

# THE PERSON OF CHRIST

## Introduction

This subject has attracted a lot of attention and controversy down through the centuries. From the interest generated, many theories emerged, and at least some of these theories will be examined. The earliest opposition came from the Jews: and his most vehement opponents among them, were the very people who should have received him gladly as the promised Messiah. Why was He rejected? Primarily because their expectations were not realized. Their perception of the Messiah and their great expectations for the nation were in contradistinction to Christ's mission and experiences in the state of humiliation; and which culminated in His ignominious death on the cross. However, it could be argued that the principal reason for their rejection of Him, was their strong emphasis on monotheism. To them, Christ's references to His pre-existence and co-equality with God the Father, were blasphemous statements: although the prophecy of Isaiah made it abundantly clear that one born of a woman would also be the Mighty God: *"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."* (Isaiah 9:6).

In considering this doctrine, first, some passages will be considered in the Old Testament, the Gospel according to John, the Epistle to the Philippians and the Epistle to the Hebrews. There are many other areas of the Scriptures one could appeal to, but it is necessary to select some passages in order to be concise. Following on from that examination, various theories contrary to the Reformed position will be looked at, before considering in more detail this wonderful doctrine.

## Genesis 3:15.

This is the first Gospel promise in the Scriptures. These words refer to the symbolical distinction between Satan's continued hostility, and the subjugation of his reign in the world by the Redeemer who is identified here as the seed of the woman. This appears to agree with what is said in Hebrews 2:14-15, *Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; And deliver them who through the fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.* And again in 1 John 3:8, *He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he*

*might destroy the works of the devil.* It was to be in consequence of the power with which He was invested as Mediator, and His perfect obedience, sufferings and death that Satan's power was to be broken. Literally, the head of the serpent is the most vital part of the creature, and once bruised is defeated. Christ's bruising of Satan was the greatest of conquests. There is limited information in this passage from Genesis about His Person.

### **Isaiah 53.**

This chapter is more informative about His work and sufferings, rather than His Person, other than verses 11 and 12. There He is called a righteous servant who would justify many, and bear their iniquities, and make intercession for the transgressors. It is obvious from the chapter that the person spoken of was no mere man, that he was a sin-bearer, one capable of justifying many, and making intercession on their behalf. However this chapter like Genesis 3:15 does not furnish us with much information, other than what can be deduced from what is said.

### **Zechariah 13:7.**

Various opinions have been expressed as to who is this person spoken of by the prophet in this verse. Calvin reckoned that it was Zechariah as representative of all the prophets, but that the prophecy referred indirectly to Christ. Grotius, Bauer and Jahn applied it to Judas Maccabeus, Maurer to Jehoiakim and Ewald to Pekah. Christ applied Matthew 26:31 to himself: *Then said Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.* Therefore the Messiah is designated the Shepherd of Jehovah by the prophet. There is also a definite reference to the relation in which the Shepherd stood to the Father in the economy of redemption - He is described as "my fellow" or as some translate it 'the man of his union.' *"The term translated man is not that usually employed in Hebrew, which in such construction would merely be idiomatic, but geber (mighty man) one who is such by eminence. Amith (fellow) is used elsewhere only in the Pentateuch, namely Leviticus 5: 21; 18: 20; 19: 11,15,17: 24: 19; 25: 14,1 5, 17; in all these passages it is employed to denote persons who were united together under common laws, for the employment of common rights and privileges. It is derived from amath, cognate with aman, to bind, bind together, unite in society....."* (Dr E Henderson).

These words point to both the divine and human nature in the one Person: for He was a mighty man and also God's fellow making Him equal with God. His death is also referred to, but the reference to sword in the passage is not to mislead: for sword is used figuratively in the Scriptures in many passages. In Jeremiah 47:6-7, it is there

personified: *O thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou art quiet? Put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest and be still. How can it be quiet seeing the Lord hath given it a charge against Askelon, and against the seashore? There has he appointed it.* In Psalm 17:13 it is applied to the wicked being God's instrument: *Arise, O Lord, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword.*" Paul employs the same figure in speaking of the magistrates: *For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if you do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath on him that doeth evil.* (Romans 13:4). Therefore the sword being commanded to awake and smite the shepherd, does not refer to how he was put to death, but rather to the instruments employed, who willingly and wickedly had Him crucified, and yet unwittingly fulfilled God's purpose.

