

From the Foreword . .

The first edition of this book appeared in 1981, and the fact that a new edition is now called for is a sure indication of the way in which it has met a real current need. This book is an introduction to the study of Systematic Theology, and it covers a vast field with directness and simplicity. It avoids entering into detail in connection with controversial issues on less essential doctrines and concentrates on the great fundamentals of Christian faith, based on Holy Scripture, held by the Church down the ages, and all expressed in a fresh and easy style.

The author has great ability in grasping what lies at the heart of our faith and in explaining it in non-technical and readable terms. Sometimes there is a freshness in his approach or in terms of expression that adds to the value of what he writes. This book will be particularly helpful to young and serious-minded Christians who stand at the starting-point in their journey of theological discovery. I am glad to commend it.

The Right Reverend Sir Marcus Loane

New Creation Publications Inc.

Quicumque vult.



Whoever will be saved : before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholick Faith.

Which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled : without doubt he shall fall away.

THE THINGS WE FIRMLY BELIEVE

For there is one Person of the Father another of the Son : and the Holy Ghost Lord and God : who is together with the Father and the Son : and together worshipped and glorified : who proceeds from the Father and the Son : who is of the substance of the Father and the Son : equal, the Majesty co-eternal.

Such as the Father is, such is the Son : and such is the Holy Ghost.

The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate : and the Holy Ghost uncreate.

The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible : and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible.

The Father eternal, the Son eternal : and the Holy Ghost eternal.

And yet they are not three eternals : but one eternal.

As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated : but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible.

So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty : and the Holy Ghost Almighty ;

And yet they are not three

Almighties : but one Almighty : who is together with the Father and the Son : who is of the substance of the Father and the Son : equal, the Majesty co-eternal.

So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord : and the Holy Ghost Lord and God : who is together with the Father and the Son : and together worshipped and glorified : who proceeds from the Father and the Son : who is of the substance of the Father and the Son : equal, the Majesty co-eternal.

For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity : to acknowledge every person by himself to be God and Lord ;

So are we forbidden by the Catholick Religion : to say, There be three Gods, or three Lords.

The Father is made of none : neither created, nor begotten.

The Son is of the Father alone : not made, nor created, but begotten.

The Holy Ghost is of the Father, and of the Son : neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Christ the Conquering King!
Truth the Golden Girdle
The Day of the Spirit
Angry Heart or Tranquil Mind?
Oh, Father! Our Father!
The Wounding and the Healing
The Splendour of Holiness
The Wisdom of God and the Healing of Man
God and Man in Signs and Wonders
Great and Glorious Grace
I Love the Father
Christ's Cross Over Man's Abyss
The Everlasting Presence

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THE THINGS WE
FIRMLY BELIEVE

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M. L. Loane
December 20, 1985

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PREFACE

PREFACE

BY WAY OF AN EXPLANATION

This volume could have been called 'A Simple Compendium of Christian Doctrine'. This is the age of scientific reality, so that the demand is to have our theology in objective categories. In theology today there is a strong 'anti-metaphysical' trend. It is not only that the supernatural is denied, but that thinking in the terms which Luther and Calvin thought—let alone Aquinas—is unacceptable. This book, then, would be seen as naive.

When we read theology today we find that theologians not only differ among themselves, which is natural enough, but they also differ, often, in their hermeneutics (principles of studying Scripture, i.e. the ground rules for interpreting it), as also in their epistemologies (the methods or grounds of knowledge). Each theologian naturally enough argues his position and presents his material so that it has credibility in the light of contemporary ways of thinking and reasoning. This generally means he must take into consideration the development of historical theology, point out its strengths and weaknesses, and value what others are saying today. Hence the reading of theology is for the most part confined to the realm of theologians, and we mean by this, trained and even professional scholars. This is by no means a bad thing.

Theology must always then be in a state of flux, partly by reason of the dialectic which obtains, partly because theology is, by nature of the case, dynamic, and also because new insights are continually being discovered. For the so—

called simple person it would be a relief to know that theology is fixed—so to speak—and all we have to do is simply restate it in the idiom of our age, and so communicate it in current thought forms. Alas, the matter is not so simple. Anything a theologian is bold to say will be called in question, and this on many grounds. How then does the simple person grasp theological truth? Does he have to go through the process we have here stated? Is there in fact *simple truth*?

The answer must be, ‘Yes.’ The truth must be simple enough since Jesus told us to become as little children to enter the Kingdom. We need new birth for new understanding. The truth then must be simple since God is the truth, and the Son the very truth of the Father. Both are ‘full of grace and truth’. The truth is also what you *do* or *live* rather than know only in an intellectual way. Theology of course is man’s reflection upon God, the system of thinking thus which he formulates. He has certain materials for intellection, and using these he comes to certain conclusions. These may or may not be correct—hence the unceasing interaction between scholars, the dialectic which keeps the issues alive.

This small treatment of doctrine has, perforce, set aside the continuing theological debate. It makes no claim to a proven hermeneutic. It takes the general trend that the church has known in history, of assuming the Scriptures are our basic source of doctrine, even though, strictly speaking, doctrine in the Scriptures is not fashioned after the manner of systematic theology. We read in Acts 2:42 that ‘they continued in the apostles’ doctrine’. There was doctrine. There were things understood. It may be debated as to whether the things they believed are acceptable to us today, but there can be little harm in knowing what they believed, and deciding whether or not this, too, is authentic for us.

Every man is a theologian. Everyone thinks on the things of God. Atheists often think on them more than non-atheists.

Whether we are good, bad, or indifferent theologians does not greatly matter. What we want to know is, ‘What things do Christians, generally speaking, believe?’ Doubtless what I have set out as things generally believed may not meet the acceptance of many (if not most) theologians. The way I set them out may meet with even less acceptance. Perhaps that will always be with what most theologians themselves set out. The truth is that no theologian is infallible or peerless. We have made our mistakes in thinking men such as Luther and Calvin have said the last word, or the only word, or the true word, on the great doctrinal truths. They have not, and doubtless did not think they had. We have our great theologians today, and no doubt they understand the humility of spirit which forbids the pride of mind.

Theology, rightly enough, will constantly be in debate. Certainly we reap many worthwhile fruits from the debate. What we must be wary of is theological priestcraft, an intellectualistic elitism which decries the crude and simple theology of the less tutored and denies authenticity because its thought has not been through the (latest) mincer of hermeneutics and epistemologies.

The apostle John said, ‘I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and know that no lie is of the truth.’ He also said, ‘I write this to you about those who would deceive you; but the anointing which you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that any one should teach you; as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie, just as it has taught you, abide in him’ (I John 2:21, 26–27). Jesus said, ‘If any man’s will is to do his will, he shall know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority’ (John 7:17). He also said, ‘When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth.’

It does seem, then, that apart from the continuing theological debate, and the endeavour to authenticate theo—

logical truth, a human person may know the truth, via what God has spoken (in the many ways that He speaks), with the conviction and assurance that the Holy Spirit gives. This book, then, seeks to provide those materials which can be read and studied, they also being subject to that monitoring which the anointing of the Spirit provides for those seeking to know more of the truth.

It is with this attitude, and in this hope, that the book is sent forth. Whilst hermeneutics and epistemologies must change in the processes of history—as indeed so many things change—yet truth must come from God to the hearts of men, and must surely come with its own ‘ring of truth’.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The response to the first edition has been most gratifying. Already it is being used in Seminary and Bible College courses, as well as personal and group studies.

The revising and correcting of the text, plus a comprehensive index, and the resetting of the type and format, have combined to make a more useful volume.

I trust it will be helpful to teachers and students, and even those whose interest has not hitherto been linked with the truth of the Christian faith.

*Geoffrey Bingham,
January 1986*

SECTION ONE

GOD, MAN, SIN AND SALVATION

This introductory section is the basis and foundation for all theology.

Not only does it introduce us to the idea of theology, but theology itself. Man has always been preoccupied with the four elements that we have named in our heading.

This is why every bit of detailed study that we can give to this section will greatly reward us. If our ideas in this area are deficient, then the two following sections on the Community of God's People and the End Things (Eschatology) will likewise be lacking. We need to know these things so that we can firmly believe them, and base the action of our life on their foundations.

Doubtless everything we know commences with knowledge of the true God Himself, which in turn enables us to know man who is made in His image. Only then does the doctrine of creation make sense, i.e. as we see the God who is Creator, and man who has been given lordship and stewardship over it.

This kind of theology is very thrilling, stimulating, and quite confronting. It is not something for dry and dusty archives of the mind, but for the living substance of the heart and the affections

CHAPTER ONE

**INTRODUCTION
TO THEOLOGY**

WHAT IS THEOLOGY?

Many shy away from the word 'theology'. Others who understand its meaning disdain it. They feel theology is the intellectualisation of the biblical truth. Others are so sold on theology as a discipline that they are in danger of missing its lived-out actualities. Whatever the view, we must come to terms with theology. Theology is man's reflections upon what he knows, or thinks he knows, of God. Theology then is related to all religions, and for any given person—be he Christian, Moslem, Hindu or Buddhist—to the religion he knows.

Our study will seek to understand biblical theology: that is, the conclusions one comes to as a result of reflecting on what the Bible tells us of God. *The Shorter Oxford Dictionary* defines theology as:

The study or science which treats of God, His nature and attributes, and His relations with man and the universe; 'the science of things divine' (Hooker); divinity.

The word 'theology' derives from the Greek *theos* (God) and *logos* (word). Theology is the word (study, theory, principle) concerning God. It is words about God.

It is natural that we will have many kinds of theology, even in Christian theology, since people reflect in different ways. Words also have varying values for different persons, so that we speak about the problem of semantics. With this is the subjective problem every human being has when approaching God, especially where we are hostile to Him, or angry with Him. It is obvious that all theology is not going to be seen in exactly the same way by various persons.

HOW WE COME TO THEOLOGY

In any subject we come to the sources of our theme. We explore them. We come to certain deductions or conclusions. The rightness or wrongness of them will depend upon two things, (a) the authority or truth of our sources, and (b) the ability and attitude to reason these through to an honest conclusion. Because man is involved emotionally in the subject, this often proves most difficult.

What then are our Christian sources or resources? We can state them quite simply, and will do so, but first we must ask whether man is in that frame of mind which will permit true and objective study. We ask, 'Can a man know God, and if he can, then by what method?' Others may assume God is there for the knowing. All sorts of problems arise. The main question is, 'Does a man really want to know God?' The biblical answer is that he doesn't, but we must examine that.

GOD REVEALS HIMSELF

In any theology the enquirer starts off with the assumption that he can come to know something of his subject: God. Has he a right to assume that? He believes he has. So he uses the sources. Some persons do not find the Bible a basic

source, or consider it reliable. They do not believe it was given by God to be a revelation of Himself. At the same time, they look upon the Scriptures as a valuable resource material because it portrays Jewish thought and, later, Christian thought.

It is axiomatic in Christian theology that God reveals Himself. When we ask how or why He does this, we are told that God desires us to know Him, and to have fellowship with Him. It is interesting that most of our assumptions on theological principles come from the Scriptures. We may think that the principles we have learned concerning God have come from our own thinking. In fact, if they are the same as set out in Scriptures, then they have not come from us but to us from the Scriptures. Of course many enquirers or scholars do not believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God, or His revelation of Himself.

THE PRINCIPLE OF REVELATION

The Greek word *apocalypsis* simply means 'revelation' or 'unveiling'. This suggests that God cannot be known unless He reveals Himself. Shortly we will look to see why this should be so. For the present, we will accept the fact that man could not know God unless God were to reveal Himself. Again it is the Scriptures which tell us that He does. They also show the media He uses. Generally speaking, they are as follows:

(a) *Creation*. Rom. 1:19–20; Ps. 19:1f.; cf. I Tim 4:4; 6:17; Eccl. 3:11.

(b) *Providence*. Matt. 5:45; Ps. 104; Matt. 6:26, 28; Acts 14:17.

(c) *The Scriptures*. When known as the Word of God, they constitute what God has said and so are God's

information concerning Himself. Cf. II Tim. 3:14–17.

(d) *History: The Acts of God.* God is known by His acts. Dan. 4:36–37; Ezek. 39:28f.; Ps. 105; 106; 107; John 5:17.

(e) *The Prophets.* Luke 24:25ff. The prophet was the voice of God. Cf. Amos 3:7–8; Rev. 19:10; II Peter I :21.

(f) *Dreams and Visions.* Num. 12:6; cf. Acts 2:17; Jer. 23:28–30.

(g) *Jesus Christ the Son.* John 1:14, 18; Col. 1:15; John 14:6; Matt. 11:27; John 3:35.

(h) *The Holy Spirit.* John 14:16; 16:7–11; I Cor. 2:10f.; John 3:5; Rev. 19:10.

(i) *The Church: The People of God.* Exod. 19:5–6 = I Peter 2:9–10; Acts 1:8, etc.

(j) *The Law.* Ps. 119; cf. Gen. 26:5. Some link law and conscience together as communicating the knowledge, and awareness, of God. Cf. Rom. 2:12ff.; 3:21.

All of these media the Christian believes are used by God to reveal Himself. Yet it is the Scriptures which tell us this fact. In other words, we only know God reveals Himself in these ways by what we are informed in the Bible.

GENERAL AND SPECIAL REVELATION

Not all scholars agree that there are divisions in revelation. *General revelation* is said to be God's showing forth of Himself without the stated facts of Scripture. Man can and must see God in the creation about him. He is presented with the truth of God in the way things really are. *Special revelation* comes through God's salvation history, His deal-

ings with the human race, and in particular through Israel, and then Christ. Thus the Scriptures, i.e. the substance of them, constitute a special revelation by God who does not leave man to discover Him through creation alone.

Another school of thought (Barthian) states that Christ is the special revelation of God. This is of course true, anyway. Barth, however, sets no store by natural theology (the theology which comes to man's mind by his observations of creation) or general revelation. The Scriptures are fallible, even though authoritative, so that we start with Christ, the true authority.

We must agree that either the Scripture is wholly dependable for true revelation or it is not. It is obvious that man's reason, although a gift from God, is not a basic authority by nature of the case, i.e. men differ even when given the same premises or basic materials for reasoning. Human beings have a bias in one direction or another. For this reason, natural or general theology cannot, likewise, be dependable in knowing God. As we shall see, special revelation is necessary, and in the light of it general revelation will be understood. In fact, it may be said that revelation—both general and special—is of the one piece.

What we need to keep in mind in discussion of general and special revelation is the fact that God *chooses to reveal Himself*. This is awesome, confronting and inescapable. God is Personal, and insists on revealing Himself to the mankind He has created.

THEOLOGY IS THE CONTENT OF REVELATION

Theology is the study of God. God chooses to reveal Himself. He does not seek to prove or commend Himself, for revelation is primarily confrontation. The Scriptures do not seek to prove or justify God. Their presupposition is the

existence of God. ‘Whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists [i.e. he *is*] and that he rewards those who seek him’ (Heb. 11:6).

Whilst it is true that God reveals Himself, this may seem a static fact. It is not. God is action: God is always working. He cannot reveal Himself without revealing His intentions, His goal, His *telos* (Gk.) for His creation. Man must be concerned with the ultimate, for that alone gives full meaning to the present time. God is equally concerned with man’s discovery of Himself. Without anticipating the doctrine of creation, we can say here that man needs to know God for his own personal enrichment and fulfilment.

When it is asked, ‘What is God’s nature, and what His intention for the *telos*?’ then the whole of theology is demanded. This theology is derived from the biblical account of salvation history. That is, history is not a mere sequence of events, but everything is oriented to fulfil God’s purposes for His creation, and the manifestation of His own glory. It is self-evident from Scripture that the fall of man was anticipated by God, and indeed forms part of His purposes in the ultimate. His work of redemption involves all the facts and processes of creation, providence, and the ultimate restoration and renewal of all creation. When then we can see a panoramic view of God’s history, we can also understand much of His nature. Indeed we can understand all we *need to* know of Him. This is the theology which is available to us, and of which we must avail ourselves.

CHAPTER TWO

INTRODUCTION TO THEOLOGY

CONTINUED

Each man is his own theologian. He may draw on the knowledge and insights of others, but he develops his own theology from his own study, experience and reflection. We would naturally expect variations in such theologies. What needs to be seen is that there are problems in a man knowing God. We need then to look at this point.

KNOWING GOD

There are many reasons why man may not easily know God. The primary one is that man does not wish to know God because of his rebellion against Him. Man does not wish to be confronted by God. The nature of God makes high demands upon a person, and man does not wish to be obedient. Nor does he wish his sinfulness and impurity to be delineated by contact with God. Man has come to love his idols rather than God. We are told these things in Romans 1:18–32.

In Genesis 2:17 and 3:1–6 we see that man was to die when he rebelled against God. This he did, and he died. His

death was primarily a *relational* one. Man died to God but came alive to himself. His relationship with God can be shown to be that of a son to the Father, a subject (servant) to his King, and a creature to his Creator. In rejecting God, he had to abandon these relationships, which he did. He was forced to see God, creation and himself from a different vantage point. Therefore he does not desire to see the truth. He has exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and does not wish to be shown he is wrong.

There are other ways of saying this. Jesus said, 'Unless a man be born again, he cannot *see* the Kingdom of God.' Paul said, 'The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit [spiritual things] for they are foolishness unto him.' Psalms 14 and 53 state, 'No one understands, no one seeks after God' (cf. Rom. 3:10). This is against the fact that everything God has done in creation seeks to steer man to God. Paul states this clearly in Acts 17:24–27. Man just does not wish to know God.

Other elements must also be considered. Isaiah 55:8–9 says that God's thoughts are higher than man's. This may mean that man is sinful and cannot understand, or it may mean that God's intellect supersedes man's intellect. Both these points are true anyway. There are limits set to man's understanding because he is a creature. 'Can you find out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limit of the Almighty?' Job is asked (11:7). The inference is, 'No!' I Corinthians 2:10f. shows that the Holy Spirit searches the deeps of God and reveals them. Deuteronomy 29:29 says the secret things belong to God (i.e. not man), but the things revealed to man belong to him. We conclude then that man's ability to know God is limited by his creatureliness and by his sinfulness.

The truth is that man, without sinfulness, only can know, and only needs to know God, *as a man may know God*. This he is permitted to do. His will refuses to know God truly.

Hence man cannot know. It can be seen then that the ten media of revelation which we have discussed above are unaccepted by man. Otherwise he will have to experience God's confrontation, which he does not wish to do; hence the impediment in man to true knowledge of God. We add, finally, that true knowledge is relational: we know anyone through relating to that person. Man dreads relational revelation of God.

THE FORMS OF THEOLOGY

Naturally enough, theologians are going to approach the subject in various ways, using different methods. Also at different times in history the approach is also different. Four approaches have been categorised in 2,000 years of Christian history. They are as follows:

Patristic Theology

The early church fathers, that is, those of the sub-apostolic and even later period, sought (perhaps often unconsciously) to systematise the vast mass of biblical thought which, though primarily of the New Testament, also had constant reference to the Old Testament. This took place in the movement of paganism to Christianity, and from Greek thought to Judaic-Christian understanding. Gnosticism and other forms of thought had to be screened out, as also the Judaic-Christian truth had to be related to current thinking, i.e. the difference between Christian truth on the one hand and Roman and Greek thought on the other, had to be rationalised.

We need not analyse this theology but merely comment that some of it seems rather bizarre to us today; yet the basic truth of the Gospel was reasonably preserved.

Scholastic Theology

Theology often became a synthesis of philosophy and Christian doctrine. Aquinas is the classic example of this, based as his approach was upon the pagan philosopher, Aristotle. The period was also one when orthodoxy was being formalised, and a system of thinking being propounded. Much of scholastic thinking was complex and even highly absurd. This particularly goes for distorted views on baptismal regeneration, purgatory, penance, infused grace, and transubstantiation. It took the Reformation to break the bonds of scholasticism, and even that did not always take place, even within the Reformers themselves. It was the accepted and formal way of reasoning and developing theology.

Reformed Theology

Scholastic theology, although it referred to the Fathers, had often become pointless and useless disputation. This, of course, was not all it was. It was concerned with dogmatics, or rather the rationalisation of them. It had moved away from the basically biblical. Prior to the Reformation, the Scriptures were not available to many, and the main text of the Bible was the Latin Vulgate. Many of the pre-Reformation scholars were pointing back to the Hebrew and Latin texts of the Scriptures. So a more biblical theology arose. Its two main streams were that of Luther and Calvin. Both had much in common. This biblical theology did not look for vindication, epistemology or rationalisation outside of Scripture. Reason was not discounted, but now it was informed biblically and put to use on that level.

Modern Theology

This is so varied that it is difficult to categorise. The Roman Catholic reaction to the Reformation stultified

theological development. The church was virtually under the Council of Trent. Certain developments took place, but the dogma of the church enlarged to take in papal infallibility and the bodily assumption of the Virgin Mary. The influence of Aquinas has prevailed until modern times.

The Protestant wing had its problems. Not all accepted the Reformed approach, especially the sacramental churches. Reformed orthodoxy became formalised creedally under the attacks from various theological forces. With the growth of pietism and rationalism came the emphasis on the subjective in religion, and the place of rationalistic thinking. The Age of Enlightenment and Reason denigrated the Scriptures as a sacred and inspired Book. Hence came what was called the Higher Criticism, Modernism, Liberalism, and then Neo Orthodoxy. Out of this has come a more objective way of study on most theological fronts.

Mixed with this movement of theology are many elements. With the incursion of Darwinianism and the theory of evolution has come a change in approach in theology. This has stated that understanding develops with time and experience, and so some textual critics feel man moved from the primitive to the more developed views of God. This meant changing the analysis of the O.T. biblical text. Hence views on the infallibility of the Scriptures were questioned. Neo-Orthodoxy was a reaction to this liberalism, and whilst the text of Scriptures was not considered to be infallible, its living internal message was seen as authoritative. Modern liberalism agrees that the Word of God lies within the Bible, 'a canon within the Canon', so to speak. The classical view is that the Bible is the Word of God and not merely contains it.

CONCLUSION ON THEOLOGY

As we have said, each person has his own theology. Whilst

there are schools of theology, these necessarily differ, as their modes of studying the Scriptures also differ. For some, biblical theology is not necessarily orthodox and evangelical theology. Rather, as in the case of Bultmann, some see the reading of Scripture being truly biblical only when one scrapes away the theological barnacles of years, the presuppositions and misconceptions of older scholars. It requires myths to be understood, and basic layers of accretion to be removed. Others see as truly biblical that approach which gives value to all the Bible, and interprets its message and revelation by itself.

We will need, then, to be astute in order to be theologians. Out of prejudice we must not reject that which others propound. At the same time, we ought not to be gullible. Where good scholarship has been at work, we should be glad of its fruits.

CHAPTER THREE

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD (1)

INTRODUCTION: THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Does God exist? Theology, as we have said, commences with this presupposition. The Scriptures work on this assumption, and the assumption is not even conscious. Christian theology, of course, accepts as its basis the fact of God's existence, although the word 'existence', whilst doing good service, says little about the mode(s) of *being*. Hebrews 11:6 says that whoever would draw near to God must believe that He is, rather than that He *exists*. Existence is the *state* of being, rather than the *mode* of being. The biblical atheist is not, then, one who does not believe that God exists so much as one who does not believe He works in the manner religionists claim is His way.

If we commence from the givenness of Scripture, rather than attempt to prove its value in regard to its statements about God, then we are told many things concerning God. The Bible is more a source-book for systematic theology than it is itself a theology. Theology makes certain statements about God concerning His attributes, and doubtless these are valuable. Nevertheless, certain things concerning

God are clearly discernible and some statements appear to be pure theology, in that they allow no room for man's fallibility due to the element of reflection.

Examples of these are: 'Holy! Holy! Holy! is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory'; 'The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof'; 'God is light, and in him there is

no darkness at all'; 'God is love'. Surprisingly enough, there are comparatively few of such statements. When we examine these, we find they are rich, and reveal the nature of God. Yet it is one thing for the Scriptures to say, 'God is love', and another for us to know what that means. We need the whole thrust of the entire Scriptures to come to know the nature of God.

ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

As we have said, the Bible starts from the unargued assumption that God exists. It is more concerned with the modes of His being and existence, and the actions by which those modes are demonstrated. It is also concerned with His purposes for His creation, i.e. His will. Theists desire to prove His existence. They have developed *formal* arguments for this. These are set out below. However, it should be seen that formal arguments, whilst not being useless, do not actually prove the existence of God, since one must have faith in order to believe. When one defines the word 'faith', then it is seen why intellectual argument, whilst not being pointless, cannot as such prove God's existence.

(i) *The Ontological Argument*. Historically latest in formation, it is an argument based on *concept*. Man can conceive the perfect. He cannot conceive more than the perfect, i.e. that which is without limitations. Hence this must be the ultimate, and the ultimate must be God, since man does not parallel the ultimate. Some see this as a denial of the finite,

but this need not be so, seeing the infinite is absolute. A being of beings must be, since for it not to be would be to deny existence as other than illusion.

(ii) *The Cosmological Argument*. That is, the effect always needs a cause, and if the creation is the effect then cause must be as real as creation itself, and the nature of creation is such that it could not be self-produced from nothing, i.e. *ex nihilo, nihilo fit* ('out of nothing, nothing can arise'). If the world is dependent, then it must have its source in an independent. If it were self-sufficient then it would, in that sense, be God. Nothing shows it to be so. Somewhere there must be that which is self-dependent, and upon which the other than it is dependent, i.e. God.

(iii) *The Teleological Argument*. The argument from design, i.e. that which is designed has a designer. This is no real argument, since the designer may have been designed. Again, a *regressus ad infinitum* must be avoided. Design has a *telos*, i.e. a goal or end. If there is a first cause then He is an intelligent cause. We recognise purposiveness as an indispensable element of our universe.

(iv) *The Anthropological Argument*. This sees necessarily a greater than man, who himself has knowing, willing and feeling elements. From man, we may deduce something of the character and purpose of his Creator, i.e. 'He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall he not know?' (Ps. 94:9–10).

(v) *The Moral Argument*. There must be a moral end in the purposiveness of the universe. Thus there must be a being interested in the same. Man has his own sense of 'oughtness' which must be correlative to the absolute. It is an argument related to conscience.

(vi) *Arguments from Existence*. These necessarily involve a biblical view and understanding:

(a) *The created universe*. The glory that is manifested is

greater than man. No part is as great as the whole. The whole declares more than itself (Rom. 1:20; Ps. 19:14; Acts 14:17; Is. 40:26).

(b) *Human intuition.* Theism is a universal phenomenon. Man everywhere seems to have an intuitive understanding that God exists. Whilst the image and modes of this God are not equal and common universally, the fact of His Being is. Some psychologists see that opposition to God, or disbelief in Him, is a departure from the norm. This does not prove the existence of God, but shows that atheism is not the true norm of the human race.

(c) *Divine providence.* Human beings believe that some force sets the patterns of life and history. They look to fate, luck, or personal Being as God. They see an 'oughtness' in regard to the divine Being. He *ought* to intervene in the natural order of the universe, i.e. when there is need.

(d) *The Scriptures.* The Bible itself, when examined, is a startling phenomenon. It must be examined. Its authority is inherent: it must be regarded in the order of things. Again, this is an argument which would only impress those who were prepared to venerate the Bible either in superstition or in faith.

(e) *Jesus Christ.* This person, the most unusual in all history, becomes an arguable phenomenon in theism, especially for his claims to be God, and the Son of God.

(f) *Personal experience.* Whilst not a proof which is scientifically verifiable, it also cannot be summarily dismissed. Human beings in every age have said they have experienced God (cf. Acts 17:23, 27–28).

The question is whether these two sets of arguments have

any validity. Whether they have or not is arguable both ways. The fact is that few if any are wholly objective in such arguing. It is best to say they will have meaning if people wish to believe; otherwise not. It does not mean that they are conclusive or useless. Together they do represent useful material. However, from the biblical point of view it must be said that man can know God. He does not because he wills not to know Him. It does not mean that his will can be successful. As we have said, the biblical atheist is more against the God who exists, rather than sure that He does not.

CHAPTER FOUR**THE DOCTRINE OF GOD (2)****THE NATURE OF GOD:
HIS ATTRIBUTES**

The attributes of God are really His qualities, elements, or characteristics, to use very loose terms. The aggregate of these attributes does not constitute God since He is His attributes, that is, He does not *have* righteousness, but is righteousness, etc. In fact, whilst each attribute may be examined singly, it cannot be seen except in the context of all the attributes. At the same time, no attribute exists apart from all the attributes. We cannot speak of goodness without love, or love without goodness. In that sense, the attributes are all one as God is One.

CLASSIFICATION OF THE ATTRIBUTES

We must remember that classification is one of the ways we think, or rather tabulate and codify our thinking. One

classification is to speak of God's natural or incommunicable attributes, and then of His moral or communicable attributes. We mean that a human being cannot have attributes which are divine, but he can have given to him attributes which are moral or functional. A way of remembering this is to see that Adam as created man had no need in his creatureliness for the natural attributes of God, but thought that he could become as God, i.e. possess those natural (or incommunicable) attributes. He already had the moral attributes, though only in a derived (contingent) sense. Innately he remained a creature. To be in the image is to be like God, but never as God. In some sense we can say that man reflects in a relative way the natural elements of God, even though he does not possess them, since there is something in him correlative to God. That is, he can understand these attributes to a degree. The moral attributes he is expected to fully reflect, and to participate in them.

NATURAL OR INCOMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES**Omnipotence**

Meaning 'all-powerful', this is saying that all power exists and has its being in God. We must never approach it as seeing it analogous to man's power. Man's power is derived, God's is not. See Psalm 62:11; Isaiah 45:5-7; Jeremiah 32:27; Matthew 19:26; Deuteronomy 32:27; Genesis 17:1; 18:14; Hebrews 11:19; amongst many others. It is not necessary to say God can do anything.' In fact He only does that which is consistent with His nature. He is creative, moral: He is powerful enough *not to do* that which others might think He ought to do. Whilst we cannot speak of self-limitation, we can say that God limits Himself to those

things which are congruous with His moral being, i.e. His attributes of love, goodness, holiness, righteousness and truth.

Omniscience

Doubtless His operation in all things presupposes His knowledge of all things. Since He created all things, He therefore knows them. He never comes to know. Not bound by time, He does not have a future, any more than a past. These limitations to our knowledge do not obtain with Him. His knowledge is not formal but dynamic; that is, as He knows, so things are (cf. I Cor. 8:2–3; Deut. 2:7; Gal. 4:9; Amos 3:2; Job 37:16; I Sam. 16:7; I Chron. 28:9; Ps. 139: 1–4, 14; Jer. 17:10). It is only by His knowledge that we may know Him (Gal. 4:9; cf. I Cor. 13:12).

Omnipresence

This means that God is free to be present to all His creation, at every point. He is not simply everywhere, but *the* everywhere. There is not where He is not. There is only where He is. God then is present to all things everywhere at the one point in time, but His presence is dynamic and not merely formal. Man lives in God, and moves and has his being in Him. So do all things, whether they will it or not. In the moral sense, rebellious man and evil powers do not live in God. We mean that they do not dwell in God by their own choice. To the contrary, they seek to distance themselves from Him. Even so, they are wholly dependent upon Him for their continued existence. Man and evil powers in this sense are afar off. Spatially none can be outside Him, for He is Creator. We mean that God is at once immanent (i.e. not locked out of His universe), and transcendent (i.e. not locked into His universe). Agnosticism makes God

inscrutable, pantheism makes Him immanent, and not transcendent, and deism makes Him transcendent but not immanent (see Acts 2:39; Eph. 2:13; cf. Ps. 139:7–12; Deut. 4:39; 30:12–13; I Kings 8:27; Isa. 66:1; Jer. 23:23–24, etc.).

Note then that omnipresence covers two natural attributes of God, viz. *transcendence* (I Chron. 29:11; II Chron. 6:18; Heb. 4:13; Rev. 4:1–11; Isa. 57:15) and *immanence* (Ps. 139; Rom. 1:20f.; Isa. 57:15). We must not think of these in a spatial sense, however much they may relate to space, but in terms of *being*. God qualitatively is above His universe, and in terms of Creatorhood and Fatherhood is present to it. Concepts such as omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience should not be thought of in the philosophical so much as the biblical and personal sense.

Immutability, Eternity

It should be axiomatic to say God is unchanging. I Timothy 1:17 speaks of Him in these terms. The thought is repeated in Lamentations 3:22–23 and Malachi 3:6. That God has eternity is also demanded (I Tim. 1:17; 6:16). Isaiah 57:15 speaks of Him as ‘inhabiting eternity’, which is a Hebraism for ‘living forever’, i.e. being Eternal. This eternity is shown in the name I AM, or, I AM THAT I AM. Again, this eternity should not be thought of merely in metaphysical terms, but in the warm truth that He is unlimited by the things which limit others. He is free Spirit in His universe, and unchanging in the love He has for it.

Often the attribute of *infinity* is associated with eternity and with God. The human mind cannot conceive of infinity, by nature of the case, but it can have a *concept* of it. Even so, infinity is better not thought of in quantitative terms, so much as qualitative. That is, as we think of God as love, as holiness, and the like, we think not in terms of immensity or endless dimensions, but in terms of love which is free of

human limitations and defects.

Free Personal Being

Man reflects the personal Being of God, but we must not work from man to God. God's being is not creaturely, nor dependent, which are marks of the human being. At the same time, God is free in that He is not the impersonal deity of deism, or much theism. He is Spirit, and not merely a Spirit. He is free in the sense that nothing places strictures upon Him. Hence His will is sovereign (cf. Eph. 1:11).

In our examination of the above natural attributes, we should derive our materials and thinking from the Bible, not elsewhere, for transcendence differs, say, in Muslim and Christian thought.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD (3)

THE NATURE OF GOD: HIS MORAL ATTRIBUTES

As an introduction to the moral attributes, we should see that man correlates with those attributes of God which are moral.

God is Creator: Psalm 19 and Romans 1:19ff. show God as Creator. Man is thus creature. As Creator, God brings into view those things which were not previously in view (see John 1:1–3; Heb. 11:3; Rev. 4:11; Ps. 33:6). The creation is not a static thing, but is dynamic. It is not there simply to exist but to praise the Creator, and share in the fulfilment of His purposes. Romans 8:19–21 indicates this. Man as part of that creation is to be to the praise of the glory of God (Eph. 1:12–14). Man is intimately related to all creation (Gen. 1:28f.).

Again, *God is Sustainer–Provider.* We mean by this that He upholds His universe continually in a way that a deistic God would not do. He also provides for it (cf. Ps. 104), not

only to supply its material needs, but to order its affairs rightly.

Finally, *God is Redeemer*. We may not see this as a foundational truth related to His moral Being, but Isaiah 63:16 has it, ‘Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer *from* eternity is thy name.’

These elements set the basis for our understanding of His moral attributes.

THE MORAL ATTRIBUTES

Goodness

Mark 10:18 and Luke 18:19 say, ‘There is none who is good, but God only.’ Matthew 5:48 says God is perfect. If we ask ‘What is *goodness*?’ then we have a number of assertions in reply, e.g. ‘beauty’, ‘excellence’, ‘that which is sound and sterling’. We need to see ‘goodness’ in the Scriptures. In Genesis 1 and 2 the term is used to mean that which is correct, useful and functional. When God creates, what He creates is *good*. At the end (Gen. 1:31), it is *very good*, i.e. ‘wholly functional and proper’. The Hebrew word *tob* signified, ‘pleasant, joyful, agreeable’. Every tree of the garden was *good* for food, and pleasant to the eyes. It was *not good* for man to be alone, i.e. not truly functional and joyful.

God’s goodness in the Old Testament points to Him as Creator along these very lines. ‘Everything created by God is good’, and ‘to be enjoyed’. So God’s creative goodness is for the benefit of His creation. He has planned nothing *evil*, which, being the opposite of good, is ‘full of pain’, or ‘broken in pieces’. God’s intention for His creation is good. When, then, man rebels against God and the order of His universe or covenant, it is His ‘loving kindness’, His grace

(Heb. *chesed* which does not destroy man. Doubtless within the goodness of God are the elements of love, mercy, pity, and the like. Hence it can be said, ‘It is the goodness of God which leads you to repentance’. The goodness of God is always shown in what He does (Ps. 119:68; cf. Neh. 9:20; Ps. 145:9). It is shown in His covenant (Ps. 25:8; 73:1; Nahum 1:7). When it is said that God is perfect, it means perfect in His Being and actions rather than merely flawless. His goodness is positive.

In the New Testament He is always said to be ‘full of grace and truth’. His intentions towards His creation are always good and beneficent, so that grace, mercy and love may be subsumed under that goodness. Man’s reflection of this goodness is not mere adherence to the righteousness of the law, but acts which go beyond even the technical demands of law (Matt. 5:16). Hence God’s goodness is also not only righteousness. It acts where unrighteousness cancels the ‘right’ of a person to goodness (e.g. Ps. 25:8). His goodness is shown supremely in the act of redemption, but this is an act in conformity with His total goodness.

Holiness

Holiness is indicated by the Hebrew word which signifies ‘cutting’ or ‘separation’. God, as holy, stands in contrast to the false (i.e. unholy) gods (Exod. 15:11), and to all creation (Isa. 40:25). His intrinsic Being is holy. ‘God is light, and in him is no darkness at all’; ‘Holy! Holy! Holy! is the Lord of hosts’; ‘Be ye holy as I am holy’. This holiness is above that of men and creation, since their holiness is derived from His. At the same time, His holiness is dynamic, destroying evil (Hab. 1:13). His love therefore is holy, as also His holiness is loving. We shall have occasion to enlarge on the subject later, when dealing with the wrath of God—which is not an attribute as such, but that element in Him which is

provoked by evil.

Righteousness

In Romans 3:21 Paul speaks of a righteousness of God which is (known) apart from the law. He infers that there are two strands to God's righteousness, (a) that which is known by law, and (b) that which is apart from the law, but attested by the law (and the prophets). The first righteousness is the essential nature of God which is expressed by the law. Man's righteousness exists in obeying this law. It shows who and what he is. In a sense, it also shows who and what God is. Man, however, does not keep the law ('... no man living is righteous before thee', Ps. 143:2), yet where there is faith, God justifies those who have not kept the law. What is clear in Scriptures is that God overlooks no sin. Ultimately it must be dealt with in judgement, and this supremely in the propitiation God arranges in Christ (Rom. 3:24f.).

Leaving aside the justifying righteousness of God, we see that His righteousness is that which demands moral rectitude, and expresses it in action by the giving of the law, and by judgement of infractions of the law. He will have 'justice in all the earth', as also He will take up the cause of those oppressed by injustice and will vindicate them (Ps. 103:6). In all this He is expressing His essential self by always doing justly (cf. Gen. 18:25; Ezra 9:15; Ps. 11:7; 103:6; John 17:25; Rom. 2:2; 3:4-6, 21-26).

Truth

Truth, for our purposes, is 'things-as-they-really-are', or 'God as He really is'. Things-as-they-are is how the God of truth has made them. Truth, from the human point of view, is found in the virtues of security, steadfastness, faithfulness and solidity. In fact, this is the Old Testament description of

them. 'God of faithfulness' and 'God of truth' are equated (Exod. 34:6; Ps. 31:5). Psalm 31 is an exposition of the truth of God (i.e. which is God), and this is contrasted to the vanity (falseness) of the idols (verse 7). John 8:44 shows Satan to be the father of lies, and never to have remained in the truth. All evil has its own inbuilt deceit, as truth, so to speak, is inbuilt into God. So, 'Thy words are truth' (II Sam. 7:28), and 'Thy word is truth' (John 17:17). God's truth 'reacheth unto the clouds' (Ps. 108:4), i.e. covers all things. God 'keeps truth for ever' (Ps. 146:6). He is 'full of truth' (John 1:14), and the Son is the very truth of Him (John 14:6). The truth makes free (John 8:31-36) because it liberates man into things-as-they-really-are from things-as-they-really-are-not! Psalm 111 :7ff. gives an exposition of this truth in action. Christ, of course, was the truth in action.

