

1853 CIRCULAR CONTENTNEA BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Dearly Beloved Brethren:- The time has once more come for the churches composing the Contentnea Association to represent themselves in this associate capacity which period completes the 24th Annual Session. We surely should feel under the deepest obligations to thank and adore Him who is the Great Author of our existence and the Giver of all good for His guardianship over us and His kind benevolence towards us. Reflections upon His past goodness, beget within us an increased desire to praise Him, who hath watched over us during a period of twenty-four years, and hath from time to time made manifest His protective arm in delivering of us from surrounding evils and blessing of us with such necessary blessings as seemeth good unto Him. And even now while assembled in an association, signal testimonies of the divine favor are displayed.

We are blessed with health, with strength, with seasons, and with the privilege of expressing our ideas, and communicating our thoughts.

Then while we are blessed with the privilege of sitting together, let us act the part of wisdom; let us ask counsel of God, and study to show ourselves approved unto Him, building upon the foundation of the Apostles, and Prophets, upon which our future and eternal happiness depends.

According to an arrangement of our last Annual Meeting held with the Church at White Oak, Edgecombe County, the beloved brethren will doubtless expect a Circular Address to accompany the Minutes of this Association held with the sister church at Beaverdam. In obedience to that arrangement we now proceed with all due diffidence to ourselves to enter upon the discharge of our duty. We are aware that the Scriptures have been ransacked and the erudite men, both of the Eastern and Western continent have sought to draw from the Sacred Volume substantial testimonies to prove their favorite systems. Our libraries are stored with comments and works of men, volume upon volume has been written and many attempts have been made to establish different systems of religion by many of those writers; but we should remember, that none of them were inspired, and in the multiplicity of their books there is no safety, all of them combined together cannot lead one sinner from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan unto God.

The Scriptures are given us by inspiration and to them we should look; every thing that is necessary for the children of God to know is there laid down. If a multiplicity of books had been necessary they would have been given by inspiration [forty of them were-SCP,] upon which we could safely depend. If all the things that Jesus did had been written even the world itself could not contain the books. In these Scriptures all the essentials are laid down, and the Evangelist saw how greatly a multitude of books composed of nonessentials would impede the progress of the child of grace. Therefore wisdom speaks out in this language: "Of making many books there is no end, and much

study is a weariness of the flesh. Hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.”

Notwithstanding many books have been written, they do not lessen our obligation to tell the brethren to beware of false teachers who come to them in sheeps' clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. They do not lessen our obligation to exhort them to be steadfast, unmovable always abounding in the work of the Lord. They do not lessen our obligation to admonish them to watch well their enemy (the devil) who is continually throwing dust upon the Scriptures endeavoring thereby to impede the progress of the traveler. They do not lessen our obligations to warn the brethren against the many attempts that have been made by Atheists and Infidels, and their subordinate colleagues to overthrow the Scriptures either by discrediting them or wresting them from their true and genuine sense. Let us look well to the Scriptures. Enoch and Elijah traveled by them and entered the heaven of eternal repose. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the worthies of old – were guided by them and died in hope of an immortality. Jesus Christ the Way, the Truth and the Life, the Captain of Zion and Head of His church, has met all the storm of persecution that ever can be poured against them. He has passed all His enemies, though they stood up as it were in hopes, to do what the hand and the counsel of God determined before to be done. He died according to the Scriptures and rose again the third day, that He might raise His church (His body) from death, and hell, and present it a glorious church (body) not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

This Jesus hath God raised from the dead and hath exalted Him with His right hand, to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. As there are various notions and conjectures relative to the purpose of God in the exaltation of His Son, we shall offer it as a foundation for our present consideration and future meditation to which we now invite the attention of our brethren.

A number of these books about which we have been speaking, set forth by their authors whose object is to overturn the Scriptures and to introduce as they suppose, a more accommodating one; communicate different ideas relative to the purpose of God in the exaltation of His Son. The Atheists tell us that there is neither God nor purpose; that all things sprang into being simply by chance; and that all things by chance may disappear; that there is no difference between man and beast as there is no remembrance of the beast after death, so there will be none of man. Thus they are disregarding all relation, reason and common sense. If the Scriptures were designed to change the hearts of men and bring them to knowledge of salvation through Jesus Christ, we ask why are not the Atheists converted to Christianity? The reason is obvious. The dead in trespasses and sins have no more use for the Scriptures in quickening and renovating the soul and bringing of it into union with God, than a blind man has for a candle to enable him to read distinctly.

Another platoon of this antichristian army affirm, that there is a deity, a Supreme

Ruler of the Universe, and that all things were made by Him, but to entertain the idea that He took upon Himself a body of flesh, and made that body suffer upon the cross, and die, and rise again, and ascend to heaven, is vain and foolish. Inasmuch as the Scriptures testify of these things, again we ask why are not these creatures, converted from Deism to a belief in Christ.