The clearest statements about the Person of Christ are in the Gospel according to John, Paul's Epistle to the Philippians and in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

### **The Gospel according to John**

John is the only New Testament writer who calls the One who became incarnate (Logos) Word. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.....And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.* (John 1: 1,2,14). By these words, John was directing attention to the fact that He existed before His birth, therefore He was not a mere man. John the Baptist was equally clear on this same matter, *He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth, is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.* (John 3:31). Christ speaking of Himself spoke in a similar vein: *For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.* (John 6:38). The following passages all refer to being sent by the Father: John 5:23; John 5:37; John 8:14; John 16:28 and John 17:3.

The Word becoming flesh, did not imply that the substance of God was in any way transmuted into the substance that is called flesh. There is a frequent usage of the word flesh in the New Testament, and there are occasions when it means humanity. The Word is a personal name of God, and therefore the Word becoming flesh is another way of saying that the second Person of the Godhead took into union with His Divine Person, human nature. 'When it is said that the Word was made flesh, we are not to understand it as if it were either changed into flesh, or confusedly intermingled with flesh, but that he made choice of the Virgin's womb as a temple in which he might dwell. He who was

the Son of God became the Son of man, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person. 'For we maintain, that the divinity was so conjoined and united with the humanity, that the entire properties of each nature remain entire, and yet the two natures constitute only one Christ.' (John Calvin, Calvin's Institutes). By this act, the experiences that belong to human beings (sin excepted), became His: as God he knows all things exhaustively and nothing can be added to that knowledge, but in becoming flesh he had an experiential knowledge of the misery sin has brought into the experience of the fallen creature.

John therefore insists, not only on His true deity and true humanity, but equally on the unity of His Person. When this subject in the Gospel is considered, alongside what he wrote on the same subject in his first epistle, it forms John's full contribution. In the Gospel his main emphasis is on Jesus Christ the Son of God as opposed to mere flesh, yet becoming flesh, but in his first Epistle it is that Christ the Son of God was true man as opposed to spirit.

It is also said that He was the only begotten Son of God: *He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.* (John 3:18). There are those who foolishly maintain that He was called "...the only begotten Son of God" because He had no earthly father. Adam was without earthly parents but he is not called "only begotten." These words point to the Son's eternal generation - that God has many sons (and daughters) is clear from Scripture, but they are so by regeneration, - He however was by eternal generation, and this applies to no one but to Him alone.

### **The Synoptic Gospels**

There are fewer direct references to His pre-existence in the Synoptic Gospels - the main emphasis being on His ministry. The following are just a few of the passages selected, which either refer or allude to His pre-existence: *Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.* (Matthew 1:23) - *All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.* (Matthew 11:27) - *Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye shall also sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* (Matthew 19:28). - *And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying Thou art the Son of God.* (Mark 3:11). - *Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.* (Mark 14:61-62). - *And behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring*

*forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. (Luke 1:31-33) - Finally, And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. (Luke 23:42).*

## **The Epistle to the Philippians**

In considering now the Epistle to the Philippians and the second chapter, it is rather unique how Paul's attempt to exhort the believers to follow Christ's example of unselfishness, has provided us with a passage (2:5-9) which could be argued to be one of the most outstanding in the Scriptures, (care must be exercised against sweeping statements) in so far as a statement of the two natures in the one person is concerned. He begins by reminding them that He was willing to forego for the good of others what was justly His. He did not consider His being equal with God (of the same substance equal in power and glory) and thereby refused taking on Him the form of a servant, but instead He did so willingly.

He by a voluntary act became man, and lived on earth as a man, but by nature He was God - He was so from eternity. This Person who was in the form of God - form expressing the qualities which makes a thing what it is - and being in the form of God makes Him all that God is, that is being in possession of the divine essence which constitutes God the One He is, and could not be otherwise. Paul is stressing here the fulness of His being God, so as to contrast that sharply with His willingness to make Himself of no reputation. Being in the form of God does not intimate in the least, that the mode of subsistence described (form of a servant) terminated the former. It reveals how great was this condescension, that the very One who assumed humanity was in the form of God.