Love

'God is love', is a statement made explicitly in the Scriptures (I John 4:8, 16), one of few such statements concerning God. God is not only loving, but love Himself. In biblical terms, love is shown by deeds and actions, not merely thoughts and words (I John 3:18). In most theologies, God's love is subsumed under His goodness. This may be a good system, but love must be seen in its own being, God. His goodness may well spring from His love, but in any case they are the one.

Love is evidenced in relationships. The relationship of love within the triune Godhead is there because God is love. The Father loves the Son, the Son the Father. The Spirit is simultaneously the Spirit of the Father, the Spirit of the Son, and the Spirit of love. One description of the love of God is: 'God's desire to impart Himself and all good to other beings, and to possess them for His own in spiritual

fellowship.’*

God’s love, rightly understood, is shown in His actions of creation, His choosing of His covenant people (Deut. 7:7), His interventions in history for mankind in general and His people in particular (Jer. 31:3; cf. Deut. 4:37; Ps. 41:1–2), and in His redemptive acts (Isa. 63:9; Hosea 14:4; John 3: 16; I John 3:16; 4:7–10; Rom. 5:5–10). His love is shown in creating His universe, providing for it, redeeming it, and ultimately renewing it. Man is the one who benefits primarily. In God’s love there is pity, mercy, and renewing action.

Conclusion : God’s Nature is Good

We can see in the action of Himself–i.e. the truly directed action of His attributes–that God can do, and has done, nothing but good. That is why created man should naturally trust God. Because man has affinity with God through being created in His image, he had nothing to fear. Sinfulness, however, does bring fear. It brings fear of God’s wrath and of His judgement.

Sinful man can only see these working elements of God through the lens of his own guilt. Hence he cannot know them without revelation. God’s wrath is provoked only by evil (Rom. 1:18), and there would be no wrath were there no evil. His holiness demands wrath and judgement (Hab. 1: 13; cf. Rom. 1: 18–32). His wrath is not to be thought of in human terms, but in biblical terms. Likewise, judgement is essential in a holy and righteous universe. We will enlarge on these matters later.

For the present, we can see that by virtue of His goodness, righteousness, holiness, love and truth, God is to be trusted, believed in, and obeyed.

CHAPTER SIX

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD (4)

THE TRIUNE GOD

THE TERM TRINITY

The doctrine of the Trinity is important because in Scripture we keep seeing that the Lord God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament. In the New Testament–rather than the Old Testament–we see God to be Father. In both Old and New Testaments we have the term ‘The Spirit of God’, or ‘The Spirit of the Lord’, and it seems that this one is not the Lord God or the Father. Also, when we examine the words concerning the Eternal Word or the Son, such a person, although human when he became incarnate, was prior to time, and more than a human. A little thought leads us to ask the question, ‘Is he then less than God?’

In the light of these elements we are forced to come to some conclusion. One conclusion is very evident. The Bible says, ‘God is One’, and so there cannot be three Gods. When we read concerning the Father, the Son, and the

* W. N. Clarke, *An Outline of Theology*, T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh 1921, p. 95.

Spirit, we certainly do not think of each person as a God, yet we cannot escape the conclusion that each has deity, without each being a God. We seem to be led naturally to the triune God. Some object to the word 'Trinity', seeing it as meaning three coming together, and so the hint is of tritheism. However, *The Shorter Oxford Dictionary* says:

Trinity: The state of being threefold, threefoldness, threeness . . . The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as constituting one God: the triune God.

Probably, then, the word is not a bad one, although of course it never has formal mention, as such, in the Bible.

PROBLEMS WITH ILLUSTRATIONS AND ANALOGIES

Some think that when a doctrine or concept can be illustrated then that proves the concept or doctrine. This is not so. Analogous reasoning likewise proves nothing. Both are illustrative. By nature of the case, the concept of three Persons constituting one Godhead and not being tritheistic is not easy to prove, since it is a unique idea. Illustrations may appear to help, but often they unconsciously lend themselves to heresies concerning the Godhead! One of the commonest of these is 'modalism', i.e. the one God in three modes, so that each 'Person' is only a *mode* of the Godhead, and in fact three is really only one Person with three modes! This relates to the heresy 'Sabellianism'. We need then to exercise caution when we seek to enunciate the doctrine, so that it is recognisable from illustrations and analogies. A little thought leads us to conclude that what has eternal dimensions can scarcely be shown by temporal spatial elements.

THE DOCTRINE ITSELF

The Problem of Mathematics

The simplistic question often asked is, 'How can one be three; how can three ones make one?' The answer must surely be that if, in biblical terms, two can become one (flesh), as in Genesis 2:23–24, then presumably, in some way, three can become one. In other words, a threefoldness of three human persons is a measurable concept. Of course, the heart of such an idea is *relational*. It is not mathematics so much as relationships. This is enough to show us that a threefoldness is not impossible in human thinking, even if it is difficult in some human relationships!

THE BIBLE AND THE DOCTRINE

(a) Intimations in the Old Testament

Without doubt the doctrine of the Trinity has emerged from the New Testament primarily. This is not to say that it is not in the Old Testament. At the same time, it is to be doubted that the Hebrews thought of God in a mathematically plural sense. Yet the idea of plural being is not absent. The use of the 'us' and 'our' in certain texts can be explained on grounds other than the Trinity, but then the explanations are not necessarily final.

In Genesis 1:26, in the Aaronic blessing of Numbers 6: 2–26, and in the Trisagion of Isaiah 6:3, a plural use is found. In the passages of Psalm 33:6, Job 28:23 and Proverbs 8:22ff., the ideas of the Word and Wisdom are found. This equates to a great degree with the *Logos* of the New Testament (John 1:1–14), and Philo, the Hellenist Jew, was attracted to it. There is again the intriguing verse in Isaiah 48:16:

'Draw near to me, hear this:
from the beginning I have not spoken in secret,
from the time it came to be I have been there.'
And now the Lord God has sent me and his Spirit.

Some scholars see a sudden change of speaker, so that the 'me' is that of 49:1, 50:4 and 61:1, i.e. the Suffering Servant, and yet this one says, 'from the beginning I have not spoken in secret, from the time it came to be I have been there.' This is certainly a mysterious person and yet a real enough one.

Along with this figure, there is another—the Angel of the Lord. Whereas in some passages he speaks in the name of the Lord God, yet in others he is identified with Him (e.g. Gen. 16:7ff.; 21:17ff.; 22:11ff.; 31:13; Exod. 3:2; Zech. 3: 1–2; etc.). Some have identified this figure with the Son of God, and so with Jesus prior to his incarnation. Again there is the mysterious person of Melchizedek, who is 'without beginning and without end'. There are, then, hints of personage other than that of the Lord God as such. In this sense we cannot say that the Old Testament is bare of Trinitarian hints or possibilities. In addition, of course, there are prophetic intimations such as found in Psalms 2, 45, 110, and Isaiah 7, 9, 11. These form an interesting picture of a person who is truly man and also much more than man.

(b) Substantial Indications in the New Testament

When we look at the material concerning God as Father, Jesus as Lord and Son of God, and the Holy Spirit as having personhood and relating to the Father and the Son, there is much material. It can be set out as follows:

(i) *The term 'Father' gains immense importance in the New Testament.* Whilst not absent from the Old Testament, it gains—great significance in the New. Thus, in the Gospels, passages such as Matthew 11:27 and John 14: 1–10 (cf. John 1:14, 18; 10:30)—amongst many others—spell out God as

Father, and Jesus in the context of being the Son. One of the finest expositions of God's Fatherhood is in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. chs 5–7). One of Jesus' greatest statements is in John 17:6, 11, and 26. Here Jesus has 'manifested thy name', and prays, 'Father, keep them in thy name', and claims, 'I have made known to them thy name', and says, 'and I will make it known'.

The 'Name' of course is the whole person, and therefore, in this case, the essential nature of God. The Name is 'Father', but rather than a mere title for God, it is the whole of His person. Hence the use of this Name, rather than only YAHWEH, tells us a lot.

The importance of the Name is seen in the Epistles where it is used as 'Father'. Yet it is its conjunction with the name and person of Jesus, the Son and Messiah, at which we will look. Nevertheless we gather from John 17 that this Name was known to the Son prior to creation.

(ii) *The term 'Father' has no great point apart from the Son.* In the Gospels, Jesus addresses God as 'Father' (e.g. John 17:1, 11, 25; Matt. 11:25), and in a way unprecedented in Jewish custom, in that he says, 'Father!' or 'Oh, Father!' and never 'Our Father!'

Matthew 11:25 shows the oneness with the Father, as do also the Johannine references we have used above, especially John 10:30, 'I and the Father are one'. This is not against 'The Father is greater than I' (John 14:28). There is no thought that subordination is inferiority. It is a subordination in order, not in nature.

Jesus being the Son of God can be seen to be first of all Messianic. Peter could say, 'Thou art the Messiah, the Son of God', and these terms were virtually synonymous. Matthew 26:63 shows the high priest asking, 'Tell me if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.' This means that the term 'Son of God' was in use and was linked to, if not equated with, 'Messiah'.

As the Word, this one gives revelation of God, and of God as Father (John 1:1, 18). This Logos is prior to time. As Son, the world (or ‘ages’) is created through him (Heb. 1: 2–3; cf. Col. 1:15–17). Passages such as Philippians 2:5f. and II Corinthians 8:9 show his pre-creation and pre-incarnation situation. Colossians 1:15, Hebrews 1:3 and II Corinthians 4:4 show him to be the true image of God. Colossians 2:9 shows that all the fulness of the Godhead bodily dwells in him so that he can be the revelation of God. Without at this point pressing Christ’s deity, it is best to work from the fact that he is the unique Son of the Father (John 1:14), and, as such, the revelation of the Father (John 14:6).

This is why it is an accepted fact that God is ‘the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ’. Hence the Person often spoken of simply as ‘God’, or as ‘the Lord God’, is now disclosed as the Father of the Son. Hence the remarkable statement of I Corinthians 8:6:

For us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

Thus at the baptism of Jesus, God says, ‘This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased’, words that are virtually repeated at the Transfiguration (cf. Matt. 17:5).

In addition to God being Father to His (unique) Son (cf. Luke 1:35), He is also Father to believing human beings. Nevertheless they are not ‘begotten’ of Him in the way the (unique) Son is begotten. Hence the essential Fatherhood of God is expressed in creation and redemption. We can know, by relationship, this Father–God (John 17:3; I John 5:20).

(iii) *Although the term ‘God the Son’ is not used as such, it is difficult to avoid reaching that conclusion.* If we use the materials written just above, it is difficult to believe that Jesus is other than God the Son. That he is the Son of God can never be in doubt. This Sonship then is either superior

to that of man, and yet inferior to that of Deity, or it is that of Deity. If the one who became the incarnate Jesus has unique relationship as Son, and has evidence of eternity, then he can be no less than God. Thomas says, ‘My Lord and my God!’ (John 20:28). When Jesus said, ‘I and the Father are one’, the Jews understood him to be claiming Deity; hence they

In John 5:23 Jesus makes a claim to the same honour, from men, as the Father ought to receive: ‘That all may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent him.’ This principle is worked out in John 8:19, 14:9 and 15:23. The writer of Hebrews asks whether God has ever said to an angel, ‘Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee’ (Heb. 1:5ff.; Ps. 2:6–7). He goes on to say, ‘Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; the righteous sceptre is the sceptre of thy kingdom’ (Ps. 45:6–7; cf. Ps. 110:1f.). Romans 9:5 has, ‘. . . Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed for ever’, whilst Titus 2:13 reads, ‘. . . awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ’. I John 5:20 reads, ‘We are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.’

What we look for is not proof texts as such, but *the relationship* Christ has with God as the Son with the Father. As the Father is God, and the Son has unique relationship with Him, so then the Son must have Deity. He says in John 5:17, ‘My Father has always been working, and I work’, meaning, I have always and will always work with Him.’

(iii) *The Holy Spirit has always worked with the Father and the Son.* In the Old Testament Scriptures, the Spirit is the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the Lord, and in the New Testament he is the Spirit of the Father, the Spirit of the Son, the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of Jesus. Whilst no doubt it could be argued that the

Spirit (Hebrew *ruach*, Greek *pneuma*) is an influence or power, yet the Spirit is undoubtedly personalised. The use of the neuter gender in Greek is often overcome by the use of the masculine personal pronoun. However, it emerges that he is Person, and as such relates to the Father and the Son. One theologian has called him, 'The Go-Between-God'.

The history of the person and work of the Spirit in both Testaments is very impressive. The New Testament speaks of him being the power behind the prophets (II Pet. 1 :21; cf. I Pet. 1:10–12), whilst we know his anointing was upon various judges, leaders, artisans, and the like. In the New Testament he is connected intimately with the birth, baptism, temptation, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, as also the anointing of the new people of God (of the Son) for their world-wide and time-wide task of proclaiming

If *relationship* is the way of establishing the deity of the Son (with the Father), then also is *relationship* an excellent way of establishing deity for the Spirit, since he is the Spirit of the Father and the Son. He is present in the work of creation (Gen. 1:1–3; Ps. 104:29–30; cf. Job 33:4), as also in the work of redemption, applying it as he does for the purposes of regeneration (John 3:3ff.; Titus 3:3f.; I Cor. 6:11). It is difficult to see this Spirit enabling Christ in his salvific ministry and being less than him. Again, although the Spirit is subordinate to the Father and the Son, this is of order but not of nature.

(v) *The social nature of the Trinity is inescapable in Scripture.* When we start from human relationships and extend them to God, we fail to reach a useful conclusion. God is not *like* a human father. He is *Father*, that is, the archetypal and fountal Fatherhood from which human fatherhood derives (Eph. 3:14–15; cf. 4:6; I Cor. 8:6; Matt. 23:9). Thus Fatherhood and Sonship are beyond natural human knowing (Matt. 11:27). Only revelation can show the essential

nature and order of these. Likewise too 'the Spirit of the Father' (Matt. 10:20), and 'the Spirit of the Son' (Gal. 4:6) is also a unique Trinitarian relationship

It must be seen that 'God is love', and that Jesus is 'the Son of his love', and so there is 'the love of the Spirit' (I John 4:8, 16; Col. 1:13; John 3:35; Rom. 5:5; 15:30; Gal. 5:22–23). Hence the Triune setting is that of love. In this sense God is love, and the unity is in that love.

Functionally, God as Father of His Son, the Son as the Son of his Father, and the Spirit as the Spirit of them both, work together relationally, and work as one purposively to fulfil the plan of the counsel they have taken, so that Father, Son and Spirit work in the works of creation, providence, redemption and the ultimate renewal or regeneration of all things.

Thus, when we read many times of the Three Persons in certain passages of the New Testament, these do not have to be 'proof texts' of the Trinity, but excellent indications that Father, Son and Spirit are one together in the one action. So see Hebrews 10:7–17; I Peter 1 :2; Ephesians 4:4–6; I Corinthians 12:4–6; 15:27–28; II Corinthians 13:14; Matthew 28:19. See also John 14:16–23; 16:12–15.

We conclude then that although the doctrine of the Trinity is not named, or set out systematically in the Scriptures, it is difficult to avoid the wonderful truth which emerges as we study them. The following notes are set forth to help us avoid the heresies which have arisen when seeking to understand the doctrine of the Trinity.

Errors concerning the Trinity have appeared over the centuries. They reappear today in the various sects. They are as follows:

(a) *Monarchianism*, which teaches that the Son is an attribute of God, and not of the same substance, nor even a person at all.

(b) *Modalism or Sabellianism*, which holds that God is manifested, sometimes as Father, sometimes as Son, and sometimes as Holy Spirit.

(c) *Patricianism* is the view that God the Father, the one Person in the Godhead, came down to earth and suffered on the Cross—apparently renouncing and deserting the sovereignty of the universe while doing so! Swedenborg followed this heresy.

(d) *Tritheism* (opposed to Trinitarianism), which falsely teaches that there are three Gods.

(e) *Arianism*, which teaches that Christ was the first and highest created Being, who, in turn, created the Holy Ghost.

(f) *Unitarianism* says that there is one God, Jesus the best of men, but only a man, the Holy Spirit a Divine influence.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD(5)

THE PERSON AND WORK OF THE FATHER

INTRODUCTION

When we speak of ‘God’, we see two things. First, the word ‘God’ is a designation rather than a name, i.e. ‘there be gods many and lords many’. As we study the names of God* we see that the English translation of God covers a number of terms (in the O.T.) which have certain meanings. Secondly, the term ‘God’ is often meant to cover the work of the Godhead, or the particular person and work of the One whom (in the N.T.) we call ‘the Father’.

Because the three Persons of the Godhead participate in every work, it is difficult to separate their particular works. Each Person is discrete, and each Person has a certain work, e.g. the Father sends the Son, so that they are not the one.

* For study in this area, readers are referred to Bible dictionaries (‘Names of God’), an excellent summary is given by T. C. Hammond’s *In Understanding be Men*, 6th edn, IVP, London 1976, pp50-51.

One possible way of seeing the ministries of the Persons is that the Father is always the Initiator, the Son the Mediator, and the Spirit the Agent of each work, viz. creation, redemption, regeneration (of man and the creation).

We will proceed then to the person and work of the Father, knowing that to be in the context of the Son and the Spirit.

THE FATHER IS CREATOR

All the elements or attributes of God which we have seen in former chapters of this section apply to God as Father, Creator, Provider and Redeemer. We do not have to repeat the meaning of attributes natural and moral. However, they are present in the action of Creation. It may sound too simple to say of God that He was prior to creation. This is self-evident. Yet it needs to be said that He was the God of grace, the Redeemer, as also the Completer of all things, before He began creating. See, for example, Ephesians 1: 3–14 (esp. verse 7); Ephesians 2:7; Isaiah 63:16; I Corinthians 2:6f.; II Timothy 1:9.

What we mean is that we must take an holistic view of God, and not think of Him creating only as a Creator, i.e. His creative work issued solely from some ‘part’ of Him which was Creator, whereas His Fatherhood was to be primarily operative in the period of the New Testament. God must create out of His entire Being.

Creation by God is the doctrine basic to the true understanding of all theology. If we miss out here we are deficient in understanding everywhere. What then is the doctrine? It is best to take the passages of Scripture and examine them, passages such as Genesis chapters 1 and 2; Psalm 33:6–9; Isaiah 40:12, 21, 22; Job 33:4; Job chapters 38 to 41, with extra details such as in Job 37:18; I Samuel 2:8; Zechariah

12:1; Psalm 8:3; 93:1; 96:10; 119:90; Jeremiah 10:12; Psalm 139:13, 15; and so on.

We need not here examine the *modes* of creation, but simply observe a number of principles. They are these:

- (a) Nothing exists or has being which was not by the act of the one God who was and is living and personal. That is, He is absolute Creator (Gen. 1:1–2:3; Ps. 33; 104; Job 38; Isa. 40).
- (b) All things were made in wisdom, God taking counsel with Himself (Job 28:20ff.; Prov. 8:22ff.; Ps. 104:24; Jer. 10:12).
- (c) God creates by His Word (Heb. 11:3; Ps. 33:9). In John 1:1–3 the Word is the second Person of the Trinity.
- (d) He creates all things as good, i.e. functional, pleasure-giving, appropriate (Gen. 1:31; Eccl. 3:11; cf. Gen. 2:18; 2:9; I Tim. 4:4; 6:17).
- (e) As Creator, He is Lord of heaven and earth (Luke 10:21; Acts 4:24; 17:24). All things are under His authority and control. This is the thought behind Isaiah 45:6–7, where God claims to be responsible for all things, including good and evil, light and darkness. He does not create *moral evil* (for it has no authentic ontology), but He does create calamity, i.e. weal and woe.
- (f) There is a series of successive creative acts of God. These are free acts of His will.
- (g) Man is a special creation of God, given lordship over all other living beings (Gen. 1:26ff.; Ps. 8:3f.).
- (h) God always works as Creator–Provider (John 5:17). His works are great and wonderful (Ps. 92:5; 139:14),

just and merciful (Ps. 145:17; Dan. 9:14), true and faithful (Ps. 33:4; 11 :7). God is the Rock whose work is perfect (Deut. 32:4). AU His works praise Him (Ps. 145:10).

- (i) The creation had a beginning, not *in* time, but *coeval with* time (Gen. 1:1; John 1:1).
- (j) Creation has its ‘times and seasons’. See Acts 17: 26–27. Its system is also *a fixed* one (Ps. 74:17; 104: 19; Jer. 31:35–36).

THE CREATOR IS FATHER

The Sermon on the Mount—amongst other passages—makes the Creator to be Provider. God’s providence is the extension of His creative work, His maintaining and sustaining of it, and His provision for it. Jesus teaches that the Creator–Provider is the Father. He does not show that God is Father apart from His Creatorhood and Kingship. We have seen that being Creator makes God also King over all the earth. The Father is King: the King is Father.

FATHERHOOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Two New Testament Scriptures—Luke 3:38 and Acts 17: 24–28—suggest that Adam was created as a son of God, and that man derives from God as Father (cf. Jer. 2:26f.; Acts 17:29). Man being in the likeness of God suggests the closest affinity possible, and man must correlate with God who is Creator, Father and King, as creature, son and subject.

In other parts of the Old Testament, God is primarily Covenant–Father to Israel. There are references to creation (e.g. Isa. 64:8; cf. Mal. 2:10), but these seem primarily within covenant. Israel is the son of God collectively (Exod.

4:22; Hosea 11:1), but also each Israelite is a son (Deut.14:1). Other references are Deuteronomy 32:6f.; Isaiah 1:2; Jeremiah 3:14, 19, 22. Isaiah 63:16 is important because it says, ‘Thou art our Father . . . from eternity’, meaning either ‘as long as we have been covenant Israel’, or ‘as long as time is’, i.e. ‘You planned us as Your children prior to creation.’ This thought is found in Ephesians 1:4ff., and doubtless derives from this passage.

God is not known in the Old Testament as Father in the same way as when the Son revealed Him by the incarnation. The simple matter is that Israel had not seen the Son. It was a son, but in imperfection. It could not have revelation from itself!

FATHERHOOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

(a) Fatherhood of the Son

Galatians 4:4 has it, ‘In the fulness of time God sent forth His Son, born of a woman’. That describes the fact and mode of sending the Son, as also the purpose. This Son had not hitherto been sent forth *in this manner*, i.e. ‘in the likeness of sinful flesh’ (Rom. 8:1–3). Whilst in Scripture men and angels can be called ‘sons of God’, this one is uniquely Son. John 1:14 says, ‘the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth’, i.e. no other is thus begotten, none other is as the Father is, ‘full of grace and truth’.

The Son incarnate catches up the covenant sonship of Israel, as he is the true fulfilment of Hosea 11: 1, as seen in Matthew 2:14–15. Hence in the New Testament, the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God is filled out as never in the Old Testament. Uniquely the Son reveals this Fatherhood as seen in Matthew 3:17; 11:27; 17:5; John 1:14, 18; 5:17ff.; 8:29–44; 10:30; 14:1–10; 17:1ff.; Romans 15:6; Ephesians 1:3; II Corinthians 1:3.

Passages such as John 14:1–10 (cf. John 3:35; 5:30; 6:57; 8:28–29; Matt. 11:27; Heb. 10:7) show the Son as obeying the Father, and in this sense *all that the Son does is what the Father is doing*. In this way, the Fatherhood of God is *not only revealed but expressed*. In our study under ‘God the Son’, we will examine the uniqueness of the relationship between Father and Son, but this, in any case, leads to the outworking of the sonship of man with the Father, God.

(b) Fatherhood of Men as Sons

We have seen from Luke 3:38 and Acts 17:24–30 (cf. Jer. 2:26–27) that God’s Fatherhood originates men. We are not only interested in the fact of this origination but its *modes*. That is, God does not originate a man without that man’s capacity for response, love and obedience. God’s origination of man is from His whole being, not some imagined creative power which is divorced from His essential Fatherhood. The New Testament chides man (as does the O.T. chide covenant Israel) for not seeing God as Father. Whilst it is true from Matthew 5:43–48 that Fatherhood is strictly speaking limited to the covenant people, yet they are to treat all men as though they were brothers, even though those they treat this way are enemies—thus showing themselves as sons of their Father. By this circuitous reasoning we see men, in some sense, are still considered as sons of the originating Father. ‘God is the Father of all men, but not all men are the children of God.’

(c) Fatherhood is Creational and Redemptional

God’s Fatherhood of men, then, is seen as *redemptive* in the New Testament. This redemption comes from the objective work of the Cross which itself is intended to ‘bring many sons into glory’ (Heb. 2:9–10; cf. John 17:1–5; 14:6). That work, through the Spirit, effects (i) regeneration, and (ii) adoption or ‘sonship’. Regeneration really means the renew–

ing of the original sonship (origination), whilst adoption (giving the sonship, cf. Rom. 9:4) means the making of men to be sons where they were not so, in this full sense, before.

This sonship of the Father was planned prior to creation (Eph. 1:3–7; cf. I Cor. 2:6ff.), and is also the intention of God for redeemed man (Rom. 8:28–30; I John 3:1–3). Ultimate sonship is glorification (Rom. 8: 17–25, 28–30; cf. Phil. 3:21), which sonship is to the glory of God’s grace (Eph. 1: 7; 2:7), and wholly to the glory of God (Eph. 1:11–14).

We note that this sonship of man cannot be accomplished apart from the Sonship of the Son. He is the means of redemption and so sonship (John 14:6; Heb. 2:9–10). It is in him that regeneration and adoption are effected (Gal. 3:26–29 4:4–6; John 1:11–13; 14:6, etc.).

Finally we note that Fatherhood cannot be excluded from redemption, i.e. Fatherhood and Redeemerhood go together. I Peter 4:19 says we can entrust our souls to a *faithful* Creator. This must mean (i) the creation is essentially trustworthy, coming as it does from God (i.e. it *is good*), and (ii) God will see through to the end that which He has purposed for creation. We must not see God as Creator and Redeemer apart from God as Father.

THE CREATOR IS REDEEMER

Isaiah 63:16 says, Thou art our Father, our Redeemer from eternity’, Israel knew God as Covenant–Father, but then that meant He had redeemed them from Egypt. Equally it was His *son* He had redeemed from Egypt (Exod. 4:22; Hosea 11: 1). The *son* was to *serve* Him (Exod. 4:22; cf. . 20:1ff.). Fatherhood and Redeemerhood, with Israel, are tied together. So with the redemption that the Father planned in His Son—the one who became incarnate and was called Jesus the Messiah. He was called Jesus’ because he was to

save his people from their sins.

In the Old Testament, redemption is certainly the work of God for Israel, but it is not to be confined to Israel. This is the message of the prophets, that God will effect a redemption which will be universal. This is the thrust of Genesis 3:15, the covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3, etc.). It lies behind the promise of Genesis 49: 10, and even if Israel takes redemption to be limited to itself, the prophets do not. The Servant is to be ‘a light to lighten the Gentiles’, as also ‘the glory of thy people Israel’.

The New Testament shows Christ coming only to the lost of the tribes of Israel, and confining himself to them. But then ‘many will come from the east and west [the Gentiles] and sit at table with Abraham and Jacob in the kingdom, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into outer darkness’ (Matt. 8:11–12). Christ then tells the disciples firmly that they are to go with the Gospel of redemption to Jerusalem and Judea (Jews), Samaria (Samaritans—‘the bridgepeople’), and ‘the uttermost parts of the earth’ (the Gentiles). They are to make disciples of *all nations*, and forgiveness is to be preached to *all nations*, beginning at Jerusalem (Acts 1:8; Matt. 28:18–20; Luke 24:44ff.).

This means that whilst the Fatherhood of God is not universalistic, it is universal. This means that *redemption springs from Fatherhood*. God certainly effects personal redemption, but He is also, and even primarily, interested in the redemption of nations (Gen. 3:15; 49:10; Ps. 2; Luke 2:32 = Isa. 42:6; 49:6; Acts 1:8; Matt. 28:19–20; Rev. 21:22–22:3).

Human fatherhood must, by nature of the case, be redemptive. No less, but much more than, the Divine Fatherhood.

THE CREATOR IS KING

God is King over all the earth (Ps. 47:2). This is obvious

from the fact that He who creates owns that which He creates, and takes responsibility for it. The Kingdom of God is simply *the rule of God over His creation*. The rebellion of men and angels makes no change to that simple fact. Whilst the literal term ‘Kingdom of God’ is not mentioned in the Old Testament, yet the theme is alive in its pages. Some references to it are Psalms 10:16; 22:28; 24:7–10; 44:4; 93:1; 96:10; 145:1–3; Daniel 4:37; Obadiah 21; I Chronicles 29: 11; Isaiah 6:5; 33:22; 43:15; Jeremiah 10:7.

Doubtless the rebellion of men and angelic powers has brought division and friction into the Kingdom, but since all creatures must be less powerful than God, they cannot break that rule. The design of doing this is seen in Psalm 2, Isaiah 14 and Revelation 12—amongst many similar passages.

The ultimate Kingdom of God will be composed of those who voluntarily (i.e. those captured by grace) submit to the Lordship of God. Israel, with its covenant promises from God, is set up to be a kingdom under God. It is primarily theocratic. It is also a holy kingdom, in fact a ‘kingdom of priests’ or a ‘priest kingdom among all the nations’ (Exod. 19:5–6). It does, however, fail to sanctify its great King, its Covenant–Father, and is punished by being sent into exile.

Nevertheless the theme of the Kingdom is regnant. It becomes the subject of the prophets (e.g. Isa. 9:6–7; 11:1–5; Dan. 7:14ff.; etc.). Certainly this is the message of John the Baptist, but then he only voices and announces that which was strongly in the minds of the people contemporary with him. Likewise Jesus came preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and teaching concerning the Kingdom. In the Sermon on the Mount, he speaks of the Father who is the King, the King who is the Father. Kingship without Fatherhood is severe, but Fatherhood without Kingship could be weak.

Jesus, so to speak, secures the Kingdom by his victory of the Cross and Resurrection. The Gospel of the Kingdom

remains just that, but it is also now the Gospel of redemption, for the Kingdom victory has been secured by the work of the Cross. Hence the church proclaims the Gospel of the King (the Lordship of Christ, the Kingship of the Father), and the reign and rule of God comes upon the world from Jerusalem to the uttermost part(s).

The Kingdom is said to ‘come’ in all its fulness in the eschaton, the Day of the Lord, the time of judgement, and the ultimate defeat and execution of all evil. This is the message of the Epistles, and thoroughly that of the Revelation.

CONCLUSION ON THE PERSON AND WORK OF THE FATHER

The doctrine of the Trinity fills out when we see the person and work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. When we examine the person and work of the Father, we see that it is only fully intelligible in the light of the persons and works of the Son and the Holy Spirit. In connection with these, we need also to understand and trace the themes of covenant, the Kingdom of God, and the people of God, in which case we also need to understand the principles of salvation history. This in turn means we must know the principles of regeneration, justification, sanctification and glorification.

In our immediate study of the Father, we see that He is the Initiator of the works of creation, salvation, and the ultimate renewal and glorification of all things. We must note, however, that His offices as Creator, as Father, as Redeemer and as King, are of the one piece. Hence we must see Him holistically, and not from a reductionist point of view.

Personally, as human beings, we delight in this integrity of God, in the unity of His Being, in the oneness of His

Being as Father–Creator–King–Redeemer. We are truly human when we correlate with these elements of which we have spoken. However, our approach to them is through the Son of God, and the Spirit of the Son, so that we must also examine the fulness of the Godhead.

CHAPTER EIGHT**THE DOCTRINE OF GOD (6)****THE PERSON AND WORK OF THE SON****THE SON IS ETERNAL**

In our study of the Triune God, we have had to look at the relationship of the Father to the Son. We have seen this necessarily existed before time. The Father never became Father. He always was. Theology (especially in the Creeds) speaks of the Son being begotten of the Father. This is often called *generation*. In human experience, we understand the generation of a son by his father. The father is prior, in time, to the son. In the case of the Son, the Father was not prior or posterior to the Son. The generation, therefore, is not a matter of time. *Paternity* and *filiation* are simultaneous. Some theologians see generation as an act before time (so that it has no relationship with time), and some see it as the continuous act of God. What the New Testament is saying is that Christ is the only (begotten) Son of the Father.

Doubtless this argument lies within dogmatic theology, but its roots are biblical. Whilst the paternal nature of the

Father is not easy to grasp, the filial nature of the Son is shown to us in his acts and works on the one hand, and the attestation of the Father (to the Son) on the other. The works of the Son are visible to us from the point of incarnation onwards, but the Son was working prior to that. His works are from the creation to the incarnation, and have to be revealed by Scripture, as we see in Isaiah 6: 1– 10; cf. John 12:39–41; I Corinthians 10:1–4; John 8:56; John 1:1–3; Colossians 1:15–17; Hebrews 1:2–3; and so on.

In other words, we are saying that when the Father attested to His Son at the baptism (Matt. 3:17) and the transfiguration (Matt. 17:5), and also generally attested, as Jesus said (John 5:36–37), then He was not making or adopting the Son at this point in time, but declaring the Sonship which had always been. Particularly at this point, however, He was affirming the Sonship having now come in the flesh.

Scriptures which point to Jesus' pre-time existence are John 1:1–3; Colossians 1:15f.; Hebrews 1:2–3; John 17:5. Jesus, in John chapter seventeen, uses the phrase 'before the world began'. Arians agree that he was the first of all creation, but take this to be in regard to time, rather than qualitative precedence. However, John 1:1 is really saying, 'When the beginning came to be, the Word already was.' Other Scriptures show the Son as prior to incarnation, and are suggestive of his eternal Being, i.e. Philippians 2:5f.; II Corinthians 8:9; Romans 8:3; John 8:13–15; 5:24, 37; and so on. Yet other Scriptures virtually speak of him as God: Colossians 2:9; Romans 9:5; Titus 1:3; I Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:1; and I John 5:20.*

* The subject of Christ's deity is quite complex, as it is also profound. We have not even asked the question, ontologically, 'What is deity?' We have assumed there is such a thing, and this because, as we read the Scriptures, we have revelation of God Himself. For further treatments read, *Jesus as They Saw Him*, pp. 20–38 (William Barclay)- *Unity and Diversity in the N. T.*, pp. 45–50 (J. D. G. Dunn); and relevant parts of *The Divinity of Our Lord* (H. P. Liddon).

THE RELATIONSHIP OF FATHER AND SON

The relationship of the Father and Son always was. If in time it is declared in the prophets (e.g. Ps.2; 45; 89), in the incarnation (Luke 1:35), the baptism (Matt. 3:17), and the transfiguration (Matt. 17:5), then it does not become so by the declaration alone. It always was. Hebrews chapter I shows that the ascension is the declaration also (as was the resurrection: Rom. 1:4) that the man Jesus is now the Son, risen and regnant at the right hand of the Father, but yet the declaration adds nothing to the essential Sonship. It only declares that the incarnate Son is victorious in his manhood, as ever he has been in his deity. Even so, this victory of his humanity is not by virtue of his deity, but by his human subsistence within the Father, a subsistence aided by the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38; Matt. 12:28).

This brings us to the point that the Son subsists in the Father, i.e. his true being as Son lies in his dependency upon the Father. In John's Gospel he constantly says he does nothing apart from his Father, and that he lives by the Father (e.g. John 6:57; 14:10). One of the problems that we have in John's Gospel is to know whether Jesus is speaking regarding the Son in his eternal nature and situation, or in his incarnate state. However, in John 5:26 he makes it clear that the Son incarnate is no less than the Son pre-incarnate or post-incarnate, 'For as the Father has life *in himself*, so he has granted the Son also to have life *in himself*'. John 1:4 says, 'In him [the Son] was life, and the life was the light of men. ' We see then that the relationship of Father and Son is determinative of the Son's Sonship. Hence the statement of Philippians 2:6 that he was in the form (Greek: *morphe*) of God.

Doubtless the incarnation only 'visibilises' to man what always was, i.e. he was 'the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person', 'the image of the invisible

God'. Hence in creation he has the creative power of God (John 1:3; 5:21, 26), the knowledge (Matt. 11:27), and the honour (John 5:23). To see him is to see the Father and to know him is to know the Father (John 14:6f.; cf. 15:23–24).

**THE PERSON OF THE SON:
THE WORKS OF THE SON**

We have seen that the Son's Sonship is contingent upon the Father. In a sense the Father is not the Father without the Son, but then His Fatherhood is expressed in the generation and person of His Son. Even so, the Son in his person has discreteness and his own functional work. He is mediator of creation, of redemption, and of the ultimate renewal and glorification of creation.

In seeking to know the *person* of the Son, we must discover who he is from his *works*. We have seen that he has ever been. He was at one with the Father, in His glory and His love (John 17:5, 24–26). He was Mediator in creation (John 1:1–3; Col. 1:15–17; Heb. 1:2). He was at work in history: 'My Father has always been working, and I work' (John 5:17). He became incarnate in fulfilment of the prophecies, i.e. he was God become man. We have seen (above) that *his deity is* indisputable by reason of his eternal generation, his participation with the Father and the Spirit in the work of creation and providence (Col. 1:15–17; Heb. 1:2–3; I Cor. 8:6; etc.).

What has always been difficult to understand is how the deity and the humanity of the Son subsist in the one person Of Jesus Christ. Understanding is difficult because we have no precedent in human history, and no parallel in creation. When it comes to the work of Christ, we must affirm two things clearly:

(a)all that the Son did upon earth, he did as man. That is– as is indicated in Acts 10:38, Matthew 12:28 and similar passages–he was anointed with the Holy Spirit and power, and so did the works given to him to do;

(b)whilst not effecting these works from the resources of his own deity, he was nevertheless Emmanuel, i.e. ‘God–with–us’, or ‘God–become–man’. We might wish to refer to the *kenosis* of Philippians 2:5–8 (i.e. his self–emptying), as a setting aside of the prerogatives and powers of his deity, but these must certainly have continued as he still had to uphold the creation (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3).

Since we do not understand how deity and humanity exist together, we must remain agnostic on that score. We must emphasise, however, that he was truly man, and not merely the appearance (or charade) of a man.

‘THE WORKS WHICH THE FATHER HAS GIVEN ME’

We have seen that the innate unity of the Trinity is by virtue of the nature of the Godhead as love (I John 4:8, 16), each Person one with the others by love, which is the essential being of true Deity. John 10:17 and 14:30–31 (amongst other references) show that the Father sent the Son to do certain works. The thrust of the Scriptures is that the incarnation was with a view to the redemptive work of Christ (Gal. 4:4–6). This redemptive work requires the anointing of Jesus as Messiah (Matt. 3:17; cf. Acts 10:38), the proclamation of the Kingdom (the Gospel of the Kingdom), so that Israel can recognise and receive its Messiah and the new Davidic rule of the Kingdom, and then the securing of that Kingdom by the redemptive work of the Cross, Resurrection

and Ascension. Jesus knew he must accomplish these works (John 4:34; 8:29; 17:4; 19:30).