Another company of warriors, who take light for darkness, and darkness for light, declare to the world that God has exalted His Son, to be a prince and a savior to give repentance and forgiveness of sins to the whole mass of mankind unconditionally; thus denying the doctrine of future punishment in the face of many positive declarations of the Scriptures to the contrary and license men thereby to pursue that course that their wicked heart may dictate unto them.

Another set of writers and teachers and which perhaps are the most numerous of any that you have named affirm that God has exalted His Son to be a prince and a conditional Savior to give repentance and forgiveness of sins to the whole Adamic family upon conditions that He died for all indiscriminately; that He ascended to heaven and left a promise to all the human race upon conditions and in case these conditions are complied with or fulfilled on the part of the creature the promise is made sure.

Fathers and mothers in Israel, when will this doctrine, taught by those conditional teachers, consign your little infants, that have been taken from your bosom. They certainly are not guided by the Scriptures and before they reach the haven of eternal repose, they will find that their vessel is run aground.

We shall now proceed to give our views on the purpose of God in the exaltation of His Son.

1st., He is exalted to be a prince; Acts 5c, 31v. When He ascended upon high, He sat down with His Father in His throne, having obtained the power, authority and dignity of a prince, having been on earth He conquered, being now in the throne a conqueror He holds all power, both which are in heaven and which are in earth. All things are made by Him and without Him was not any thing made that was made. He upholds all things by the Word of His power, and by Him all things consist. He rules all nations by the rod of His power and is not to be baffled or frustrated in the execution of His laws, but will inflict punishment upon the guilty, and reward the righteous according to the merit of His own work for justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne, and mercy and truth go before Him. When His name is published on earth He is to be declared to be the Son of God with power; the great Prince that standeth for the children of Israel, the great Deliverer of every one that shall be found written in the Book of Life.

The prince of darkness; the prince of the “power of the air” is conquered by the exalted prince of light; for being found in fashion as a man He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death even the death of the cross, that He might be exalted to be a prince, by which He spoiled principalities and powers making a show of them openly;

Conquered him who hath the power of death, which is the devil, and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. We now conclude that the battle between the exalted prince of light and peace, and the prince of darkness has been fought, the victory gained, the lawful captive delivered and the exalted prince holds the keys of hell and of death, and says through His prophet that *“the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”* God’s purpose in the beginning was that He should be a prince; He brought Him into the world first, by promise; second, by prophecy – and lastly, personally. He has conquered all His enemies without the aid of men or angels, for He hath trod the winepress of His Father’s wrath, and of the people there was none to help. Having thus finished the work which His Father gave Him to do, God, the eternal Father who dwelt with all of His fullness in Him bodily, hath exalted the humanity in whom dwelleth all fullness, and gave Him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess to God.

2nd. He is exalted to be a Savior. God’s purpose in the exaltation of His Son to be a Savior is clearly to be defined; there is no condition or contingencies in His purpose. The term “Savior,” implies one who actually saves. The father does not become the savior of his drowning child unless he saves it from drowning. If he saves it from drowning then he becomes the Savior of that which he saves.

Thus God’s purpose in the exaltation of His Son is not to *try* to save sinners as the Arminians who predicate salvation upon conditions tell us; but to be a Savior of those whom He hath saved as it is written, *“Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world begun.”*

Here the term “saved” is in the past tense and the purpose and grace of God which was the cause of those being saved that are saved was given in Christ before the world began.

Again, the term “Savior,” signifies “a redeemer.” If Christ redeemed all of the Adamic family then He is exalted to be a Savior of all, but no such terms can be found anywhere in the Bible to justify the idea of universal redemption, but many Scriptures can be produced in proof of a particular redemption for which see Psalms 130c82v. *“And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.”* It cannot be allowed even by Universalists themselves that the term “Israel,” here covers the whole human race. The redemption from all iniquity is particular and not universal. Again, Isaiah 1c, 27v: *“Zion shall be redeemed with judgment and her converts with righteousness.”* Rev. 5c9v: *“For thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation.”* If redemption had have covered the whole mass of mankind then the term “out of” could not have been used. We again refer you to Isaiah 63c8v. *“For He, God, said, Surely they are My people; children that will not lie; so He,*

God, was their Savior.” Verse 9, “In all their afflictions He was afflicted and the Angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them and He bare them and carried them all the days of old.” The prophet in the above cited text has direct reference to Israel, when the Lord in His love and in His pity redeemed. As the term “Israel,” is not applied to the whole human race, so redemption is not universal and in consequence of redemption not being universal, God’s purpose in the exaltation of His Son was not that He should be a Universal Savior.

