

Scriptures and Doctrine :: James Nayler

**James Nayler, on: 2005/9/30 13:27**

Gal 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;"

In 1656, Quaker James Nayler, one of the most influential and beloved of the first group of Quaker ministers, entered the town of Bristol on horseback as chanting people spread their scarves upon the ground. It may be that, as many historians have asserted, Nayler's act was the result of delusion and megalomania. I wonder, however, if Nayler might have been engaging in a bit of "street theater" to demonstrate the fundamental Quaker experience that the same Spirit which was in Jesus and his disciples is available to us today - that, in other words, "sacred history" is not so much the story of a golden age in the past but what we do here and now: "the Kingdom of God is within and among you."

Below is the famous deathbed testimony of James Nayler (or Naylor), who died in 1660 at the age of 44. Because of the horse riding act related above, Naylor was found guilty of blasphemy and suffered cruel tortures, including, along with other severe punishments, receiving brutal scourgings, having his tongue bored through with a hot iron, and having the letter "B" branded on his forehead. His sufferings were made worse by his rejection by many Friends, including George Fox. For a fuller account of Naylor's passion, see my "The Power of Suffering Love: James Nayler and Robert Rich." --George Amoss

“There is a spirit which I feel, that delights to do no evil, nor to avenge any wrong, but delights to endure all things in hope to enjoy its own in the end. Its hope is to outlive all wrath and contention, and to weary out all exaltation and cruelty, or whatever is of a nature contrary to itself. It sees to the end of all temptations. As it bears no evil in itself, so it conceives none in thought to any other: if it be betrayed, it bears it; for its ground and spring are the mercies and forgiveness of God. Its crown is meekness, its life is everlasting love unfeigned, and takes its kingdom with entreaty, and not with contention, and keeps it by lowliness of mind. In God alone it can rejoice, though none else regard it, or can own its life. It is conceived in sorrow, and brought forth without any to pity it; nor doth it murmur at grief, and oppression. It never rejoiceth but through sufferings; for with the world's joy it is murdered. I found it alone, being forsaken. I have fellowship therein with them who lived in dens, and desolate places of the earth, who through death obtained this resurrection, and eternal holy life.”

I saw the Gal 2:20 quote on another thread and thought of James Nayler. Just thought you all would like to know about him and I would ask what you think. Read more at the link.

Bubbaguy

**Re: James Nayler - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/9/30 15:00**

Naylor's 'confession' has been a wall companion for almost 20 years. It is a beautiful expression of the work of the Spirit in a man's heart. As regards his riding into Bristol on a donkey and allowing folks to put leaves and clothing before him...

And I am disappointed that George Fox distanced himself from Naylor at this time. It is good to read the introduction to ([http://www.ccel.org/ccel/fox\\_g/autobio.html](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/fox_g/autobio.html)) Fox's Journal which shows the kind of chaotic conditions that these things took place in. Fox always distanced himself from the Ranters and this kind of behaviour was more in keeping with their antics.

I think I was the first to post Naylor's confession on here some 2 years or more ago. It was in our discussion on ([https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?viewmodeflat&order0&topic\\_id736&forum36&post\\_id&refreshGo](https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?viewmodeflat&order0&topic_id736&forum36&post_id&refreshGo)) your views on reincarnation.

there is quite a full wikipedia entry on ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James\\_Naylor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Naylor)) James Naylor.

**Re: James Nayler - posted by crsschk (), on: 2005/9/30 15:47**

Wow, thanks Jake and Ron.

Had never heard of him prior. What a powerful paragraph in that testimony;

“There is a spirit which I feel, that delights to do no evil, nor to avenge any wrong, but delights to endure all things in hope to enjoy its own in the end. Its hope is to outlive all wrath and contention, and to weary out all exaltation and cruelty, or whatever is of a nature contrary to itself. It sees to the end of all temptations. As it bears no evil in itself, so it conceives none in thought to any other: if it be betrayed, it bears it; for its ground and spring are the mercies and forgiveness of God. Its crown is meekness, its life is everlasting love unfeigned, and takes its kingdom with entreaty, and not with contentions, and keeps it by lowliness of mind. In God alone it can rejoice, though none else regard it, or can own its life. It is conceived in sorrow, and brought forth without any to pity it; nor doth it murmur at grief, and oppression. It never rejoiceth but through sufferings; for with the world's joy it is murdered. I found it alone, being forsaken. I have fellowship therein with them who lived in dens, and desolate places of the earth, who through death obtained this resurrection, and eternal holy life.”

Quote:

-----Read more at the link.

Couldn't find it, could you re-link it here?

**Re:, on: 2005/9/30 16:03**

Sorry, it didn't come through the first time.

Here it is:

<http://www.qjs.net/~daruma/naylor2.html>

You can also find quite a few other sources on Naylor with a Google search.

Bub (Jake)

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/9/30 16:57**

there is an interesting insight here to modern quakerism?