In order to understand the person of the Son, we must examine the nature and value of these works. Yet in order to do that correctly, we must understand the nature and offices of Messiah as spelled out prophetically, and fulfilled in the life and ministry of Jesus. He is, then, *Son of man* (Ps. 8:4; Heb. 2:5f.; Dan. 7:13; Mark 13:26; 14:62; 2:20; 2:28; 8:31; 9:31; 10:33; 10:45; 14:21; cf. John 1:51; 3:13–14; 5:27; 6:53; 8:28; 12:34; Acts 7:56). The Son of man is at once an earthly and a divine figure, given authority over the nations and linked in Mark 10:45 with the Suffering Servant of Isaiah chapters 40 to 66.

He is also *Messiah*, i.e. ‘the anointed one’. This is virtually the equivalent of, or parallel to, the term ‘Son of God’, as we see in Matthew 16:16 and 26:63–64, where also it equates with the term ‘Son of man’. The term also relates to other designations of Jesus such as ‘The Son of the Blessed’, ‘The King of the Jews’, ‘The Holy One of God’, and ‘the King of Israel’. We have seen that he is the *Son of God*, and yet this term must primarily be understood in its Messianic sense. This is so in the Synoptic Gospels. In John’s Gospel it is this and more because there is more reference to his existence before time.

The further designation that *Jesus is Lord* refers of course to his place as Mediator of creation (Col. 1:15–17; cf. I Cor. 8:56), but is shown in prophecy (e.g. Ps. 2:6–7; 110:1; Mark 12:35–37; cf. Luke 5:8; Matt. 7:21–23; Mark 11:3; Luke 6:46) and confirmed by the works Jesus did. His Lordship is essential to his claim to be the King of the Kingdom, for this is virtually the significance of his baptism. Where he goes the Kingdom goes (Matt. 12:28). His Lordship is of course consummated by his saving work, for then the cry is ‘Jesus is Lord!’, seeing he has overcome sin, death, the world, Satan and the like.

Even so, all these designations are *servant* offices. Hence his work is that of a *Servant of God*. This is stated definitively in Mark 10:45, in the light of which we should read Mark 8:31, Matthew 12:18–21; Isaiah 42:1–4, and John 1:29; Isaiah 53:6–7. Luke 22:27 shows him as servant of all (cf. John 13:1f.). The thought is carried through into the Acts (3:13, 26; 4:27, 30) and the Epistles (Phil. 2:5f.).

THE DOING OF THE WORKS

In John 14:10 Jesus says, ‘Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does his works.’

Also in John 8:28–29 he says likewise, ‘When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority but speak thus as the Father taught me. And he who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him.’ Put together, these statements mean: ‘I am not doing any works of my own. I am doing what the Father has commanded me to do [cf. John 10:17; 14:30–31]. Even so, I only do them because it is the Father within me who is doing them.’

We can see then that Jesus does the works of his Father, and each of these works (or, all of these works) is in accordance with the offices the Father has given him which we have nominated above, e.g. Son of Man; Messiah; Son of God; Lord; Servant of God; and so on. When we look at the purpose of those offices, we see that they can be summed up as follows:

(a) Jesus is the Christ, i.e. the leader of the Kingdom of God.

(b) His task is to proclaim the Kingdom to Israel, and then to ‘secure’ the Kingdom by the work of the Cross and the Resurrection. This means (i) he will bear the sins of mankind; (ii) he will defeat the powers of darkness and evil; (iii) he will liberate man from the power of sin and evil, as also the guilt of the law, and the death which comes from it.

(c) Jesus as the Son will do the will of the Father, and in doing so will reveal the Father who Himself is the King of the Kingdom.

Jesus then, with and through his disciples, teaches and proclaims the Kingdom, and in fact his presence is the Kingdom in action. Israel should recognise this but does not. Instead he is judged and crucified as a blasphemer. Later we will examine the saving work of Christ, but it is sufficient here to see that every work which Jesus did was showing the glory of God (John 11:4, 40; 12:28–29; 13: 31–32; 17:1–5). On the Cross, Jesus stated that he had completed the work given him by the Father (John 19:30), and he then committed himself to the Father (Luke 23:46; cf. John 10:18).

THE POST-RESURRECTION WORKS OF THE SON

In Acts 1:1 Luke suggests that what the Son had done to the point of his ascension was what he ‘began both to do and to teach’, suggesting he was yet to do and teach more. The Book of the Acts is really describing the ongoing work of the Son through the Spirit and the church. If Acts 10:38 speaks of his earthly ministry, then I Corinthians 15:24–28 speaks of his ascension ministry. Whilst the Son is at the right hand of the Father (Eph. 1:19–21; Col. 3:1–2; Acts 7:55; Heb. 1:3ff.) he is also with his church and in both its life

and ministry (Matt. 28:20; Mark 16:20; Acts 9:3ff.; 22: 17ff.). He has an intercessory ministry at the right hand of God (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25). The Book of the Revelation depicts him as Lord of history, ruling over it, and making his judgements. Finally, as the Epistles also indicate, he will have defeated all evil, and will return to judge the world. He, then, with the Father, will dwell with the true people of God in the new heavens and the new earth.

THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE SPIRIT

In pursuing our doctrine of God, we see that the Son does all his work in the will of the Father. The Father and the Son are one in the work (John 5:17–29; 10:30; etc.). The Father witnesses to the Son, and the Son to the Father. At the same time, the Son works by the Holy Spirit. From the conception in Mary’s womb to the ascension, Jesus does all by the Spirit. Then with the Father he sends the Spirit, who in turn witnesses to Christ (John 15:26; Acts 1:8; John 16:12–15). All the works of Jesus the Lord are done through the power of the Holy Spirit. In Revelation chapters 2 and 3 it is Christ who writes to the seven churches; yet he says, ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

Later we will see the consummating work of the Son, but here we can see it is to save man, to guard him in intercession, to bring him to sonship, and ultimately to glorify him. In these works the Father is also present, as, too, is the Holy Spirit. We conclude then that we cannot know the nature of God unless we know both the Father and the Son, with also the Spirit. We know God when we are the beneficiaries of the work of the Father, the Son and the Spirit.

CHAPTER NINE

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD (7)

THE PERSON AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS PERSON AND ETERNAL

We have said that each person of the Triune Godhead is discrete as a person. Each has unique function, yet the Godhead is One. Because the masculine gender is not used of the Spirit in Old and New Testaments, some tend to think of the Spirit as ‘it’—hence the idea of a fluid (water), and element (wind or fire) or impersonal power. The Scriptures ascribe the elements of knowing, willing and feeling to the Spirit (e.g. Isa. 11:1f.; I Cor. 2:12; Rom. 8:14; Luke 4:1; Isa. 63:10; Eph. 4:30; Gal. 5:22–23), and such elements—so far as we know—constitute personal being.

Even so, we receive our understanding of the Holy Spirit from what the Scriptures tell us of him, and he is clearly spoken about from Genesis to Revelation. Hebrews 9:14

speaks of him as ‘the eternal Spirit’.* Speaking most simply, we know that the Spirit was present in creation (Gen. 1: 1–2; Ps. 33:6; 104:29–30), and he is spoken of as ‘the Spirit of life’ (Job 33:4; Rom. 8:2; II Cor. 3:6; Ezek. 37; etc.) He is then present throughout man’s history. We trace this fact in the Old Testament, where we see him working in the patriarchs, in Israel (Hag. 2:5), and especially in prophecy.

He works in the coming and birth of Christ, in his ministry, death, resurrection and ascension, and then comes in an epochal way at Pentecost, and so works in the life of the church until the eschaton where he works in judgement. All of these things presuppose him to be eternal.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

It is inescapable that we should trace the work of the Spirit from creation, which in its turn means he is prior to creation. We need to trace that work to the end–time, the eschaton. This would appear to be a history of the Holy Spirit. In fact it is more than that. In tracing the ministry of the Spirit, we are really tracing the works both of the Father and the Son, and the Triune work is really that of salvation history, i.e. *heilsgeschichte*. †

This salvation history involves such themes as covenant, the Kingdom of God, the people of God, the plan and purpose of God, and the redemption of man and the creation.

It is necessary then to see that the works of the Spirit are not simply those things which happen in a linear form of

* Some commentators suggest this is Christ’s own spirit (cf. Rom. 1:4), but even so it does not alter the fact that the Spirit is eternal, and the Son’s spirit as man was contingent upon the Holy Spirit who is eternal.

† The German word *heilsgeschichte* covers the theology of salvation history, i.e. that all history is, and relates to, God’s act of salvation in Christ. There are differing views or systems within this *heilsgeschichte*.

successive acts, culminating in the Day of the Lord (although that is true), but are in fact the works which Father, Son and Spirit combine to do to fulfil their purpose for creation. What happens, then, in each age or epoch of human history, must be seen as purposive, processive and progressive, all shaping up the climax of history. In this light, then, we may briefly examine the works of the Spirit, knowing that by them we arrive at the nature and person of the Spirit himself.

THE SPIRIT IN CREATION

The references above show us the Spirit as the Spirit of creation. The *nature* and *goal* of creation must be understood as well as the *modes* of creating. Creation is functional (Gen. 1:31; Eccl. 3:11), and as such is purposive (Prov. 16:4; Ps. 57:2; John 12:27; Eph. 1:5; 3:11). Man is commanded to live and work according to this purpose (Gen. 1:28f.; 9:1f.). Genesis 2:7 speaks of God breathing into man the breath of life, and although man is a contingent creature (Jer. 10:23), he needs the Holy Spirit, not only to be a creature, but to have true meaning as a person in his creation. Genesis 6:3 (and context) shows us that man can refuse his being as spirit, and seek to live only after a fleshly manner.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of life, and as such sustains all life in creation.

THE SPIRIT IN MAN AND MAN’S HISTORY

The Spirit in the Old Testament

Man’s history is of course God’s history. In biblical terms it must be understood by covenant and the Kingdom of God,

and both of these relate to salvation. *The fall of man* must be understood in order to know the grace of God in redemption. Genesis 3:15 is the ‘proto–evangel’, i.e. the first prophetic announcement of the Gospel. In this case, it speaks of the defeat of evil and the triumph of God in the seed of woman, generally interpreted as the Messiah. Romans 5:12ff. gives us a rationale of salvation in history. All history shapes up to Christ. History must be understood by means of prophecy.

The Spirit works by dwelling in man, and working in him at the same time. Doubtless the Spirit sustains the biological life of man, even though he is a sinner. However, Genesis 6:3 shows that whereas the Spirit worked in man to bring moral obedience, the Flood is a judgement in the removal of the Spirit in relation to this work. Abel was a prophet (Luke 11:51); so was Noah; and prophets are men of the Spirit. We find the Spirit working in the patriarchs—Abraham (Gen. 20:7), Isaac (cf. Gal. 4:29), and Jacob (see Gen. 49). Joseph is spoken of as a man of the Spirit (Gen. 41:38), as are also Moses and Joshua.

Israel always has the Spirit (Hag. 2:5), not only in the Exodus (Isa. 63:10), but also in all its life. Some priests are said to have the Spirit, and certainly some judges and kings, as also others, such as artisans, elders and the like. The point is that the Spirit worked always in Israel, shaping up God’s purposes through this people. Most of all the prophets are spoken of as men of the Spirit, but their greatest prophecies are of the Messiah—King who is to come, and of the era when God will pour out His Spirit on Israel (e.g. Ezek. 36:24–28; 37:1–14; Isa. 32:15; 59:21; Zech. 12:10), and not only on Israel but on all flesh, such as in Joel 2:28f.

The Spirit in the New Testament

The word of prophecy has always been indispensable to man. ‘Where there is no prophecy the people cast off restraint’

(Prov. 29: 18). The prophetic word is the word of the Lord, and the Spirit brings it through the prophet. A dearth of such prophecy obtained in the period between the Old and New Testaments. However, in the New Testament there is no dearth of the working of the Spirit.

(a) The Birth Narratives

In Luke chapters 1 and 2 there are many mentions of the work of the Spirit. They are to do with the births of John and Jesus, with the persons of their mothers, and with other prophetic ministry attaching to their births.

(b) The Life of Jesus

The Holy Spirit is spoken of in the following events of the life of Christ: (i) *The birth*. Jesus is conceived through the Holy Spirit (Luke 1 :26–38). (ii) *The baptism* (Matt. 3: 13–17; cf. John 1:29–34). (iii) *The temptation* (Luke 4:1ff.). (iv) *The ministry* (see Matt. 12:28; Acts 10:38). The understanding of Jesus is by the Spirit (Luke 10:21). (v) *The Cross* (Heb. 9:14). (vi) *The Resurrection* (Rom. 8:11; 1:4; cf. Eph. 1:19–21). (vii) *The Ascension* (Eph. 1:19–21).

The Old Testament has prophesied that Messiah would be anointed with the Spirit (Isa. 11:1f.; 42:1; 61:1f.; etc.). Isaiah 59:21 accords with the promise of John that the Messiah would pour out the Spirit—which he does (Acts 2:33). Jesus, in John chapters 14 to 16, says he will go to the Father and, with Him, pour out the Spirit.

(c) The Spirit and Pentecost

The Spirit is given by the Father and the Son at Pentecost. This outpouring is to be universal, and so first (in accordance with Acts 1:8) the Spirit is given at Jerusalem (Acts 2); then at Samaria (Acts 8); and afterwards to the Gentiles (the nations) at Caesarea (Acts 10). This also means these three peoples are admitted into the Kingdom of God.

(d) The Spirit, the Church and the Acts of God

The coming of the Spirit effects two things: (i) conviction of sin, righteousness and judgement (John 16:7–11), and (ii) the revelation of the Son and the Father (John 16:12–15).

The result of this ministry of the Spirit is for many the gifts of repentance and forgiveness (Acts 5:30–31; 11:18) which are received. Regeneration (forgiveness, justification) takes place (I Cor. 6:11; Titus 3:5–7; Acts 15:8–9). The church or the body of Christ is born, and redeemed persons become its members, through the Spirit (Eph. 2:18; I Cor. 12:13). The church itself is the dynamic unit of the Spirit which further proclaims the Gospel through the Spirit. It does this by reason of the gifts of Christ which are distributed by the Spirit (Eph. 4:8ff.; I Cor. 12:4ff.; cf. Heb. 2:4), and by the power of the Spirit (Acts 1:8; I Cor. 2:4; I Thess. 1:5; I Pet. 1:12).

What must be seen is that the Holy Spirit is at once the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9–11), the Spirit of the Son (Gal. 4:46), and the Spirit of Jesus (Acts 16:6–7). Hence to be indwelt by Christ is really to be indwelt by the Spirit (Rom. 8: 9–11; Eph. 3:16f.). Whilst Christ is the Lord of the church (Eph. 1:19f.), so is the Spirit (II Cor. 3:18). He is the one who gives commands to the church, as we see in Acts. This is supplemented by such teaching as Romans 8:14; Galatians 5:16, 18, 25.

In other words, the Spirit is the Spirit of the now–time, with a view to the end–time. He is concerned to bring the Gospel of redemption (which is the Gospel of the Kingdom) to all the world (Acts 1 :8). Thus through him all the peoples of the world will receive the Gospel, and proclamation will evoke that response which will save man (I Cor. 1:18–21). Thus the nations of the world will come to the feet of Christ (Rom. 1:5; 15:18; 16:25–26; cf. Ps. 2:6–7; Gen. 49:10). In

the Acts (and the Epistles) all the acts of God are acts of the Holy Spirit. Doubtless they relate to the Father (Matt. 10:20) and the Son (Gal. 4:4–6), for all things are done in the Trinitarian unity. Even so, Acts 2:17ff. makes it clear that this is the era of the Spirit.

Within persons, and within the church, the Spirit is the Spirit of holiness, love, worship and praise, prayer, proclamation, and the like. The programme of Christ in (i) I Corinthians 15:24–27; (ii) Philippians 2:9–11, and (iii) The Book of the Revelation, is the programme which is carried out by the fulness of Christ (i.e. the church, cf. Eph. 1:23)—that is, the church led by the Spirit. All of this heads up history, orienting it to the consummation, and bringing it to that pitch.

(e) The Spirit and the End Things. The Eschaton

We have seen that the Spirit is eternal (Heb. 9:14). We see, too, as we examine the person and work of the Spirit, that the beginning (creation), in which the Spirit works, is really with a view to the end, i.e. the glorification of God by the glorification of man and the creation. In regard to all things, the Spirit is heading up history—as the Agent of the Father and the Son—to its ultimate consummation. We thus see the following:

- (i) He is the Spirit of Messiah, and Messiah must consummate the Kingdom (I Cor. 15:24–28; Rev. 11:15; Rom. 14:17; Matt. 12:28; etc.).
- (ii) He is the Spirit of judgement (Isa. 4:4; 11 :4; II Thess. 2:8; Isa. 42:1–2).
- (iii) He is the Spirit of hope (Rom. 8:18–30; 5:5; Gal.:5;5).
- (iv) He is the Spirit of resurrection (Rom. 8:9–11; cf. II

Cor. 3:6; Rom. 1:4).

(v) He is the Spirit of glorification (I Pet. 14:14; Rom. 8:18–27; cf. Ezek. 1).

CONCLUSION ON THE PERSON AND WORK OF THE SPIRIT

We have not dealt in any measure with the ministry of the Spirit in the life of the believing person. The initial complex of repentance, faith, forgiveness, conversion and justification need special treatment. They are, here, merely noted. Likewise the work of the Spirit in regeneration, sanctification, the service of the children of God, proclamation of the Gospel through them, and the life of love, unity, fellowship, prayer, worship and service will need a later treatment.

What we can conclude is that the Spirit is one with the Father and the Son in their basic works of creation, providence (including the sustaining of the creation), redemption, sanctification and glorification, as also the regeneration of the creation and its glorification.

We conclude then that the Trinity is certainly the ontological unity within time and eternity. We may then make our conclusion on the whole matter of the Doctrine of God.

CONCLUSION AS TO THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

We now know that we have to see the unity of the Triune God. To do this we must know that God is love, and that His love is expressed and actuated in the work which He does. We must know the Father, and His work in creation, providence, redemption and glorification, including that for man and the creation. Likewise we must see the Son as Mediator of this same work, and the Spirit as Agent. We must see that the Three Persons work together in the one Godhead, each not being a god, but in Triune relationship being the One (Godhead).

Even so, this is knowledge of God to which we do not come unaided. Because of our sinfulness, we cannot know God in a personal way, and we do not really know Him. However, the Word and the Spirit are one and they bring us to the revelation which God has prepared for man, so that by it He may reveal Himself. Full revelation (or a larger knowledge of the revelation) comes when we relate to God as Father, as Son, and as the Holy Spirit. We can say that at once the knowledge of God is relational and experiential. God, of course, is not dependent upon our experience of Him, but our knowledge is related to our personal experiences of Him—both as persons knowing Him personally, and as the people of God, the church, coming to know Him corporately.

CHAPTER TEN**THE DOCTRINE OF MAN (1)****INTRODUCTION: KNOWING MAN**

Doubtless we cannot know man unless we first know God. Man is made in the image of God, so that we need to understand the basic Reality before we can understand the image. Because of man's fallenness, we cannot attempt primarily to know God through man, for his perversity would lead us astray (Eccl. 7:29).

Of course we can develop an anthropology without reference to the Scriptures, but it will always be a deficient study in the light of what is said in Romans 1:20–32. Man has a bias against God; as we gather from the statements of Romans 3:10–18. Man does not know God—nor does he wish to do so, which is why his views of God, man, and creation will always be deficient. He needs the Scriptures to teach him, but then also the Spirit to teach him the truth of the Scriptures.

WHO AND WHAT MAN REALLY IS

In order to really understand who man is, we must see him in his various categories from beginning to end. We need to

know him as (a) man created; (b) man fallen; (c) man redeemed; (d) man in the processes of sanctification; and (e) man glorified. The Scriptures indicate that man as created was not final. God's ultimate purpose for him was always glorification. Nor has the Fall fully prevented that. Whatever man would be, had he not sinned, is a matter for speculation. He did sin, but God had—before creation—determined that man (i.e. elect man) would reach glorification. In this sense, man is always a 'becoming' person until he is glorified. Then what a man really is will be shown plainly.

MAN AS CREATED

(i) When we realise that *man's creation*—like all creation—comes from the Word of God (Gen. 1:1–2; Ps. 33:6; cf. John 1:1–3), then in that sense man is a response to the Word. He is as the Word makes him. What then has it made him? In Acts 17:26 (cf. Rom. 5:12f.) Paul insists that the race developed from one man, and indeed was in him.

(ii) *Man then is a creature of communality*, i.e. he is a social creature, and whilst always to be seen as a person, he is this best in context with the whole of his race.

(iii) *Man is also created as a male–female duality*. His social being lies in this area. Genesis 1:26–27, 2:18–25 and 5:1–2 show that man as male–female reflects God's image. Whilst I Corinthians 11:7 seems to suggest the male alone is the full image, yet the glory of man is absent without the woman, and so present in the dual (male–female) complex.

(iv) *Man is created as a contingent creature*. That is as Jeremiah says: 'The way of man is not in himself. It is not in man to direct his own footsteps' (10:23). Man is only true man as he correlates with God as his Creator, his Father, and his King. This creature–son–subject (servant) has affinity

with God because he is made in His image. Should man seek to move outside this contingency (i.e. dependency), then he goes against what it is to be truly man.

(v) *Man is created in the image of God.* This is clearly seen from Genesis 1:26f.; 5:1–2; 9:1ff.; I Corinthians 11:7; cf. Psalm 8:3f.; Ecclesiastes 3:11; 7:29. This means simply that ‘*everything God is, man is like that, but anything that God is, man is not essentially that.*’ When of course we understand the nature of God as we have seen in our previous studies, we see the mutuality of the Persons within the Godhead, and man must reflect this mutuality in two ways: (a) internally, i.e. he is an integrated person; (b) externally, i.e. he is related socially (inter-personally) with all mankind. We take it, however, that this social mutuality with all is again dependent upon his relationship with God (John 17:3; I John 5:20; I John 4:20).

When we ask, ‘What is the image of God?’ we can only answer the question when we know who (i.e. what) God is. There are many things we know concerning God, namely that He is love, is light, and has (or is) the attributes we have examined. He is actional, all movement and purpose deriving from Him (Eph. 1:11; 3:11), so that man also must be these things, not essentially (i.e. innately and intrinsically), but after a derived manner.

We discover then that man has been created to relate to God as Father (Acts 17:28; cf. Luke 3:38), for this must be so when he is so intimately in the image of God. Also man is a creature, requiring creaturely dependence. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus brings together the ideas of God as Creator–Provider and Father, and insists upon man’s total dependency. Man is also a subject of God, who, as we have seen, is King. He is King of the Kingdom, i.e. His entire universe.

Since man is a subject of the King, then he is bound to obey the creational mandate given in Genesis 1:28f. and

9:1f. We must conclude then that man has affinity with God which is indispensable to his being man; he is a responsible creature (God having self-choice, man must also have such); man as a subject must obey the King, but in fact this obedience is carried out in the area of working together with God (cf. I Cor. 3:9).

Other elements which we ought to know about man is that he is an integral part of the creation, and as such ‘very good’. He has moral being (choice of will), and spiritual being (Gen. 2:7; cf. 6:3); that is, he is not passive, not self-living, but moves out to others. He has eternity in his heart (Eccl. 3:11), meaning he connotes with the eternal as well as the temporal. He is upright (Eccl. 7:29), i.e. righteous, and has lordship over the universe. He must be responsible in all the areas of living and vocation for which he was created.

It is only when we see what happened to man, and what he lost by the Fall, that we can work back reasonably to what he was as created man, and also what he possessed.

CHAPTER ELEVEN**THE DOCTRINE OF MAN (2)****MAN IN THE TEMPTATION AND FALLING**

The garden (Eden) was undoubtedly a place of delight. Every tree of the garden was good for food and pleasant to the eyes (Gen. 2:9). The tree of life was central and available to man. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was prohibited to man for his own good. At this time, man was given dominion over the creatures, and his male–female duality was formed in the creation of woman out of himself. He was shown to be a social creature by being one as male–female.

The temptation, made to the woman, was simple. The serpent (cf. Rev. 12: 10) cast doubt upon the wisdom of God in the prohibition order concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. His temptation was at once a slur upon God and an invitation to man: ‘God knows that in the day you eat of the tree, your eyes will be opened and you will be as God [or, gods], knowing good and evil.’ That is, man would not simply be *like* God, but *as* God. Since God had made man by the Word, then man ought to have responded to that Word only. He was responsible. The woman

who was tempted was primarily related to her husband and to his leadership (Gen. 2:18). Eve was reprehensible for making the decision she did (Gen. 3:16; I Tim. 2:11–15). However, Adam knew what he was about, namely, ‘You shall be as God’. Man could not be more *like* God than he was. The indictment must have been ‘as God’, i.e. independent, able to make one’s own decisions regarding good and evil (cf. Heb. 5:14).

The results of the Fall tell us certain of the properties of man. He was one with God, i.e. as the male–female entity. He lost the glory as such (Rom. 3:23), which must have had to do with his relationship with God. He became afraid of God, saw himself as naked. He also in his guilt blamed God, and (as male) the female, and (as female) the serpent. Man rationalised his sin. He was denied access to the tree of life, although this for his own protection.

FALLEN MAN

It is not difficult to adduce an anthropology of man as fallen. Proverbs 4:23 pictures his heart as pure, flowing out the issues of life. Proverbs 25:26 shows how this fountain becomes polluted. Jeremiah 17:9 and Mark 7:20ff. indicate the pollution of man. Romans 5:12ff. indicates that man lives under the domination and fear of death, through sin, and the domination of sin through fear of death (Heb 2:14–15; Rom. 5:12–21).

Fallen man may, by grace, relate to God. Doubtless men like Abel, Seth and Noah are proof of this. I John 3:10f. indicates that mankind is in two camps. Some are children of God (by grace), and others are children of Satan (by their sin). Cain is pictured as one of the latter. Even so, all fallen mankind is doomed to death apart from the grace of God.

Whilst man has not lost the essential nature God has given

him, he does not live according to that essential nature. Romans 1:18–32 describes man in his rebellion against God. Refusing the principle of Jeremiah 10:23, man has sought his own autonomy. He has failed to give God His glory or to be thankful for creation. He has exchanged the truth of God for a lie. Reduced, this means man has rejected the *essential* theology, cosmology and anthropology that obtains by reason of the truth, and has re-rationalised them into his own forms and orders of thinking. These, too, vary across the entire human race.

What also emerges is that *man is a creature of love and of worship*. Acts 17:24–28 and Romans 1:20ff. show that the moment man rejects God he is forced, innately, to discover other objects of worship. He loves his gods—anyway, to begin with. The Fall is really *a death in relationship with God*. Man dies to God and comes alive to himself. Whilst he does not change *essentially*, he perversely goes against what he is. Hence the Bible speaks of him as being dead (Gen. 2:17; 3:7; Eph. 2:1, 5; Heb. 9:14; etc.). This being dead must not be spoken of as simply ‘spiritual’, i.e. that part of him which is spirit has died whereas soul and body live on. This curious idea is not found in the Bible. Arguments for man as either bipartite or tripartite are best rejected. Man is a total person, whatever the terms ‘body’, ‘soul’, and ‘spirit’ may mean. These terms are sometimes used interchangeably, and for this reason a so-called ‘biblical psychology’ is not to be sought.

MAN AND HIS VOCATION

We saw in Genesis 1 :28f. and 9:1 f. that man has been given a task. He is expected to work with God in this. It is quite considerable:

(a) He is to be fruitful and multiply.

(b) He is to replenish the earth, undoubtedly through loins, mind, and practical skills.

(c) He is to subdue the earth in whatever dynamic elements there are.

(d) He is to have lordship over all that is placed under his aegis. To do this the whole race is expected to work in its male–female duality as an entity.

Man’s rebellion against God results in man seeking to be autonomous. We must recognise that ‘the sons of God’ represent those who ‘call upon the name of the Lord’, i.e. those who are subject to God. Doubtless they live under grace. Others seek to subvert the vocational mandate (Gen. 10:6–14; 11:1–9). That is, man does not wish to move across the face of the earth, or, for that matter, wish to let God *scatter* him.

CHAPTER TWELVE**THE DOCTRINE OF MAN (3)****MAN AND HIS EVIL**

Hamartiology (the study of evil) reveals biblically that man is born in sin (Ps. 51:5; cf. Rom. 5:12–14; Eph. 2:3; Job 14:4; 15:14). It shows that he (man) is depraved (Rom. 3:9–18; Jer. 17:9; Mark 7:20ff.; Rom. 1:20ff.; Eccl. 7:29; Gen. 6:5; 8:21); yet man does not sin alone. Satan, his world system of evil powers, and in fact every evil force, conspire to draw man more deeply into sin. This complex system which involves human ‘flesh’ (i.e. human fallenness) is a bloc always opposing God.

Man is sometimes spoken of as being ‘natural’, i.e. ‘psychical’ (I Cor. 2:14; Jude 19; cf. James 3:15 where the ‘wisdom’ sinful man uses is ‘natural’). Some have translated this as ‘soulish’ and have opposed it to ‘spiritual’, but man is a spirit whether he is good or evil. Evil can be said to be ‘spiritual’ (Eph. 2:2–‘The spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience’).

If we read the passages above on evil, then we will see what man’s sinfulness is, *in practice*. Doubtless every human being does ;not do everything nominated in these Scriptures,

but the truth is that man does them all as a race, and that, so r to speak, the seeds of all of them are in everyone. What man 4– does in his mind (Eph. 2:3) is generally known only to that person, and even then—because of the deceit of sin (Heb. 3:12–14)—not always consciously even to the thinker.

THE NATURE OF MAN’S EVIL: THE NATURE OF SIN

When we discuss the subject of sin, we must do it in the context of man. Even so, we tend to personalise sin and regard it apart from man. This is not wholly wrong because sin is often personalised, being called ‘the sin’, and it is certainly an entity which seeks to subdue man. This is seen in John 8:34, Proverbs 5:22 and Romans 6:12–23. Hence also we have biblical descriptions of sin which we here append:

- (a) Sin is falling short of the mark (Rom. 3:23). The mark is surely the glory of God, or the true norm set out for man by God.
- (b) Sin is lawlessness (I John 3:4). Lawlessness is *anomia*, i.e. ‘anti-law’. Sin against law is of course sin against God who is the perfect outshining of this law.
- (c) ‘Whoever knows what is right to do, and fails to do it, or him it is sin’ (James 4:17). This is often called ‘the sin of omission’. It approximates to:
- (d) ‘Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin’. Romans 14:23 states this principle, namely that whatever is of doubt is sin. However, it also shows us that the *opposite of faith is sin*. Faith is not only trust and belief, but—in the ultimate—obedience, i.e. action which results from believing. Sin then is disbelief, and Jesus nominates this as *the sin* (John 16:7–11).

Sin, then, can be seen in many ways, such as man’s wrong

use of freedom, his refusal to love God, man and creation, and obey the functional principles of true living. It is the wrong use of the love he has been given, the image of God which he is.

SIN AS BONDAGE

We have indicated that man has many enemies, and that he is under their bondage. These enemies are roughly divided into two, namely (a) evil enemies, and (b) Godly enemies. Evil enemies are Satan, the principalities and powers who work under Satan's headship, as also the world system which they dominate. Along with these are sin, the flesh, idols, and death. The Godly enemies are God Himself, His law, and, linked with them, His wrath and man's conscience. Sin uses the law (Rom. 7:7–14), and Satan uses the wrath of God to bring fear and bondage to man (Heb. 2:14–15; cf. Jude 9), as do also his evil powers (Col. 2:14–15; Gal. 1:4). Conscience then becomes the instrument of accusation and is thus used by evil.

Man is not merely a helpless creature under such enemies. *He is responsible for having come under their power.* His sin alone has brought him to this pass.

THE POWER BY WHICH THE ENEMIES ENSLAVE MAN

Briefly, we can see that the guilt and the pollution of sin are the means by which man is enslaved. Hebrews 2:14–15; cf. Colossians 2:14–15; Jude 9; I John 4:18; Revelation 12:10 all show that if man were not guilty he would not be under the power of Satan, the principalities and powers and the world system. Romans 8:12, Galatians 5:24 and Romans

8:5–8 show us that man is under the power of the flesh (i.e. man's humanity as conditioned-by sin; his incorrigible nature, his refusal to obey law; his propensity for sensuality before God and man) only because he is guilty of sin.

Likewise, were he guiltless he would not fear death (I Cor.15:55–56; Heb. 2:14–15), the judgement of the law (sometimes known as the curse, Gal; 3:10, 13; cf. Rom. 3:20; Ps.143:2), or the wrath of God which comes upon man because of sin (Rom. 1:18; I Thess. 1:10; cf. Ps. 7:11; II Thess.1:7–9) Man is under the power of his idols because he has shifted his allegiance, his love and his worship from God. This is heinous sin, and brings guilt, and that guilt further enslaves man in his idols.

Behind all man's enslavement is his enslaved will. What he is and does as a sinner is enslaving to him, but he does not see it this way. He sees it as (justifiable) rebellion against God, the assertion of his own ego, the progress of his own person, and ascension to some sort of lordship. The very gifts of will, personhood, natural gifts, intelligence and the like, which have come to him from God—including the very image of God that he is—he uses perversely. In so doing he is further enslaved, more deeply entrenched in evil. He often hates the bondages under which he finds himself, and even uses his powers to seek to liberate himself, but he is unable. He is indeed the slave of evil.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE DOCTRINE OF MAN (4)

MAN'S DILEMMA BEFORE GOD

If we were to look at God and the state of man before Him, then we would conclude the position were hopeless. Man was created by God to relate to Him, to work with Him, and to be His image and likeness. This is a high calling. Man abdicated that calling. When the contrast between who God is and what man has become is made, then the situation is no less than appalling.

We have seen that man was created in the image of God, expected to fulfil the mandate given to him, and be lord over the creation. It is undoubted from the New Testament (if not the Old Testament also) that God had destined man for ultimate glory, glory which would be more complete and final than the glory he already possessed. In that case, man as created is true man, yet can be said to be man not as yet fulfilled or completed. The tree of life in the garden was an indication that man was to be enabled to live forever. *Of himself*, man is not immortal. His immortality is conditional upon God's will and aid. Man, by sinning, has failed to

truly be himself. What, then, is the contrast between his and God, and what is his dilemma?

THE DILEMMA OF SINFUL MAN

Man's dilemma lies in the fact that he has fallen. He is distant from God. He is a rebel. He is dead because of, and in, his sin. He is unholy. He is worthy of judgement. God Creator, and because of sin becomes man's Judge. He is also holy, righteous, good, true and loving. Man has, then, the following problems:

(i) **Man has gone far from God**, but does not know how far. He is sinful but does not really know the radical nature of sin. He thinks he knows sin, but he does not. Sin has its own deceit. Man is not ready to hear about himself—at least not in the area of his sinfulness.

(ii) Whilst man has had God bring revelation to him through the media we outlined above, man does not, of himself, have an ear to hear. **He does not wish to know God**, but knowledge of God is essential to him.

(iii) **Man does not know the nature of God**. If he were to know God, then he would not only be in a state of shock, but he would see the true nature of his dilemma.

(iv) **Man is weak**. In fact, when it comes to the moral spiritual arena of experience, man is totally without strength. He is energised by Satan to do evil (Eph. 2:2). He is sustained by God in biological existence (Acts 17:28; cf. Ps. 104:29), but even so he cannot do anything for himself. Whilst man outside of Israel cannot strictly be said to be under the law which governed Israel, yet man cannot keep the moral law of God, and the same principle obtains for him under this law as for members of Israel under their law, namely (a) the law gives knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20); (b) by the law none can be justified (Rom. 3:20); (c) to be under

law is to be under curse (Rom. 7:1; Gal. 3:10). Man has no power, then, to justify himself before God (cf. Job 15:14; 25:4; Ps. 143:2).

(v) **Man cannot justify himself by good works**, i.e. works ‘done in righteousness’ (II Tim. 1:9–10). We have seen that man has *no moral power* to execute such works (Rom. 5:6). He does, however, think he can do self-justifying works (Luke 16:15; 18:9). The Letter to the Galatians is given over to persons who work under this illusion. Passages such as Ephesians 2:8–10, II Timothy 1:9 and Titus 3:5 (cf. I Pet. 1:18–19) tell us that man cannot do good works. Such attempts are only dead works (Eph. 2:1; Heb. 9:14). In fact, any attempt to justify oneself is heinous pride and tantamount to blasphemy.

GOD’S DILEMMA WITH MAN

God is in no dilemma. The doctrine of election tells us that God had solved what we believe to be a dilemma before the creation of the world. We use the term ‘solved’, but God does not. Isaiah 46:8–11 speaks of God’s intentions and of His fulfilling His own will.

If, however, we wish to speak in our human terms of God’s dilemma, it is this: that God is holy, just and righteous, and although loving cannot, and must not, release man from judgement. Man is under law, and transgression of law requires punishment. We will look afresh at God’s righteousness to see how culpable is man in his sin. God then cannot possibly justify man in his sinfulness. Were He to do this, He would deny the holiness and righteousness of His nature, of His law, and He would be accepting the impurity of man. In all conscience He can only judge and punish man. The extent of such judgement would be to deny life to man. Judgement would mean his entire death. There could be no rehabilitation

for him.

By revelation we know God to be love, to have mercy, longsuffering and compassion. None of these, however, can vie with, or cancel out, His holiness and righteousness. If God were to desire to release man from his dilemma, then He could not do this by *a fiat* of forgiveness, justification or the like. Many times He has said, ‘I will by no means acquit [clear] the guilty’.

The dilemma, then, is how does God redeem man from ultimate judgement and death, and how does righteous wrath and judgement become fulfilled, as it must, without destroying mankind who is sinful?

These questions we must answer in our section on salvation.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN**THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION (1)****GOD'S BASIC REVELATION OF HIMSELF AND GRACE**

Without doubt the salvation of man is presented in the Scriptures. Anyone can read that. The question to be asked is whether in fact it meets the requirements of God as He is set forth, and the needs of man as are required to release him. We have seen the ignorance of man as to his own fallen state, and his equal ignorance of the nature of God although man thinks he understands both reasonably enough.

The value of Scripture for revelation comes in the selection by God of His people Israel. We are apt to think the first eleven chapters of Genesis were written to acquaint man with the beginnings of history, and give him some understanding of the nature of creation. Although this is not excepted from its purpose, the writing of the Pentateuch was primarily for Israel's understanding of the God who was their God.

The account of the creation is not only to reveal the nature of God, but also of man. Not only to tell of his state

in innocence, but of his fall, and not only of the Fall, but of its immediate consequence to man of the time and the whole human race. Yet the Flood is not recounted to inform man of some historical happening, but to tell of the nature of man and God's judgement upon him for it. The roll-call of the peoples in Genesis 10 is not for antiquarian interest, but to show the thrust of the nations in the world. *All of it is but the introduction to the fact and gift of covenant!*

That covenant is with Abraham, but it is with the peoples of the earth, rightly understood. It is universal, both in nature and scope. Even so, Israel would not have understood its position amongst the nations as the priest nation *par excellence* (Exod. 19:5–6), had it not known of God's promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Had there not been the Messianic statements of Genesis 3:15 and 49:10, then the destiny of Israel would not have been fully known.

Further, had Israel not been given the law, its rituals, and its didactic cultus of tabernacle (temple) and sacrifice, then humanity could not have learned the great attributes of God, nor have become acquainted with the nature of law and sin, and also propitiation, redemption, and the like. It is the special revelation of God through His people Israel which enables man to understand the great redemptive nature of God and His redemptive acts in history with Israel, and later His new people, the community of Messiah and His Spirit.

