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Commentary — From the Margins

The Sinner's Prayer

The caller to the radio prayer line asked simply, “My prayer is that Jesus comes into my life and makes me a better person” ...

What is wrong with this simple request? There is a major theological fallacy in the request—can you identify the fallacy? Most Christians cannot.

Can anyone who wants to be a Christian actually be one? Can a person simply decide to be a Christian? Can a derelict—or for that matter, anyone else—simply want to quit living as he or she has been living, give the person's heart to the Lord, and become a Christian? The answer to this question is what separates silver Christendom from Christ Jesus; for silver Christendom teaches that if a person answers an altar call to give one's heart to the Lord, the person is saved from damnation. But is damnation even in play for the person who has not first been born of spirit through the Father drawing this person from the world (John 6:44. 65)? And is the purpose of Christianity to make people better human beings?

There is a schism that divides the person who has truly been born of spirit from the person who has not been so-born—and this schism results from the Father drawing the person from this world and giving to the person a second breath of life, a breath of life that is not of this world, a breath of life not subject to materialistic inquiry, a breath that brings to life an actual son of God, a spirit being that will undergo maturation while dwelling in a tent of flesh, with this maturation foreshadowed by the person's physical growth from human infancy to the person reaching his or her majority.

Buddhism would have a person be a better human being ... Christianity is about an infant son of God learning to walk uprightly in an invisible realm where ideas have substance as stones in this earthly realm have solidity. Walking uprightly, which means keeping the commandments in this world, is the expectation of a son of God as it is expected that a human father's son will by two years of age or so walk uprightly as a little human being. The implication of this expectation is that there will be a period of infancy when a son of God does not walk uprightly, but crawls on hands and knees.

Disciples are individually and collectively the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27); thus, the Christian Church is collectively represented in the person of the Apostle Paul who said,

For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I

do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. / So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin. (Rom 7:15–25)

If Paul would have looked into a full-length mirror, he would have seen an earthly body in which sin dwelt, and an earthly body which did the very things the invisible thoughts in his mind hated—and Paul would have seen the Christian Church which does the very things that Christ Jesus, its invisible Head, hates. Yes, the Christian Church as the Body of Christ is at war with its Head; it does those things that its Head doesn't want it to do and it does not do the things that its Head wants it to do. It is sin or lawlessness dwelling in the Body that causes the Body to do the things that the Head hates, but the Body does not today have the ability to carry out doing what the Head wants. The Body needs liberated from indwelling sin and death, and the Body will be liberated from indwelling sin and death at a second Passover.

What happens if through striving to do what is right a person actually becomes a better human being without having first been born of spirit? Can a person enter heaven by might, by force of character, or by deed? Can a person by supplication to Christ Jesus enter heaven? What about the non-Christian who lives righteously?

Will any amount of good deeds and human righteousness give life to what does not exist spiritually?

Paul writes elsewhere,

For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. (Rom 2:12–16)

The expectation of God is that all humankind “show that the work of the law is written on” hearts, with the work of the law being love for neighbor as expressed in the commandments. The Father doesn’t expect that the person to whom the Father has not given life to know the Father and the Son, but the Father does expect that this person not murder, lie, steal, covet, commit adultery; the Father does expect the person to honor father and mother. These are the works of the law that every person can do in becoming a better person, and a prayer to be that better person might well be heard and honored. However, unless the person is in a sanctified relationship with the Father—a relationship addressed by the Moab covenant—the person cannot expect the Father to draw this person from this world and give to the person a second breath of life.

Whom the Father draws and why one person is called to be one of the firstfruits and another person is not called is not yet logically explainable in this world although characteristics of those who have truly been called suggest it is the person with latent abilities but who cannot of him or herself utilize these abilities that is drawn from this world by the Father (John 6:44, 65) as a firstborn son [the singleness of the English linguistic expression “a firstborn son” is trumped by every disciple being a firstborn son, with Christ Jesus being the First of the firstborn sons]. Although every person can become a better human being, unless called to be one of the firstfruits, no person can come to Christ Jesus in this era; for the firstfruits are typologically represented by the barley harvest of ancient Judea while everyone else is represented by the main crop wheat harvest. Those who are firstfruits are now under judgment, with these judgments to be revealed at the Second Advent, whereas those who are not born of spirit within their human lifetimes will be resurrected in the great White Throne Judgment as the main crop wheat harvest of God. They will then be as one or the other of the two thieves crucified with Christ at Calvary—the firstfruits are the Body of Christ and are therefore Christ and as such they are crucified with Christ Jesus at Calvary; they stand between the two thieves, one of who wants to save his physical life and the other acknowledging that the law is good (cf. Rom 10:6–8; Deut 30:11–14), that Jesus is Lord, and that the Father would raise Jesus from death (Rom 10:9–13).

