 8:1 that the sacrificial death of Christ had made him free from the law of sin and death, so that the latter cannot apply to human nature subject to a process of decay, for Paul was still very much physically alive in flesh and blood. Paul has now discovered that the misguided zeal he had for the Law even to the persecution of Christ's servants was in thinking that the law of itself could give life by strict adherence to its precepts, but he had ruled out redemption through the antitype or substance of the types in the death of Jesus before works could count. Paul thought he could be justified by the works of the law merely, but afterwards he appreciated the fact that if there had been a law given which could have given life then verily righteousness should have been by the law. He discovered too, that even the Patriarchs and Noah, Enoch, Abel, Seth, Adam and others; responsible in their particular dispensation, were still dependent for life upon the willing sacrifice of Jesus, the scriptures prove this to be so. Speaking therefore of the Law Paul says, "Was that which was good made death unto me? God forbid." No, he had found that the commandment was holy, just and good but was introduced to teach something, and therefore Paul says, "The Law was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ," but now it was superseded by the substance Christ himself - not by destruction, as being worthless, but by fulfilment. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. Matthew 5:17.

We are still expected to keep the spirit of the law though not under it, for Christ said, "Love is the fulfilling of the Law," and this embodies the first and second commandments, to love the One true God and our neighbour as ourselves and this involves cultivation of the fruits of the Spirit of which Paul gives a list in contrast with the works of the mind of flesh.

Paul was one of those many who had not discerned 'this time' of which Christ spoke but as he was foreordained to be an apostle to the Gentiles as well as the Jews, and knowing in his foreknowledge that the misdirected zeal would be re-directed toward the latter, God intervened through Jesus to this end when he appeared to Saul, as he then was called, in the way to Damascus, after which he received by revelation the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ and suffered the loss of all things and counted them but dung in order to win Christ and be found in him not having his own righteousness which was of the law, but that which in through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. From what we learn from the journeys of Paul, his experiences and his epistles, there can be no doubt in our minds that he not only discerned 'the time' but he became the greatest expositor of the same, both out of the law and the Prophets, providing the reader is not already indoctrinated with the theory of sin-in-the-flesh falsely attributed to Paul's teaching in Romans chapter 7 where discrimination and rightly dividing of the word must be used. There is nothing in Paul's Epistles that teaches us the impossibility of conforming to the will of God, all he asks is that we endeavour to follow Christ even as he is a pattern but he also, says that we have an High Priest - who can be touched with the feelings of our infirmities in that He was also tried in all points as we are, yet without sin. There is forgiveness with God that He might be feared, in reverence and respect. Paul exhorts us to give thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in Light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the Kingdom of His dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Natural death has made no contribution to this; only belief and faith in the fact that redemption was through the blood of Christ and also the forgiveness of sins and that God in His Only begotten Son was the prime mover in it all. As Paul said to the Philippians, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." And to the Ephesians he said, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." We should be mindful of these words of Paul - this bowing of the knees is an outward show of humility and gratefulness for what God has done for man, and God does not desire men to bow the knee or confess that Jesus Christ is Lord under compulsion to do so, but to His Glory, and in the way Paul puts it and also Isaiah and Jesus. Paul remarks to the