Put another way, we can say that man would have had no light to see the folly of his idolatry, the nature of his sin, the light of grace which could bring salvation to him. He would never have been able to discover even the nature of his own dilemma, much less know the way of redemption. Thus we see the significance of covenant, both Abrahamic and Mosaic, and the indispensability of both in leading man to that understanding of God and man which would throw light upon the amazing grace of God.

**THE NATURE OF GOD
IN RELATION TO SALVATION**

We have suggested that grace, to be grace, must be of God alone. Since God is ‘the God of all grace’ (I Pet. 5:10), His grace must proceed freely, and yet at the same time be consistent with His nature. We have seen that God is love, is light, and is good (goodness). He is also the God of righteousness. Hence, as we have seen, He cannot (and does not) forgive gratuitously. He must justify (if He so determines) only in the light of the purity and demands of His law. We have suggested this is man’s dilemma, and, in a manner of speaking, God’s also.

We have seen that God is Father, is King, is Creator, and— in addition—is Redeemer. Isaiah 64:8 speaks of God as Father—Creator (cf. Mal. 1:6; 2:10), Isaiah 63:16 speaks of Him as Father—Redeemer. We may note that the desire to redeem one’s children is part, even, of genuine human fatherhood. As Creator, God is faithful (I Pet. 4:19), and this would be so with His other offices. That is, He is faithful Father, faithful King, and, in conformity with these, faithful Redeemer. The initiative then, for man’s redemption, arises within God. Man merits none of it. At the same time, God is *not passionate*, in that He is driven by His love to redeem. He is not the *object* of His love but its subject. He fulfils His love in what He does, as also He fulfils His own righteousness in the judgement He effects in the action of redemption.

Put another way, God will insist, in history, on His own action as Creator, Father, King and Redeemer, over and against the opposition of evil. We will not understand this unless we read aright the *eschatological* stance of the Bible. By this we mean that God effects His purposes in the ultimate. In the ultimate, all evil will be defeated, and the true character of God vindicated. Meanwhile, to *appearances*

this does not seem to be the case. To faith (and hope), however, it is apparent.

Before proceeding to God’s action in salvation, let us take one case in point. God is King. This opens up the whole matter of the Kingdom of God. God then must vindicate Himself as King. His Kingdom must triumph! Of course. But He is not King without being Father. Hence He must redeem the children of His Kingdom, which He does. And so on. We are free now to go directly to the matter of salvation in the light of the nature of God and the nature of fallen man.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN**THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION (2)****GOD'S HOLINESS AND WRATH**

On page 29 we began to look at the nature of God's attribute of holiness. I John 1:5 says, 'God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all.' The Trisagion of Isaiah 6:3 reiterates this holiness. By holiness, we generally mean ethical and moral purity, because we contrast it with what is unholy. Whilst this is true enough, God's holiness is dynamic and actional. It is not merely absence of evil or impurity. We have to see that God not only constantly exercised this holiness—which He did and does—but He taught holiness to His people Israel. It is through them we understand the holiness of God.

God then is holy as against the heathen gods who are unholy. The following references should be studied to induce a rich idea of God's holiness: Genesis 28:16ff.; I Samuel 6:19ff.; II Samuel 6:6ff.; Joshua 24:19; Isaiah 6; 57:15; Hosea 11:9; 11:12; Ezekiel 1; 28:25; 36:22; 38:23. So far as Israel was concerned, the nation was to be a holy nation (Exod. 19:5–6; Lev. 11:44, 45; Deut. 7:5; Isa. 8:13; Lev. 19:2; 20:7, 26; Num. 15:40). We do not have space here to

consider its cultus of holiness including the law, the worship, the manner of life, the sacrifices, but they all taught in practical ways the holiness of God.

In practice, all this meant that if Israel did not obey God it failed to sanctify Him in the eyes of the other nations, and especially defiled God in the light of their idols. Even when God chastises and restores Israel, it is not for Israel's sake, but for His own sake so that He sanctifies His name (e.g. Ezek. 36:16–32). The principle then is as seen in Ezekiel 38:23: 'So I will show my greatness and my holiness and make myself known in the eyes of many nations. Then they will know that I am the Lord.'

Particularly relevant for our purpose is Habakkuk 1:13: 'Thou . . . art of purer eyes than to behold evil and canst not look on wrong'. This must mean, 'You are so pure that You see all evil, but Your holiness will allow none of it to go on unjudged and unpunished.' This is verified many times. Romans 1:18 must be examined in the light of this: 'For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth.' God is angry and brings His wrath* upon

* G. O. Giffith: 'We picture "wrath" as we might think of the fury of the storm. The Hebrew prophets, when they spoke of "the wrath of God", ethicised the idea of anger so that it meant the implacable hostility of the Divine Holiness to every form of moral evil. . . . The wrath is no fitful outburst of personal anger, but the implacable antagonism of holiness for evil, and antagonism that burns eternally' (*St. Paul's Gospel to the Romans*, pp. 21, 85f.). Peguey says, 'Wrath is the emotional response of a sound personality to anything low, vile, or mean.' J. G. Mackenzie quotes Father Danielou as saying, 'There is hardly anything in the terminology of religion that gives more offence to the pious (or prudish) ears of the modern world than this expression: the wrath of God... In our day, Simone Weil, for example, finds it simply intolerable: for she, like Marcion of old, contrasts the New Testament God of love with the Old Testament God of wrath. Unfortunately for the position, there is love in the Old Testament, and wrath in the New, as Tertullian pointed out long ago. We have to reckon, whether we like it or not, with wrath as one of the divine attributes; and what is more, for all its anthropomorphic appearance, this particular word may carry a stronger charge than any other, and afford the deepest insight into the meaning of the divine transcendence' (*The Meaning of Guilt*).

those who seek to subvert His creation, and the laws by which it works. If He allows the truth to be suppressed by acts of unrighteousness and does not judge and punish, then He has no intrinsic holiness. Moreover, His law is of no consequence.

The Scriptures speak much of the wrath of God, as we shall see. However, they nowhere indicate that God is wrath. God is love: not wrath. At the same time, He is provoked to wrath by evil. His wrath then emerges from His holiness. Equally it could be said that it emerges from His love because His love protests against the action of evil against the true (beloved) creation.

MAN AND THE WRATH OF GOD

The manner in which man feels this wrath is to be considered. Psalm 7:11 says, 'God is a righteous judge, a God who expresses his wrath every day' (NIV). This is somewhat the equivalent of Augustine's statement that man carries about in his conscience every day a testimony to the wrath of God. God's wrath too must be seen as personal and not only mechanistically retributive. Ezekiel 7:8–9 shows this character:

Now I will soon pour out my wrath upon you, and spend my anger against you, and judge you according to your ways; and I will punish you for all your abominations. And my eye will not spare, nor will I have pity; I will punish you according to your ways, while your abominations are in your midst. Then you will know that I am the Lord, who smite.

In the New Testament, the matter of God's wrath on evil is quite strong. John warns against it in Matthew 3:7–11. Judgement is to come upon God's people. I Thessalonians 1:10 shows that the Gentiles were conscious of a wrath to come. However, it is in Romans 1:18–32 that Paul gives his

exposition on the nature of wrath. In order to understand it, we need to backtrack to the fact of the nature of sin, especially in Hebrew thinking.

SIN AND GUILT AS THE WRATH OF GOD

A number of Hebrew words in the Old Testament which are translated generally as 'sin' in English have the following meanings and uses: 'a missing; a failing; wickedness; confusion; iniquity; perversion; guilt; transgression; rebellion; wrongness; trouble; vanity; lying; deceit; evil; trespass; a breach of trust; error; negligence; injustice; disobedience'. When all these elements are considered, we see that they are things which *man feels* in his person, especially in heart and conscience. They make him defective, uneasy, disoriented, burdened, confused. If we add that sin separates man from God (Isa. 59:2), then we see man is loosed from his moorings. When also (Rom. 1 :20ff.) man goes against the natural order of things, he further confuses and disorients himself, becoming a malfunctioning and dislocated person.

Paul, in Romans 1:24, 26 and 28, speaks of God giving man up to his evil. This may be progressively (retrogressively), or at once as a total act. It does not much matter. Man experiences God's wrath as God's giving him up to (the effects, compounding, and elements of) his own sin. We can then say, 'Whilst God's wrath is not sin, yet sin is God's wrath.' That is, man feels the wrath of God in his conscience as the effects of sin pile up on him. This is felt in guilt, in fear, in loneliness, alienation, pollution and defilement, separation, frustration, confusion, pain, shame, and wounding. So the list could be lengthened. These constituent elements of sin are sin in action, i.e. the wrath of God working in man.

Passages which should be studied closely are: Psalm 32:

1–5; 31:10; 40:12; 38:1–8; and Isaiah 57:19–21. The substance of these is this: guilt is so heavy a thing, and sin so innately dynamic, that when a person refuses to confess it, and repent of it, it works powerfully within him, bringing him to a state of misery. This misery is really God’s wrath being inwardly dynamic and destructive. Likewise its pollution brings the shame and distress which comes from the deprivation of purity.

CONCLUSION AS TO GOD’S WRATH AND HOLINESS

It is impossible to see redemption in its true light until wrath is seen as the righteous action of God against evil. That God is loving, merciful, slow to anger, and that, in fact, it is not primarily His anger but His longsuffering and kindness which brings us to repentance, is the true theme of Scripture (e.g. Neh. 9:17; 9:31; Ps. 103:8–9; Exod. 34:6–7; Rom. 2: 4–5). Even so, wrath is inescapable if we go the way of sin. Again, if God were not to love in His wrath, then in one sense wrath were more endurable.

Finally, we need to note that nothing will escape His wrath. When it appears that God is not wrathful in immediately executing judgement, men sometimes think His wrath is not real. For this see the warnings of Psalm 10:12–14 and Ecclesiastes 8:11–13. God’s holiness is set to destroy all evil, all impurity and all rebellion. He will permit nothing unclean to survive or to be in the new heavens and the new earth (Rev. 21:27; II Pet. 3:11–13). God’s wrath then is His mercy, is His holiness expressed in dynamic action in the destruction of evil and impurity. This is true redemption from sin, both personal and cosmic.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION (3)

THE ATONEMENT–I

The word ‘atonement’ in old English texts of the Bible was translated from the Greek word *katallage* in Romans 5:11. It is generally translated ‘reconciliation’, which is a good word. The English word ‘atonement’ is really ‘at–one–ment’, and has the same idea. ‘Atonement’ has now come to be an overall word to cover the event and meaning of the Cross. We use it in that sense. The events of the Cross and Resurrection are in fact inseparable, so atonement must cover both.

THE PURPOSE OF THE ATONEMENT

In an endnote on pp. 103–105,¹ we have given very briefly the theories of the Atonement which have grown up in church history. Whilst none of these theories is total in itself, each of them contains some aspect of the truth. In fact, we might derive some of the purposes of the Atonement from them.

Nevertheless we advert to previous statements, (a) that by the Atonement God fulfils His purposes as Creator, Father, King and Redeemer, and (b) man under bondage to his enemies is released from them, and, under God, now becomes a new creature, a true son, a voluntary subject, and a redeemed person.

To these two main purposes must be added the truth that it is through the Cross and Resurrection that God effects His ultimate purposes for His whole creation. In other words, it is the power released by the event of the Atonement (Cross and Resurrection) which determines the lines of history future to the Atonement, and which assures the true *telos* of God.

THE EFFECTING OF THE PURPOSE

Before we explore such, we must remind ourselves that the Atonement is a Trinitarian work. As in creation, and the ultimate reconciliation of all things, the Father is the Initiator, the Son the Mediator, and the Spirit the Agent of Atonement. Each person of the Triune Godhead has a different work, but these three works are mutually inclusive and indispensable to the effecting of the Atonement.

The Nature of God

In and by the Atonement, God must do that which is consistent with Himself, and by which He effects His purposes. Nothing must happen which goes against the nature of God. In some places it is hinted that the Cross is ‘the weakness of God’ (cf. I Cor. 1:18–25; II Cor. 13:4). What is meant by some is that God must be weak, not being able to solve the matter of sin by direct action. Such a view is superficial. The Cross is God’s ‘direct’ action, although it seems otherwise.

It is God’s chosen method of atoning. By nature of the case, it has to be this way.

The Nature of Fallen Man, and His Bondage

On pages 81 to 83, we described briefly the situation of man under his own sinfulness, the power of sin, and also the enemies which confront man. We need now to look at these enemies, and discover what is the common factor in them which holds man under their bondage. The enemies, then, are as follows:

(a) *Sin**

Man is responsible for his own bondage to sin (John 8:34, ‘Every one who commits sin is the bondsman of sin’; see also Rom. 3:9; Prov. 5:22–23; II Pet. 2:19). Man sins of his own volition. Sin has three basic elements (i) its power (John 8:34; Rom. 6:12, 18, 20), (ii) its penalty (Rom. 6:7, 23), and (iii) its pollution (Isa. 57:20–21). These keep man in bondage. However, it is primarily the *guilt* of sin which binds man. No guilt; no bondage.

* 1. *Sin is a state in which man Eves, and in which he is alienated from God*. This is seen in the effects of Adam’s rebellion. He is cut off from his former innocent relationship with God (Isa. 59:2).

2. *Sin is depravity*. This must first of all be seen as deprivation. Man is deprived of life, of full relationship with God. Hence he is deficient (Rom. 3:23). Because of what he has lost—or rejected—he is innately evil (Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:10–18; Mark 7:21).

3. *Sin causes compulsive transgression*. Man, because of his sin, hates God (Col. 1:21; Eph. 2:1f.; Rom. 1:19–32). His hatred springs from his guilt—fear (Gen. 3:9f.; cf. 4:4–7). He moves from one stage of depravity to another, as outlined in Romans 1, cf. w. 24–27.

4. *Sin is a power in man, holding him in bondage* (John 8:34; Rom. 3:9; I Cor. 15:56; 11 Pet. 2:19). ‘It is its guilt which gives it power. Its guilt alienates us from God, and it is in virtue of this alienation that sin reigns in us’ (James Denney, *The Death of Christ*, p. 191).

5. *Sin places man in a camp that is evil, and hostile to God* (I John 5:19; Eph. 2:1–3).

(b) Death

Man lives under the bondage of the fear of death. See Hebrews 2:14–15; cf. I John 4:18 (where fear of judgement = fear of death); I Corinthians 15:55–56 (where death is fearful because of its sting, i.e. guilt of sin). Romans 5:12f. shows how death reigns over man by sin, and also sin by death. In I Corinthians 15:26 death is called ‘the last enemy’, and in Romans 6:9 we read of ‘the dominion of death’. Death then constitutes a powerful enemy of man. In fact, it is a tyrant ruling him.

(c) The Wrath of God

We have already given attention to this. What is clear is that the wrath of God is currently felt by sinful man (Rom. 1:18ff.), and is coming in judgement as a future crisis (Rom. 2:4–5; I Thess. 1:10; II Thess. 1:8ff.). Another term for wrath is ‘the curse’, as in Galatians 3:10, 13; cf. 4:4–5. Our study of Romans 1:18ff. located wrath’s experience in the conscience, namely in the guilt which is itself dynamic, as experienced in Psalm 32:3–4.

(d) The Law

Like the wrath of God, this enemy is not created by God as an enemy. Law is essential to the life of man. It is the expression of the ‘very good’ functionality of the universe. Psalms 1, 19 and 119 tell of the glorious nature of the law, whilst love in the New Testament is equated with this law (Rom. 13:8–10; Gal. 5:13–14; James 1:25; 2:8–12). It is the condemnation of the law, i.e. its curse, which becomes a burden to man. By the law, man is conscious of his sin, and through law it is reckoned to him (Rom. 1:19–20; 4:15; Gal. 3:19; Rom. 6:7). The law then assists guilt to be dynamic subjectively, whilst it holds man ruthlessly, objectively, to condemnation.

(e) The Conscience

This is a subject which requires a treatment of its own. Hebrews 9:14 (cf. 6:1) speaks of the conscience as being defiled with dead works (sins). In 10:2 and 22 the thought is repeated. Conscience is that faculty which judges (Rom. 2:14–15), and which makes us aware of our guilt, and so relates to law and the wrath of God. To have a clear or a pure conscience (Titus 1:15; I Tim. 1:5, 19) is to be guiltless, free from law’s condemnation and wrath. Fallen man is kept under the tyranny of his conscience in the light of law, guilt and wrath. Conscience, intended by God to be an aid to man, becomes a tyrant.

(f) Satan

Amongst other things, this one is the accuser of man. This is seen in Revelation 12: 10, and Job 1 and 2. Basically this is the old serpent who deceived Eve, and so man. He is a liar and a murderer (John 8:44). Ephesians 2:1–3, I John 5:19 and II Timothy 2:26 depict him as having man in his power. He also heads up a world system against God (John 12:31; 14:30–31; II Cor. 4:4). Satan has power by virtue of man’s fear of death (Heb. 2:14–15). When examined, this fear of death is ‘. . . not because we have to die, but because we deserve to die’ (P. Tillich). If we examine John 14:30–31 and Jude 9, we see that Satan keeps man in fear because of his guilt, because of coming death which is itself judgement and leads to judgement.

(g) The Principalities and Powers

We have mentioned these as the powers which work with and under Satan. They are mentioned in Ephesians 6:12 as ‘the world rulers of this present darkness, the spiritual hosts of wickedness’. Other mentions are Romans 8:38; Colossians 1:16 (here all are created as good); 2:15; Ephesians 1:21;

and probably Galatians 4:9 and Colossians 2:20. Revelation 12 suggests that a third of the angelic powers followed Satan in his revolt against God. These are certainly enemies of man. It is clear from Colossians 2:14–15 (which parallels Heb. 2:14–15) that these powers have man in their grip by reason of his guilt.

(h) The World System

When you bring Satan and his powers together, you have the world system referred to in Galatians 1 :4; I Corinthians 1:20–21; I John 2:15–17; I Corinthians 7:31, and other places. In the Book of the Revelation it is Babylon and its satellite groups. Galatians I :4 suggests man is bound to the world system because of his sins (i.e. guilt). This accords with the same power of Satan (the god of this world, II Cor. 4:4) and the powers who rule by reason of man's guilt.

(i) The Flesh

'The deceitful lusts of the flesh' (Eph. 4:22) indicates that the flesh is vitalistic. Romans 8:5–8 shows the incorrigible nature of flesh. It is man in rebellion against God: man's humanity as conditioned by sin. Whilst the physical body is not evil, to have 'the mind-set of the flesh' is deathful. Romans 8:12 and Colossians 2:11–15 suggest the same principle—man is indebted (under slavery) to the flesh because of his guilt incurred by disobedience. The flesh is most tyrannous.

(j) The Idols

Isaiah 26:12–14 suggests Israel knew the bondage of the idols, the false gods. This is indeed its history. No less is man, throughout his history, the slave of idols—i.e. anything to which he gives that worth which primarily belongs to God. Man has to love, and he will either love God or idols. That is why idolatry is called 'adultery' and 'forni-

cation', i.e. illicit 'love'. Romans 1 :21–23 shows that man in rejecting God turned to idols. I Thessalonians 1:9 shows man serves 'dumb idols'. Judgement is upon such, and probably Galatians 4:8–9 (cf. Col. 2:20–23) refers to idol-bondage, which was a form of legalism. Idols have their laws. They keep man in bondage by his guilt.

We conclude then that man's bondage is such that even were he to be inspired to do so, he could not, by any means, extricate himself from this frightening imprisonment. In practice, these enemies conceal themselves to a great degree. Ultimately—as, for example, the law exposes sin as 'exceeding sinful' (Rom. 7:13)—these enemies make man's life a misery, seeking to destroy him. All of this adds to the weight of that internal guilt and suffering which we have called 'the wrath of God'. How then does the Atonement meet this situation and deal with it?

¹ 1. *The Ransom Theory*. The earliest of all, originating with the Fathers, claiming that Christ offered himself as ransom (Mark 10:45), which of course he did. It was debated as to what the ransom was, and to whom it was given. Some views were quite bizarre. It relates to the later views of victory, called:

2. *The Victory Theory*. Bishop Aulen's *Christus Victor* propounds this view, held to a great degree by Luther and some Reformed theologians. However, this is a richer view than that of the Fathers.

3. *The Satisfaction View*. Its main proponent was Archbishop Anselm, who wrote *Cur Deus Homo* (Why God Became Man). He says that God's offended honour and dignity was restored or rehabilitated. Later theories incorporate the idea of *satisfaction*. The satisfaction is given by Christ in his suffering.

4. *The Moral Theory*. First propounded by Abelard and Origen, it was later reshaped by men such as Schleiermacher,

4 (cont) Ritschl, Bushnell and Campbell. Briefly, it insists that no satisfaction for sin (or God's dignity) was required. The death of the Cross identified God with man in his grief and suffering. Such an example inspires to great (responsive) love. Obviously there are great weaknesses here.

5. *The Rectoral or Governmental Theory*. God is Governor. He is able to determine what He requires. He can abrogate the law or, rather, its total punishment. Christ on the Cross bears a nominal punishment, thus showing that God views sin seriously. However, He forgives, having put this safeguard around His law. This theory was worked out by the great Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius.

6. *The Example Theory*. Man, as well as God, needs to be reconciled. Expiation is pagan, and not Christian. Christ dies, not effectively as an expiatory sacrifice, but as a noble martyr, and provides the example for us. We are inspired to repent, and to reform by the act of the (influenced) will. Propounded by Socinus in the sixteenth century, it has a unitarian background.

7. *The Mystical Theory (Gradual Extirpation of Depravity)*. Christ entered the world in the flesh of fallen humanity, but brought a new factor, a new kind of life, which destroys original depravity on the Cross, so that a new humanity emerges through Christ. By identification with us, and we with him, man is gradually sanctified, and his sanctification becomes, in fact, his justification.

8. *Vicarious Repentance Theory*. Was evolved by McLeod Campbell, and claimed that perfect repentance is all that is required for forgiveness. This Christ effects in the Cross, where he identifies with man under condemnation. Man, thus being forgiven, has an impetus to holiness.

9. *The Substitutionary Theory*. Generally expounded by the Reformers, and held by evangelicals (though with varying modifications), it says simply that Christ died for man, in man's place, taking his sins and bearing them for him. The bearing of the sins takes the punishment of them, and sets the believer free from the penal demands of the law. The righteousness of the law and the holiness of God are satisfied by this substitution. Opponents of this theory say that expiation or propitiation are pagan concepts, and that in fact such substitution is immoral. Exponents reply that

substitution was a principle of the Jewish economy, and that current (Greek) views rejected expiation whilst Christianity (and Judaism) espoused it.

10. *The Vicarious Theory*. This view is an extension of the substitutionary theory. It sees the work of Christ on the Cross as achieving all that the substitutionary theory has expounded. But it goes further in that it sees that the substitutionary theory leaves the work of the Atonement as apart from man and his need. In effect, the substitution of Christ for man *need* have no result in man. However, the principle of the Atonement was that when Christ died on the Cross, the sinner himself died. Christ's death was the sinner's death. In this way, not only is the conscience of God satisfied, but also the conscience of the believer.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN**THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION (4)****THE ATONEMENT-II****THE ACTION OF THE ATONEMENT**

The action of the Atonement must not be seen as simply an endeavour to save single persons. Whilst this is included, it is by no means all. We saw that God has such things in mind as His elect people, His Kingdom, the abolition of evil, the defeat of evil forces which war against Him, and the renewal of His creation. At the same time, He has given many promises to save His people from their enemies (Isa. 61:1f.; Luke 1 :68f.; 4:17f.; etc.). All of these purposes become the one in the action of the Cross. As we shall see, the key to the liberation of man and the defeat of evil is the bearing of the guilt of the human race, and so the breaking of the power of evil. No guilt: no power. Likewise the response evoked in man by God's liberating grace and love is the key to his renewal, his regeneration, his new sonship of the Father.

We have seen that the Atonement has its roots in the prophetic

promises commencing with Genesis 3:15. The prophecies we saw spoke of a Messiah of the coming Kingdom a Davidic King, a Son of man and a Son of God (both being Messianic figures), as also the Suffering Servant who would bear the sins of many. There were promises of a new covenant when sins would be remitted, and when a new heart would be placed within man. The people of God would be established and be a source of blessing to the nations which would come to the feet of Messiah. All of these promises meet in the Atonement where their fulfilment lies.

That is why, when we look at the Atonement, we see its many facets such as the 'securing of the Kingdom', the defeat of evil, the emancipation of man, the confirming of the people of God, the establishment of the covenant people, the gathering together of the family of God, the bringing of blessing not only to Israel but to all the nations. How then is it possible to conform all these elements into one theory of the Atonement? How, also, do we compass 'the word of the Cross' (I Cor. 1:18) and comprehend all of it? The answer must be that what was accomplished in the Atonement, and which is mediated by the Holy Spirit, is that power of God which redeems because it has accomplished, and its working power is not dependent whatever on our understanding or not understanding of it.

THE ACTION LEADING TO THE ATONEMENT

We must by no means think that the event of the Cross was a mishap. We must not think that had Christ been more tactful and diplomatic he might have evaded the Cross. It was not a crass mistake. Acts 2:22-23 makes this clear:

Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—this Jesus,

delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

Likewise, when we look at Mark 8:31, 9:31 and 10:32f., we see the *must* (Gk. *dei*) of the event. We must also see that what Christ pronounced as his commission in Luke 4:18–19 (cf. Isa. 61: 1) required the Atonement. Even more, we must see that all of the ministry was a planned and completed task. It was a preparation for the Cross. The proclamation of the Kingdom had to be to all Israel until it was sealed in the event of the Atonement.

This helps us then to understand both the teaching and practice of Jesus. Everything he did was the Father's will and for His glory. His actions of signs and miracles, his healings and exorcisms, were all part of the Kingdom action. They led up naturally to that event which would defeat evil with finality, and liberate man with power. So we must understand the ministry from the baptism to the Cross. We must see that he walked, 'as it is written', and 'that it might be fulfilled'. Also we must see Judas as a figure—not fated but yet fulfilling God's plan—as part of that purposeful pattern. The Cross is then inevitable, but it is also indispensable.

THE ATONING ACTS

Given the significant events of the Passion Week, the victorious Entry, the last discourses by Jesus both in the Temple and in the Upper Room, yet these are actions which close off the ministry and leave Jesus ready for the event of the Cross. What then actually happened in the Atonement? The answer is simple: having been judged to be a blasphemer by the Jewish Sanhedrin, and the hand of Pilate manipulated by political pressures, Jesus of Nazareth was hanged upon a cross, dying after many hours, and was taken down prior to sunset and placed in the grave. That is

the story of the Cross.

If we wish to understand the meaning of the event, we need to go to (a) prophetic statements concerning the death of Messiah the Servant, (b) statements by Jesus himself concerning what would thus happen, (c) statements by those who were Jesus' followers, (d) the brilliant interpretation(s) given by Paul the apostle, and (e) the position given in eschatology to the fruits (necessity) of the atoning work of Christ, e.g. the Book of the Revelation, the sealed book, and slain Lamb ('Christ crucified'), and his Lordship in history. In any detailed exposition of the Atonement, we need to include all this. We do not have space for this in our present study of salvation. However, we will occasionally draw from these five sources we have just stated.

We have seen that Christ, time and again, reiterated the need for the Cross, and the fact of its coming. Mark 10:45 puts it down as service to and for man, thus linking it with the Isaianic prophecies concerning the Servant of Yahweh. Luke 4:18–19 also links with this. The statements of John the Baptist concerning the taking away of the world's sin, Jesus' references to being lifted high, and his clear statement of Matthew 26:28 (linked with Jeremiah 31:31–34) concerning his death for sins, are all elements which make us look to the Cross for redemption. Given all this, what happened on the Cross?

In John's Gospel we have references to Christ giving his life for the world, for the flock of God, and a powerful word in John 11:51–52 that the death was to bring together into one family all the children of God scattered abroad. The idea of Christ doing battle with the prince of the world (Satan) is clear from John 12:31 and 14:30–31. The linking statement in Luke 22:53, 'When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness', is more than a mere reference to those who had come to take him. Behind them

hovered the manipulating powers of Satan and his cohorts. Thus John 12:31, Hebrews 2:14–15 and Colossians 2:14–15 come together to show that the Cross is the battle for man.

If then we add to this the direct comments of the apostolic teaching, a rounded view and understanding of the events of Good Friday begins to emerge. When we make our quotes, we will have the ten enemies of man in mind.

(a) Interpretative Words from the Cross*

The first word speaks of forgiveness; the word to the thief of immediate salvation. The cry of dereliction indicates that the Son of man has suffered the ultimate indignity of judgement for the sin of man, since he cried, ‘My God! My God!’ and not, ‘My Father! My Father!’ This is significant, for he addresses the Father personally in the first and last words.

Likewise his cry of thirst indicates not merely physical thirst (it must include that) but spiritual thirst as he takes into himself the aridity of sinful man and suffers it to judgement. His triumphant cry, ‘It is finished!’ means that the work the Father gave him has been completed. The death for sins is vindicated. His last cry of peaceful surrender to the Father means he is accepted of God, he who has been forsaken within the suffering for sins for mankind.

(b) N. T. and O. T. Statements Relating to the Cross

I Peter 1: 10– 12 (cf. II Pet. 1:20–21) makes it clear that the prophets knew of the Atonement. After his resurrection, Christ emphasised this truth. In Luke 24:25–27 (cf. vv. 45–46) he says:

‘O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?’ And beginning with Moses and all

* For further reading on this subject, see the author's *The Word and Words of the Cross*, NCPI, Blackwood, 1982.

the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

This then means that when we quote I Peter 2:24, we immediately link it with Isaiah 53 in general and verses 4 and 5 in particular. ‘He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.’ II Corinthians 5:21 has it, ‘For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.’ These two verses tell us powerfully that Christ became sin for us, and that he bore not only the punishment for our sins, *but the sins themselves*. He actually became them. In practice, this must mean that the entire weight of the guilt of sins descended on him and he bore such until he had expended it, and so defeated it by extinguishing it. Put another way, ‘He was made curse for us’, i.e. he bore the wrath of the law, the wrath of God, in bearing the sins and being made sin. This accords with ‘the scandal of the cross’ (I Cor. 1:23), to which Jesus adverts in Matthew 26:31, where he says, ‘You will all be scandalised because of me this night.’ He then refers to Zechariah 13:7 where God smites His peer (the Good Shepherd) with His own sword of judgement. This makes the cry of dereliction under stand able .

Thus Christ has borne the wrath in bearing the guilt, i.e. in bearing the sins. This is clear from many New Testament passages, e.g. Romans 8:3; II Corinthians 5:14; Romans 6:9, 11. These show that he died sin’s death, but proved to be more powerful than death. Nevertheless he, so to speak, bore the death. I Peter 3:18 underlines this. Colossians 2:14–15 shows that the guilt of the law was laid upon him, whilst Hebrews 2:14–15 shows that the guilt grounds on which the devil accuses were dissolved by his guilt–suffering. Of course, Hebrews chapters 8 to 10 makes a clear exposition of Christ’s sin–bearing through the motif of the new

covenant of Jeremiah 31:31–34. Statements such as, ‘he has appeared...to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself’; ‘having been offered once to bear the sins of many’; ‘Christ offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins’; ‘Where there is forgiveness of these [sins], there is no longer any offering for sin’. These statements accord with Revelation 1:5 which says, ‘To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood’, as also I Peter 1:18–19, ‘You were ransomed. . . with the precious blood of Christ’.

In all, the wealth of interpretative statements requires thoughtful assessment. Even so, we seek to understand the *modes* of his suffering.

(c) How He Suffered what He Suffered

Doubtless the *essence* of this suffering is something we cannot know. It may be that the Spirit who searches the deep things of God can convey something of this to our own deeps. Even so, his suffering was unique because of his purity, his peerless obedience, and his utter submission. Such, in true essence, is absent from sinful man. Nevertheless we can, broadly speaking, comprehend the lines of his suffering.

I Peter 2:24 suggests he gathered our sins upon him, taking them up into the tree. Isaiah 53:6 says clearly, ‘The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all’. We do not understand the hypostatic union of Christ’s humanity and deity, and so we do not understand what happened in this regard upon the Cross. We do know, however, that he was ‘man-for-men’. We know that he offered himself through the Eternal Spirit (Heb. 9:14), so that God made him to be sin, set him forth as a propitiation, and it was His will to bruise him (II Cor. 5:21; Rom. 3:25; I John 4:10; Isa. 53:10). It was He who laid the sin of us all upon him

Theology speaks of Christ’s identification with man in his Cross. II Corinthians 5:14 says, ‘We are convinced that if

one died for all, then did all die.’ How then did he make this identification? The answer may well be that on the one hand the Father identified him with all sin, and so all sinners, and on the other that he was aided in relational identification by the Holy Spirit. Whatever the case, such passages as Romans 6:17, Galatians 2:20, 5:24, 6:14, Colossians 3:3 and II Timothy 2:11 strongly insist on such personal identification. Romans 6:6 can say, ‘Our old humanity was crucified with him’. Doubtless this is a mystery.

Finally, we also know he bore the pollution of the world. Hebrews 1:3 and 9:14 suggest this. The purging from impurity promised in both the Old and New Testaments could not be accomplished except the Son bear not only the guilt, but also the pollution of sin. From Psalm 51 we understand these two are closely related. We also know that the pure conscience of Christ must have possessed that dynamic of holiness (holy love) which would spell doom to impurity.

(d) Conclusion as to the Action of the Atonement

Christ, in bearing the guilt of sin, bore also the wrath of God. This is what is meant by propitiation. Yet wrath-bearing was the sign of God’s love to man, for Father and Son are one in this voluntary bearing. We mean that the Father is not wrathful against His Son, but against sinful man, and that the law must be justified by the sin-bearing of the Son. This is true Atonement, without which the conscience of man cannot cease to indict him for his evil. The cry, ‘There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus!’ stands categorically as the fruit of Christ’s sin-bearing and the love of God in the Atonement.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION (5)

THE ATONEMENT-III

THE TRUE FRUITS OF THE ATONEMENT

Jesus said, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit’ (John 12:24). The context shows that whilst he was stating a general principle, it referred directly to him and his cross. Isaiah 53:11 says, ‘He shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied’. The Atonement, then, has borne much fruit. Briefly stated, this is as follows:

- (i) The victory of the Cross over the enemies sealed the Kingdom. What was the ‘Gospel of the Kingdom’ (Mark 1: 14–15) is now the ‘Gospel of salvation’, which is at the one and same time the ‘Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ’, i.e. Jesus is Lord, Messiah of the Kingdom.
- (ii) The Atonement being universal opens the Kingdom to all who will believe. Israel and the nations may have salvation.

- (iii) The salvation of persons issues from the Atonement, this being the source of repentance and faith, and bringing forgiveness, justification, redemption, reconciliation, cleansing and regeneration. The concomitants are sanctification, adoption (sonship) and glorification.
- (iv) The victory over evil and the enemies of man must be understood in the light of Christ bearing the guilt of man. We saw in our study of the ten enemies that objective guilt (let alone the subjective workings of guilt) kept man in bondage to his enemies. Whilst this was his own fault—since man sins of his own volition—yet the taking away of man’s guilt releases him from all enemies. The following table shows this fact:

1.SIN.	John 8:31–36; Matt. 1:21; Rom. 6:7, 12–17; 11 Cor. 5:21; I Pet. 2:24.
2.DEATH.	Rom. 6:10; 11 Tim. 1:10; I Cor. 5:55–57; Heb. 2:14; I John 4:18.
3.THE WRATH OF GOD.	I John 4:17–18; I John 2:2. Link with Matt. 26:31 =Zech. 13:7, and see Rom. 1:18ff.; 5:9; I Thess. 1:10. See also Gal.3:10,13.
4.THE LAW.	Rom. 6:7, 14; 7:6; Gal. 2:16–21; Rom. 3:19–25; 8: 1–3.
5.THE CONSCIENCE	Heb. 9:14; cf. Titus 1:15; I Tim. 1:5 (Heb.1:3); cf. Heb. 10:22.
6.SATAN	Heb. 2:14–15.; I John 3:8; John 12:31; 16:11; cf. Rev. 12: 10–11. Link Jude 9 with John 14:30–31 (John 10: 10); cf Luke11:21f.
7.WORLD POWERS	Gal 1:4; Col.2:14–15;cf Rom.8:37–39.
8. THE WORLD	Gal. 1:4; 6:14.
9. THE FLESH	Rom. 8:11; Gal. 5:24.
10. IDOLS	1Thess 1:9;Gal 4:8–9cf Acts17:28–30.

- (v) Galatians 4:4–6 shows that the Atonement brings sonship. John 11:51, Ephesians 2:11–20 and Hebrews 2:

9–15 all show that the Father sought to reveal His Fatherhood in and through the Cross, and made sure that the Son suffered all so that He could bring ‘many sons into glory’. Hence we say the Atonement produces also the fruit which is the Family, the People and Household of God.

- (vi) By the defeat of all evil, and the cleansing of all pollution, the nature of God as holy was vindicated, as also the revelation of God as love was completed (I John 4:9–10). God’s righteousness in fulfilling the demands of the law through Christ is also shown. See Romans 3:21–31.
- (vii) The (so to speak) historical fruit of the Atonement is seen in Revelation chapters 5 to 22. Christ crucified opens the seals and the book, i.e. he controls history in accordance with the will of the Father. This is ‘the power of the Cross’ as it works in history. This means then, virtually, that eschatology springs from the Atonement. This understanding is not incorrect, provided we understand that history (salvation history) leads up to the Atonement, has its salvific cause, action and expression there, and thus proceeds to be the power to move to and effect the eschaton. All of this involves (a) the people of God as the community of God’s elect, who have been redeemed and so formed into the sanctuary of God as Creator–Father–King–Redeemer, and (b) within that action, the redemption of persons involving sanctification and glorification.

These then are the fruits of the Cross. What we must keep in mind, all the time, is the Trinitarian nature of all this action. We repeat that the Father initiates what happens, and then proceeds, with the Son and the Spirit, to effect the plan. The Son works with the Father, subordinate not in nature but in the operations, being Mediator in all things. At the same time, when we have referred to the Cross, we must as much refer to the Resurrection or, better still, see them as the two elements of the one Atonement. The Father raises from the dead (Rom. 6:4). Jesus rises from the dead (Luke

24:46). He was raised from the dead by the power of the Spirit (Rom. 8:11; cf. 1:4). Every fruit of the Cross is contingent upon the Resurrection, as Paul ably points out in I Corinthians 15: 16–19.

We say then that the practical evidence of the victory of the Cross over all evil and all enemies is that Christ subjected himself to them and their powers, but proved victorious over them. He even subjected himself to the dominion of death, but, far from overcoming him, he overcame it (Rom. 6:9–10). The use of Psalm 16 in the Acts is to claim that Jesus never saw corruption—whatever that may mean.

Well then, the corn of wheat fell into the ground and died as a wheat seed, only to become fruitful beyond comprehension.

CHAPTER NINETEEN**THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION(6)****THE FRUITS OF THE ATONEMENT (CONTINUED)**

We need now particularly to look at the fruits of the Atonement as regards persons. Perhaps our heading should be, 'THE APPLICATION OF THE ATONEMENT TO PERSONS'. This is what we mean. In Luke 24:44f. Jesus says the prophecies indicate that following the Atonement 'repentance and remission of sins shall be preached in his [Messiah's] name in all nations, commencing with Jerusalem'. A similar Lukan reference is found in Acts 1:1–8.