There is within every human being the need to “worship” something larger than him or herself. This need is placed within the software program that is casually called human nature, the non-physical aspect of a person that gives “personhood” to the flesh. It was this aspect of personhood that was taken from ancient King Nebuchadnezzar for the seven years he lived as an ox, after having been suddenly given the “nature” of a beast (Dan chap 4). And if that which makes a person “a person” can be supernaturally replaced by that which makes an ox “an ox,” then human nature is not a product of biology which is analogous to a computer’s hardware, but is indeed comparable to the software that causes a computer to do useful work. It is this software program called human nature that has to be overwritten by the nature of God if a person, born of spirit, is to be glorified when judgments are revealed.

Now, what about the person who by professing the sinner’s prayer expects to enter heaven at death: Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom

of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matt 7:21). So the person who prays the sinner’s prayer also needs to do the will of the Father, or the person will not enter the kingdom of heaven, is that correct? Apparently it is for Jesus continued, “On that day many will say to me, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?” And then will I declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness”” (vv. 22–23).

How does saying the sinner’s prayer equate with doing mighty works in Jesus’ name, or with prophesying in Jesus’ name? Doesn’t really equate, does it? So if the person who casts out demons in Jesus name but who is an anomian— [anti-law] teacher of Israel will be denied salvation when judgments are revealed, what chance does the one who says the sinner’s prayer have if he or she continues in lawlessness? None if—and this is a huge “if”—the one who says the sinner’s prayer has actually been born of spirit ... being truly born of spirit changes everything, for until born of spirit a person cannot keep the law (Rom 8:7) for the person doesn’t know the Father and the Son and cannot enter into their presence, but if born of spirit, the person will keep the law. And by whether a person keeps the law or doesn’t, a disciple can identify who is a son of God and who is a child of the devil (1 John 3:4–10).

Let us here return to the human infant that crawls on hands and knees: a disciple when first born of spirit is not expected by the Father to walk uprightly before Him. If a human infant does not crawl on hands and knees the infant doesn’t learn hand/eye coordination and has difficulty learning to reading, or so claimed the literature about childhood development of when my children were infants. Likewise, an infant son of God crawls on hands and knees (in prayer) so that this firstborn son can “learn to read” ... a human child of less than 30 months of age does not comprehend dual referents whereas using dual referents by a child of 36 months is almost embarrassingly easy.

A human child’s brain matures in a describable manner as does a born of spirit son of God, with a son of God’s ability to take meaning from Scripture through typology coming when this disciple is of a spiritual age equivalent to a human child of three. By extension, a disciple who does not attempt to walk uprightly before God through keeping the commandments, all ten of them, is spiritually as a human infant of less than a year in age. And this is especially important when addressing the Sabbath commandment; for until a disciple enters into Sabbath observance, the disciple is as a Hebrew infant was of less than eight days of age ... the children of Israel born in the wilderness, these children following Joshua [Gr: Iesus or in English, Jesus — cf. Acts 7:45; 4:10 in Greek], were not circumcised until after they crossed the Jordan and entered into the Promised Land (Josh 5:2–7). Crossing the Jordan equates to entering into God’s rest (Ps 95:10–11), which is entered spiritually through Sabbath observance (Heb 3:16–4:11). Therefore, a disciple will not have cleansed his or her heart so that it can be spiritually circumcised until the person begins to keep the Sabbath—and unless the person has been circumcised of heart, the person is not of Israel (Rom 2:25–29), and is not of the household of God.

The Christian who prays the sinner's prayer and continues in disobedience, if born of spirit, places him or herself under the law as a bondservant of sin (Rom 6:16); this person is not under grace because he or she willingly remained in or returned to disobedience. However, if the person has not been born of spirit, the person never left being the bondservant of the Adversary—and because this person is not “free” to keep the commandments, this person's lawlessness is not counted against the person for the law has not yet been given to the person (Rom 5:13). This person is as Israel was in Egypt, a nation in servitude to Pharaoh and thereby not free to keep the law. This person is under natural grace, but has no spiritual life at this time.

I don't know if the person who called in to the prayer line has been born of spirit; what I know is that those manning the prayer line will slay this spiritual infant if they can, for they will do whatever they can to keep the person from walking uprightly before the Father. They will tell the person that he or she is under grace and that the law has been abolished, that sin is not really sin if that sin is transgressing the Sabbath and thereby not entering into God's rest, a euphemistic expression for entering into God's presence. And there isn't much I can do to help the person, which is the frustrating part of being called to deliver a message.

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