There are those who maintained that He emptied Himself of His Deity, and that this is how He became man. The idea is that His Deity was abandoned when He became man. The obvious tendency of that view is to think of Christ in terms of 'pure humanity'. Ironically, whilst He was regarded as a 'purely human Christ,' theoretically they were not denying His divine nature. It is the teaching of Scripture that Christ had a human nature, but a 'shrunken deity' is Kenotism. The Greek word for 'emptied' (Philippians 2:7) is *ekenosen*, the aorist tense of *kenoo*, and from that comes the Kenotic theory. This passage along with 2 Corinthians 8:9 became their Biblical foundation for this doctrine. *'These passages were interpreted as teaching that Christ at the incarnation emptied or divested himself of his divinity.'* (L Berkhof The History of Christian Doctrine). This view is not unlike, at least in some parts, that of Thomasius who taught that whilst He retained His moral attributes, he temporarily divested Himself of omnipotence,

omniscience and omnipresence, and that after His resurrection they were resumed. The Socinians on the other hand viewed His essential nature as simply a man, though He possessed a fulness of the Spirit, and an extraordinary knowledge of God. The monotheistic principle of Arius that there is but one unoriginated being, distinguished between the Logos which is immanent in God, and the Son or Logos. The former he regarded as a Divine energy, but that the latter became incarnate and had a beginning. He was created by God. *Kenotism differs from Socinianism fundamentally however in that Socinianism takes from us our divine Christ, while Kenotism takes away also our very God.* (B.B. Warfield, The Person of Christ).

There are also those who view Jesus as purely human only, and that God was able to fill His heart with His own Spirit, so that every word spoken became the words of God, and every deed became the deeds of God, and that He revealed God by His feelings. The metaphysical relationship would not be attainable by any other being, and therefore He could be called the Son of God. This is equivalent to saying that man became God. Indeed, Isaac A. Dorner appears to have held to a similar position, that the human Jesus became 'gradually God by a progressive communication to Him of the Divine Being, so that though at the start he was but man, in the end He should become in the truest and most ontological sense the God man.'

So then Paul teaches that although He was God, yet He assumed humanity - He became man also. Here is the supreme example of true humility, to which also he makes reference in 11 Corinthians 8:9, *For we know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.*

### **The Epistle to the Hebrews**

Chapters 1 and 2 of the Epistle to the Hebrews are regarded as the great Christological passages, and as being equivalent in richness and fulness to Philipians 2: 5-7. The writer is not dealing with either nature in these passages, but with the Person. It is sufficiently obvious by the contents of the passages what belonged to each nature. The design is to show His pre-eminence and suitableness to discharge perfectly the work given to Him to do as Mediator. He declares both what the Son is in Himself, and in relation to the Father: *.....the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person* (Hebrews 1:3). This was He by whom the worlds were made. Then the writer moves from the Divine majesty to His humiliation - *...when he by himself purged our sins....* It is not sanctification that is meant here by purged, but expiation. The end for which He assumed humanity was to suffer, render perfect obedience unto death, and atone for the sins of His people. *And whenever sins, and not sinners, are made the object of any mediatory act of Christ, that act immediately respects*

*God and not the sinner, and intends the removal of sins so as that it should not be imputed.....this was done by the sacrifice of himself, by his blood shedding death on the cross, with his antecedent preparatory sufferings: he himself was both priest, sacrifice, altar and incense..... (John Owen Epistle to the Hebrews).During the days of His flesh, He was still a Son.*

## Controversies and Creeds

At this juncture it is useful to consider at least some of the Christological controversies, and how in responding to them there emerged the formulation of the doctrine of the Person of Christ. The principal points aimed at were: the true deity and true humanity; the union of both in the one Person; and the clear distinction between deity and humanity in the one Person. It is reckoned by many that the Christological heresies which emerged in the early church were due to failure 'to combine these elements in the doctrinal statement of the truth.' It would take up far too much space to go into all the controversies in detail, hence a few are selected.