Philippians or the mission and work of God accomplished by Jesus, “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Philippians chapter 2. It is a pity that some people mistake Paul’s further reference to this exaltation of Jesus in Romans chapter 14 as a time of Judgement upon the nations at the second coming of Christ when all will be forced to bow the knee and confess to God that Jesus is Lord. How can any compulsion or anything done under duress be said to be to the glory of God? Does not Jesus give the answer to this in his reply to the woman of Samaria, John 4:23,24? “But the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the father in spirit and in truth: For the Father seeketh such to worship Him. For God is Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” There is no compulsion here – the Father seeketh such as are willing to conform to His Will and to His Glory. Yet I have heard this false interpretation of Paul’s reference found in Isaiah chapter 45 made by members of a community to which I once belonged, that this refers to Divine judgment in the future, and that those who refuse to “bow the knee will not have any knees left to bow. Such thoughts and misinterpretations are fostered by the obsession of judgment always being applicable to wrong doers, whereas it can apply to those who are righteous, see Psalms 25 and 26 for example. So for example also, when we look at the word of God through Isaiah chapter 45 we find that the message of God is, “Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God and there is none else.” Contained in this message is the realisation of the words of the Apostle in later years, “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself not imputing their trespasses unto them”, “I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and glory.” All this is the result of discerning ‘the time’ that time of which Jesus said in the parable of the labourers when the first would be last and the last first - the eleventh hour when the Gentiles were invited to share with the earlier labourers on equal terms salvation being the principle of grace and not of duration of works - Peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? The lesson Paul draws from Isaiah chapter 45 for the Roman believers is the fact that having died unto sin, Romans chapter 6, they were no longer living, or dying, to themselves. “For” says Paul, “whether we live we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live ‘therefore or die, we are the Lord’s.” “Who therefore art thou to judge another man’s servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth; Yea he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand...” “For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living” - “for we shall all appear before the judgement seat of Christ,” what for? To bow the knee to God and confess that Jesus is Lord to the Glory of God the Father, having committed our probationary lives unto him (Jesus) who judgeth righteously. There the apostle exhorts, “Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts, and then shall every man have praise of God.” I Corinthians 4:5, “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection, on such the second death hath no power but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.” These are the justified servants of Christ whose names are in the Book of Life, not having been blotted but by unfaithful conduct – a royal priesthood - a holy nation as Peter declares, “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a purchased people; that ye should show forth the praises or virtues of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, hut now have obtained mercy.” I Peter chapter 2, Peter’s only concern was that the trial of their faith, being much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it “be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. I Peter chapter 1. The signs of the times indicating the nearness of the return of Christ are all very well providing those who discern it, are in true covenant relationship with God through that Light which lightened the Gentiles and the Jews, i.e. “In Christ.” But what is it to you if ye discern all these outward signs, yet cannot discern ‘the time’ God sent forth His son made of a woman - the reason for it - and why Christ died - and what is involved in that death - and what the significance of Baptism into it? To those who believe in physical condemnation through Adamic sin, there is no significance in the afore mentioned, not even forgiveness can remove it, only a physical change of nature can. But to the Romans who had been Baptised into Christ’s death in symbol Paul declared emphatically of them and himself,

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh (alienation) but after the Spirit. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”

Is it not ‘time’ for some to discern what the law of sin and death really was to which Paul referred, and that it had nothing to do with the physical law of creation and death common to all? Some have by the grace of God discerned “this time,” will it be too late for you who profess to desire the return of the Lord, by not being prepared yourselves? Being still, as you believe, under physical condemnation? Is modern technology through the medium of mechanical answering machines and such like, of any use if the message given is out of harmony with the Divine message revealed by the word and power of God’s Grace through His Son? Would not Jesus say today as He did to the Jews, “Ye search the scriptures and in them ye think ye have eternal life and they are they which testify of me”? Did not our hearts burn within us when He talked to us in the way because we had failed to understand the reason for His death and had it re-explained to us from Moses the Prophets and Psalms? Is it a shame to admit to being mistaken and to need re-educating where salvation and eternal life is concerned? I think not. Let us rejoice that Christ’s birth, death and resurrection was for salvation not condemnation of the flesh, and for this reason the Angels of God worshipped him. Hebrews 1:1-9. May the time soon come when as glorified beings we may sing “Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

P. Parry.

“Except A Corn Of Wheat Fall Into The Ground And Die, It Abideth Alone.” - John. Ch. 12 V 24.

All will undoubtedly agree that Jesus used this figure of a corn of wheat to represent Himself, and His mention of it falling into the ground had reference to His approaching death. There are a number of interesting points which arise out of this statement of Christ’s.

Does it not appear to us that Christ realised that He had a life which none could take from Him without His consent, also that the life He had He had received direct from The Father, and knowing none could convict Him of sin there was a consciousness in Christ’s mind that His perfect obedience to all God’s laws entitled Him to ever remain in possession of that life and so “abide alone”? So we see when Christ voluntarily submitted to the death on the cross He was conscious of surrendering that which was His to give - “My life I give for the sheep.” Now we know full well none can by any means redeem his brother but this cannot be said of Christ, for it is by Christ we are redeemed and to be redeemed we are bought back from ‘sin’ by the blood of The Lamb of God, for God so loved that He gave.

For Christ to be in possession of a life of which He could truly say, “abide alone,” implies that He was in no sense under the sentence of death like Adam was before he was provisionally redeemed. Adam by transgression was under sentence of death; if Christ were ever under this sentence it could not be said by Him if He did not fall into the ground and die He would “abide alone,” consequently we see that Christ was in possession of a life not belonging to ‘sin,’ and this is how He could offer His life to buy us back so we see much is conveyed through the phrase if a corn of wheat fall not into the ground and die, it abideth alone. How is it that by falling into the ground and dying it bringeth forth much fruit? The death of Christ meant that He poured out His soul (or life) unto death; it was the blood or the life of Christ that bought us from sin’s possession; hence we are no longer the possession of ‘sin’ but we are now bought with the precious blood of Christ and are become God’s adopted sons and daughters which Christ will raise up at the last day and glorify together. Herein we see that the dying of the corn of wheat indeed bringeth forth much fruit, even all those who have “passed from death unto life” and others too who may yet believe.

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