In the Gospel by Matthew 20c28v, we find that Christ gave His life a ransom for many. This is the only place in the Evangelical writings except Mark 10c45v where the term *ransom* occurs and the only Scripture that can be produced by Universalists, or those who are advocates for a conditional system to prove universal redemption. The term *ransom* signifies price for liberty. Then the liberty of “the many,” is purchased and the life of Christ was the price paid for their liberty. Now that the term *many* does not embrace the whole or every one of the Adamic family according to the general acceptance of the English term, we think will be given up by every intelligent Universalist and the advocates of the conditional system. Then the purpose of God in the exaltation of His Son was to be a Savior of those *many* whose liberty He had purchased, and who are embraced in the term *many*.

In the 1st. Epistle of Paul to Timothy 2c6v, we have this text of Scripture which both the Universalists and the Conditional Universalists cling to as a proof text to prove universal redemption. Here it is: “*Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.*” Now the Conditional Universalists may see if they have eyes to see that they have no foundation to build upon even in this text. The 4th verse of the same chapter completely undermines them. If they say that the word “*all*” in the 6th verse embraces every one of the human family, then in the 4th verse, God will have “*all*” to be saved. If the Conditional Universalists say that Christ has ransomed every one, yet every one will not fulfill the *conditions required*, and will thereby be lost, then they declare that God will not do that which Paul says in the 4th verse He will do. Now whom think ye is wrong: Paul or the Conditional Universalists? Let wisdom speak and answer the question.

The final Universalists may also see if they have eyes to see that they have no ground to build their system upon in this text. So far from this Epistle of Paul being a universal address, it is to Timothy alone whom he calls his own son according to the prophecy which went before him, to prepare him, to war a good warfare, holding the faith, and a good conscience; to stand fast upon the promises that had been laid down, to hold the faith and contend for it; to clear his conscience by declaring the whole counsel of God and not to be frightened or moved away, by those Judaizing teachers, who came hither teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, denying salvation to the Gentiles through Jesus Christ. The final Universalists should remember that Timothy

was constituted first bishop of the church at Ephesus, a heathen city, a city that had long been a worshipper of the great Goddess Diania. The church was located within the jurisdiction of the heathen kings and potentates who were not solicitous for the peace and prosperity of the church. – Therefore, Paul exhorts Timothy to make prayers and intercessions to God for these kings, and for all that were in authority, that God would rule them and prevent them from venting their spleen against the church which was composed of Gentiles as well as Jews according to His own choosing and suffer His church to live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. All of the connection taken together makes the matter plain that the apostle’s design was to encourage Timothy to stand in the face of all opposition, and declare that Christ gave Himself a ransom for the Gentiles as well as the Jews and these two nations included all manner of men. So the conclusion is this: God’s chosen are in every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, and Christ has given Himself a ransom for all of them to be testified in due time. Then God’s purpose in the exaltation of His Son, is that He should be a Savior of all His chosen, that are scattered over the world, and are among every nation, kindred, tongue and people; and God’s will is that in due time it should be testified to by the Spirit of His Son and He will have His people to come to a knowledge of the Truth.

The last text that we shall notice upon this head may be found in the 9th chapter of Paul’s epistle to the Hebrews. 38 verse. “*So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.*” You will doubtless see by reference to the 27th verse, that the word “so” in the 28th verse corresponds to, “as,” in the 27th verse. Thus it was by the appointment of God, that Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many. Now as the term “many” does not include all of the Adamic family, so Christ was not offered to bear the sins of all; and as the sins of the many were laid upon Him, so the sins of the many pressed Him to death, and as the sins of the many pressed His life from Him, so He gave His life a ransom for the many. Now we conclude from the proof text offered, that God’s purpose in the exaltation of His Son, is that He should be a Savior of the many whose sins He bore in His own body on the cross. By the sins of the many being laid upon Him the body of Christ, that body became a sin-offering and by the one offering God hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.

In the third place, God’s purpose in the exaltation of His Son is to give repentance to Israel. Acts 5c, 31v. The term “repentance” occurs in the New Testament in all of its forms about sixty times. There are various kinds of repentances, but the limits of a Circular forbid that we should enter into a full exposition of the term. We shall therefore confine ourselves principally to the one kind which is essential to salvation.

We are aware of the great stress laid upon this term by the Conditional Universalists who declare that both faith and repentance are the act of the creature without any antecedent cause more than external testimony. Now if the external is the *cause* of repentance in some then the same *cause* produces the *same* effect and repentance would consequently be produced in all. But this universal repentance the

Conditional Universalists will not allow, but they ought to remember that the same effect has the same cause and the same cause produces the same effect.