FAITH AND REPENTANCE

Whilst it is not immediately evident that faith and repentance are fruits of the Atonement, yet they are. Faith is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8–10; Phil. 1:29), but faith, so to speak, is evoked by the substance of the Atonement, which reveals the Father and the Son in their love. Faith works by love (Gal. 5:6). Likewise repentance is a gift (Acts 5:31; 11:18).

In reality, these gifts are effectual because of the revelating work of the Spirit (John 16:7–15). In Acts the faith and repentance become evident in the presence of the Spirit (cf. Acts 2; 4; 10–11; 9:17/22:16). Faith as such is not in the Atonement, but in the Father and Christ who effect the Atonement. That is why the work of God is revealed by the Spirit, rather than the work alone.

FORGIVENESS AND CLEANSING

The Holy Spirit is often known as the Applicator of the Atonement. This is seen in John 16:7–15, Romans 8:2–3 and II Corinthians 3:6, 17, in the context of I Corinthians 6:11 and Titus 3:5. It is emphasised by I Peter 1:10–12, I Corinthians 2:4, I Thessalonians 1:5 and Hebrews 2:4. Another way of saying this is that the Spirit applies subjectively that which is the objective work of the Cross.

Forgiveness is a gift, a fruit of the Atonement, and through the Spirit man receives this gift. With forgiveness (Acts 2:38; 5:31; 22:16) is also cleansing (Heb. 1:3), also applied by the Spirit (I Cor. 6:11; Titus 3:5).

JUSTIFICATION

Often in the New Testament, justification and forgiveness are linked (Acts 13:38–39; Rom. 4:1–8). Justification is primarily objective. Christ effected that on the Cross (Rom.;3:24f.; Gal. 2:16–21). It is also primarily justification by grace alone, and not by faith alone. God justifies. Man believes in God for that justification, but his faith neither makes justification to be so, nor acquires it for man. That is, faith is in no way a work, nor supplementary to the Atonement. There can be no subjective application of justi–

fication by the Spirit which is not the application of the objective justification.

Justification is that God does not impute our sins to us, but He does impute the work of Christ, both in his passive and active obedience* (Rom. 5:12–21; II Cor. 5:19–21; cf. Rom. 3:24f.; Gal. 2:16–21). Justification is really acquittal from the charge and condemnation of sin, a righteousness accounted to us in regard to the law, with all the fruits which flow from such liberation. When we speak of justification by faith, we are contrasting it with a justification by sight. The latter is not ours, but then we, through the Spirit, by faith, wait for such (Gal. 5:5).

SANCTIFICATION

A number of New Testament passages assure us that we are (have been) sanctified. These are I Corinthians 6:11; II Thessalonians 2:13; Titus 3:5–7; cf. I Peter 1:2; I Corinthians 1:2, 30; I Peter 2:9–10. A study of these passages will show that sanctification includes washing or cleansing from sins, and also incorporation into the (holy) people of God. In at least two passages, sanctification precedes justification. Also this work is through the Holy Spirit. Even so, it is an application of the power of the Cross and Resurrection. All God's people are called to be saints. Acts 15:8–9 shows that incorporation into the people of God is by cleansing and the Holy Spirit, which (verse 11) equals being saved by grace. In I Peter 1, verses 2 and 22, to obey the Gospel is to have been purified. In I Peter 2:9–10 those who were once no people (i.e. Gentiles) are now become 'a holy nation, God's own people'.

* For further reading on the subject of Christ's 'passive' and 'active' obedience, see pp. 21–22, 48ff., of the author's *The Sons of God are the Servants of All*, NCPI, Blackwood, 1982.

The fact of personal and experimental holiness rests upon God both sanctifying and justifying us. It has been observed by many that in the Letter to the Hebrews the two seem almost the one. 10:14 has it, 'For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.' The context is that of forgiveness from the Cross–Resurrection event. Even so, the daily experience of living holy lives centres upon the power which comes to man from the Atonement. We cannot here amplify this, but in the sixth chapter of Romans, and the third chapter of Colossians, Paul expounds the fact that the removal of guilt liberates us to have power over sin, and to live in Christian freedom. His principle can be thus stated: 'The power of sin lies not in sin itself, but in its guilt. This guilt, however, has been borne by Christ and obliterated. Seeing we died when he died and rose when he rose, we have fact and proof that our guilt is gone. Hence we do not have to submit to sin.' Such understanding is again a matter of faith and not of sight. However, Paul says such 'reckoning' and 'submission' has 'its fruit unto holiness'. Without the Atonement, we could never have been sanctified, and without its daily power, we could not walk in practical holiness.

We need to note that sanctification is a work of God, and not of man. We may say practically that God initiates and we cooperate. That is acceptable, provided we do not think of God in any way being dependent upon some power in us. Philippians 2:12–13 strikes the right note:

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

We work because God *energizes* within. In Romans 7:18 Paul says he has the will, but not the *power* (energy). God then requires our wills in holiness, but *He* works with power,

energizing those wills. Philippians 1:6 is a good verse, showing it is God who brings His own good work to completion:

And I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER TWENTY

THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION (7)

THE FRUITS OF THE ATONEMENT (CONTINUED)

REGENERATION, OR THE NEW BIRTH

It is interesting that when the New Testament talks about ‘new birth’ or ‘a new creation’ it is always cited in the context of the Atonement. This is so in John 3:1–16, II Corinthians 5:16–21 and Galatians 6:14–15. I Peter 1:3 links it with the Resurrection, and I Peter 1:23 with the Word of God (cf. Rom. 10:17). In Titus 3:5–7 this renewal of the Holy Spirit is linked with grace and justification. Hence it is indirectly linked with the Cross.

In John 3:3ff. new birth is indispensable to entering the Kingdom of God. New birth is by the Spirit, but this in the light of the Cross (3:14, 16). The new creation is ‘in Christ Jesus’, which means faith and repentance have been exercised. The new creation (or, new creature) is the old creation, fallen and now renewed. It is the one who is forgiven, sanctified and justified, and in fact adopted.

Many theologians see regeneration as the beginning

(crisis) which leads to a process and ultimately the climax of full sanctification or glorification. Others see the new birth as an event which, once it has happened, means the person is now regenerate, i.e. a new creation, and that regeneration is not a continuing process. They would view the process—if there is one—as that of experimental holiness, or something similar.

What is common to both views is that the ‘natural’ (Gk. *psychical*) man of I Corinthians 2:14 cannot understand things spiritual, and this the regenerate man can do. We may well have to speak of the new creature in terms of growth and development in maturity, but we know at least that he is a new creature, and as such is not bound to live as formerly.

ADOPTION, OR THE SONSHIP

The basic Scripture for this idea is Galatians 4:4–6:

But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying ‘Abba! Father!’

We need to study this passage closely. It is clear that redemption from the law (sin, etc.) is *with a view to* the sonship. Also the sonship brings with it the gift of the Spirit (see below).

What then is the sonship or the adoption?

Romans 9:4 says, ‘To Israel . . . belong the sonship’. Exodus 4:22 and Hosea 11: 1—amongst many other references—speak of Israel corporately as the son of God. God is Father. Israel is son. The son, however, disobeys. See Malachi 1:6; 2:10. Also each Israelite is a son (cf. Deut. 14:1; 32:6, 18–20). The sons are in the son. In Matthew 2:14–15, Hosea 11:1 is applied to Jesus, the Son of God. Thus in Galatians 3:26–29 anyone who believes in Christ is a son of God

and, *by baptism, incorporate in the Son*. All are sons in the Son, without division or impediment. Similarly in Ephesians 2:11–22 we see that *through the Atonement* Jew and Gentile are made one, and constitute, thus, the family of God (cf. I Tim. 3:15; Heb. 3:1–6).

In John’s Gospel Jesus is saying that no one can come to God as Father but by him. This is substantially the meaning of Matthew 11:27. I John 3:1–3 shows that the love of the Father (cf. I John 4:9–10) has enabled us to become sons of God. Romans 8:14–17 amplifies this. Thus adoption flows from the Atonement. It is not unrelated to regeneration, for by regeneration we are the children of God (cf. John. 1: 12–13).

It is surprising how this great fruit of the Cross is neglected in most theologies. Doubtless there is a reason for this. So many soteriologies are almost wholly Christ-centred, and are not Trinitarian. Also the concept of God as Father is not easily accepted because of the problems human beings have with human fatherhood, the primary problem being that of authority. It is reasonable to say that no theology is full-bodied which is not embodied in the wonderful cry, ‘Abba!’ i.e. ‘Father!’ In fact Christian holiness and maturity must be sought in the realm of obedient sonship, and helpful (Christian) familyhood. Without doubt, man was created for sonship (Luke 3:38; Acts 17:28), and sonship was God’s plan for him (Eph. 1:4–14), so that he is only fulfilled in and by such sonship, through the Spirit (Rom. 8:14–17).

GROWTH AND MATURITY

This is a wide subject in the New Testament. Key passages are I Corinthians 3:1ff; Hebrews 5:11–6:11; Ephesians 4:11–16; Philippians 3:10–16; cf. I Corinthians 2:6–10.

Maturity is called for as against resistance to spiritual and moral growth. Just as a seed is mature as a seed, it must be sown to become mature as a plant. It can be wholly mature at each stage of its growth, but if it prolongs any stage and resists new growth, then it is immediately immature.

We have seen that basic purification and experimental holiness are both through the power of the Cross, in union, of course, with Christ, and through the leading of the Spirit. Growth is natural because the human person is not impeded by the guilt of sin and bondage to evil powers. It is clear from I Corinthians 1:18 (cf. Eph. 2:8–10; Acts 15:11; Phil. 2:12–13) that the power for present salvation lies in the Atonement. This is the thrust of Romans 6:12–22.

GROWTH AND THE LIFE OF LOVE

The Epistles constantly direct us to see that love builds up. Knowledge may puff up, but not love. In fact when we think about it, faith works by love (Gal. 5:6), and hope also (Rom. 5:5). God is not faith and hope, but He is love. Hence the greatest is love. Works alone, without love, are pointless and worthless (I Cor. 13:1–3). Faith and hope can be used without love, but to no point. ‘Love . . . believes all things, hopes all things. . . ‘ Hence ‘love never fails’.

Edification or growth is by love. This is seen in I Corinthians 8:1; Ephesians 4:15–16; Romans 14: 15, 19. When we ask, ‘By what love?’ the answer must be, ‘God’s love, not ours.’ I John 4:19 says we love because He first loved us. I John 4:9–10 (cf. Rom. 5:5–10) is the love manifested at, and working in, the Atonement. John 14:15 (cf. 11 Cor. 5:14) shows that true obedience issues from our love which in turn issues from His love. Thus Christian growth, and all that is genuinely built, is through love, first recognised and experienced at the Cross, and ever flowing to us from it.

The life of love in its turn is very positive. It forgives because it has been forgiven. It also gives. In fact, love restores man to what he was as created: a person who was to love and give, and not to use the creation for his own purpose, but for God’s good purposes. Likewise love, as we have briefly seen, is the source and motivation for true obedience to God, His creational mandate (Gen. 1:26ff.), and His redemptional mandate (e.g. Matt. 28:18–20). God’s law is, truly seen, the law of love (i.e. the law of Christ), and obedience to it is the sign of, and aid to, maturity—not only of persons but the whole community of the redeemed.

GLORIFICATION

Doubtless this great theme belongs to eschatology. I Corinthians 2:6–10 (cf. Eph. 1:4–14) shows that God had planned man’s glory before time. Isaiah 43:6–7 shows that the glory of man is to glorify God. Romans 8:28–30 makes it clear that to be called is to be justified, and to be justified is to be glorified. In God’s reckoning, so to speak, the redeemed person is already glorified.

Even so, the New Testament speaks of suffering in order to be glorified (Rom. 8:17–25; cf. II Cor. 4:16f.). Also it speaks of a process of glorification already happening in the believer (II Cor. 3:18). Hebrews 2:9–10 speaks of the action and purpose of the Cross as being to ‘bring many sons into glory’. Here sonship and glorification are both designated as fruits of the Atonement. I John 3:1–3 couples both also.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE**THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION (8)****THE FRUITS OF THE ATONEMENT (CONTINUED)****THE CROSS AND THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT**

We would expect, in a treatment of the fruit of the Cross, to speak of the gift of eternal life. John 3:14 and 16 certainly locate this gift in the Cross. See also Acts 13:48; Romans 6:23; I Timothy 1:16; 6:12; I John 5:12, 20; John 17:3. At the same time, this life—which is primarily the life of Christ himself—comes to us through the Spirit. The conjunction of these two is seen in Romans 8:9–11. Romans 8:2 is not easy to exegete, for the statement ‘the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus’, is capable of two meanings. However, that he is the Spirit of life is true creationally (Gen. 1:1–2; Job 33:4; Ps. 104:29–30; Ezek. 37:1–14; II Cor. 3:6). Simply put, we receive the Spirit by believing on Christ (cf. Acts 2:38; 10:44ff.; 11:17). Through the Spirit we receive the life of Christ (cf. Eph. 3:16; John 16:12–15; Gal. 3:1–3, 13–14).

Again, eternal life rightly belongs to the study of eschatology, although we now live in the present experience of it.

This eternal life is to be thought of qualitatively. It is to be understood that all that is Christ is mediated to us dynamically by the indwelling Spirit. Christ dwells in us by the Spirit –this attested by I John 3:24 and 4:13. That the Spirit dwells in us is shown by John 14:16–17; Romans 5:5 (cf. Acts 2:4; 10:44; 11:17); II Corinthians 1:22; II Timothy 1:14; Romans 8:9–11.

THE GOSPELS’ PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT

John promised the coming of the Spirit gift—wise to Israel, through Messiah, and pointed to Jesus as the one who would baptise in the Spirit. Jesus himself was baptised this way, but the Spirit was to stay upon him, a factor not guaranteed to any in the Old Testament (John 1:32–33). Jesus supported this promise (Luke 11:13), and on the night of his betrayal spoke much of the gift of the Spirit (John 14 to 16). Finally, after his resurrection he promised the event of the baptising with the Spirit (Acts 1:2–8). In John 20:19–23 he proleptically gives the Spirit.

In Acts 2, i.e. the Day of Pentecost, the Spirit comes, shed forth by the Son (Acts 2:33). His convicting and revelatory work promised by Christ (John 16:7–15) was certainly exercised. This Spirit could only come when Christ was glorified. Christ’s glorification was, so to speak, in two parts. The first was his crucifixion. A thoughtful reading of John’s Gospel, and especially 17:1–5, with Hebrews 2:5–10, will show that the glory of God was in and through the Cross. The second part was his ascension into glory. This glorification completed, Jesus sent forth the Spirit, thus attesting to John 7:37–39. We can say simply, ‘No Atonement, then no Spirit! ‘

The conjunction of the Old Testament prophecies and the New Testament fulfilment is seen from passages such as Ezekiel 36:24–28; 37:1–14; Joel 2:28f .; with Acts 2; 4; 10; 11 (to which we may add Acts 9:17; 19:1–17).

THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT

When in Acts 2 the Spirit comes upon the one hundred and twenty assembled, he is then promised, gift-wise, to those who will repent and be baptised in Christ's name, receiving the gift of forgiveness. In fact, a close reading of Acts will show that *the Spirit is not received apart from the gift of forgiveness*. Nor is forgiveness received apart from the gift of the Spirit. Acts 2:38 gives the normative order for receiving the gift of the Spirit. If Acts 8 seems not to comply with this order, it is because the full gift of salvation waits upon *the coming of the apostles*. In accordance with Acts 1:8, the apostles are to be present for the Kingdom-gift of the Spirit in (a) Jerusalem and all Judea (the Jews), (b) Samaria (the Samaritans), and (c) the uttermost part, i.e. the Gentiles. This doubtless accords with Matthew 16:19, where the apostles (plural) are given the keys of the Kingdom. At Pentecost this Kingdom is opened to Jews, at Samaria (by the apostles) to the Samaritans, and at Caesarea (by the apostle Peter) to the Gentiles.

Romans 8:9 says clearly, 'Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.' *The test of salvation was the possession of the Spirit*. This seems to accord with Acts 2:38; 11:17; 19:2; Galatians 3:2, 14 and Ephesians 1:3, where having believed one receives the gift of the Spirit. Only in Acts 19 is it apparent that the disciples of John *had not believed in Christ*. The others, believing, had received the gift of the Spirit.

THE MINISTRY OF THE SPIRIT

We know that the Spirit does a preparatory work to bring men to Christ (John 16:7-11). However, the work he does is to reveal the Cross and Resurrection. He proclaims the word of Christ which redeems (cf. I Cor. 2:4; I Thess. 1:5; I Pet.

1:12). Thus, in accordance with Romans 8:1-3, it is by the Spirit that the Gospel is proclaimed and applied. This also accords with II Corinthians 3:6 and 17.

The primary work of the Spirit is to do with love (Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22-23; Rom. 15:30). This involves all the elements of unity, fellowship, prayer, worship, service, sharing, proclaiming the Gospel, and the like. We have seen that it is out of love that we mature, and in love that the processes of glorification proceed. Likewise Galatians 5:16-26 shows us that apart from the Spirit we would revert to law and flesh, and that these two are conjoined. How great, then, is the gift of the Spirit!

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

**CONCLUSION TO OUR THEOLOGY OF
GOD, MAN, SIN, AND SALVATION**

GOD

We sought to understand the nature of the self-revealing Godhead, and this especially in His great works of creation, salvation, and the renewal of all things (eschatology, on which we have barely touched). We have also sought to see Him as Creator, Father, King, and Redeemer.

This inevitably led us to the nature of the Godhead as Triune, and the relationships between the Persons of the Trinity, namely Father, Son, and Spirit. We saw the difficulty of avoiding three unitarianisms by centering on one Person to the exclusion of the Others. Also we sought to avoid the perils of modalism on the one hand and tritheism on the other. We saw that whilst the Persons have relationship within the Godhead, it is within the unity of essential love, and for this we have no authentic human analogy.

We saw that God reveals Himself through many media, and that most powerfully the incarnation of the Son reveals the brightness of His glory and the fulness of His person. In His salvific work, God operates to bring man to sonship, to

be part of the Kingdom, and to glorify God forever by himself being glorified.

MAN

We sought to see the created nature of man, and so have a true standard of what humanity is, in order to understand the nature of the Fall and so, fallen man. We saw something of the nature of man's sinfulness, as also his sin. This led us to see man's dilemma. How can sinful man desire salvation, and how can he possibly accomplish such in the light of his own rebellion, moral weakness, and the impossibility of atoning for his own sins? He cannot.

SALVATION

What man cannot and wills not to do (even supposing him to have the ability to do so, which he has not), God out of His sheer grace plans in Christ. When the right time has come in history, He does just this: He sets forth the Atonement in His Son. Such grace relates to Him as Creator, as King of the Kingdom, as Father, and as Redeemer. The Son is one with the Father in this work. The Father lays the iniquity of the world upon the Son, and with that iniquity the wrath it deserves. This is judgement upon sin, but one borne by Christ as man.

The effect of this discharge of guilt is to honour the law, and to break the power of all sinful man's enemies. Guilt is gone, and he is justified and so free from the law. Even so, man— because of the fruitfulness of the Cross—is given many gifts. These support him in his new life, and his battle with evil. They also prepare him for the ultimate life he will live beyond death. Not least of these is the Spirit of Christ,

and the life of Christ which he brings, which is, notably, Sonship for man's sonship of the Father.

OUR CONCLUSION TO THEOLOGY

Our conclusion, then, is that God, within the counsel of His own will, has worked to effect that which He has planned. In doing so, He has knowledge of man, creation, the artifices of evil, and the needs of His universe. His power is not used absolutely and despotically, but in accordance with His own nature. Thus He is, in the ultimate, vindicated as Creator, as Father, as King, and as Redeemer. He is all of these essentially. This also involves the Sonship and Spirithood that is within the Triune Godhead.

Were it not for the Word, the utterance of God, we would know nothing of these mysteries. Through revelation, we have come to know them. There is no way in which we can express even that which we know. We are aware that what has happened could not have been otherwise. This also goes for what is happening and what will happen. This also leads us to see how personal is theology. Whilst theology must be objective, we can see that only our involvement in it as truth can enable us to truly understand it, or, rather, to understand God, insofar as we may know Him.

We feel then that the only appropriate concluding statement we can make is that already made by Paul in Romans 11 :33–36:

O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements and how inscrutable his ways!
 'For who has known the mind of the Lord,
 or who has been his counsellor?'

'Or who has given a gift to him
 that he might be repaid?'
 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory for ever. Amen.

SECTION TWO

THE CHURCH, THE PEOPLE OF GOD, THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Man is a social creature, finding his personhood more deeply in the context of other persons. He has always been a person of clans, tribes and nations. He is lonely when alone. He keeps seeing significance in groups

In this he is correct, for the Scriptures talk about nations, how they were formed, and their function within the whole human race. When a person is individualistic he loses the meaning of social being, but when he is actively part of a group he discovers more of himself.

The three groupings of persons as named in our title form a fascinating trio of the modes in which God's true people have their being, meet, live together and work together. In one sense the three groups are the one, but in another sense they are not. What these differences are we will discover as we examine them.

The discovery of what they are gives an understanding of God's plan in history for those who love Him. This is why persistent study greatly repays the time and energy we have spent.

CHAPTER ONE

THE CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

**INTRODUCTION:
THE FACT OF THE CHURCH**

The church is an historical fact or happening. It has been in existence for nearly two millenniums. However much it may be liked or disliked, it is a very powerful factor in the world, and has been to varying degrees in the time of its existence. There are, however, theological questions which have to be asked, such as, 'Is the church a viable institution, that is does it have a right to exist? Is it indeed God's appointed fellowship or community for His purposes, or has it happened fortuitously? Is it some accident of history, or has it merely come into being because some people chose to divert from Judaism, and enlarged their sect known as "the Way"? ' These are reasonable questions, and at least awaken us from the conditioning some of us have had, namely the idea that since the church has always been there it is authentic, and its existence must be accepted.

Some of the points we will have to consider are, 'Did Christ actually form the church? Is it in accordance with Jewish prophecies, or apart from them, and even opposed to them? Was it in fact a sect of the apostles at Jerusalem, or the

brain-child of a man like Paul? If valid, does it have continuity with the old Jewish congregation? If viable, then what is its real reason for being, and what is its function or functions?’

THE CHURCH BEFORE THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

Was there in fact a church before the New Testament church? In Acts 7:38 Stephen speaks of ‘the church in the desert’, i.e. the *ekklesia* or ‘congregation’. The word for ‘congregation’, meaning ‘the assembled company’, is, in Hebrew, *qahal*. This is often used, but generally for an assembly called together. Another word *edah* also means the congregation, but not necessarily called together.* It means the assembly, either called together or not, having its representative heads or elders. *Qahal* denotes the actual assembling. Whilst *edah* is used liberally in the Pentateuch, it is rarely used later, *qahal* being the common word. *Qahal* is translated *ekklesia* in the Greek Septuagint (LXX). It does not, however, mean that *qahal* and *ekklesia* are identical, but since the term *ekklesia* means a group called together, and because the *qahal* was ‘called together’—namely by God—then *ekklesia* was a good word to bring across *qahal* into the common usage of the day. Incidentally, so far as the English word ‘church’ is concerned, it derives from the Greek adjective *kuriakon*, used first of the house of the Lord, and then of the people.

At this point, what we need to note is that the congregation (whether we use the terms *edah* or *qahal* does not matter, and their use anyway is often interchangeable) of

Israel was the people of God. This is deeply significant. What we will see is that in the New Testament the *ekklesia* is the people of God. The word *ekklesia* derives from *ekkaleo*. *Kaleo*= ‘to call’, and *ek*= ‘out of’. People were called together, rather than called away, or out, from others. We say this because it has been claimed by some that the New Testament church is a group of people ‘called out of’ the secular situation. Whilst this may happen to be the case, it is not the essential meaning of the word.

What then of the *edah* or *qahal* or *ekklesia* preceding the New Testament (Christian) *ekklesia*? As we have said, it is the people of God. This was really constituted as an assembly at Sinai, and assembled before the Lord in the annual feasts in the persons of its representative males. The interesting thing is that a people in this world could be called especially ‘the people of God’. They seemed to be this, over and against other peoples, although the Abrahamic Covenant pointed to a time when all the peoples of the earth would be blessed by relating to Abraham, and the Psalms indicate that those of Israel understood God to be the King of all the earth, and that all nations were subject to Him. However, in a unique sense the Old Testament describes them as the special people of God (cf. Deut. 7:6; Exod. 19:5–6; etc.).

Why then should this *qahal*, *edah* or congregation (*ekklesia*) not, as a whole, become the true *ekklesia* of the New Testament?

* For a full treatment of the words *edah* and *qahal* see article ‘Church’ in *Dictionary of New Testament Theology* vol. 1 ed. Colin Brown, Paternoster Press, Exeter, 1975, pp. 291-296.

CHAPTER TWO**TRANSITION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH**

By the time we reach the New Testament, we see there is worship at the Temple, particularly at the annual feasts, but such worship must have been limited because of the geographical distances. Throughout Palestine small worship situations had grown up called *synagogues*, and indeed the word ‘synagogue’ was the word used to translate *qahal* in the Pentateuch. Meaning on the one hand ‘the place of assembly’, and on the other ‘the people who assembled’, it certainly posed a local worship situation so that people did not have far to travel, although the synagogue did not, of course, have to do with offerings or sacrifices. The term ‘synagogue’ did not come to be Christian usage for churches, although James uses it once (2:2). However, the pattern of local assemblies certainly influenced the pattern of Christian assemblies.

We also know from the Dead Sea Scrolls that there were actual Jewish communities who lived in expectation of Messiah’s coming, trusting to be his people when he came. Already the prophets had taught about the ‘holy seed’ and ‘the remnant’, a small group of the people who would look eagerly for ‘the hope of Israel’, as against the larger group

who had secular intentions, or were simply Jewish traditionalists.

THE MINISTRY OF JOHN

John came as the Messianic messenger, the precursor to the Messiah. He gathered about him a group of disciples. The group closest to him seemed to constitute a regular and intense community, whilst many more were his disciples in a looser sense. See John 3:25–30; 4:1–3; Acts 19:1f.; etc. However, there was a group, and technically speaking this group should have transferred, as a man, to Jesus, when he came. Not all transferred. At the same time Jesus began to gather around him a group of near disciples and then a larger group which could, generally speaking, be called his disciples or followers.

From the Gospel accounts it appears at first simply a fact that both John and Jesus attracted followers. These were at the same time Jews and members of the congregation of Israel. There was no explicit rejection of this congregation, or of the leadership of the hierarchy. At the same time, the congregation of Israel must be understood not as God’s favourite people but as His chosen people, and chosen to do His will. They are to be the priest nation amongst all the nations, according to one interpretation of Exodus 19:5–6. Passages such as that of Ezekiel 36:22f. show that according to the pattern of life Israel follows, God is either profaned or made holy in the eyes of the Gentiles. Israel has the privilege of being God’s people, but the responsibility to be holy before the nations. Failure to do so brings judgement, such as the nations do not have in the same manner. What is more, this was known by Israel.

In Joshua 8:35 we read:

‘There was not a word of all that Moses commanded which Joshua

did not read before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the sojourners who lived among them.

In other words, all Israel knew what it was about. Yet Israel sinned, was judged, was exiled, was purified, and remained committed to what God demanded. Israel was to reject idols, worship the living God, and serve Him.

The prophets predicted the days when the people of God would be restored to their land, renewed in holiness, made a kingdom, and given a new covenant. So they would be the true kingdom-people, and the covenant-people, the holy remnant, the true Israel of God.

When John the Baptist came, he demanded repentance because of the Kingdom which was near. He promised the new days of forgiveness (the New Covenant, Jer. 31:31–34), of the Spirit, and of the Kingdom. It was as though he were saying, ‘Old Israel must repent and be renewed’. Many of the leaders objected to a saying which was tantamount to the accusation of apostasy. In any case, all Israel should have repented. When Jesus came, his was the same message. They were to repent and believe the Gospel of the Kingdom. The ministry of John was very significant, and tied in with that of Jesus. It carried the burden of the prophets.

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

It is true that Israel had no evangel to preach. They were to carry the message of God’s holiness by their own lives. Yet the prophets spoke of the three things—forgiveness, the Spirit and the Kingdom—and many of their prophecies carried the thrust of a day when the Gentiles would come to the people of God for blessing. The Suffering Servant was to preach judgement to the nations. Hence when he came, a group grew up around him. Some came, were baptised, and followed him, but hearing the hardness of his message again

left him.

Yet there was that people. Jesus lifted no finger to form them into an organised body. He and they continued in the festivals and worship of Israel, loyal to the Temple and its rituals. Yet Jesus taught of the Kingdom to come, and called out disciples to preach the Kingdom. Finally he gave them, deliberately, the commission to evangelise the earth with the message of repentance and forgiveness based on his Lordship. This means that Jesus must have a people with an aim, a people carrying out his work. This people should have been Israel, and Israel in its entirety. All that was latent in its charge to be the people of God should have become actuated in its committal to Jesus, so taking salvation to the ends of the earth.

But none of this would have had validity had not the prophets foretold such. Daniel 7:13f. speaks of the Son of man and his people, the saints, receiving the Kingdom, and Jesus certainly fulfilled this in appointing the Kingdom to the disciples (Luke 22:28–30). Moreover, in Acts this is what they do—preach the Kingdom to others. Also Jesus told of the New Covenant being fulfilled in his death (Matt. 26:28), which was why repentance and remission of sins could be preached (Luke 24:44ff.). It was after his resurrection, in fact at Pentecost when the Spirit came, that Peter disclosed from Joel 2 that these were the last days, and that the Spirit was being poured out for prophecy which was to come from men and women who belonged to God.

It is surprising, therefore, that Jesus did not speak a lot about the church. In fact he says hardly anything. A close study of his words indicates that he knew he would be crucified, rise, and enter into his glory. Also he had trained the disciples so that they could go out. Both the twelve and another seventy had trial runs, so to speak, within Palestine during the time of his ministry (cf. Luke 9 and 10). Yet he gave little instruction about a society he would form.

At the same time, he taught concerning *the flock*. This is seen in John 10, and repeated in John 21. The flock was a term from Ezekiel 34 where God is Shepherd, and it is repeated in the latter part of Ezekiel 37. Jesus used this term ‘shepherd’ for himself, inferring he was head of the flock. The term of ‘the vine’ is also used, not only in John 15, but in parabolic teaching. In John 11:51–52 the idea of ‘family’ is present, and this is rounded out in the Sermon on the Mount. It is implicit in the Lord’s Prayer.

There is a somewhat obscure teaching as to the Temple. Christ will be the new Temple. This was probably not obscure to the hearers, for they knew the Temple represented Israel as the people of God. A new temple would mean a new people of God. We know the leaders looked on such claims as dangerous, and pressed them against him at his trial.

CHAPTER THREE

JESUS AND THE CHURCH

JESUS’ PURPOSE IN FORMING NO CHURCH

Jesus said, ‘I will build my church’. This statement of Matthew 16:16ff., as also the other reference to the church in Matthew 18:15–20, is discounted by many scholars as not being authentic words of Jesus. They say that even early in Acts there is no explicit idea of a church. Hence these words are redactions or later interpolations. The reasoning is mainly subjective. In every other way Jesus was pointing to a people, indeed raising them up, so the idea of a church was not foreign to him. However, he was not about forming a church as such, and certainly not over and against Israel.

He was giving all Israel the opportunity to receive him, his message, and his Father. This, if anything, should be the true church, i.e. Israel. We have seen that terms compatible with ‘church’ are used for old Israel, in the wilderness and in Canaan. Israel then should turn to the Son, accept him and become ‘the new (i.e. the renewed) Israel’. They fail to do this. In Luke 10 and Matthew 11, Jesus addresses the cities which virtually rejected him. He hastens to Jerusalem, saying they must go there for it is not possible that a prophet should perish outside Jerusalem. He weeps over the city

which will not hear him. Whatever Palestine may say, it cannot say he did not give it opportunity. Israel, represented by its Sanhedrin, puts Jesus in a deficient trial and has him killed.

Will Israel then be convinced by the Resurrection? To them it is as though it had never happened. Acts 4 and 5 show that the ministry of Jesus is rejected. The true people of God are not co-terminal with the members of the Jewish community in Palestine. For the most part, they reject Jesus as Messiah.

JESUS' TEACHING CONCERNING THE CHURCH

We see that had Jesus taught strongly concerning the church he would have predetermined the response, that is, the reaction against him of Israel, especially its official reaction. He taught little explicitly about the church. His two mentions are significant but still somewhat obscure. The first shows his determination to build his church, and to build it upon the rock of his Sonship of the Father. The second shows that the church acts under the authority of the Father and the Son in matters which need judgement in regard to relationships.

However, we have to understand the whole teaching of Jesus, and not just that of the realities of the vine and branches, the family, the temple, the flock. It is his whole mission which matters, and that is the preaching of the Kingdom. If there is going to be a church, it *is not going to be the Kingdom*. The church will be the means by which the Kingdom is proclaimed. The Kingdom is not just a grouping of people, or even God's people. The Kingdom is the reign and rule of God coming upon people. The Kingdom comes, but not the church. We cannot pray, 'Thy church come.'

Thus, if we wish to find Jesus' teaching on the church, it must be compounded from all that he says in regard to the

service those who follow him will give. It must be in regard to relationships with God and fellow man. It must be concerned with the message of the Gospel, and with the outworking of God's plan for history. Also it must be in line with the prophetic Scriptures. For example, in Luke 24:46f. Jesus says, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead', and he does not end here, but continues, 'and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem'. He means that preaching of repentance and remission of sins has also been written, i.e. prophesied. How then can the Gospel be preached to all nations and to every person, and how can those who follow Jesus be witnesses to him from Jerusalem to the end of the earth, except there be some group, some body, some arrangement of persons whereby this can happen? Again, having done this, what of the teaching and nurture which he requires of his followers for those who believe on his name?

It soon becomes evident that either within the larger *qahal* or *ekklesia* of Judaism, or apart from that, there must be some body. Since the commands given are too large to allow them to be handled in a sectarian way, we can come to no other conclusion than that there must be a special people. Since also the message is for the people of God, as well as to further form the people of God, we are forced to see something in the nature of the church.

Add to all this the fact that the official ruling body, the Sanhedrin, rejected Christ—thus putting themselves outside 'the holy seed' or 'the elect remnant'—and another group is essential to do the work, and to be the true people of God.

This, then, presupposes the church, even if Jesus had never given it a name.

CHAPTER FOUR**PENTECOST AND THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH**

We know that on the last night of his life Jesus talked very seriously to his disciples. He had taught them the truth of the Kingdom, had demonstrated the modes of the Kingdom, and on that night he appointed them the Kingdom. He spoke of his relationship with the Father, and theirs with him, and through him with the Father. He spoke of the work they would do, and the coming of the Spirit to teach them, bringing what he had said to (dynamic) remembrance. He had spoken of the power of the Spirit to convict, not them, but the world. Then he had prayed for his disciples, and those who would believe on their word, asking for a oneness and a unity such as he, Jesus, and the Father had always had. He spoke of the church formed, the church militant, the church unified, the church in action, and then the church glorified. He said he did not wish to keep these from the world, but to send them into the world. Prior to this he had told them the world would hate them, not understanding Jesus and his people, but they would have the Spirit who would witness to Jesus and assist them to do so.

This was the ‘little flock’ and they were to be sent as

‘lambs amongst wolves’, but they would have power, and the truth would come to God’s elect people. Yet none of this could happen apart from the Spirit.

PENTECOST

When the Spirit came at Pentecost, he came as prophesied. In this way John the Baptist had come, and in this way Jesus. Now the Spirit fulfilled all the prophecies concerning himself. With him also was to come the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel, and the people upon whom he would come would be anointed to prophesy and proclaim the Kingdom, which is what they did.

We know that with the coming of the Spirit they had brilliant revelation of the truth, so much so that their doctrine was formed that day (Acts 2:42). They so preached, and Peter so proclaimed, that three thousand people repented, believed, had the forgiveness of their sins, and received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Just as the baptised of John had to be related to John and his teaching, and those baptised under Christ, so these now had to belong somewhere. In tradition they belonged to the corpus of Israel. Now in addition they belonged to Jesus. In fact they formed under his leadership, for now ‘Jesus is Lord!’ was their faith and cry.

It is interesting to note that Pentecost at once spells out continuity and discontinuity with the *qahal* of Israel. It is continuity in that it was natural for every Jew to acclaim and follow Messiah. It was discontinuity in that Peter said, ‘Save yourselves from this crooked generation.’ That is, ‘Do not ally yourselves with those who reject Jesus as Lord and Messiah.’ Whilst they continued to worship at the temple and in the synagogues, the time would have to come when the break would be evident and effected.

THE NEW PEOPLE OF GOD

Whilst the Authorised Version has in Acts 2:47, ‘The Lord added to the church daily, such as should be saved’, yet the word ‘church’ is not in the oldest of manuscripts. The word ‘church’ does not come up until Acts 5. They are called ‘all who believed’, ‘the company of those who believed’, and speak of them as ‘gathered together’. Only after the judgement upon Ananias and Sapphira is the term ‘church’ used. Even then it may have not been an actual term used at that time, but one known to Luke as he recounts the story. Even in chapter 6 they are spoken of as ‘the number of the disciples’. At other times they are simply spoken of as ‘the brethren’.

However, what is interesting is that they are all about the business of proclaiming Jesus as Lord. When the apostles are persecuted by the Sanhedrin and forbidden to preach in the name of Jesus, the whole church or fellowship (or whatever it may be called) is concerned, and comes together for listening to the apostles’ report, and immediately prays, and with great power, so that in fact the word is preached with tremendous effects.

It is also interesting to know that when the fellowship of those that believe comes into being, there is immediate love, one for the other, and a great sense of fellowship, and a deep sharing—not only of heart and mind, but of possessions—so that no one is left in need. Again there is immediate care for the widows. This is not to say that there was no care amongst the Jews prior to Pentecost, but we are not told that. Nor would we be told of its being amongst the believers except for an administration difficulty which arose. Again, somewhat later we read of the new church at Antioch being concerned, through prophecy, for the church at Jerusalem.

In other words, without calling this fellowship by any

name, it has arisen, through the Spirit, grown organically, and become a vital and dynamic unit in Jerusalem and other places to which it has spread its good news. Here is no mere social group, no mutual-help society, no religious sect with a fierce opposition to all but itself, but *an entirely new entity*. This is the group which begins to use the old term *qahal* in its Greek form *ekklesia*. It is the *ekklesia* of Christ. In no sense is it a sect.

It has arisen out of the message of the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ. It is the body which has sprung from the Word and the Spirit into its being as an entity. In it, the Spirit and the Word work, and through it, the Spirit and the Word go on working. It is clear, now, why Christ did not have to speak much about it, especially in the term ‘church’, and why he did not have to define its form. Already this group had gathered around him, intuitively aware that although they did not understand all that he said, yet they knew he was from God, and that he had the words of eternal life. It needed only the revelation by the Spirit at Pentecost, and the gifts which the Spirit brought, *especially the gift of apostleship*, to bring the church into true being. It was impossible from that point that the church should not be, that is, should not be the church, the true and viable form of God’s people.