The Ebonites and the Dynamic Monarchians denied the deity of Christ; and the Gnostics and Modalists denied His humanity; whilst the Arians denied that the Godhead belonged to the One who became incarnate. Apollinaris, bishop of Laodicea, denied Christ's true humanity, because according to him a complete human nature would involve sinfulness. Nestorianism failed to unite the two natures in the one Person, and the consequence of this was a dual personality. Finally, Eutyches maintained that there was a fusion of the two natures, and that his body was not consubstantial with human bodies, and therefore that he was not human in the proper sense of the word. The response to these heresies brought about the Council of Ephesus in AD 431, and the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451. The former dealt in particular with the Nestorian theory of two distinct persons in Christ, and the latter condemned the Eutychian or Monophysite theory of one nature in Christ. These Councils between them, dealt with all the heresies referred to. Commenting on the Deliverances of these two Councils, W.G. T. Shedd said: *'The results to which these two Councils came are to this day regarded as correct, and the theological mind has not ventured beyond the positions established at this time, respecting the structure and composition of Christ's most mysterious Person, - a subject in some respects more baffling to speculation than that of the Trinity.'*

### The Council of Chalcedon's Decision

*We then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only - begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly (assugatos), unchangeably (atrepos), indivisibly ((adiaretos), inseparably*

*(achoristos), the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, the Only-begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ; as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the Creed of the Holy Fathers has handed down to us.*

## **The Reformation**

The Reformation did not bring any changes to the doctrine of the Person of Christ as formulated by the Council of Chalcedon. However, the Lutherans' position was that each of Christ's natures permeated the other; and that His humanity participates in the divine attributes. They claimed that to Christ's humanity at his incarnation, were communicated, omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence. Other attributes were said to be laid aside whilst some were only used occasionally. This was a return to an error that had emerged many centuries before the Reformation. It was tantamount to a fusion of the two natures. The Scriptures attribute the properties of both natures, which are kept distinctly apart, to the one Person, so that it is not a contradiction to ascribe to the one Person omniscience and limited knowledge, omnipotence and weakness. It was a human nature that was brought into union with the Logos, and not a distinct individual, therefore the sufferings and death are ascribed to the Person and this is what gave them infinite worth. However, it needs to be made clear that in all His sufferings the divine nature remained impassible.

## **The Person of Christ in Nineteenth Century Theology.**

By the end of the nineteenth century there was a theological shift from a Christology which had been Theocentric to being Anthropocentric: *The supernatural Christ made way for a human Jesus; and the doctrines of the two natures, for the doctrine of divine man.*(Louis Berkhof, The History of Christian Doctrine). Schleirmacher was the chief exponent of this new thinking; but many strands of it were in the heresies of the early centuries. According to him, Christ had a sense of union with the divine, which was perfect and unbroken; and accompanying this was His God-consciousness. He as the second Adam and the new spiritual head of the race, was the source of true religion. By a creative act His Person was constituted, and therefore it is not necessary to believe in the virgin birth. It also brought his humanity to a level of ideal perfection.

## Some Aspects of His Emotional Life

### Love

First then let us consider love. The Son loved the Father and had delight in doing His will. He loved with an everlasting love those given to Him by the Father from eternity, and came into the world to redeem them .....*to give his life a ransom for many.* (Matthew 20:28). *Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do what soever I command you.* (John 15:13-14). Strangely as it may seem, only once is the emotion of love actually attributed to Him in dealing with the needs of others, whilst in the state of humiliation. The accounts by the Evangelists abound with instances where it can be inferred, but the only case where it is mentioned is in Mark 10:21 *Then Jesus beholding him loved him...* This was the love of benevolence: *'.....it is the love not so much that finds good as that intends good.* (B. B. Warfield, The Person of Christ).

### Compassion

Love has also to be considered as foundational to His compassion, and compassion includes pity and beneficence. The Greek verb *splagchnizesthai*, which comes from the noun *splagchna*, appears nowhere outside the Synoptic Gospels, and with the exception of the word appearing in three parables, (the prodigal son, the good Samaritan and the servant who was unable to pay his debt) it is restricted to Christ alone. It is said to be the strongest word in Greek for the feeling of compassion, and it is only but proper that this word should be used of Christ alone. No one could show compassion like the Saviour. The Greeks would regard it as incredible that this compassion could be applied to one who was divine, for they regarded the gods as incapable of being affected by sorrow. Here was One who was Divine and could feel sorrow and reach down to the depth of human need: *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin.* (Hebrews 4:15).

The passages in the Synoptic Gospels where the word is used, are Matthew 9:36, 15:32, and Mark 6:34, 8:2. In the former He was moved by the spiritual lostness of the multitude, for they were like sheep without a shepherd, and a harvest ready to be reaped, but so few to do it. He also felt deeply for their physical needs, and moved with compassion, provided the help needed. In Mark 9:22 He had compassion on the son with the dumb spirit, who was brought by the father to the disciples, but they were unable to help: and in Luke 7:13 He had compassion on the widow of Nain and bought her son back from the dead. Other than these passages this word is applied to no one but the Saviour.