The final Universalists may learn from experience, that the term “Israel,” to whom repentance is *given*, and for which purpose Christ is exalted does not embrace the whole human family, - since he that is born of God hath the witness in himself and we see many depart this life professing to have no hope, and dreading to meet the reward of a future world. If they had the testimony of repentance in the heart, this would not be the case; but they would be more like brother Paul having a willingness to depart, and to be with Christ which is far better,

We believe that it is generally conceded that without repentance all must perish; Jews and Gentiles, scribes and Pharisees, priests and pontiffs. The term *repentance* in the generally received sense of the word signifies sorrow for sin. Then as the term in its various meanings, we will notice one which the Conditional Universalists frequently refer to as a proof text to disprove the foreknowledge of God, His oneness of mind and His stability of purpose which may be found in Genesis 6c, 6v. Now the Conditional Universalists ought to remember that sin is transgression of a law and repentance – sorrow for sin, or transgression according to the general acceptance of the term. Now if God reported that He had made man as they suppose, then He transgressed a law in making man and sorrowed or repented for that transgression. The text under consideration has no such meaning. The context explains the text itself and every one that professes to be an expounder of the Scriptures ought to know that the pronoun “it” does not stand for God – Here is the text: “*It repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth.*” The sense of the text is this: The pronoun “it” stands for wickedness of man in the preceding verse and that this wickedness had grown so great on the earth, that it determined the Almighty to sweep man from the face of the earth and cleans it by a flood of water; here is the repentance of God so much spoken of by the Conditional Universalists, which means nothing more than an eternal change in the order of His Providence. For proof text, against God’s repentance according to the general acceptance of the term see 1st Samuel 15c, 29 verse. Then we conclude that the purpose of God in the exaltation of His Son was not to give repentance to Himself, but to Israel, whom He had chosen in Him before the world was, and in Him all the blessings designed for Israel The Elect of God was given to be kept in Him, and treasured up in Him, and given to His Israel or church, in time as seemeth good unto Him. Among the many blessings in Christ which He is exalted to give is the inestimable blessing of repentance. This repentance that Christ gives is evangelical. The cause of it is the Spirit. It takes of Christ and shows it to Israel, His church; then the same cause produces the same effect, the Spirit is God. Then it is God that works within, to will and to do and makes it a godly sorrow which worketh repentance to salvation. The Spirit makes an application of all the blessings which were given the church in Christ, and when the Spirit makes an application of all the blessings which were given the church in Christy, and when the Spirit makes an application of the blessings of repentance to the soul it

sorrows after the Spirit, because it is led by the Spirit; and as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God, and because “*ye are sons God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts*” with His inestimable gift and blessing of repentance. This repentance that Christ is exalted to give is an unceasing repentance, the soul to whom it is given ceases not to sorrow on account of the corruption of the flesh and in this respect it differs from all other kinds of repentance, which disappears as the eternal cause which produces it is removed.

Our conclusion upon this head is that the purpose of God, in the exaltation of His Son is to give repentance to His ransomed Israel, whom He did foreknow which is composed of Gentiles as well as Jews, and prepare them by an application of this blessing with others, to sit even with Him in His throne, and inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

In the fourth and last place, the purpose of God in the exaltation of His Son is to give, forgiveness of sins to Israel. The Israel that will obtain the forgiveness of sins, embraces the many that Christ gave His life to ransom. The many whose sins He bore in His own body constitute the Israel spoken of in the text; and as the wheels of time roll them into the world, the Spirit has, and will bring them to Christ, and God has and will reveal His Son unto them, as bearing of their sins in His own body as suffering for them, as dying that they might live, as rising that they might be justified from all their sins and His Israel, though black when she is brought to Him, though she is ten thousand talents in debt, and have nothing to pay – obtains the gift of forgiveness of her sins; He takes off her black garment and puts on a robe of His own preparing, and with this robe on God will look upon her and own her the Bride of His Son, but in no other will God accept of her. Then we say in conclusion of the whole matter that the purpose of God in the exaltation of His Son, is to be a prince and a Savior of His people whom He did foreknow and predestinated unto eternal life, and that God will not cast away any of His people whom He did foreknow; but that will be a Savior of all them and give the gifts and blessings which He has received of the Father to them and will at last come and receive them to Himself, that where He is there they may be also, that they may behold His glory, and be like Him and acknowledge Him to be their Prince, their Savior, their Lord, and their God, who hath redeemed them with His own blood from among all nations and hath saved them from all their sins, hath justified them from all things, and brought them home to the House not made with hands eternal in the heavens. Now beloved Brethren, Christ, though exalted to be a Prince and a Savior, has not left you comfortless; He has sent His Spirit to make an application of those gifts and blessings, and to comfort your hearts; then if you have been comforted by this heavenly messenger, fear not – it is your Father’s good pleasure you give you the kingdom. In view of what He has done for us may we ever be led by His Spirit and guided by His counsel, and live to the praise of the glory of His grace wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.