CHAPTER FIVE

PENTECOST AND CHURCH-GROWTH

THE GIFT OF APOSTLESHIP

Even before Pentecost the eleven apostles knew that their office was very significant. That is why, in the first chapter of Acts, they seek to fill up the apostolate, the vacancy left by Judas's defection and death. It is faintly possible from Hebrews 3:1–2 that Moses is regarded as an apostle, but in fact no such office was really possible in the Old Testament. Israel was not a 'going' nation. Christ is certainly spoken of as an apostle (Heb. 3:1), as also he is spoken of as a prophet. We are driven to acknowledge that apostleship is a new office, and belongs in the church uniquely. Ephesians 4:7–11 places the gift of an apostle first. What, then, was an apostle, and what was apostleship?

The answer is that an apostle is one who is sent. In the New Testament he is one who has been called in by Christ, has accompanied with him, has witnessed his death and resurrection, and then has been sent out to make disciples of all nations. Evangelists also had to go and proclaim the Gospel. However, the apostle was given *apostleship*, that is, he held the deposit of apostolic truth. The proclamation was not simply, 'Believe on Jesus and be saved', but it held all the elements of the past of Israel, the covenant promise, the

coming of Messiah in accordance with the prophets, and then his fulfilment of those prophecies and so the significance of his death and resurrection. In this proclamation there was certainly the personal offer of salvation, but it went wider than that. It was, in fact, a demand for men and women to believe the Gospel of the Kingdom, and so become part of the people of God.

Who, then, could be entrusted with this word, but those, primarily, who were apostles? They uniquely had been commissioned by Christ, then led into all the truth by the Holy Spirit, and so were able to tell of the events of Christ in the light of the Old Testament, and the teaching of the Old Testament in the light of the events of Christ. In this sense they had a unique ministry. They did not *form the truth*, for it already was, but they were able to *share* that formulation of the truth which was authentic; coming from Christ and the Spirit.

Thus the truth (the apostolic truth) was something which was not as such given in the Old Testament, and not as such formulated in the Gospels. It awaited the completion of the events described in the Gospels, the coming of the Spirit, and the formation of the church. We can see then that such persons as the apostles were indispensable to the true nature of the church, especially at its formation. Once formed, and once the truth had been given, the need for apostles was not indispensable. Whilst it may well be true that a second order of apostles can be found in the New Testament, this order does not equal that of the twelve, and of course the thirteen as we include St. Paul.

What, then, do we mean by a second order of apostles? Some scholars point out that men like Barnabas, and even James the Elder, seem to be called apostles. Others too have been spoken of as 'messengers' from other churches, and might be included as apostles. The original apostle was one who knew the truth and proclaimed it, and basically proclaimed

it where it had not previously been proclaimed. In this sense he opened up a new furrow. Whilst the *message* of the evangelist did not differ greatly (if at all) from that of the apostle, yet his authority was of a different order. The apostles' statements were accepted by the new church as the truth. Indeed the whole church was built upon the doctrine of the apostles, as well as the (prior) prophecies of the prophets. The two came together in one. Thus we have the most valuable deposit of truth, which would never change. The *modes* of proclaiming it might change, and the gifts whereby it was shared might be many and varied, but the deposit would be invariable. We saw that with the coming of the Spirit, the apostles received, immediately, this truth, and that they proclaimed it.

It follows then that the church is authentic, because it is now the body by which the truth is proclaimed, and people hear and respond, and are incorporated into the same body. Nevertheless, as we have said, this does not exclude a second or different order of apostles, for these men would also go into new areas, proclaiming the exact same message as the twelve, but although they founded churches, and sought to build them up, none would look to them as being the ones having authority in regard to the truth. Rather, they would proclaim the very truth which the original apostles had formulated. Had there been a necessity to have such as the original apostles, then doubtless each would have been replaced upon his death.

THE CHURCH IN THE TIMES OF ITS BIRTH

We have seen that the church came into being at Pentecost, having both continuity and discontinuity with the church of the Jewish people. We saw that it went to the Temple at the hours of prayer, and yet had a fellowship of its own as its

people 'ate their food from house to house'. Also they shared what they had in order to fulfil the needs of all. We also gather that in the very early stages they had 'favour with all the people' (Acts 2:47). Whilst this did not include the Sanhedrin, yet it meant there was no basic alienation from others, nor were they met with hostility.

However, from John 11, following the raising of Lazarus, we gather that the use of supernatural powers deeply troubled the Sanhedrin, and when these were again used by the apostles, thereby causing a stir among the people, the Sanhedrin tried to forbid this use, demanding that they preach not in the name of Jesus. In spite of persecution they did this, and so the breach between the church and the Sanhedrin widened. Indeed the Sanhedrin officially rejected the message of the Gospel, and so the church was further freed from its original moorings.

We have seen that the church cared for its members. At Jerusalem the needs of all were met from a common fund. Widows were cared for, and the proclamation of the Gospel flourished. We have little account of the nature of the church, but we can see that love was mutually exercised. Also we can see that the Gospel of the Kingdom was proclaimed, *primarily under the announcement of the Lordship of Christ* (cf. Acts 2:36; 3:15f.; 4:30–31; 10:36; cf. Rom. 10:9). What we gather most is that the church at Jerusalem was seeking to share the proclamation of the Messiah with the people of Israel. Presumably it would have gone on doing this, but an event took place which precipitated a change. It was the persecution of Stephen.

CHAPTER SIX

THE CHURCH ON THE MOVE

Christ had said that when the Spirit came they would be witnesses to him in Jerusalem, all Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (i.e. to the Gentiles). Up to almost the end of the sixth chapter of Acts the scene is Jerusalem only. Stephen is at first one who serves at tables for the widows' arrangement. Then he is seen as a powerful controversialist. He is a man 'full of faith and the Holy Spirit'. He also does signs and wonders, which are anathema to many who oppose him. Having argued powerfully with many, he is indicted before the Sanhedrin, and in making his defence stirs them to such anger that they kill him by stoning.

At that point, much of the underlying hatred for the church suddenly came to the surface and the church was strongly persecuted, especially by Saul of Tarsus. The effect of this was to cause many to move out 'preaching the word' (Acts 8:4). This caused the evangelisation of Samaria by Philip, another man full of faith and the Holy Spirit who had likewise served at tables. In Acts 11:19ff., we read of others who went as far as Antioch in Syria, and a church was commenced there, amazingly of both Jews and Gentiles. Acts 10 and 11 speak of Peter's preaching to the Gentiles at Caesarea, and their acceptance by the Jewish church

as being part of the new people of God.

Acts 9 speaks of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, and he is called by Barnabas, an apostle, to help with the church at Antioch. After a period of time this church, sensing the mind of the Holy Spirit, sent out Barnabas and Saul (or, Paul) into Asia Minor, and eventually, after some time, Paul (with Silas) made his way into Europe. Acts 1:8 was being fulfilled in every area!

The real point we want to make here is that the church preached Christ as Lord, and in this sense it preached the Gospel of the Kingdom. It was not the Kingdom itself, but preached the Kingdom. It was the church, vital and alive, and whilst on the one hand it was concerned with its own members and their needs, on the other hand it was concerned with its task—to preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth. This is what it existed for as the people of God. From the time Paul moved out of Antioch, the church has, generally speaking, been moving onwards to 'the ends of the earth'. When it has not done that, it has denied its true purpose of being. Whilst being the people of God in this era, it must also be the proclaiming people of God.

We must not forget that it is always the new *qahal*, the eschatological assembly, the people of Messiah, the proclaiming people of God. If we seek to examine the nature of the church, its internal life, and even its external actions without keeping this in mind, then we cannot rightly assess the true nature of the church. As we have said before, it can only be the authentic people of God, the true outcome of the old *qahal*, if it is this under Messiah. To be the church it must always be dynamic. That is, it must always be on the move.

CHAPTER SEVEN**THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH (1)**

The materials which lie at our disposal in determining the true nature of the church are the Gospels, the Acts, the writings of Paul, John and Peter, as also the Book of the Revelation. Since writers do not all use the same terms, nor write from an identical vantage point, we have to work at an understanding of the materials. We have seen, to some degree, the nature of the church in Acts, and now we will look at Paul's view of the church.

PAUL AND THE CHURCH

Paul, as Saul of Tarsus, was present in the very early days of the church at Jerusalem. Until the persecution of Stephen, he must have seen much of its action, and at the point where Stephen debated with Hellenists (Greek-cultured Jews), he was able to commence his open persecution of the Christians. We know that he later claimed to have pressured these Christians to blaspheme. We cannot be sure whether they did, but we can be sure he knew (a) their doctrine, and (b) their practice.

In other words, he knew the church at Jerusalem. Admittedly he saw it through biased eyes, but he knew what there was to be known of them. Later, when he came back to Jerusalem and Judea, he ministered amongst these churches. So then, we conclude he knew them.

THE CHURCH AT JERUSALEM AND IN JUDEA

On the Day of Pentecost only Jews repented, were baptised, and became part of the *ekklesia*, the new people of God. However, among these Jews were many from other countries, and they had been part of their culture as well as being Jews. It seems that the Jews of Jerusalem had a more defined Judaism. Stephen, by his speech before the Sanhedrin, seemed (as a Christian) to sit very lightly to the temple and the law, and it was because of this they finally stoned him. Jerusalem Christians seemed for the most part to be accepted by the Jerusalem Jews. In Acts 6 we can detect a mild division between widows from outside Palestine and those from within. The Book of Acts shows that in the case of the baptism of Gentiles (chs. 10 and 11), the Jerusalem church was anxious to know why it had been done. The Jewish-Gentile church at Antioch was also looked on a little suspiciously until Barnabas reported well of it. In Acts 15 the whole question of the Gentiles was reopened, and, although settled, the Jerusalem church continued to have a group of Judaising Christians. Some of these, we gather, were converted Pharisees.

Some time after his conversion, when Paul returned to Jerusalem and Judea, he was at first met with suspicion, but then accepted. At that time, the church in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria had ceased being persecuted, and was able to grow and develop.

Paul's next experience was of the church at Antioch, and here was a 'hybrid' church, so far as its members were concerned.

They were Jews and Gentiles. Paul ministered to the church, but he must have learned a lot from the nature of this group. It would have prepared him for his ministry in Asia Minor and Europe.

PAUL THE FOUNDER OF CHURCHES

There is no doubt that Paul had a doctrine of the church, and this we will see. We understand it from his action of founding churches, and then his writings in his Epistles. We know that Barnabas basically led the first journey into Asia Minor, to Antioch (in Pisidia), Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. They preached in the synagogues, that is, in the old *qahal* situation, and those who responded were incorporated into the new *qahal*, the Christian *ekklesia*. The act of baptism is not mentioned by word, although the making of disciples is (14:22), and the mode for making disciples of John and Jesus was by baptism. Jews and Gentiles were both incorporated into the church. We have later evidence, both from the Acts and the Epistles, that new converts were baptised.

We should note that Paul preached the same Gospel as the apostles had preached (I Cor. 15:11; Gal. 1:17), and we have every reason to believe it was accepted as such by the Christians at Jerusalem. We know from Acts and the Pastoral Epistles that it was Pauline custom to ordain elders, with prayer and fasting and the laying on of hands. We will see the significance of these ‘elders’ or ‘bishops’ or ‘overseers’ later.

We know that Paul revisited many of the churches, and to many of them he wrote letters. He also wrote to at least one church he had not seen or visited at that time (cf. Rome and Colossae).

PAUL’S VIEW AND TEACHING CONCERNING THE CHURCH

The Epistle to the Romans reveals Paul’s view of the

ministry of proclamation. At least three times he says it is to bring about the obedience of (or, to the) faith of the nations (i.e. the Gentiles). This is said in Romans 1:5, 15:18 and 16:25–26. This accords with the teaching he gives of the Kingdom, as we saw. He sees the church, or the Messianic people, as one. Whilst he uses the term ‘churches’, he sees the church as one, which accords with the usage in Acts. The best attested text of Acts 9:31 says, ‘the church throughout all Judea and Galilee’. In Acts 20:28 (cf. I Cor. 1:2; I Pet. 5:2; I Cor. 12:27) it is ‘the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood’. Of course in Ephesians it is the Bride, the Temple, and the Family—all single entities. In I Corinthians 12 to 14 it is the Body. This is also found in Ephesians. Paul can also use the term ‘the church of God which is at Corinth’ (I Cor. 1:2). At the same time, he can speak of ‘the churches of God’ (I Thess. 2:14; Gal. 1:22; I Cor. 16:1; II Cor. 8:1). He can speak of the churches as being in particular places (Rom. 16:1; I Thess. 1:1), and as being the church in a house, and so on. Yet this plural sense still does not mean there is more than one church, but rather that there are many realisations of the church in different places. It is still the one church.

How then does Paul see the church (a) as the whole church of God, and (b) as the local church? If the latter is a realisation of the former, then he will not really see any great difference. Hence when Paul gives teaching on the general view of the church—as, say, in Ephesians—he also gives particular instruction in regard to the life of the local church. At the same time, he sees a complete structure for the church in any locality (the local church). It has elders, deacons, and all members have gifts, ministries, and operations. However, it is when we come to what may be called ‘ministry gifts’ that we see these cannot all be contained within the local church, and probably are not intended to be so.

CHAPTER EIGHT**THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH (2)**

Paul and the Church (continued)

PAUL'S VIEW OF THE MINISTRY GIFTS

In Ephesians 4:7–11 Paul says that Christ ‘led captivity captive and gave gifts to men’. He nominates these as ‘apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher’. We have seen the work of an apostle, and we know that the evangelist proclaimed the Gospel. The prophet had a ministry of exhortation, encouragement, comfort, and sometimes had a ministry of prediction. The pastor and teacher seem to be the one, i.e. pastor–teacher. His would be very much a local ministry. The evangelist may or may not remain in the one locality. We find in Acts that prophets travelled, and certainly the apostle was not confined to any local church. This does not mean that all did not have ministry from time to time in local churches.

Paul speaks in I Corinthians 12:28 of ‘*first* apostles, *second* prophets, *third* teachers, *then* workers of miracles’ etc. This seems to imply some order—perhaps hierarchical—of

degree of operations or order of ministries; that is, the apostle must minister first, then the prophet, and so on. What is clear is that these gifts are indispensable to the church at some time or another. Paul, in Ephesians 4:12, says that these gifts are for ‘the equipment of the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ’. He then goes on to show that by the mutual contributions of all, the Body upbuilds itself in love. Thus all gifts of love are orientated.

PAUL'S VIEW OF THE BODY AND THE CHARISMATA

Paul sees the church as the body of Christ, and every believer as a member of that body, and all members both interrelated and interdependent. Each member (every member) is given a gift. The gift is at the same time a manifestation of the Spirit, and such are for ‘the common good’, i.e. not just for the good of the one who has it. Yet, again, all the gifts are for the good of all the body. They may be exercised personally, but in fact they have their corporate effect, and therefore all are to be used for all. He sees a variety of gifts, but these given by the one(ness) Spirit. He sees a variety of services but these are by the one(ness) Lord (Jesus Christ), and there is a variety of operations or ‘workings’ but these by the one(ness) God (the Father). Hence the body is a (ontological) oneness.

It is the unity of the body which Paul sees as its essential nature, and calls it ‘the unity of the Spirit’ or being ‘all one in Christ Jesus’, and stresses that in this body there is ‘neither Jew nor Gentile, neither male nor female, neither slave nor freedman’. He means that the whole body is essentially one, and the ‘accidents’ of race, sex and vocation do not impair that unity. His famous statement of I Corinthians 12:12–13 makes this clear:

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with

Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one[ness] Spirit.

It is evident, then, that the church is a basic (ontological) unity, and that the gifts are for unity, and the members for function, and the ministry of the gifts keeps the church alive, growing, healthy. In fact the primary purpose of the gifts is love, and if the gifts are used for any other purpose then they are useless, sterile, and a contradiction in meaning.

PAUL'S VIEW OF THE SPIRITUAL WEAPONS

Paul is aware that the people of God are in conflict with the powers of darkness. In Ephesians 6:10–18 he speaks of having battle with powers of darkness, and using weapons both offensive and defensive to defeat them. He requires constant prayer for all the saints, and no less for himself. In II Corinthians 10:3f. he speaks of spiritual weapons which can pull down mighty strongholds. The battle is carried into the enemies' territory. The church, then, is martial. This is indicated in Philippians 1:27–28, where the unity of the fighting force is terrifying to evil opponents. Christians are those who have the victory through Christ (I Cor. 15:57; II Cor. 2:14; etc.).

PAUL'S VIEW OF THE TASK OF THE CHURCH

The task of proclamation is one in which Paul was involved, and speaks often of that involvement. He may simply have seen it as his ministry, and in particular as the ministry of an apostle. However, he speaks of the work of Christ in I Corinthians 15:24–28 as putting down all the enemies. He gives constant advice to the members of the church to walk worthy of their calling and to have an eye to

those outside the church. His discussion of the Gospel in I Corinthians 1 shows that he sees it as the only means of redeeming man. In I Corinthians 9 he speaks of his responsibility to preach the Gospel, and it is inferred that this is for all. His advice to Timothy and Titus cannot be limited to them. Paul sees the members of the church as coworkers and co-sufferers with Christ. He sees them as responsible for the proclamation of the Gospel, for doing good to all men. He sees them as ministering fully within the body (e.g. Rom. 12:3ff.). His advice to the elders of the Ephesian church (given at Miletus) is indeed moving. They are to tend the flock of God, and to watch for the wolves that will arise, defending the flock against them.

The Pastoral Epistles are filled with sound advice for the ministry of elders and deacons, for those who teach and do the work of an evangelist—such as Timothy and Titus—whilst Paul is constantly emphasising the need for good teaching, and for training more teachers.

When it comes to the internal life of the church, it is evident that Paul sees this as one of constant vigilance against the world, the flesh, and Satan. The children of God must walk in light, they must walk in love, they must be holy. Their lives which have commenced in the Spirit must go on in the Spirit, so that they must be led by the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, be aglow with the Spirit. This is because they are new creations, having been transferred from the powers of darkness into the Kingdom of God.

Put in another way, Paul sees this people of God,—these Jews and Gentiles who have believed, as the true Israel, the true handiwork of God, 'created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them'. These works are the plan of God working out through His church. This is evident from Ephesians 3: 10–12, where it is said that heavenly powers watch the church for the outworking of God's will, i.e. His plan. Paul

also shows that the church is the fulness of Christ by which he will fill all things.

It is difficult for us to stand back and see that the figures of the church in the New Testament are simply those of the Old, and so are the fulfilments of the prophecies. They outline very strongly the fact that the church is the people of God, the Messianic people, under Messiah and his Spirit, working in obedience to God and His plan. This principle is seen very clearly in Peter's understanding of the church, which we will now proceed to examine.

CHAPTER NINE

THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH (3)

PETER, JOHN, HEBREWS, AND THE CHURCH

PETER AND THE CHURCH

On the day of Pentecost, Peter addressed the Jews as 'the house of Israel'. He was not thinking of having 'another house', but exhorted the believers to separate themselves from this crooked generation, i.e. those who refused to be the true house of Israel which was now the new (renewed) people of God.

In Acts 15:14 James the elder describes Peter's idea: 'Brethren, listen to me. Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his own name'. He then refers it to Amos 9: 11–12, where it is spoken of as a rebuilding of the house of David. In I Peter 4:17 Peter refers to the church as 'the household of God'. In 1:17 he has said they call on God as Father, and later speaks of them being living stones, built into a spiritual house. This is the true (spiritual) house of God, His true tabernacle. Again he sees the church as the new people of God. In 2:9–10 he

says:

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy.

Adding to the concept of the house and the household, which is really the family, he also speaks of the brotherhood, saying 'love the brotherhood' and 'have unity of Spirit, sympathy, love of the brethren, a tender heart and a humble mind'.

Peter sees the church as a suffering people. Indeed his first Epistle is primarily on this theme. However, that is what Christ was—the Suffering Servant—and his people can scarcely expect less. Let them suffer as he did, not reviling, and let them know the end is a glorious one when Christ shall appear. Already they have joy which is full of (that coming) glory, and in their very suffering the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon them. This does not mean the people of God are ineffective or defeated. Satan flees from them when they resist him. They are able to tell the wonderful works of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvellous light. The church is livingly 'on the move'.

In the second Petrine Epistle, there is a call for holiness by the people of God, and an anticipation of the new heavens and the new earth, which in the Old Testament is the ultimate glory for the people of God (Isa. 65 and 66). If in the first Epistle they have suffered, in the second they are assured God is not tardy in bringing about the end, but it is His long-suffering that causes the delay they are sensing. His long-suffering is that many might come to repentance, and so represents for these salvation itself. This explanation is salutary because, when we compare some of the prophecies in the Old Testament, it does seem that the people of God are seeing little of that Messianic victory. The Petrine

teaching is that this victory is carried out through and in the midst of suffering. Such a view gives a powerful rationale of suffering, especially the suffering of the people of God.

JOHN AND THE CHURCH

John's Gospel is filled with figures and teaching regarding the church, and we have seen some of this: the vine and the branches, the flock and the fold, the family and the Father, and perhaps even the net and the fishes. The beautiful seventeenth chapter speaks of the intimate unity of the church: 'That they may all be one, even as we are one, thou in me and I in thee, that they may be one in us. . . 'John's first two Epistles do not mention the church as such, except under the idea of the brethren, and that is very strong. They also speak of the 'children of God' as against the 'children of the devil', as though both are families. Perhaps 'the elect lady' is a church in the second Epistle, but again love is enjoined in the sense of the church being the family. The third Epistle does mention a local church. This is equated with 'the brethren' and so, again, the family. The family is always then the people of God, the children of the Father. John's three Letters have a very high view and demand of how the children must love one another. This is the very life of the church—obedience to God and love of the brethren. To love is to obey, and to obey is to love.

In the Book of the Revelation, the church is shown in many and powerful ways. John as a servant of God is in exile 'for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus'. This term 'the testimony of Jesus' is a significant one in the Book, because it is 'the spirit of prophecy' and accords closely with what began when the Spirit was poured out at Pentecost ('and they shall prophesy'), and with Acts 1:8

(giving the testimony of Jesus when the Spirit comes upon them).

The church is seen in many passages such as the martyrs in 6:9f., the accused and persecuted brethren of 12:10ff., and the persecution of those who would not follow the beast in chapter 13. In chapter 19 the people of God follow the triumphant Word, the Lamb. At one point they are at the wedding of the Bride and the Lamb, and at the next doing battle with the powers of evil. In chapter 21 the Bride, the church, the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, descends out of heaven. For the most part, then, the church is involved in conflict or seen in glory. At the end of time, she anticipates –with the Spirit–the coming of the Bridegroom.

In chapters 2 and 3 there are remarkable letters, teaching much about the church. These are represented as seven churches in Asia, and their localities given, but it is the state of these churches and the rebukes they receive which teach us much as to how true churches (or, the true church) should be. It also shows the eschatological outcome of true victory, and the rewards which shall come to the true churches, that is, to those members who are obedient.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS AND THE CHURCH

In this Epistle the concept of ‘house’ and ‘sons’ is prominent. In 2:9–14 we see that the Father brings many sons into glory by the work of the Cross. The Son is not ashamed to call those he sanctifies ‘brethren’, and he liberates them from fear of death. In 3:1f. Jesus is compared with Moses. Moses is a servant in ‘the house’, but Jesus is the Son ‘over it’. The passage then goes on to say ‘we are his house’. Thus the Pauline and Petrine idea is again present, stemming as it does from the Old Testament where the house of God is the

house of Israel, or better still the true sons of God are the sons of (faithful) Abraham. Chapters 8 and 10 speak of the old Israel and its covenant, and then the New Covenant, and the new people of God who, because of the sacrifice of Christ, can have access to God through the new and living way. It is implicit that if there were old covenant people, then there are New Covenant people. Often the writer refers to how these believers had lived earnestly, and he exhorts them to go on doing so. In chapter 11 they are to be encouraged by the old church, the people of God down through past history who witness to them of faith. In chapter 12 they are to remember as sons that the Father often disciplines, and they are not to faint under that discipline. In 12:18–28 there is a brilliant passage which contrasts the old covenant people coming to Mt. Sinai and the new covenant people coming to Mt. Zion. The first tremble, the second come with joy. In the last chapter (13), we see what the church should be in action, in giving hospitality to the needy, being subject to the leaders (elders), and remembering that they are seeking a (the) city to come. Verse 20 presents the picture of the church being brought up out of death into eternal life by the blood of the eternal covenant, i.e. Christ’s blood.

What is remarkable is that the writer uses all Old Testament terms, figures and patterns to refer to the new people of God, so that in fact he employs only those terms which will be both understood and accepted by Hebrews.

CHAPTER TEN**THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH (4)****GENERAL CONCLUSION**

When we think about the birth and progress of the church in the New Testament, it is quite amazing. Without doubt the apostles and others who followed Christ thought in terms of the church being the people of God and the true Israel. They dared to think beyond the Sanhedrin, the whole cultus of worship at the temple, to see themselves—in Jerusalem, all Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth—as the people planned and prophesied to do the will of God. They saw themselves as carrying through the prophecies under the terms of:

- (a) the people of God, that is, the children of the Father, and so,
- (b) the family of God. Time and again in the Old Testament, the prophetic promise was, ‘I will be their God, and they shall be my people’, and ‘I will dwell in their midst’. As people they are now the sons and daughters of the living God.

- (c) They are the people who belong to and proclaim the Kingdom of God, or, of the Father. They are the true sons of the Kingdom. Not even the whole weight of the Jewish people dismays them, or makes them think again whether they be the people of God or not. They stay in Jerusalem, seeing themselves as the true successors of old Israel.
 - (d) They are the true vineyard, for in Christ’s words the vineyard of Israel was to be taken away from those who had killed the Owner’s servants (the prophets) and His Son (Jesus) and be given to others, just as the sons of Abraham would be cast out of the Kingdom (the vineyard) in favour of those who come from other places than Palestine (Israel).
 - (e) In Paul’s terms, they are the true olive tree. No doubt the Gentiles are the wild olive branch grafted in, but what does that matter? God will surely re-engraft Israel at the right time, but at the moment Israel is not, herself, the olive tree.
- Israel is not regarded as the only people who have the blessing of God. Gentiles are not mere beneficiaries who receive certain blessings without being included as God’s people. In fact, Paul is saying that they are full beneficiaries, and this equally with Israel: ‘...the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel’. Doubtless there is a battle to convince all within the church of this, for the thought that the Jews are primary is still there amongst some. However, the battle was won, hence the teaching of the ‘one body’ was not ‘one as against two’, but ‘absolutely one within itself’, i.e. the body is one so that being Jew or Gentile (or any other category) makes no difference. This is because *all are holy*, that is, they are saints, and in Daniel 7

the Kingdom is given to the Son of man and the saints—his saints. Those of the church are ‘called to be saints’.

The mystery of the Body is a mystery even beyond old Israel after the flesh, so much one are they. They fellowship in the breaking of the bread—that feast which remembers the past, shows forth his death in the present, and looks to the eschatological fulfilment (‘Till I come’), when they shall drink the new wine afresh in the Messianic banquet, the Kingdom of God. When all of these things are put together, it can then be seen how wonderful a thing is the church of God upon the earth, with its members in heaven, and its members to come, all of whom will form the ultimate redeemed community in heaven, the multitude such as no man can number, out of every nation and people and kindred and tribe and tongue. This will be the glorified community, the full family of the Father. This is because it is *the new humanity*, a term which we now wish to look at on its own.

THE NEW HUMANITY

In Ephesians 2:11–22 Paul speaks of the alienation of the Gentiles from the Kingdom of Israel, its covenants, and (if we add in Rom. 9:4) ‘the glory, the sonship, the worship and the promises’. There is inherent hostility against Israel and God within the Gentiles, but the Cross has broken down this enmity. The temple courtyard where the sacrifices were made was denied to the Gentiles, but now the wall that prevented them sharing has been taken away. In the Cross, Christ has made Jew and Gentile *one*. He has minted an entirely new humanity which is not merely an amalgam of Jew and Gentile but a humanity which is neither Jew nor Gentile. This is the import of Peter’s saying that he has sanctified their (the Gentiles’) hearts by faith, through the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:9), and his statement that all are one people, many of

whom had been ‘no people’. They are a ‘holy nation, a kingdom of priests’.

This is the people ‘called to be saints’. In Christ’s Cross all have died (Rom. 6:6), their old humanity being crucified there with its flesh (Gal. 5:24) and the world to which it belonged (Gal. 6:14), together with its sins (Gal. 1:4; I Pet. 2:24; etc.), for Christ was made sin for that old humanity (II Cor. 5:21), and all have been through the crucible of that death, even down into the grave and up into life (II Cor. 5:14–15; Col. 3:1–5; Eph. 2:5–6). This new humanity has been renewed ‘in the spirit of its mind’, and ‘is being renewed after the image of him who created it’. This is the miracle: the church is the new humanity, corporately, for each member participates in him who is the New Man himself, that is, Christ the head from whom flows, in practice, this humanity.

It is this humanity which walks as sons of God, and brethren of the Elder Brother, being led as it is by the Spirit of Sonship (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:16, 18, 25). This is the humanity which has been ‘washed . . . sanctified . . . justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God’. It is this cleansing which has made them saints. It is the sanctification which has set them apart for God, and this justification which has released them from the fear of judgement, and the power of sin. As the new humanity, they live together in the new humanity, the miracle of all time—the church!

CHAPTER ELEVEN**THE ORDER AND ORGANISATION OF THE CHURCH****INTRODUCTION**

Whilst the church constitutes the people of God, and is particularly so when they are gathered together (Matt. 18:20; I Cor. 11:20; Acts 4:24f.), yet it is not an unstructured body. Indeed the very term ‘body’—as also the term ‘sons of the covenant’ and other similar terms—suggests a structured society or community of God. And this is how we find it. We have seen that in a remarkably short time there was a group under the immediate leadership of the apostles and elders, and caring for the widows and the poor, and making those decisions which affected the life of all its members. Whilst there must have been problems concerning ‘faith and order’ at the beginning, it is remarkable how well-structured was the church, and we will seek to see something of this structure.

CHRIST THE HEAD

In Ephesians 1:19ff. it is stated that God has raised Christ up, ‘far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in

this age but also in that which is to come’. This means that Christ is Lord of all history and all eternity. It adds, ‘. . .and has made him the head over all things for the church’. It then adds that the church is his body, ‘the fulness of him who is filling all in all’. In Colossians 3:1 Paul directs believers to look to Christ, seated at the right hand of God. Christ then is the Head of the church, and so in control of his Body. In Ephesians 5 and other places, Christ is depicted as the Husband who is head of his wife, the Bride, i.e. the church. She must obey him, and be subject to him. The New Testament cry, ‘Jesus is Lord!’ is also for the church.

In the commission passages at the end of the Gospels, and Acts 1:3–8, we see Christ saying that he will be with the church in its labours of preaching the Gospel, proclaiming the Kingdom, and making disciples of the nations (Gentiles). It is clear from the Acts that the church sees him as Lord, and the Epistles major on his commands, and his patterns which he has given for the life of the church. Where the church meets he is present, in the midst. The church is ‘in Christ’ and he in them, i.e. ‘Christ in them the hope of glory’. He is also Lord in a personal way to each member.

When it comes to the outworking of the commission, it is ‘the Spirit of Jesus’ who directs. This term, found in Acts 16:7, indicates that the Spirit brings the mind of Christ to his people. Through the Spirit, Christ is ever present with his people—hence the unifying ‘one Lord’ of Ephesians 4:5.

THE LORD THE SPIRIT

It is clear that the church was born of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and it is also clear that it is led by the Spirit (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:16, 18, 25) and empowered by the Spirit, and through the Spirit has the mind of Christ. He is ‘the Lord the Spirit’ and must be obeyed. By him all have been sealed

unto the day of redemption (Eph. 1:13–14; 4:30). Hence they must not grieve or quench him, but be filled with him, and receive from him.

In Acts it is the Spirit who brings truth to the church, empowers it, guides it, and protects its unity in so many ways. Ananias and Sapphira are really disciplined by the Holy Spirit to whom they have lied. The offices and gifts of the church come through the ministry of the Spirit. In fact there is nothing the church has which is not from the Spirit—such as gifts, ministries, love, fellowship, prayer, knowing the will of God, its weapons of spiritual warfare, and so on. It is the Spirit, then, who is the immediate Guide, Counsellor and Leader of the church. This work of the Spirit is lived out in the use of the ministry, the gifts, and the oversight of elders and deacons.

THE MINISTRY GIFTS

We have already seen that there is an order of precedence or hierarchy in the gifts of an apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher. It is clear that Paul demands submission to his apostolic authority. However, this ministry is not magisterial but ministerial, that is, one of servanthood. The one who would be greatest must be servant. There is no imposition of tyranny, and no personal lordship over others in any of the ministries. At the same time there must be order, or there will be confusion.

It is obvious that where a certain ministry is exercised—say, that of an apostle or prophet—that the order of the ministry will be observed within the church. Paul and John point to members who oppose their authority, but their opposition is exceptional, and not the true order of things. The regulations Paul issues for the use of gifts such as those of prophecy and tongues, tell us that there was no haphazard

use of the gifts. Within the worship must have been those who led and controlled that worship. Who, for example, insisted that no more than three speak in tongues, and that the spirits of the prophets be subject to the prophets? It may well be that the ministry gifts were exercised in a collegiate rather than an hierarchical manner, but discipline must have been there.

THE LEADERSHIP OF THE CHURCHES

It cannot be doubted that there was an order of authority within the churches, even beyond that of the ministry of apostles, prophets, and so on. In Hebrews (13:7, 17) these are called ‘leaders’ or ‘they that have the rule over you’. In I Thessalonians 5:12 they are called ‘those who labour among you, and are over you in the Lord’. I Timothy 5:17 says, ‘Let the elders who rule well. . . .’ The word of I Peter 5:1–4 speaks of the elders tending the flock ‘not as domineering over those in your charge’. At the same time it exhorts the younger to be subject to the elders. From these passages we see that authority was exercised within the church by the elders.*

The example of this in Acts is at Jerusalem where James the brother of Jesus is an elder (‘the elder’?) of the church, and in the deliberations of Acts 15 it is James who presides rather than Peter or other apostles. The elders are to be men of experience, especially in married and family life. They are to be men of sober character, but also fatherly persons who can lead the church. In Acts 20 Paul gives them very solemn charges regarding their ministry. Some scholars see in the constant references to teaching and pastoring that the office of an elder is at the same time the gift of a pastor–teacher.

* For a fuller treatment of this theme, see *Shepherds of the Flock: Eldership in the Scriptures*, G. C. Bingham, NCPI, 1985.

This could well be so. However, it can be seen that the elders have charge of the flock, are called upon to heal the sick, teach, and minister to relational needs within the community. They are to do this under the guidance and empowerment of the Holy Spirit, for they are anointed by him for the task.

With elders are also deacons (servants). They doubtless had much of the administration of widow care, and care for the poor, but would have worked along with the elders, supplementing their ministry. They too had to be godly men who understood the mystery of the faith. They were not merely 'organisation men'. They also had to live godly lives.

Given in this leadership, every member of the body had a gift, and so all shared in the life of the church. Romans 12:3ff. shows them all about their tasks and ministries so that the whole body was helped and healthy. We find no hard authoritarian spirit within the church, since the order of the day was love, unity and fellowship. In the context of 'one Spirit', 'one Lord', 'one God and Father of all who is above all, through all and in all', the church was a working unit, and whilst doubtless this unity was attacked, they could work at maintaining the unity already given and so wisely structured within the gifts and offices.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH

The church was (and is) a worshipping community. The church had continuity of worship* from its Judaic origins. At the same time, the church had a new thrust for worship with the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. However, before we examine this point, we will look at the general view of worship in the New Testament.

In the Old Testament, the principle of worship was also the principle of service. Hence Exodus 4:23: 'Let my people go that may they serve [worship] me.' The demands of worship-service are made in Exodus 20:1ff.: 'Because I have delivered you from bondage, therefore have no other gods before Me. Serve Me!' The promise of the Abrahamic Covenant, according to Zechariah in Luke 1:73-75, was:

. . . that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, may serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.

In the New Testament this principle obtains as powerfully. Romans 12:1-2 speaks of surrendering the body to God as a living sacrifice. This is 'reasonable service' or

* To examine this theme in detail, see Living Faith Study No. 12, *Worship: Its Meaning, Scope and Significance*, G. C. Bingham, NCPI, 1977.

‘logical worship’. The word *latreia* (Gk.) is again used in Hebrews 9:14 and Revelation 7:15. In the first, the conscience is purged by the blood of Christ to serve the living God, and in the second, the robes of the saints are made white in the same blood, and so ‘they serve him day and night, in the temple’.

When it is seen that the *service* and *worship* are the one, then we do not think of worship as only the operation carried out at a time of concerted devotion. There are, however, other words. One of these is in Acts 13:2, where the church was serving the Lord, i.e. ministering to the Lord. The English word from the Greek is ‘liturgy’. The Greek word *leitourgia* can be used for serving in the temple. However, the Levites not only worshipped, but they also served, so that it amounts to much the same thing.

What we do know is that from the day of Pentecost the Christians in Jerusalem attended the hours of prayers (Acts 2:42). They worshipped in the temple. At the same time, they served the Lord by their lives. What then caused this worship which was so new and fresh? The answer lies in the whole idea of the New Covenant, which, as Zechariah claimed, would liberate God’s people from bondage to serve Him fearlessly.

MOTIVATION TO WORSHIP

The New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31–34 (cf. Matt. 26:28; I Cor. 11 :25) promised the forgiveness of sins, and with this forgiveness a true obedience in the heart, and a living knowledge of God. Hebrews 9:14 shows that once cleansed from dead works, the believer will now worship the living God. Hence Paul can say, himself, ‘I thank God whom I *serve* with a clear conscience’. Doubtless Cain’s problem was that his conscience was not clear, hence he could not

serve God truly, as did Abel. Paul says in I Timothy 1:5 ‘The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and a sincere faith’. This means that true service or obedience can only flow when the heart and conscience have been cleansed. This is the secret of true worship.

Again worship comes from relationship with God. Man, being justified, does not stand as guilty before God. Being adopted or made a child of God, he now has affinity with God and cries, ‘Abba!’, that is, ‘Father!’ (Gal. 4:4–6; Rom. 8:14–17). Thus in the New Testament the following elements motivate to worship, namely grateful love, true relationship with God, liberation from idolatry and sinful bondage, and filial relationship with the Father, God. Doubtless the Spirit at Pentecost freed men and women into the liberty of grace so that they desired to both worship and serve God in His way. Whilst the freedom motivates to worship, the Spirit also conducts to worship. In Philippians 3:3 Paul says, ‘We worship God by the Spirit’, thus underlining the words of Christ in John 4:23f.:

God is Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit [Spirit] and in truth . . . such the Father ever seeks to worship him.

The worship of the community has always been the integrating power by which it lives. Idolatry is thus necessarily divisive, but the worship of the ‘one true God’ must integrate the community. Motivated by love and gratitude which sprang from deliverance, the community worshipped. Living in the Spirit, it was kept fresh in worship. Nor was this being fresh in, and by, the Spirit merely a subjective matter. In various passages (I Cor. 12; Eph. 4; Rom. 12) it is seen that the Spirit gives gifts, and these gifts are used in the worship–service of the church. Hence worship is not static, but dynamic. The old forms of the Mosaic Covenant have given way to the new and living ways of the New Covenant.

We do not mean to suggest that the old forms were not, for their time, dynamic. They were, but the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews shows how much more excellent is the New Covenant, the New Mediator, and the new worship. We can then sum up by saying that the worship, in itself, was a rich motivation to worship, this being particularly so because it was worship of the Father, and service to the Son the Lord, and it was by the Holy Spirit. This will help us to understand that what is set out below is in every aspect relational and living.