## Indignation

This emotion is seen only on a few occasions as one would expect from Him who was sinless, whose moral judgment could never be misplaced or inaccurate in the least. In Mark 3:5 Christ was angry with those who opposed the man with the withered hand being healed on the Sabbath day. Their inconsideration and harshness in putting their ritual before human suffering filled Jesus with indignation. When there is a good reason for righteous indignation by the Lord's people, it is impossible to be so without sin being present, but the Saviour's anger was never misplaced, but to the glory of God the Father.

The cleansing of the temple demonstrated the burning jealousy He had for the holiness of the house of God. The disciples recognized in what they witnessed, the fulfilment of the words ascribed to the Messiah: *For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.....*" (Ps 69:9).

There is a strong allusion to anger in Matthew 23: 1-25. In those verses He called the scribes and Pharisees hypocrites, devourers of widows' houses, blind guides, fools, whited sepulchres and serpents. This was an exposure of what was in their inner life, and was not in the least exaggerated but precise.

Before moving on there is one other instance that is worth considering, because it is too often misinterpreted: that is His weeping at the grave of Lazarus. It is quite common to hear this instance referred to at a time of bereavement to show how even the Lord sorrowed at the death of one He loved: *Jesus wept* (John 11:35). It seems strange that He would weep tears of sorrow, when He was about to remove the cause of sorrow, and fill the grieving sisters with ineffable joy by raising their brother from the dead. This was not a weeping with loud lamentation - it was not a *klauthmos* ( great lamentation) as over Jerusalem, but *dakruo* which would have been like sobbing quietly, and this verb is used only of the Lord. The verb occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. That he sympathized with Mary and Martha is not in doubt, but there was more than that in His weeping. In verse 33 it is said that *...he groaned in his spirit and was troubled*. According to Calvin, in Mary's sorrow He was contemplating the misery of the entire human race, on account of what sin had brought into their experience. Whilst He tenderly cared for the sisters, the sobbing was that of anger as he was about to confront death and release one from its clutches.

## Weariness

The most remarkable instance is recorded by Matthew 8:23-27. There, Christ is in a boat, fast asleep through exhaustion. The contrast between the Saviour lying exhausted, and then rising to abate the storm and transform a storm-tossed sea into a most tranquil scene,

filled the disciples with amazement: *What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!* In the Gospel according to Mark 6: 31, Christ and his disciples needed some time in private to rest a while, so he drew them aside from the people and went to a desert place, but the needy people did not allow them to rest. Another instance of the Saviour's weariness is located at the well of Samaria. He was both weary and thirsty, and although he asked for a drink, it is not on record that the woman ever gave that drink. The reason being that the conversation took a unique turn whereby the subject became eternal life, rather than the physical need of Christ. However, that takes nothing away from the fact that the demands made upon Him in the course of each day would have been immense. It would have been strange if He who assumed humanity had never felt weariness: *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.* (Hebrews 4:15).

## Sorrow

In Isaiah 53:3 He is called *.....a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*..... Are these words to be understood as referring to His objective afflictions, or His subjective pain, or to both? It is a designation that is not applied to Him in the New Testament, the reason could be that His outward sorrows were sufficiently obvious; yet the very depth of His sufferings, no human eye could see, nor could a finite mind grasp. This He had to endure to break the power of sin and conquer death in our nature, and render satisfaction of an infinite nature to the justice of God. Being the sin bearer, His portion in the state of humiliation could have been nothing else but a bitter one, which culminated in the cry of dereliction, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me.* Some speak of His soul going into hell, but for what purpose? He suffered all that could be suffered in the outpouring of God's wrath upon Him the substitute.

If these words.... *a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*.... are to be understood as referring to subjective pain, does that imply that every duty, from the time He embarked on His public ministry, was executed in a state of mental depression? Some would respond in the affirmative, by directing attention to it not being on record that Christ ever laughed, and from that it is concluded that He must have gone about His work with a sad countenance. But did he not have delight in doing the Father's will? Not only did He reveal the Father's will, but He would also reveal the delight He had in doing it. There is an occasion referred to by Luke when He was exultant in spirit: *In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.* (Luke 10:21.) It is not a mark of Godliness, for believers to go continually about their duties with a sad countenance. There are

occasions when the believers cannot smile, but there are also the many occasions when the Lord fills their mouth with laughter.