Quote:

----- New Testament reports that Jesus once entered Jerusalem seated upon an ass, with people laying their cloaks before him and chanting "Hosanna!" I don't think we'll ever know whether this story records an actual event or is simply an expression of the faith of some of Jesus' followers. (1) We do know, however, that a similar scene did take place in England many centuries later, when the Quaker James Nayler, one of the most influential and beloved of the first group of Quaker ministers, entered the town of Bristol on horseback as chanting people spread their scarves upon the ground.

We have here a writer who is not prepared to believe the Bible but takes the absolute word of more modern sources. This is hostility to the scriptures' accuracy would seem to be a modern quaker tendency?

**all so depressing, on: 2005/9/30 17:16**

Ronnie B, I read the wikipedia entry and the entry bubba jake provided and its all so depressing to me. This brother Naylor presumably was operating under the Leading of the Holy Ghost, and he gets tortured by a court of man?

to me, this just underlines the wisdom of separating church from state.

I agree with you about modern quakerism, they got it all wrong, because they totally deny the Infallible Inerrancy of the Word of God, the Bible.

**Re: all so depressing - posted by philologos (), on: 2005/9/30 18:41**

Hi Neil

There can be no justifying what was done to Naylor. However, the times were very different to our own. Cromwell's commonwealth was failing, Charles II was poised for his return, and during the civil war there had been what they called 'Fifth Monarchy Men'. These were radicals who believed that the 4 kingdoms of Daniel were coming to an end and that the 5th Kingdom, Christ's, was about to appear. They were anarchists who wanted to see all government fail to make room for Christ's. The extremists were under suspicion of the civil power. Britain had executed its king, and the kingdom was ready to strike back. It was a time of fear and suppression when every extremist's action was interpreted as treason against the commonwealth, and the most dangerous of all was religious treason. The climate was similar to your Salem Witch Trials half a century later. Fear stalked the land.

One of Cromwell's chief ministers was George Downing, the man they named Downing Street after. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sir\\_George\\_Downing%2C\\_1st\\_Baronet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sir_George_Downing%2C_1st_Baronet)) George Downing. Surprisingly he was from Salem and was a Harvard man. He had returned to England and become a government minister under Cromwell. He was cruel, vindictive and sly. He was the man responsible for the 'punishment' of James Naylor. He changed sides so completely that he was one of those who welcomed Charles II back at the restoration of the monarchy!

These were evil times and they were evil men as well and good men whose deeds were evil. Our civil war was the bloodiest, percentage-wise, of all England's wars. The suspicions ran deep and brother had fought brother. Religion could so easily be the spark to the powder keg. When Charles II became king most Quaker boys spent their 16th birthday in jail because they refused to swear the oath of allegiance to the king.

In the midst of all this volatility James Naylor's action was sheer folly. Does that excuse what they did to him? Not at all, but it is difficult to get into the mindset of another century and England in the 17th century was another world!! I agree with you about the separation between church and state but it would not have spared Naylor; any such non-conformity was bound to draw the hostility of a frightened government down on itself.

When it comes to sources the Naylor story seems to be from those who opposed George Fox's discipline of the Society of Friends. They would tolerate no authority other than that of their own spirit. Fox believed in that too, but knew that God had set in the church ... apostles, evangelists etc and when he tried to exercise his gentle authority he was opposed by the more extreme of the early Quakers. It is good to remember that whenever there is a move of God there is always a lunatic fringe which throws everything into jeopardy. Fox tried to modify some of these extremes, and some have never forgiven him for it.

**Re:, on: 2005/9/30 19:14**

My dear Ronnie,  
thank you and bless you for that concise nugget of English history.

Indeed, against the backdrop 17th century Britain, Naylor's actions do seem like folly.

Thank you for the teaching

Neil

**Re: James Nayler, on: 2006/1/1 11:39**

Philologos Quote:

Quote:  
-----When Charles II became king most Quaker boys spent their 16th birthday in jail because they refused to swear the oath of allegiance to the king.  
-----

I read somewhere that during the First or Second World Wars that Pentecostal preachers were jailed until after the war because they refused to fight.

One of them was Howard Carter who wrote a book entitled, "Spiritual Gifts".

LS

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2006/1/1 12:25**

I am not sure whether or not Howard or John Carter was imprisoned. In fact 'ministers' of recognised denominations were not required to take up arms and a number of Pentecostal ministers were 'added' to the ranks of 'registered Pentecostal ministers' at that time. It was usually 'independents' who spent time in prison for refusing to take up arms. This would have been the Second World War rather than the First World War. That conflict 1914-1918 was much harsher on conscientious objectors but that would have been too early for Howard Carter I think.

I heard Howard Carter speak.

**Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2006/1/1 13:03**

Quote:

-----Fox always distanced himself from the Ranters and this kind of behaviour was more in keeping with their antics.  
-----

Ron I am wondering if you have any detailed knowledge of the "ranters" as a movement in England primarily and also the United States. I am wondering if there are counterparts to ranters today and if there could be some plausible lessons learned. If you think it's worthwhile start a new thread on this. As Ravenhill said the one thing we learn from history is that we don't learn from history, may it not be so in this case.