MODES OF WORSHIP

The true mode of living is the true mode of worship—we have seen that. However, corporate worship is also portrayed. In Acts 2 the one-hundred-and-twenty were gathered together for prayer and worship (cf. Luke 24:33; Acts 1:14; 2:1). At Pentecost they were filled with the Spirit and prophesied, and proclaimed the Gospel. They then shared in four elements—the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and the prayers—with those who were baptised. In their homes they had times of worship and prayer (Acts 2:46f.; 12:12; etc.). Churches met in homes (cf. Acts 16:15 20:8 [house], Rom. 16:5, 23). Probably the church proper met in homes, whilst proclamation was made in more public situations (cf. Acts 19:8–10).

We can now look at passages which describe worship in the New Testament. One of the simplest appears to be I Thessalonians 5:16–22:

Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophesying, but test everything; hold fast what is good, abstain from every form of evil.

The thrust of this should be closely studied. Colossians

3:12–17, whilst undoubtedly being instruction for Christian living, is also a passage linked with Christian worship. Verse 16 says:

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Notice here that psalms and hymns and spiritual songs are not so much addressed to the Lord as they are to one another—in order to teach, mutually, the things which are related to the congregation's needs.

In Ephesians 5:18–21 the picture of worship is very clear. As in the Colossian passage, the psalms and hymns and spiritual songs are forms of 'addressing one another', obviously for the purposes of exhortation, encouragement and even admonishing. 'Making melody in the heart' is 'to the Lord'. Thanksgiving is also a part of worship. All of this is in the context of 'being subject to one another', meaning the entire body of believers, hence what follows in family life with husbands and wives, parents and children, servants and masters, is all part of the *latreia*, i.e. the worship/service which Paul speaks of in Romans 12:1–2.

In I Corinthians chapters 12 to 14, the following things emerge:

- (a) *The church is under the Lordship of Christ.* It cries 'Jesus is Lord!' This accords with the fact that Christ is the organic head of the church (cf. Eph. 1:20–22), and all are members one of another (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:25–27).
- (b) *The Holy Spirit distributes gifts to the members* for the complete operation of the body. Hence the body as a whole exercises the gifts for its ministry and service. All of this must be done in love (ch. 13).
- (c) *14:26–33 gives us a picture of worship which is typical*

in the church: ‘When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation’. The uses of these gifts are regulated. The criterion of true worship is ‘order, not confusion’. However, it can be seen that the use of various gifts is contributory to the whole order of worship. Many participate. It is suggested that if the whole church were to use the gift of prophecy, then an unbeliever coming in would experience the impact of this ministry, as his secret thoughts would be disclosed, and he would declare, falling down, ‘God is really among you!’ The point of this is that such worship is not passive but dynamic, God being known to be present.

In addition, other elements are described. Women, presumably married, are to keep silence in the churches, at least so far as questions are concerned, and to ask their husbands when they return home. Women, of course, may prophesy (cf. Acts 2:17–18), but with head veiled (I Cor. 11:5–6). In I Timothy 2:11–13 Paul enjoins women to learn, but not to take the authority of a man in teaching. The Pastoral Epistles show that elders lead the church community, and it is assumed they regulate the worship to some degree. In I Peter 4:10–11 the gifts mentioned may not all be used specifically in embodied worship, but they relate to the whole service of the church:

As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who utters oracles of God, whoever renders service [*diakonei*], as one who renders it by the strength which God supplies; in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

In James, there are certain instructions for public worship. In chapter 2:1–17 the treatment of the poor in the assembly is discussed. The poor must be honoured equally with the rich, and, beyond that, those who can should show

their practical love by helping the brother who has need. This must be part of service, surely—the actions of the body of which Paul speaks in Romans 12: 1–2, and expands in the following verses.

We conclude then that the modes of worship are not fixed rigidly. Because they ‘worship by the Spirit’, they are led into love (Rom. 5:5; I John 4:12f.), they are aided in the use of the gifts (for love), and the church worships in this living way, more especially because the living God is present. Hence, the worship contributes to the life and strength of the church, which is also equipped for service beyond even its corporate acts of worship. We must think then of the Father and His family, Christ as Lord of his people, and the Holy Spirit as Guide, Comforter, and Empowerer. In this situation, worship flourishes.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE CHURCH
AND
SERVING OTHERSTHE *DIAKONIA* AND *DIACONATE*

When we come to ‘THE PEOPLE OF GOD’, we will need to glance again at this theme of serving others. The word *diakonia* in the Greek is generally the word used for the serving of others. Unfortunately it has often been institutionalised into *deacon* and delegated as a specific office. However, all Christians are deacons. They are in the diaconal occupation. In I Corinthians 12:4–7 gifts, ministries (servings, from *diakonia*), and workings (operations) are mentioned. These all constitute the working of the church through the Spirit. What is noticeable is that all gifts, ministries and workings are to profit the whole body. It is doubtful whether these three can really exist one without the others.

There is also another noun for ‘servant’, namely *doulos*, which really means ‘a slave’. When the two verbs *diakoneo* and *douleuo* are traced in the New Testament, they tell their story. In Galatians 5:13–14 Paul says, ‘Through love serve one another [as slaves]. For the whole law has been summed up in one word, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” ‘To love is to serve. To serve is to do all that the law

demands. In Galatians 6:10 Paul says, ‘Whilst we have time, let us do good unto all men’, and adds, ‘especially to those who are of the household of God’. This may seem to favour the church. Probably the explanation is that to love is to serve, and the church under persecution requires more service in certain respects than those outside it. However, the ‘all men’ cannot be denied.

In I Thessalonians 3:12 Paul says, ‘And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all men, as we do to you’. To love means to serve, and so the church serves all men. How it does this we will discuss. In I Timothy 2:1–4 Paul speaks of ‘prayers, supplications, intercessions and thanksgivings’ being made for *all men*. He sees this as maintaining peace in the world and bringing many to salvation. In I Peter 2:13–17 the apostle speaks of the attitude Christians ought to have to all men. He says, ‘Honour all men.’ This must mean action as much as attitude.

The church then has continual service within its own body, and service to the world. The latter has sometimes been called ‘the diaconate of the church’. We have discussed enough under love and gifts to know what is the internal diaconate. What then is the external diaconate, i.e. service to the world?

The answer must be along a number of lines. Today great store is placed upon social welfare, and social activism. Liberation theology, and the interpretation of the work of the church in the context of great social and material need, has driven many to believe that the church must try to change the social order within the world. Even temporary amelioration of social conditions is not enough. Also man’s sense of lostness, alienation and the like is often explained by Marxian analysis.

First let us say that social obligation is not primarily a Christian matter. All men are responsible for all men, whether they are ‘in Adam’ or ‘in Christ’. It is simply that

Christian people are (or should be) sensitized to man's material needs. I John 3:17–18 enjoins discernment of another's need and help where it is possible to give it. Probably John was speaking primarily of need within the Christian family. However, social obligation must be part of creational responsibility as well as Christian love.

Honest expositors of the New Testament must admit that there is almost no mention, either directly or by implication, of a Christian sense of social obligation in the way it is put forward today. Why should that be? The answer is plain. The church thought in terms of man's deepest needs, the ones we call spiritual or moral, the need of redemption. If we scoff at this thought, and think of 'bellies before Bibles', we may also be erring. Man is a creature in direst bondage. Of course social aid and motivation ought to be given to the needy, but his deepest need must be considered. The proclamation of the Gospel is not mere religious proselytising, but the richest liberation the human spirit can know.

It is this liberation which also brings the inflooding of love, and of concern for one's neighbour. This is the true service which is all the law. Man's economic and political bondage can be—and often is—dreadful. Deeper, however, is his bondage to sin, death, the powers of darkness, the law and wrath. To be emancipated in these areas is to give him new powers for living, and even for helping to change the temporal order of things.

We have also mentioned spiritual warfare. The body of Christ, in accordance with I Corinthians 15:24–28, shares with Christ in the putting down of the enemies. It does this, often, on behalf of others, especially the unredeemed. The Gospel defeats their enemies when they are forgiven their sins. A quick glance at history will show the church has occupied itself in the realm of hospitals and medical care, refuges for the weak, the mentally ill, the needy and the aged. Education has been a top priority. Today the church

exercises social concern on an international scale. However, the church will be failing in its function if it does not offer the greatest of all gifts, the gift of salvation and eternal life. These are the ultimate things. When Paul says, 'We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves your slaves for Jesus' sake', he is thinking on the one hand of the liberating message, and on the other of personal concern and service for all men.

So then, the church is a servant to the world. It is not, however, servile in any sense. It is not a guilt-ridden community, fawning on the world about it, pleading for opportunity to serve. Its proclamation polarises the attitudes of men and women, and often its word is a sword which cuts in judgement, as for others it severs the bonds of evil by the word of grace. Its concern for social need is not (and should not be) a form of manipulation, or a means of trading the listening of men for the gifts of material help which it brings.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN**THE COMMUNITY OF LOVE
AND HOLINESS**

The church is nothing if not the community of those who love God and one another, and who care deeply for each other. This is seen in the immediate warmth of expression of fellowship on the day of Pentecost and following. It is seen in their being ‘of one soul and one mind’. This heart-love expressed itself in the sharing of all the goods they possessed. The move to do this was spontaneous, triggered off no doubt by the release found in forgiveness. We see that the poor and the widows were cared for, and later James said that true religion and undefiled was to visit the fatherless and widows.

In every way this love is expressed. Paul’s famous chapter on love (I Cor. 13), and John’s whole first Epistle, are magnificent expositions of love. Peter says in his first Epistle that the real purpose of conversion is ‘to love one another from the heart, fervently’. John even points out that when the brethren love one another then God is seen through that loving (I John 4:12).

This love is to work itself out in every way in the community. Husbands are to love their wives, parents their children, and the church is to do good unto all men, even if

primarily the church.

At the same time, there must be holy love. ‘Called to be saints’ is no mere saying. The new people of God are not to walk as the Gentiles walk, being morally callous, having their consciences hard or seared. They are to walk in love, yes, but to walk in light, in fact to walk in the light as he (Christ) is in the light (of the Father). Peter says that if they call on God as Father, they must be obedient in every part of their lives. He has just said that they are to be holy because God who called them is holy (see I Pet. 1:13–21). This is equivalent to the Lord’s Prayer, where to call God ‘Father’ is also to pray that His name be hallowed, i.e. His people reverence it in holiness of living. After all, as Peter points out, the new community is a ‘holy nation, God’s own people’. In his second Epistle, Peter urges holiness in the light of imminent renovation of the heavens and the earth, whilst John says that if our hope is to be like him then we will purify ourselves (now) even as he is pure.

This holiness is to penetrate every part of life.* I Thessalonians 4 speaks of it in regard to marriage, as also does Hebrews 13:4. The walk, life and conversation of the people of God is to be holy, and even their speech edifying. It is not as though such advice had not been given to ‘old Israel’. Indeed they were to be the pure people of God, but for the most part failed. The new people of God must not fail. They have all the motivation of forgiveness and cleansing. They have been through the crucible of the Cross and purified, and so they must live consonant with their holy calling.

Certainly it was seen that they did not walk as the Gentiles walked. At the same time, the seven letters in the Revelation are a salutary reminder of how the churches, too, can deteriorate.

* For a comprehensive coverage of the theme of holiness, see *The Splendour of Holiness*, G. Bingham, NCPI, 1985.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN**THE PROCLAIMING COMMUNITY**

As we have seen in Chapter Six of this section ('THE CHURCH ON THE MOVE'), the community from the very beginning was a proclaiming community. This cannot be said in the same way of the old *qahal* of Israel. Many passages in the Old Testament show us that the people of God was called upon to witness to the holiness of God. In Exodus 19:5–6 and Leviticus 11:44—among other such statements—Israel is to sanctify God in the eyes of the heathen. This, for the most part, Israel fails to do. Hence Israel is punished and led into exile. At the same time, God has to redeem Israel for His own sake. This sounds strange until we read a passage such as Ezekiel 36:16–38. In this passage, God says that He scattered Israel among the nations as a judgement for their idolatry and disloyalty. The nations then said, 'These are the people of the Lord, yet they had to go out of His land', and God says that Israel thus 'profaned my holy name'. God says He will bring back Israel for *the sake of His holy name*. He will witness to His own holiness by redeeming them. Hence they will then be an obedient people. They will, by their being redeemed, witness to His holiness. In this sense, then, Israel always had had the responsibility of proclaiming a holy witness.

In Luke 24:44–49 Jesus says that the Scriptures not only

say that Christ must suffer and rise from the dead, but also that 'repentance and forgiveness of sins shall be preached in his name among all nations, beginning from Jerusalem', and that the apostles themselves will witness. In other words, the Old Testament prophesies that the Messianic community will preach repentance and remission of sins.

In Acts 1:8 Jesus said that following the reception of the Spirit the apostles would be witnesses to him. This witness began powerfully on the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit came, and continued in the same power. The Book of the Acts by no means covers the extent of that witness, since it confines itself to the ministry at Jerusalem, Samaria, and Caesarea, and then proceeds to cover the ministry of Paul without reference to the ministry of the other apostles.

There is no doubt, then, that the community is the proclaiming community. It proclaims the Gospel by actual utterance, whilst it is at the same time the true witnessing community. In Acts we see the progression from Jerusalem and Judea (the Jews), to Samaria (the Samaritans), to Caesarea (the Gentiles). At the same time, we see a church at Antioch in Syria which is composed of Jews and Gentiles, the Gentiles having been preached to by Jews. The nature of this church is investigated by Barnabas who had been sent down by the leaders of the church at Jerusalem, since such a church was a new phenomenon. His report being received, it was evident that churches would not now be composed only of Jews who had believed on Jesus.

THE PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

In Acts 10:36–37 Peter speaks of *the word* which 'God sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace by Jesus Christ. . . the word which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee'. This word was the Gospel of the

Kingdom (Mark 1:14f.). In Mark 16:15 the command is to preach the Gospel to every person. In Luke 24:44f. it is the preaching of repentance and remission of sins. In the Acts it is primarily the Lordship of Christ which leads to repentance, faith, and so the remission of sins. This Gospel has two Greek terms, the first being *kerugma*, i.e. ‘proclamation’, and the other *euaggelion*, or ‘good news’.

In I Corinthians 1:17 to 2:5 Paul expounds this ‘word of the Cross’. In I Corinthians 1:21 he says that ‘When in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the folly of what we preach to save them that believe.’ He meant that the word of the Cross was *the only way men could be saved*. Hence in Acts 2, when Peter preaches Christ’s Lordship by death and resurrection from the dead, the listening crowd cry out, asking what they must do. The answer is, ‘Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’ In Romans 10:9 confession by mouth of Jesus’ Lordship, and belief in the heart of his resurrection, are the conditions for salvation. In Romans 10:17 it is hearing the word of Christ which brings faith, and faith brings salvation.

The proclamation of the word in the Acts is the primary fact. Through such proclamation people hear, believe, and are saved.

THE PROCLAMATION WHICH IS WITNESS

By Holiness

Witness ‘by lip and by life’ has always been a tenet of true Christianity. However, as we have seen in the Old Testament, Israel witnessed simply by being the true people of God. It had no evangel as such. It remained as a witness to God (cf. Exod. 19:5–6; Isa. 43:10; 44:8), especially by its

holiness (Ezek. 36:16–38). As we saw in Chapter Fourteen of this section, the church is the community of love and holiness. This thought is emphasised at the judgement of Ananias and Sapphira when they would have polluted such holy witness. It is seen in the case of Simon Magus when he would have commercialised the outpouring of the Spirit (cf. Acts 5:1f.; 8:18f.). Peter is anxious for the Jews to see that the Gentiles are holy who believe on Christ (cf. Acts 10–11; 15:6–11), and says that God has cleansed their hearts by faith. Paul also intimates that the Gentiles have a portion with those ‘sanctified by faith’ (Acts 26:18).

The Epistles not only indicate that the Gentiles are cleansed, but that the whole church is the holy community of God. In Ephesians 2:11–22 Paul expounds the acceptance of the Gentiles into the church, and shows that they, with the Jews who believe, constitute ‘a holy temple in the Lord’. Peter in his first Letter strongly expounds the same theme, especially in 1:13–21 and 2:9–10. The latter says:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were no people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

This emphasis on holiness is personal as it is communal. The Epistles abound with references to light and purity. God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. The children of God must walk in light. Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. One’s calling is to holiness. It is this holiness which will proclaim to those outside the church the nature of the God who is holy. The Gospel is a holy Gospel.

By Love

Doubtless the love of the church was for the most part unconscious. Jesus’ prayer of John 17 had been that the people

of God be one, and filled with love. This prayer is shown as answered in the early church. ‘All who believed were together and had all things in common’, and ‘The company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common’ (Acts 2:44; 4:32). Hence, ‘With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.’

This love was shown immediately in their concern for needy widows, and for the poor (Acts 6:1f.; 11:27–30). The Epistles show that love of the brethren is one of the recurring themes. On the one hand, it is assumed that such love is normal and natural (I John 3:14; I Thess. 4:9), and on the other hand, members are constantly exhorted to live and walk in love (Eph. 5:1ff.; I John 2:7ff.; Rom. 13:8–10; Gal. 5:13f.).

Jesus had prayed, saying that when they were all one in love then the world would know that God had sent His Son. This also is the burden of I John 4:12, as we have seen.

By Warfare

The community knew no love that was not, at the same time, light. Light meant enmity with darkness and warring with it. The Cross had meant the victory of Christ over all evil powers. The justified–sanctified community (I Cor. 6: 11) now turned its attention to evil in order to defeat it. This is the thrust of Ephesians 6:10–18, II Corinthians 10:1–4, and Philippians 1:27–30. The believer lives in the victory of Christ (II Cor. 2:14; I Cor. 15:55–57; Rom. 8:35–39; Phil. 4:13), and overcomes Satan (I John 2:13–14; 4:4; James 4: 6–7; I Pet. 5:6–9; etc.).

This warfare is not merely personal victory over evil and impurity. It is a practical objective victory which releases

persons under the power of darkness and the bondage of Satan. Exorcisms are powerful (Acts 8:7; 16:18; 19:11–20), and by this spiritual warfare the practical victory of Christ, over evil, is proclaimed.

It is clear from the whole passage of Ephesians 6:10–18 that the church does not wrestle merely with human persons and forces but with the dark powers that are behind humanity and which override it. Much of this battling is done in prayer, but the constant defeat achieved is the proclamation of the risen, reigning Lord.

When Paul speaks about ‘weapons of warfare’ (II Cor. 10:4), he is speaking of weapons which actually pull down strongholds of evil. Some see these as the powers such as miracles and wonders (cf. Heb. 6:4) which are signs of the new age. Doubtless they are included. Doubtless, too, the weapons set out in Ephesians 6:10–18 are similar weapons, but the offensive weapon of all is the Word of God, called ‘the Sword of the Spirit’, i.e. the proclamation of the Gospel, the dynamic *kerugma*, the liberating *euaggelion*, the true good news of Christ and his Kingdom.

THE CONTEXT AND PURPOSE OF PROCLAMATION

The proclamation of the Gospel and its victory in warfare is not erratic or spasmodic. It has a context in which it is working. This is outlined in I Corinthians 15:24–28. Here Christ is working out the victory of the Cross to its appointed end when he shall have put down every enemy, won the kingdom of the world, and will present it to God. This accords with Philippians 2:9–11; Matthew 28:18–20; Mark 16:14–19; Revelation 11:15; 12:10; and similar passages. In other words—as we will see in our next chapter—the church is the eschatological community, bringing in the eschaton (cf. II

Pet. 3:11–12). In Hebrews 1:3 and 10:12–13 the writer expects the outcome of the victory of the Cross to be ultimate victory. This can also be seen in Revelation 5 where Jesus alone is capable of opening the seven seals of the scroll, as also the scroll itself. Hence he is Lord of history. It is this Lordship Christ is working out *through his church* (Eph. 1: 19–23; 3: 10–11, 20–21), that is, through the proclamation of the Gospel.

Acts 1:8, which must be read in the light of Psalm 2, defines the arena of operations, showing the completion of witness to be the capture of the nations for Christ. This theme is underlined in Romans 1:4–5, 15:18–19 and 16: 25–26, i.e. the obedience of the nations, so that they may be baptised into the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In other words, the Gospel must work until, on the one hand, sins are forgiven, and on the other, retained (John 20:19–23). We mean that the Gospel has polarised what is good and what is evil, and has sealed the victory of God in Christ.

The victory is eschatological. That is why we say that the church is the eschatological community.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE ESCHATOLOGICAL COMMUNITY

Finally, the people of God were a people who looked to, and moved towards, the end–time. The church, at Pentecost, was born in the climate of the eschaton. Peter quoted the prophecy of Joel as referring to ‘the last days’. He pointed to the new mode of prophecy, and the events and signs which would follow before ‘that great and eventful day of the Lord’. Many scholars have speculated that the church expected an almost immediate coming of Christ. This may or may not be so—according to how one looks at it—but they certainly were *the community of hope*.

They were first of all the community of the eschaton because they believed they were the new covenant and kingdom people of God, and that by their proclamation the nations would be told of Christ and his salvation, after which Messiah would return, and the final events of judgement, resurrection, and the new heavens and new earth would take place. They were the community of the end–time because they believed that in the now–time Christ was working out the plan of God through His people. Christ was putting down all rule, authority and power, and destroying every enemy. They were with him in this task, with spiritual weapons which were mighty to the pulling down of many strongholds. They were proclaiming not only the Gospel of

salvation but the defeat of the evil enemy. They were wrestling with principalities and powers, and defeating them in the conflict.

They were the community of the last days because they lived in hope of the consummation of time. From Abel and Enoch (see Jude 14) onwards the people of God have looked to the eschaton. This is part of the thrust of Genesis 3:15 and 49:10. The theme we saw in Romans regarding the ‘obedience to [or, of] the faith amongst all nations’, Paul says has been ‘kept secret for long ages’. Revelation 7:1–10 speaks of its consummation. The people of God–Israel– looked for the Day of the Lord, and the Israel of God looks for exactly the same thing. Hebrews 11:39–40 says we both –those of old and those of these days–will converge upon the consummation simultaneously. All through the Old and New Testaments it is the coming of the eschaton that stimulates to godly living. God’s promises are sure and certain, and hope is squarely based upon them. Time has always been eschatological in that the end has always been coming towards us as we have been travelling towards it.

The hope is of course in sharing in the glory of God (Rom. 5:2) and inheriting the promises, the Kingdom, the world, and ‘all things’, i.e. eternity. That is why the church is waiting, and also preparing itself for that great day. Then, as she with the Spirit cries, ‘Come, Lord Jesus!’, she will be ready for the great event, and the marriage of the Bride and the Lamb. Then will be that great multitude which is numberless, the whole family of God, the sons of the eternal Father, the glorified ones, the redeemed and cleansed ones, all before the Father and the Lamb and in the presence of the Spirit.

This is, and this will be, for ever, the living church of the Living God!

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE CHURCH AND THE SACRAMENTS (1)

INTRODUCTION

It would be impossible to make a study of the Church in the New Testament and to ignore the sacraments, or—as they are often known—the ordinances, that is, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper (or, Holy Communion, the Eucharist, etc.). We have of course mentioned them in passing. For this reason we will devote two chapters to them, for their origins, significance and practice have very deep roots back in the history of mankind. The term ‘sacrament’ comes from the Greek word *mysterion* which was often given the Latin translation *sacramentum*. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper were the visible aspects of the living power manifested when the *kerugma* (Gospel) was proclaimed, for it was generally associated with the miracles and powers frequently evident at the time of proclamation. It was these sacraments which covered the mystery of Christ and his church.

Later the term ‘sacrament’ took on a more technical meaning. Often it simply meant the element, such as bread or wine or water, and was called (by Augustine) a ‘visible word’. It was sometimes called ‘the outward and visible sign of an

inward and spiritual grace'. However, this need not here concern us. We will look at the two sacraments which relate to the church, namely Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

BAPTISM

ORIGINS OF BAPTISM*

Baptism in the New Testament is first met with John the Baptist. He baptised, and those who were baptised were called his disciples. *Baptism is certainly linked with discipleship*, as we see in John 4:1–2. This is again emphasised in Matthew 28:18–20 where Jesus says, 'Make disciples of all nations, baptising them into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit'. A disciple of course is a learner, one submitted in trust to his teacher. Baptism identified men and women with John or Jesus. Whilst we are told that proselytes were baptised, thus becoming Jews, this is difficult to trace before the first century. Certainly it obtained in the first century and perhaps existed before. The Ebionites and Essenes (sectarian Jewish communities) used many lustrations, and baptism would not have been difficult for contemporary Jews to understand. John's demand for baptism was linked with the coming Kingdom, forgiveness of sins, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It seemed tantamount to calling on Jews to become converted to God!

At Pentecost, baptism was called for, and here it related to the forgiveness of sins, but also it signified incorporation into the (new) people of God. This is certainly the idea elsewhere.

* Of deep interest is John the Baptist's statement that Messiah would baptise the people with (or, in) the Holy Spirit. The Old Testament equivalent must be 'pour out' (e.g. Joel 2:28f.; Isa. 32-15). At Pentecost, all were 'filled' with the Spirit, doubtless because all the house was filled by the Spirit. In this sense there was a baptism, an immersion.

In Romans 6:1–6 (assuming that passage refers to the rite of baptism, as well as its spiritual significance) it is incorporation into the death and burial of Christ, and also signifies rising. In Galatians 3:26–29 it is to put on Christ. In Acts 22:16 it is to wash away one's sins. In Colossians 2:9–13 it is almost the equivalent of circumcision with its covenant significance and the cutting away of the life of the flesh (cf. Deut. 30:6). As circumcision was the sign and seal of the Abrahamic Covenant (Rom. 4:9–12), so baptism corresponds to this in the New Covenant which is itself the eschatological fulfilment of the Abrahamic Covenant (cf. Luke 1:72–73). Having said this, we do not mean that baptism and circumcision are exact equivalents, especially in regard to administration. Women were not circumcised in the Old Testament. Doubtless they were 'covered' by the male (father, husband, etc.) who was circumcised. However, the moral spiritual and redemptive contents of baptism and circumcision are surely equivalent.

Baptism also relates to the gift of the Holy Spirit, as John had promised (John 1:32–33). At Pentecost Peter promised this gift, contingent upon baptism (Acts 2:38). At the same time, the Spirit works in baptism, effecting the spiritual washing and renewal which is the promise and fruit of baptism (John 3:5; Acts 9:17f.; 10:47; 22:16; II Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; Titus 3:5; I Pet. 3:21). In II Corinthians 3:6 and Romans 8:1–3 this work of the Spirit is to bring life. In Colossians 1:13–14 the forgiveness of sins associated with baptism also brings us into the Kingdom of God.

The *requirements for baptism* are repentance (Acts 2:38; cf. Mark 1:4; Acts 3:19) and faith (Mark 16:16; Acts 10: 43–48; 16:31–33). The *fruits* of baptism are, from God's grace, forgiveness, cleansing, justification, incorporation into Christ's Body the church, and the initial act of regeneration followed by the process of regeneration, sanctifications all leading to ultimate glory. The demands made by

baptism are renunciation of sin, the world, the flesh, and evil powers. In fact, no such explicit demand is made, but such demands are inherent in repentance. It is baptism which *effects* release from the enemies. The will is required to render obedience, be led by the Spirit, produce his fruits, live the life of love, service, and proclamation of the Gospel, in the context of the whole body. When we say ‘the will is required’, we do not mean man is called upon to *effect* any of the above things in some (imagined) power of his own. By baptism, one is incorporated, relationally, into the Trinity, i.e. ‘the *Name* of the Father, and the Son, the Holy Spirit’ (Matt. 28: 18–20). One has the gift of sonship (adoption) and the gift of the Holy Spirit, particularly as the Spirit of the Son, for one has ‘put on Christ’ (Gal. 3:26–29). In this obedience is thus rendered to God as Father, and to the Son as Lord.

The ritual act of baptism signifies what God has done, as also His promises accompanying this sacrament. It does not, however, *ex opere operato*, accomplish this, since both faith and repentance are required in the one baptism. Although both repentance and faith are gifts, they must also be exercised. Again, baptism brings incorporation into the church, the new people of God, and is with a view to the vertical and horizontal life of that body, since it is unto discipleship.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM

The way in which baptism has been understood is properly the subject of historical theology. We cannot here define what the various ‘branches’ of the Christian church claim to be the meaning of baptism. The indications we have given above, from the New Testament commentary on them, constitute a wide field for theology. Romans 6 alone is the basis for the meaning of baptism as a way of life. Luther, who has

commended ‘creeping back to our baptism’, insists that all life for the Christian is a dying to sin and a rising to life until the resurrection when only then this process will be completed. Others see baptism as dynamic merely for the time of its act. It is an entrance into salvation and the church. Yet others see the water of baptism act *ex opere operato*, effecting regeneration even in infants who at this point have neither the choice nor power of response or rejection. And so on.

Furthermore, there are two vital points of controversy. The first is the question of whether or not infants should be baptised. Always accompanying this is debate about modes, i.e. whether by immersion (submersion) or by water applied. An appendix (pp. 303–308) is included on these variant views. One thing is certain: whatever view is held must take into account a theology of the people of God, and biblical eschatology.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN**THE CHURCH AND THE SACRAMENTS (2)****THE LORD'S SUPPER**

In Christian history this has been known under various heads, e.g. 'Holy Communion', 'Eucharist' ('The Thanksgiving'), 'breaking of bread', and others. Each of these titles has its right and special significance.

The actual institution of the meal, it is argued, was at the precise time of the Passover. The synoptic Gospels and John's Gospel seem to point to different datings, and it may well be that there were two different traditions which may be harmonised. However, we do know that it was *in the context of the Passover* that the meal was instituted, and that is enough. It points back to the old Exodus, and forward to the new Exodus. In the Transfiguration Elijah and Moses spoke with Jesus concerning his *exodus* which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem.

The meal was also *related to the matter of the Kingdom of God*. Luke 22:28–30 speaks of the disciples being appointed the Kingdom as the Father had appointed the Kingdom to the Son (cf. Luke 12:32). In Luke 22:18 Jesus says, 'I tell you that from now on I shall not drink of the

fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God comes.' In Matthew 26:29 he speaks about drinking it new with his disciples in his Father's Kingdom. In this sense the meal has an eschatological connotation. The 'until he comes' of the Pauline statement concerning eating of the supper (I Cor. 11:26) is also eschatological. The new Exodus and 'Christ our passover' (I Cor. 5:7) point to the ultimate, the end-time when all the people of God shall know 'the glorious liberty of the sons of God'. The drinking of wine, new, in the Kingdom refers to the Messianic banquet of victory to which Jesus adverts in his parables of the feast. He is really saying, 'This feast is with a view to that feast, the feast within the Kingdom at the end of time, in eternity.'

There are many interpretations of the use of bread and wine and the references to 'my body' and 'my blood'. However, it is best to see them covenantally, since Jesus was referring back to the Mosaic Covenant as the old, and the establishing of the New Covenant 'in my blood'. That is, as Israel was delivered from Egypt (bondage) and released to Canaan (liberty), so the giving of his body and the shedding of his blood will bring the freedom promised in the remarkable words of Jeremiah 31:31–34. Hence Jesus says, 'This is the new covenant in my blood which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins'. Thus his death is for forgiveness. The paschal victim of the Passover set the Israelite free. The blood of this (new) Passover sets the new people of God free.

The early church certainly shared in 'the breaking of bread' (Acts 2:46; cf. 2:42), which may have been the sharing of meals, and yet with a view to sharing the commemoration of the Supper, believing also that the invisible Lord was present in that meal. In Paul's exposition (I Cor. 11: 20–34), the sharing of the meal is showing forth (exhibiting) the Lord's death until he comes. At the same time it is a communion (fellowship) with the Lord in his death and

resurrection. This means the unity of the members, since they share together one loaf as they sit down as the body of Christ. This also means they must ‘discern the body’ and not be at variance, or this will spell sickness or even death.

Briefly summing it up, we can say that the Supper has a *backward look* to the death and all its significance. The death is there; the feast reminds us dynamically of that. ‘Dynamically’, because in the present we are assured (or, reassured) of the total forgiveness of sins. Hence the note of thanksgiving (rather than petition) for what has been done. *In the present*, there is a dynamic participation in forgiveness, as also the full unity of the body, since the body is one with its Head. *The future look* is towards the eschatological fulfilment, when the Kingdom, the new age, and the freedom of the sons will be consummated.

Again, this sacrament does not *ex opere operato* effect forgiveness, liberty, fellowship and hope. Faith and repentance, as in baptism, are essential. We speak of initial faith and repentance, and the life of the church consonant with them, worked out in fellowship and obedience.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LORD’S SUPPER

We have already noted that the various titles given indicate different elements such as fellowship, and thanksgiving, in addition to the basic theme of the forgiveness of sin. Again historical theology will show us the variant interpretations as to what the sacrament means, and the modes by which God works in it. These too are discussed in an appendix (pp. 309–311).

What must be clear to all is that the sacrament is a reminder to faith—through the worship, the Word, and the manual acts—that the forgiveness of sins is for God’s people. This forgiveness relates directly to the Cross, and in fact the communion is of the body and blood of Christ, and

shows forth his death (i.e. exhibits it) ‘till he comes’. This matter of forgiveness is not a bare (ineffective) remembrance but a present and dynamic participation in forgiveness. It is interesting that the sacrament of baptism and this sacrament have forgiveness as their central element. Also both are eschatological since both are with an ultimate view to forgiveness and justification, and with a view to the Kingdom.

We have emphasised that repentance and faith must be present, although we insist that these do nothing to make the grace of the sacrament. They are simply the manward conditions essential to right participation. The sacrament is ‘all of grace’. However, we must recognise that no theory or rationalisation of the Lord’s Supper adds anything to it or authenticates the participants. It is God who works. We receive. Again we must not see it merely as a Subject–object event, but as the body of the church in fellowship with its redeeming Lord.

CHAPTER NINETEEN**GOD'S
PEOPLE
FROM THE
BEGINNING**

We have pre-empted a major portion of this subject by giving priority to the Church in the New Testament. The church is truly the people of God, yet it is not the whole people of God. It is true that the Reformers always spoke of the people of God in the Old Testament as being the church. They saw continuity of true Israel in the Old Testament and the true Israel in the New Testament, i.e. the church. Doubtless they did not oppose an element of discontinuity also when the leaders of Israel rejected the claim of Jesus to be the Son of God, and would not accept his resurrection.

THE ELECT PEOPLE OF GOD

That there is an elect people of God, is a strong theme of Scripture. How to explain that election has always been a difficulty for many. The fact nevertheless remains, i.e. of election. We shall see that Israel was an elect people of God. Yet prior to this, and following on the fall of man, there are those who begin to call upon the name of the Lord (Gen. 4:25-26). Genesis 6: 1-4 speaks of 'the sons of God' and 'the

daughters of men'. Various interpretations, some scholars take it to mean the two lines which come from Seth and Cain. In I John 3: 10ff. Abel is called a child of God and Cain a child of the devil. In Acts 17:24-30 Paul argues that all men originate as children of God, but some in contradiction to this make idols, and these are against this Fatherhood of God (cf. Jer. 2:26-28; Deut. 32:15-18). We conclude then that even prior to Abraham and (later) Israel, there has always been a people of God.

ABRAHAM AND COVENANT

The roll-call in Genesis 10 is greatly significant. Shem and Japheth are blessed by Noah, but Ham is cursed. From Ham comes Nimrod, who commences a kingdom against the creational mandate (Gen. 1:28f.). In Genesis 11, following the event of Babel, the line of Shem is traced, leading to the exodus of Terah and Abraham from Ur. Genesis 12 speaks of God's covenant with Abraham. This is to be a covenant of universal blessing, and, for that matter, universal cursing also (Gen. 12:3; cf. 18:18).

The thrust of the Abrahamic Covenant, from Abraham to Jacob—and then beyond—is 'I shall be your God, and you shall be my people.' We need to read Genesis 17:1-8. This contains first mention of 'I will be their God'. From this point on, through to Revelation 21:3 ('He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people'), God insists that Israel is His people, and He their God. This is not so much a statement which is exclusive, but rather one which is inclusive.

We can see then that the births of Isaac and Jacob are elective, since they are younger sons. If we follow the events of Joseph, including his death, and Israel's release from Egypt and its bondage, then we recognise the principle that

all these happen through the working of God, i.e. these events are not man's working, but of God. Hence we say they are 'monergistic', i.e. one working and not two. Thus Moses, speaking to the people of Israel in Deuteronomy 7:6–8, says:

For you are a people holy to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his own possession, out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love upon you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples; but it is because the Lord loves you, and is keeping the oath which he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

ISRAEL THE PEOPLE OF GOD

Israel is the people of promise. Promise means nothing comes from law as such, or even obedience, but all is from grace. Paul pursues this powerfully in Galatians 3. It is covenant which is powerful. Whilst the Abrahamic Covenant, so to speak, has temporarily narrowed down into the particularised Mosaic Covenant, yet it is later due to broaden out into the New Covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31–34; Luke 1:68–79; Matt. 26:28). Meanwhile, Israel is basically God's people.

The people of God have both function and purpose, and to these relate their modes of living and action. We cannot here enlarge on this matter. It is sufficient to say:

(i) Israel is a people of covenant promise. This covenant is the expression, through Moses, of the Abrahamic promise. Israel has a particular covenant with God (Exod. 24), and this relates to obedience to His law. Obedience of course is prompted by the grace of liberation (e.g. Exod. 20:1f.). The covenant is of grace (Deut. 7:6–8).

(ii) Israel is a holy people, a priest–nation (kingdom) amongst all the nations (Exod. 19:5–6). Leviticus 11:44 and cognate passages show that this holiness is a witness for all nations.

(iii) Israel is a people trained by God. The history of Israel shows how God shaped it. A slave people in Egypt, it is liberated, matured in the wilderness, settled in Palestine, given 'the promises, the covenants, the worship, the law, the glory and the sonship' (Rom. 9:4). Even so, it is a nation which knows rebellion, chastisement, and is refined on its return to the land. The latter chapters of Isaiah show how God has had to train it, and for what purposes, i.e. purposes which are not primarily national, but universal.

(iv) Israel is a people of prophets and prophecy. This point needs emphasis. All Israel's history is really prophetic. The prophets are certainly didactic and hortatory, but their predictions are not merely to satisfy curiosity. They are related to God's plan not only for Israel but for the world. Within these prophecies are intimations of one Messiah, one Davidic King, one Son of man, and even the Son of God. Also the Servant of God. These figures (or, this figure) related to universal witness, action, and the Day of the Lord—which is judgement to some, and blessing to others. Likewise the Kingdom of God is linked with the special personage(s). Also the ultimate renewal of the heavens and the earth.

THE PEOPLES AND THE PEOPLE OF GOD

The people of God cannot be identified exclusively with Israel. Israel is a servant of God, and this to the nations. The Scriptures take into their purview all the nations. Genesis 5, 10 and 11 show this interest. Genesis 49:10 is a magnificent prophecy that all nations shall be obedient to the ruler of

Judah. This, too, is the thrust of Psalms 2 and 110 and allied prophecies. In any case, we have seen that the Abrahamic Covenant is to relate to all nations. There is no question of Israel being God's *favourite* nation, for it is the *chosen* nation, and as such has a vocation which has universal connotation. It is clear—for example, from the Psalms—that Israel did not simply think of Yahweh as its national god, but of Him as King over all the nations, ruler and judge of all the earth.