### **Over the City**

There were however the occasions when there was an outpouring of His grief. In Luke 19:41 we are told that *...when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it.....* This in all probability is the same occasion referred to by Matthew in chapter 24:37. The verb employed by Luke is *klaio* which means, '...loud expressions of grief, especially in mourning for the dead.' (A. E. Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words). This is the same verb in Matthew 2:18 *In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation and weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.* Christ then did not conceal the extent of His grief as He wept over the city - the audible expression of it was commensurable with His inner sorrow. He was not a professional mourner, but *....a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief...* Their unbelief and spiritual blindness caused Him more grief than the physical sorrows many have to endure.

### **Gethsemane**

Nowhere else, other than the Cross, is there a spectacle of sorrow like that which took place in Gethsemane. He there realized the nature of the death which He was to die: *.....My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.....*(Matthew 26:38). This was a distress from which there was no escaping, and had to be undertaken voluntarily, which was not in the least impeached when eventually taken by wicked men and crucified. It was necessary for His humanity to be fully informed about the bitterness of the cup He was to drink, otherwise He would have taken it in ignorance. It was the clear apprehension that He was given, that caused such intense grief, and the severity of the perplexity led to the sweating of great drops of blood. *'....the paroxysm of earnestness and energy with which he prayed; the frequency with which he recurred to agonizing prayer as his only resource; his reiterated but unsuccessful appeals and visits to his disciples; and the bloody sweat which his intense wrestlings in prayer produced, even in that cold night ( for it was that same night in which the soldiers "made a fire for it was cold" ) all these proofs that the anguish of the Saviour's soul in Gethdemane was unparrelled by anything that even he, the man of sorrows, had yet encountered or endured.* (Dr Hugh Martin The Shadow of Calvary). Whilst that was so, His mind all along was fixed on doing the Father's will. When it was made known to Him that it was the Father's will that the cup would have to be drunk to the bitter dregs, He willingly took it. He had the glory of the Father in view in everything He did. This was the bitterest of cups.

It appears from the narrative that calmness was restored when the cup

was placed in His hand which He willingly took, though it still had to be drunk. The God of the Universe, the One to whom belongs absolute power and might, glory, honour and dominion, was the same Person, in agony of soul, and sweating great drops of blood. *Nowhere is he the victim of circumstances, or the helpless sufferer. Everywhere and always, it is he who possesses the mastery both of circumstances and of himself.* (H. N. Bernard). This was made abundantly clear by Himself: *Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.* (John 10:17-18).

### **The Sin Bearer**

A few remarks will suffice, because sin bearing is a subject that belongs to His work which will be considered in another lecture. To be a sin bearer He had to be born of a woman, but that in itself was not what made Him a sin bearer. The sins of many were laid upon Him: *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.* (Isaiah 53:6). He voluntarily undertook that task. Only He could gather the sheep scattered. The scattering was understood by Augusti and Hengstenberg as marking the selfishness of fallen man - ....we have turned every one to his own way.....Whilst sin had made man selfish, the figure employed here includes other things, such as confusion and incapacity to choose the right way, and utter lostness. It belongs to the Good Shepherd to gather them together, first by bearing their sins which have caused the scattering, and making atonement for them. J. A. Alexander comments: *Union among men can only spring from their common union with God.* Only the One who was both God and man was competent for this work. John, in the Book of Revelation, wept because none was to be found in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth who was able to open the book and to look into it (Rev 5: 3-4). The worthy One had to be from both heaven and earth - the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Brief Summary**

The One who was conceived in His mother's womb, who hungered, was on occasions exhausted, who wept, groaned in His spirit, suffered like no one else ever suffered, and gave Himself a ransom for many, and was under the power of death for a time, is the same One who was in the bosom of the Father from eternity, by whom all things were created, and who is now at the right hand of God, and will return again to judge all men. This is an amazing doctrine - two natures united in the one Person, yet the union did not bring about any essential change in the divine essence. The natures are not mixed but kept distinctly apart: and both are the property of the Person, and whatever is

associated with either nature is ascribed to the Person: so then it is correct to say that the Lord was born, that He died and rose again. This is our glorious Saviour. His redemptive work is brought about by the perfect cooperation of both natures, which forms an undivided unity, because it is all the work of one Person.

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