Israel was to be the priest–nation *among* all nations. The large number of contacts that Israel has with other nations—both in Palestine, through Solomon, and ultimately through the Exile—warns us against concluding Israel was wholly exclusivist in life and outlook. The following references indicate something of Israel's extra–national dealings: I Kings 19:15; II Kings 5; Daniel, especially 9:6; the Book of Jonah; the burdens or oracles of Amos concerning the nations; Isaiah (cf. 17:1–11; 20:1–4; 37:33–35); Jeremiah 1:5; 12:14–17; and important are the Servant passages in Isaiah, especially 41:11f.; 42:1–4; 42:6 (cf. 11:10); 49:6, 22. Two full quotes are here given:

For the nation and the kingdom that will not serve you shall perish. . .
The sons of those who oppressed you shall come bending low to you. . .
The least one [of Israel] shall become a clan, and the smallest one a mighty nation (Isa. 60:12, 14, 22).

Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for lo, I come and I will dwell in the midst of you, says the Lord. And many nations shall join themselves to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people; and I will dwell in the midst of you, and you shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you (Zech. 2:10–11).

The ultimate fortunes (for good or ill) of Israel and the nations are linked together. Paul makes this very clear in Romans chapters 9 to 11.

CHAPTER TWENTY

THE GOSPEL FOR THE NATIONS

THE NEW PEOPLE OF GOD

When we come to the New Testament, the exclusivism of Israel gives way to a world–wide view of God's love. The utterance of *the Benedictus* by Zechariah, father of John the Baptist (Luke 1:68–79), sets a wide stage when it relates Messiah's coming to the covenant with Abraham. However, the Gospels show Jesus as exclusively coming to the lost of the tribes of the house of Israel. John the Baptist refers to Jesus as the one who takes away the sin of the world, and speaks of the coming Kingdom of God, which in no way can be limited to Israel, but Jesus is careful to address himself only to Israel, although he does minister to Samaritans.

At the same time, the Gospels have more than hints that Jesus is on a universal mission. The sons of the Kingdom (many of them) will be cast out and the Gentiles will sit down with Abraham. The vineyard (Israel) will be given to others. The parable of the great feast envisages the elect (so called) refusing to come, and the lesser ones (the sinners, Gentiles, etc.) being invited, even compelled to come. The Sermon on the mount (cf. Matt. 5:43–48) includes enemies,

generally understood by Jews to be the Gentiles, though not of course limited to them.

We have no need to repeat the material already given under the church. We must point, however, to Acts 1:1–8, where the disciples ask whether the Kingdom (of God) is now to be restored to Israel. The thrust of that passage is that the times and seasons of this matter are exclusive to the Father. What the apostles need to know is that the coming of the Spirit will send them not only to Israel (i.e. the Kingdom) but to Samaria and the Gentiles. The Kingdom will come, but not just exclusively to Israel.

The rest we know—how that the Gospel brought Jew and Gentile together. There was some amazement at first, but the principle was soon worked out. The Epistle to the Ephesians is a brilliant rationale of this principle. Through God’s plan in Christ, all are brought into the household of God, the true people of God (I Tim. 3:15), and in fact Jew and Gentile distinctions are lost. Both are one (through the Cross), and they are fellow—heirs. This is the new mystery. In other Letters, Paul puts it slightly differently. The nations (Gentiles) come to the obedience of faith (Rom. 1:5; 15:18; 16:25–26). We have seen the Pauline, Johannine and Petrine versions of this principle. The statement of I Peter 2:9–10, when linked with Exodus 19:5–6, clearly designates the true people of God. The function of this people is also included in the Petrine statement.

COVENANT—ISRAEL AND THE PEOPLE OF GOD

What then of the future of the nation Israel, often called ‘Israel after the flesh’? Apart from Paul, other writers of the New Testament do not seem to be greatly interested. First Peter assumes the true people of God are those built into a holy temple, each stone being a living member. They are built

a spiritual priesthood. Paul, of course, has similar ideas.

Even so, we need to answer the question, ‘What is the future of (the nation) Israel?’ Paul’s three chapters (9–11) of Romans need to be read time and again. Some scholars have concluded that Israel’s rejection of Jesus as Messiah has finished the nation, and at first sight this appears to be the case. Such scholars generally then apply all the Old Testament prophecies to the church. The Christian *ekklesia* has replaced the *qahal* of Israel. What, however, does Paul mean by saying, ‘Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God’ (Gal. 6:16)? He can mean (a) the church, or (b) any in Israel who hold to the principle (grace) that Paul has just enunciated, or (c) those of the church, and those who will come to the church from the Jews. If it is the latter then it must mean all God’s elect, from both Jewish and Gentile sources. The present writer holds this position.

Romans chapters 9 to 11 makes it clear that the Gentiles have come to God through Christ, by the Gospel. The rejection of the Gospel by the Jews has given them this opportunity. If such rejection brings reconciliation with God, what then will be the result of the acceptance of the Jews? It will be ‘life from the dead’, i.e. not simply resurrection but a great living happening in history (Rom. 11:13–24). Paul is convinced this happening is ahead in history. His point is that ‘the gifts and calling of God are without recall’. That is, God does not choose Israel—teach, train and persevere with the nation—only to suddenly discard it when they reject Messiah. Jesus’ prayer from the Cross, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!’ and Paul’s own confession, ‘I did it in ignorance’, must be taken into consideration.

ISRAEL IN PALESTINE

The burning question is whether the land of Palestine will be

restored to Israel as a nation, or not. Some see all prophecies as literal (a difficult exercise!) and applying only to Israel. Others, it is said, ‘spiritualise’ the prophecies. It is difficult to understand the term ‘spiritualise’. What does it mean? Probably those who make this statement mean that the prophecies are applied to the church, and do not work out in the literal scene of Palestine. There are yet others who see some prophecies relating to Israel as applying primarily to the church, and some applying to Israel as a nation.

Just how these prophecies work out is the occupation of different schools of thought, especially schools of eschatology, and reams have been written from varying points of view. Whilst it may be strongly debated *how* things will work out, surely it is not to be debated that ‘all Israel shall be saved’, whatever ‘all Israel’ means! In other words, we have not heard the last of the nation Israel. At the same time, there is no way Israel can come into acceptance by God but by Messiah. Unless we read Ephesians with Romans chapters 9 to 11, we will certainly have variant and confusing views. This does not commit us to accept all theological and prophetic rationalisations which are being poured forth from the religious press today. That is an entirely different matter.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

THE ULTIMATE PEOPLE OF GOD

THE CURRENT PEOPLE OF GOD

We take it that the current people of God is ‘the Israel of God’, i.e. those who come to the Father through the Son, by the redemption that is provided through the Atonement. The Gospel is universal, and the distinctions which may have been thought to prevent men from coming to God are no longer extant, i.e. Jew or Gentile, male or female, slave or free person.

THE MOVEMENT TOWARDS THE ULTIMATE

We have seen that the church is committed to the current Outworking of the plan of God. Christ is with it for this purpose, ‘confirming the word by signs and wonders’, and as the nations are baptised into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit’, so Christ is with his people with a view to the consummation of this aeon. Thus I Corinthians 15:24–28 tells us what is going on, and this by means of the fulness of Christ, that fulness which he has given to his church, but which he uses by means of his people.

Likewise we have seen in Revelation 5 that the slain Lamb

is the Lion of Judah, and he is working history out as he breaks the seals and fulfils the will of God. Hence all history is in his hands. This is the parallel of I Corinthians 15:24–28 as the enemies are being put down, the last enemy being death.

THE PEOPLE OF GOD AND THE CONFLICT

We have seen that Christ told the apostles that their witness of him was to be to Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles, i.e. to the ends of the earth. This Paul reiterates in Romans 1:5 15:18 and 16:25–26. Thus (if we may use the term) the *interim* people of God are to be the proclaiming (Messianic) community, until ‘the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of the Lord and his Christ’. That is, until all enemies are subdued. Then the people of God are those who have come through the resurrection and final judgement, and are the glorified community of the Father.

In the Book of the Revelation we have a number of glimpses of this community. In chapters 7 and 14 we have the 144,000 or the sealed people of God. The seal is the name of the Father and the name of the Lamb which is placed on each forehead. The number must not be taken literalistically, for the actual tribes of the Old Testament are not fully nominated and the whole have been redeemed from all the earth. Some see these to be a special prophetic company. Again in chapter 6 we have the martyrs. 19:1–2 suggests that their blood is avenged on Babylon. They have been victims of this system. These are those who reign with Christ in the millennium. None others seem nominated. In chapter 7 we have the vast multitude which seems to encompass all believers. In chapter 19 we have ‘the armies of heaven’, and it is not easy to distinguish whether these are celestial creatures or the redeemed (cf. Eph. 6:10–18). Finally we have the Holy City descending out of heaven (ch

21). This is surely the people of God since it is the Bride of the Lamb. It is said to be the abode of God (cf. Ezek. 37:26–28; Eph. 2:19–22; cf. I Pet. 2:4–5). Certainly the covenant *motif* is uttered: ‘He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people.’

In our section on eschatology we will see the fulfilling of salvation in each life by resurrection, glorification, and the receiving of the inheritance. The Book of the Revelation gives constant indications that the people of God will be a kingdom of priests, and this must mean they will minister to God and to His (new) creation. They will reign upon the earth, and they will reign forever (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6; 22:5). Because I Corinthians 15:24–28 is now fulfilled, they are free from pain, sorrow and death. They dwell in light, and they see the face of God (Rev. 22:4)!

CONCLUSION

The purpose, then, of God—shown clearly to us in Ephesians 1:3–14 and 3:1–11 (cf. Rev. 10:1–7; I Cor. 2:6–10)—is fulfilled in the completion of the Abrahamic or New Covenant. What to us may be amazing and marvellous is that God has had the nations in sight all the time. This is shown clearly in Revelation 21:22 to 22:2. Here the nations walk in the light of the City of God, the true people of the Father. Into this city the kings of the earth bring their glory, for the glory and the honour of the nations—whatever that may mean—shall be part of this city. Also the river of life which flows through it and feeds the tree(s) of life. The leaves of this tree ‘are for the healing of the nations’. Again it is difficult for us to fully comprehend what this may mean, but what it signifies is that the people of God, the City of God, is indeed significant in eternity, and therefore must be significant in time.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO**INTRODUCING THE KINGDOM****INTRODUCTION:
THE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM**

There is always a problem in speaking of the Kingdom of God. People think of (a) a monarchical system, (b) of a realm of ruling, and (c) of a community of the ruled. This is not incorrect, but it can be misleading. Psalm 47:2 says, 'For the Lord, the Most High, is terrible, a great king over all the earth.' What we happen to know is that much that is on the earth, seen and unseen, is rebellious. It is best, therefore, to think of the Kingdom in the following ways:

- (a) As Creator, God is King over all creation.
- (b) There has been rebellion by men and angels, yet God is still Ruler over all things.
- (c) The Scriptures speak of the day when everything will be subject to God, and there shall be no dissidence. All will be unity.

Another way of saying this is that everything is the Kingdom of God, and one day, when the judgements are completed, only that which is truly obedient will constitute the pure Kingdom of God. We can then speak of (a) the creational Kingdom of God; (b) Israel as the Kingdom of God;

- (c) the Kingdom coming through Christ and his church; (d) the completed (eschatological) Kingdom. If we keep these elements in mind, we shall not be over-confused. Also we should think of the Kingdom not so much in terms of a realm with a perimeter, but as 'the reign and rule of God'.

THE KINGDOM IN HISTORY**The Creational Kingdom of God**

That is, the entire creation under the reign of God. Such includes celestial and terrestrial powers. Celestial powers greeted creation with joy (Job 38:4–7). Some angelic powers rebelled under Satan (Rev. 12), and later mankind (Gen. 3: 1–6; cf. Rom. 1:18–32). God, however, is still King over His Kingdom. Whatever authority God gave to angelic rulers who later rebelled, they still have their commission (cf. Luke 4:6; Jude 6–9; cf. Deut. 32:8; Dan. 10–11; John 1:51), and will be judged according to the use of that authority.

The Old Testament has much to say on this Kingdom. See Psalms 10:16; 24:7–10; 44:4; 47:2; 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 103:19; 145:11–13; I Chronicles 29:11; Isaiah 6:5; I Kings 22:19; Isaiah 24:23 with Exodus 15:18; Deuteronomy 33:5; Numbers 23:21; Jeremiah 10:7; Daniel 4:37; Obadiah 21. Some of these verses speak of the universal Kingdom, others of the Kingdom within Israel.

Israel is God's Kingdom

It is accepted that God is King of Israel, i.e. it is a theocracy. Even so, provision is made for an earthly king who is under God the King (Deut. 17:14–20). God makes Israel a kingdom (Exod. 19:5–6; see also Deut. 7:6; 14:2, 21; 26:19). When we add to these references the Scriptures above—e.g.

I Chronicles 29:11, Psalm 145:11–13—then we see that Israel understood (a) that God’s Kingdom is universal, and (b) that Israel is the Kingdom particularised under a covenant.

The Kingdom-to-Come as Israel Saw It

To understand the fact and nature of this coming Kingdom, see passages such as the following:

- (i) Isaiah chapters 24–27; 40–55; Obadiah 21; Micah 4:3; Zephaniah 3: 15; and Zechariah 14: 16–17. In Isaiah 40:9–11 God is telling Israel she will be restored, and God will be her Shepherd. In Isaiah 52:7 the comforting announcement is made, ‘Thy God reigns!’ In Isaiah chapters 24 to 27 are beautiful pictures of the new Israel, with God as her Guide and Comforter. Obadiah 21 announces that ‘the Kingdom shall be the Lord’s’. In Micah 4 the Kingdom appears almost as universal, Israel being the centre and cause of blessing. In Zephaniah 3:15ff. God is in the midst of His people, delighting over them. He is called ‘The King of Israel!’ In Zechariah 14:1ff. the Kingdom is so fulfilled that the statement is made (v. 9), ‘And the Lord will become king over all the earth; on that day the Lord will be one, and his name one.’
- (ii) Hosea 14:3f.; Isaiah 2:10f.; 9:1–6; 11:1–10; 60:1f.; 65:17; 66:22, 24 (cf. 25:7f.; 26:19; 45:22; 51:4–6; 61:1ff.) are prophecies which speak of the nature of the Kingdom and the Kingly reign. They involve the person of Messiah, and tell us that Israel’s enemies will be destroyed, that salvation will come to Israel, and that it will be imperishable, that death will be destroyed, that there will be a new heaven and a new earth, that the wicked being judged and punished, the redeemed will experience eternal bliss. There will be universal blessing, since the Gentile nations will also participate in blessing. God will reign over all, but generally, through His Messiah. The pictures alternate between God’s

own reigning and that of His Davidic King. Likewise the Kingdom sometimes seems exclusively that of Israel, and sometimes that of a wider, indeed universal, Kingdom. Hence these references need to be studied quite deeply and in detail.

Daniel and the Kingdom

This book deserves special mention in regard to the Kingdom. In chapter 4 Nebuchadnezzar learns of the true Kingdom (4:3, 34–37). In chapter 7 this everlasting Kingdom is given by the Ancient of Days to a Son of man, and the ‘saints of the Most High’. The description of it is in the context of a struggle for power by four beasts, the last being the most powerful, but it is overcome by the true Kingdom. Doubtless these beasts are earthly kingdoms, and even, perhaps, contemporary to Daniel. From chapter 7 onwards this theme is repeated, and the actual kingdoms are named. Their operations reach into the future. However, most important of all is the principle outlined in chapter 2, where earthly kingdoms all fall under the thrust of the true Kingdom of God. In verses 44–45 Daniel describes it:

And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall its sovereignty be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand for ever, just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be hereafter. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure.

Chapter 9 links the fortunes of Israel with those of the coming Kingdom. Verses 24–27 are later quoted by Christ of coming events, and some of the material of them is also quoted in the Book of the Revelation. Daniel, then, is a Book distinctly linked with the coming of the Kingdom.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE**THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT****JOHN THE BAPTIST AND THE KINGDOM**

John's call to repentance must have sounded startling to all. It was like recalling a nation from sin to God, and the leaders took a dim view of such a call. John linked the imminent Kingdom with two things, (a) the forgiveness of sins: one had to undergo a baptism of repentance with a view to this forgiveness; (b) being baptised with (or, in) the Spirit. Both must have sounded strange. Forgiveness to the Jew was received through the sacrifices. As for the 'baptism in [of; through] the Spirit', this could only be understood as the outpouring by God of His Spirit upon all flesh. This meant virtually, the coming of the Kingdom. Indeed, universal forgiveness was also connected in the minds of Jews with the coming Kingdom.

John was really saying that a new age was on the door step. No wonder the leaders of the Jews were cagey about him. And then John pointed to the man Jesus as one who would bring both forgiveness (John 1:29) and the outpouring of the Spirit (John 1:31-33). It was through him, that the Kingdom would come.

JESUS AND THE KINGDOM

Mark 1:14-15 says, 'Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel.'" 'On the heels of John came Jesus, preaching the same word, i.e. 'the gospel of the - kingdom'. He did not do this, however, without baptism, which was his anointing as the Son of God, the Messiah, in the context of Psalm 2:6-7 and Isaiah 42:1. Luke 4:17-18 (cf. Acts 10:38) shows the anointing was for 'Gospel-work'. This is Kingdom-work. The last Adam faces temptation and triumphs. His Kingdom is by way of the Cross, and not by way of human and satanic power pitted against God.

So Jesus is the Kingdom wherever he goes because he is the King, even if incognito. This is clear by the use of the term *rebuke* which is used against demons, natural elements demonically stirred, and sicknesses (cf. Luke 4:35, 39; 8:24). A key verse is Matthew 12:28: 'But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.' This should be linked with Luke 10:8-11 and 9:1-2, where the same principle obtains. Jesus is, then, the Kingdom in action. Darkness recedes before this Light. None can stand against the King. Hence when Jesus liberates people, this is the Gospel of the Kingdom. The release may be from demons, certain sicknesses, or from accumulated guilt, but the release is the message and effect of the Kingdom.

The Kingdom is not only enacted. It is also taught. It is taught both by enactment and word. The Sermon on the Mount is all Kingdom'. Man needs new birth to enter the Kingdom Not just the 'sayers' but the 'doers' enter the Kingdom. There are parables concerning the Kingdom. Israel's entity as a kingdom is an uneasy one. The Kingdom may yet be given to Gentiles. The Kingdom is present among

the people in the person of Jesus (Luke 17:21). Even so, it has strong future connotation (Matt. 13; 24; and 25). It has been prepared for the beloved of the Father from the foundation of the world (Matt. 25:34). All nations must hear the Gospel of the Kingdom before the end comes, *and it will come* (Matt. 24:15).

One thing remains. Given that the Kingdom is present in the person of Son–Messiah, what continuity of it is ensured? Suppose the Son–King departs, or is even killed? Will the promises of John the Baptist and Old Testament scriptures then be fulfilled? Jesus’ word for that is, ‘Fear not, little flock, it is the Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.’ Also on the night of the Last Supper, Jesus appoints the Kingdom to the apostles (Luke 22:28–30). Even so, how does this happen?

Something has to happen to ‘secure the Kingdom’. Nothing can make the reign and rule of God insecure, but in time and locale something has to happen in the affairs of men and evil powers to establish the victory of God forever in His own creation. This ‘something’ is the work of the Cross and Resurrection. As we have seen under the heading ‘Salvation’, Jesus accomplishes the following:

- (a) He defeats all the powers of darkness, sealing their doom forever.
- (b) He liberates humanity from evil and impending wrath and judgement by erasing the guilt of sins.
- (c) He neutralises the enmity of man by the action and revelation of his love, thus inducing voluntary obedience in his elect people.
- (d) Fear of Satan and death is abolished, and life and immortality are brought to light. Hence man has hope.
- (e) Because of the defeat of evil, the holiness of God is vindicated and the true *telos* of God will come to pass.

What seals all this is the fact that Jesus ascends by the power of God, and sits at His right hand. He is above every other power and name in the universe, and is seated in his humanity, i.e. the *man* Jesus. The message is, ‘Jesus is Lord!’. That is, he who was always Lord by virtue of his Sonship, his being as Creator–Mediator, is now Lord through the triumph of his humanity, especially the victory of the Atonement. We can say then that the Kingdom is ‘secured’, and now the Gospel of the Kingdom, whilst remaining just that, is also the Gospel of redemption.

Through it one may now enter the Kingdom.

In eschatology we see that the Kingdom is coming, i.e. will be established through the return of Christ, the judgements of evil, and the reign of the Father, the Son, and the people of God.

THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM

When Christ said, ‘I will build my church’, he would not have said, ‘I will build my Kingdom’. The Kingdom is, has always been, and always will be. Its various manifestations and operations over the years do not alter or add to its essential nature. We have seen that the church is the new true people of God nevertheless having continuity with the *qahal* (congregation) of Israel. At the same time, none is in the church who is not in the Kingdom (Col. 1:13–14).

The fact of the Kingdom we have seen in Acts 1:1–8. It was not to be limited to Israel (Jerusalem and all Judea), but was to be opened to the Samaritans and the Gentiles. This, we saw, was made to be so in the outpourings upon the Jews, the Samaritans and the Gentiles, signifying that the work of the Spirit in regeneration (John 3:3f.; cf. Titus 3:5–7; I Cor. 6:9–11) was the means by which one entered the Kingdom.

The message of the church was the Gospel of the King–

dom, but naturally enough not preached in the identical way we find it in the Gospels because the great factor of the Atonement had given basic content to the message. If we compare Acts 8:5 and 12; 19:8; 20:20–27; 28:23, and 31, we will find the following emerges, viz. the Gospel is the message of the Kingdom, and is the message of Jesus. Because explicitly, this is not stated about the apostolic preaching when they give their messages, we tend to think otherwise. However, the message of the Resurrection is ‘Jesus is Lord!’ (cf. Acts 2:36; 3:14–15; 4:10; 5:30–32; 10:36), i.e. Messiah of the Kingdom. In the light of this Lordship (of the Kingdom), men are to have faith, repent, be baptised in the name of Christ, and receive the gifts of forgiveness (of sins) and the Holy Spirit.

TEACHING IN THE EPISTLES

Doubtless the proclamation of the Gospel (*kerugma*) was not in the direct *schema* of the Kingdom. Little is said explicitly in it concerning the Kingdom. However, the Epistles reveal that teaching concerning the Kingdom is common knowledge. The following are some of the elements:

- (i) True believers are already in the Kingdom (Col. 1: 13–14). They have been *given* the Kingdom (Heb. 12:28; cf. Luke 22:28f.; Dan. 7:22, 27). Romans 14:17 and I Corinthians 4:20 speak of elements already experienced within the Kingdom, e.g. ‘righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit’, and ‘power’.
- (ii) Believers are to inherit the Kingdom (I Cor. 6:9, 15: 50; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5; I Thess. 2:12; II Thess. 1:5; II Tm. 4:18; James 2:5; II Pet. 1:11). Those who walk in evil have been deceived, for such cannot inherit the Kingdom.
- (iii) Suffering is linked with the matter of the Kingdom. In Acts 14:22 Paul had warned new converts that they would

only (finally) enter the Kingdom through much suffering. In II Thessalonians 1:4–5 he speaks of the Thessalonians suffering for the Kingdom.

- (iv) Romans 14:17 reveals that all that is in the Kingdom is ‘in the Holy Spirit’. This must be so. Matthew 12:28 shows that Jesus did all he did, Kingdom–wise, through the Spirit. In Acts it is the Spirit by whom there is power (cf. I Cor. 4:20). The Kingdom then is ‘righteousness, peace and joy’ through the Spirit, and Romans 14 is primarily speaking of the way of love, which is, of course, the way of the Spirit (Rom. 5:5; 15:30; Gal. 5:22–23).
- (v) I Corinthians 15:24–28 (cf. Rev. 11:15) shows that Christ is putting down all enemies and taking the kingdoms of the world (cf. Phil. 2:9–11). Finally he gives the Kingdom to the Father. We see it is (a) the Kingdom of the Father, (b) the Kingdom of the Son (Col. 1:13) and of Messiah (Eph. 5:5).
- (vi) We have seen that the Kingdom has ethical connotation, for if one does evil one does not enter the Kingdom, or inherit it. In II Peter 1:11 we see that the man who keeps adding to the content given by grace ultimately has ‘an abundant entrance into the kingdom’. This tells us that whilst flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom, one does enter the Kingdom through resurrection.
- (vii) In Hebrews 12:28–29 receiving the Kingdom is a powerful incentive to true worship.

TEACHING IN THE REVELATION

What is clear is that the Book of the Revelation shows the events and operations which lead up to the final denouement of the Kingdom. Doubtless (as in ch. 12) the prophecy goes back beyond the New Testament events, and then proceeds into the future ahead of them. Yet all is the scene of

the conflict of two kingdoms, that of God and that of Satan.

The Book, as it opens, is addressed to those who, with John, ‘share . . . in Jesus the tribulation, and the kingdom, and the patient endurance’. They are in the Kingdom; they await the Kingdom. In 11:15 the same culminating moment described in I Corinthians 15:24–28 is announced by the angel who says, ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.’ In 12:7–11 a great conflict appears in heaven, perhaps that which Jesus saw in Luke 10:18, for Satan and his hosts are cast down, out of heaven. A loud voice announces:

Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them, day and night, before our God .

The whole Book, as we have said, leads up to the ultimate climax of victory. The *motif* is repeated again and again, especially in chapters 18 to 21, where Babylon—the kingdom of the world—is cast down, and the evil powers of the devil, the beast, the second beast, its image and the false prophet, are climactically defeated. As we will see, the victory of the Cross is worked out in the final defeat of all evil. The Kingdom of God remains. It is everlasting, and God is King!

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

CONCLUSION CONCERNING THE KINGDOM

We see how the Kingdom of God is really the sovereignty of God working in history, drawing it to the plan and goal that God has for His creation. Likewise we see how the themes of the church and the people of God relate intimately with that of the Kingdom. In other words, as we have said many times, God is consistent with His nature and being as Creator, Father, King and Redeemer. We note that the King of the Kingdom is the Father. Fatherhood without Kingship is weak, and Kingship without Fatherhood is severe. As Creator, God is faithful (I Pet. 4:19), which means He will not betray His creation or give it over to evil powers. Defeating evil in Christ, He brings His *telos* to its planned fulfilment. This is, of course, through redemption.

We see then that at no time has God been a helpless King or Creator. Those created to be His children may have defied Him, but by the way of love and redemption (which has within it the whole matter of righteousness and justice), He brings all things to that end wherein His elect people are established, His true character is vindicated, and His Kingdom is established forever. It remains only, then, to speak of the coming of the Kingdom.

THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM

The Kingdom has always been. The Kingdom was there in Israel. The Kingdom was yet to come. It came in Christ and was secured. The Kingdom is yet to come. This sums up the matter of the Kingdom. The life of the Kingdom is lived by members of the Church, because the Kingdom is about to come. We must not be surprised by its coming. Ethically, we must not be caught napping.

Matthew 13, 24 and 25, with Luke 21 and Mark 13, provide the materials which we call eschatological and apocalyptic, for in them are events which concern the Kingdom, and the coming of the King at the end of the age. Likewise in the Revelation we read in apocalyptic language the events which lead up to the last Day. In Acts 2: 14–21 the coming of the Spirit is for the last days, and the last events which lead up to the last Day of the Lord are also told. Whilst this book cannot enter into the intricacies of the various schemes, the material is enough to warn the evil that that day will come when the judgements will be made, and to encourage the believer to continue in the Kingdom until it is fulfilled. Whilst watchfulness is enjoined, obedience encouraged, and holiness of life motivated (cf. II Pet. 3:10ff.), yet, even more, proclamation of the Gospel is both enjoined and motivated. In II Timothy 4:1–2 the writer says:

I charge you in the presence of God and of Jesus Christ who is to judge the living and the dead by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching.

The passages speaking of the eventual coming and consummation of the Kingdom act as a warning to those unsaved, and as encouragement to those who are redeemed. Best of all, those who wait, wait for the unveiling of the sons of God, for the changing of their bodies of humiliation into

bodies of glory, such as is his. They wait to see the last enemy destroyed (death) and know that there will be no more sorrow, nor crying, nor pain, nor death. They know too that all things will happen suddenly, such as the coming of a flash–flood (Matt. 24:37ff.; Luke 17:26), the entrance of a burglar (Matt. 24:43), the surprise of the servants at the sudden homecoming of their master (Matt. 24:45ff.), or the sudden arrival of the bridegroom (Matt. 25:1–13). Yet come it will—that Kingdom!

As Zechariah 14:9 states clearly:

And the Lord will become king over all the earth; on that day the Lord will be one and his name one.

Hence we pray, ‘Thy Kingdom come.’ Hence the Lord of the Kingdom says, ‘Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.’

SECTION THREE
ESCHATOLOGY

The word 'eschatology' is not much used in general conversation and reading but it is quite important. Far more than we would realise, man is future-oriented. He is fascinated by what will happen. That is why unbelieving man consult occult powers, and why communism is so fashionable, amongst many: claims its scientific reading of history proves that a future kingdom of peace and plenty is an inbuilt principle of history, i.e. 'dialectical materialism'. The sects, for their part, claim to know how coming events will happen, and that is why many are attracted to them.

To know the truth about the future is not difficult if we consult the Scriptures. There is what we may call 'the cosmic future', i.e. what will happen to creation, and what it will ultimately prove to be. There is a 'community future', i.e. what will happen to the people of this earth— the people of the present, of the past, and of the future— and, in particular, the people of God. There is also a 'personal future', and this concerns each one of us. Hope is a powerful factor in every life, and to have that hope based upon reality is most gratifying. That is why a study in biblical eschatology is indispensable to every human being

CHAPTER ONE

APPROACHING THE END THINGS

**INTRODUCTION:
WHAT SHOULD OUR ATTITUDE BE?**

It is quite remarkable, even to the point of puzzlement, that often theologians who maintain a steady level in other areas of theology are quite changed when they come to eschatology. It may be that this domain has been wildly invaded by those who have a love for the bizarre, the unusual, and even the flamboyant. It is as though no other area of theology gives so much scope for the unusual and the weird. Men have a fascination for the future, and once a person loses himself in the language of the symbolic and apocalyptic, who can say he is wrong? For that matter, *who can say he is right?* So theologians often confine themselves to categories which they trust are wholly objective. They stick rigidly to the expression or interpretation of apocalyptic.

Yet is this what is required? Why, when we come to eschatology, should we set aside our commonsense approach? Given the language is symbolic, apocalyptic, and even at times literal, why should we not see it all as the continuum of the salvation history we have been studying. The same themes of creation, salvation, the people of God and the

Kingdom of God, must still be present. The same streams must flow towards their ultimate confluence, and even exit into the ocean of eternity. We should not yield to those excited people who appear to be mining new lodes of precious ore. Some of it, in time, has been proved to be fool's gold! Also we must do away with remnants of superstition which make the interpreters of the prophets more potent and authentic than the prophets themselves. We need to remember that Satan tempted Christ with the bizarre, the flamboyant, promising that this would win him the kingdoms of the world.

If we see eschatology as the right coming together of all things, the natural 'tying off' of the threads, the action of God which is consistent as ever with His true character and Being, then we have a principle by which to approach these end things, which, after all, are His things.

THINGS TO COME

We cannot here do an excursus on prophecy. We simply observe that prophecy is primarily hortatory and secondarily prediction. Prediction is not with a view, simply, to information, but to action of life, knowledge of God, and the establishment of hope in the faithful. If the principle of Revelation 19:10 holds as a general principle, then 'the testimony of Jesus is the spirit [Spirit] of prophecy'. In that sense, prophecy is Christological. When, however, we find also that the prophets teach of the Son because the Father has initiated it that way (John 6:44–45), we see that prophecy is Pateriological. Yet when Christ speaks of the Spirit, saying, 'He will declare to you the things that are to come' (John 16:13), then the heart of prophecy is Pneumatological. Even so, in this very context (John 16:12–15) the things the Spirit will reveal are those of both the Father and the

Son.

The heart of prophecy as the Father and the Son reveal it is 'the testimony of Jesus', or 'the witness of Christ'. This needs to be followed in Acts 1:8 and the Book of the Revelation (prophecy), where the battle is between those who 'hold [have, proclaim] the testimony of Jesus', and those who oppose it. These are hated by the dragon, the hunted of the beast. They confront the world with Jesus. So then, *the Spirit cannot be Christological apart from being eschatological*. All eschatology is the Father's plan for His people, His creation, and His own glory, being executed by the Son, the Spirit being the dynamic Agent of all these things.

We must not, then, forget the lines we have learned in pursuing salvation history. We must keep in mind the great themes of Israel, the Messianic community of the church, God's salvific action, and the Kingdom of God. All of these meet together in 'the end things'.

THE PRINCIPLE OF HOPE

Hope, like prophecy, needs its own excursus. Yet hope is a simple thing. Paul says it finds its birth in love (Rom. 5:5). Faith, its companion, also operates through love (Gal. 5: 5–6) or it is useless, i.e. 'faith which works through love' (cf. I Cor. 3:1–3). Biblically, hope is based upon God Himself (Jer. 14:8; Ps. 71:5). In practice, hope is based on the promises of God. Rightly understood, the prophetic predictions are also the promises. Ultimately what God does is best for His people and His creation. In Galatians 3 and Romans 4 Paul develops the faith of Abraham on the basis of promise. The Gospel is thus built upon promise and law. Law cannot invalidate promise (grace).

For the most part, hope is based upon prophecy, but then prophecy which is part of the life and history of the people

of God, not prophecy absent from it. Only in this context is it intelligible. Amos 3:7 says God does nothing but what He first tells it to His servants the prophets, and Jeremiah 29:11 has it that God has plans for His people, not of evil, but of welfare, ‘to give you a future and a hope’.

THE SUBSTANCE OF HOPE

Hope, of course, began with the Golden proto–evangel (Gen. 3:15). Gleaming largely also is Genesis 49:10, which places it in universal context, built, doubtless, upon the Abrahamic Covenant promises for all the peoples. In the context of these and other promises, the coming of Christ, his life, death, resurrection and ascension, and the coming of the Spirit, we have many bases for hope. Without examining their foundations in the Atonement, let us state them:

(a) *The hope of justification* (Gal. 5:5; cf. Rom. 5:1–5). The believer has justification, yet by faith and not by sight. By faith we wait in hope. Then it will be by sight.

(b) *The hope of salvation* (I Thess. 5:8; cf. Eph. 6:17). We have salvation of course, but this salvation is not complete—not, anyway, until the redemption of the body (Rom. 8:23).

(c) *The hope of eternal life* (Titus 1:2; 3:7). Again we already have eternal life (I John 5:12; John 17:3). This is by faith, not sight. Thus we need to hope.

(d) *The hope of resurrection* (Acts 24:14f.; 26:6; cf. 28:20). The basis of this hope is the resurrection of Christ (I Pet. 1:3; cf. Acts 2:26–27).

(e) *The hope of glory* (Rom. 5:1–2; 8:18–25; Col. 1:27; cf. Eph. 1:17f.; I John 3:1–3; Rom. 8:28–30; I Cor.

2:6–10). This hope is based on many promises. Man was created for glory (Gen. 1:26f.), in glory (I Cor. 11:7), and to glorify God (Isa. 43:6–7; cf. Eph. 1: 121–4).

(f) *The hope of inheritance* (Col. 1:5; Eph. 1:18; cf. 1:13–14; Col. 1:12; I Cor. 6:9–10; Gal. 5:19–21; Eph. 5:5). The inheritance is eternal life, resurrection from the dead, sonship (cf. Rev. 21:7) and glorification. The Book of the Revelation includes becoming a kingdom of priests and reigning on the earth, and reigning forever.

We take it, then, that the motions of history as they are under the hand of the triumphant Lamb, the Lion of Judah, will be in conformity and context of the promises that bring such hope.

CHAPTER TWO**CHRIST AND ESCHATOLOGY (1)****THE LORD OF THE FUTURE**

It goes without saying that all eschatology is in the hands of the Lord of history, Jesus Christ. However, his Lordship must be looked at from a number of angles, and this we will proceed to do. We will have to recognise these in relation to the plan of God the Father: for example, Ephesians 1:4–10. His Lordship relates to his mediation in creation, redemption, in the bringing of the sons to heirship, and to the ultimate unification of all things.

CHRIST AND CREATION

New Testament passages such as Colossians 1:15–17, John 1:1–3 and I Corinthians 8:6 (cf. Heb. 2:10) indicate that all things were created in Christ. Some of the Scriptures show him as the *mediator* of creation, and others simply as creator. However, it is best to see him as creating through the power and aid of the Father (Heb. 1:2–3; I Cor. 8:6). For our purposes, he is shown as Lord of creation. Whilst certain

Old Testament passages may refer to this act of creation—for example, use of the term ‘by the word of God’ (cf. Ps. 33:6–9; 148:5–6)—yet it is the New Testament which makes this fact explicit.

Eschatology must never be seen apart from creation, since ; the climax of the eschaton is the renewal of creation (cf. Isa. 65:17ff.; 66:22ff.; Rev. 21:1f.; etc.). Hence in Ephesians 1: 9–10 the ‘all things’ of creation are said to be finally headed up (or, unified) in Christ. As we will see, creation is related to redemption, since Romans 8:18ff. (cf. Isa. 11:1 –9) speaks of— the redemption of creation into its ultimate form and liberty.

CHRIST AND THE PEOPLE OF GOD

In the Old Testament there are many themes which relate to the coming of the special one who will fulfil the will of God. These aspects we will look at. However, the New Testament is greatly concerned with the theme of the people of God. This is also an eschatological theme. Acts 2:14ff. speaks of the people of God as the Spirit is poured upon them, and much of the Book of Acts (if not all of it) is concerned with showing that the Jew, Gentile and Samaritan, in the Spirit, form the one people of God. Linked with this is the position of Israel itself, and in Romans 9 to 11 Paul outlines the final acceptance of Israel after their rejection which has happened because they have rejected Messiah.

In the Old Testament the one who is to come is hidden under veils. I Peter 1:11 speaks of the prophets speaking by ‘the Spirit of Christ’. This accords with a later New Testament principle which is enunciated: ‘The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy’ (Rev. 19:10). In Isaiah 6 the prophet sees the Lord in the temple, and in John 12:37–47 the writer of that Gospel makes the point that it was Christ.

In I Corinthians 10:1–5 Paul says that the spiritual rock that followed Israel in the wilderness was Christ, and that they drank of him. There is a further reference to Israel as the people of God in Hebrews 3:1–6, where Moses is depicted as a servant in the house which God has built. In fact Christ, it is said, has built the house. Certainly he has always been a son in it (refer John 8:35). In this sense the Son has always been linked with the people of God. If, as some scholars say, the Son is ‘the angel of the Lord’, then Christ is very present in the people of God.

When we come to the New Testament there are no veils in regard to Christ and the people of God. He is the Messiah of the Kingdom. He is the Son of the Father, and the Father is the King of the Kingdom. The people of the Kingdom are the people of God. From the birth of the church in Acts the people of God are, as we have pointed out, all who come to God by repentance and faith. They are the new community. The Book of Acts, as also the Epistles and the Revelation, depict them as the new community, having continuity with Israel as the covenant people, but also having an element of discontinuity in that Israel of blood descent does not wholly accept Messiah. Those who do are of the true Israel, and those who are of the Gentiles who come in repentance and faith are also of the true Israel. Paul spends much time in Ephesians showing that they are of the one ‘new humanity’, and fellow heirs with those of Israel of the promise.

Our main point in developing this theme is to show that at the end–time, when the people of God will be sealed, and will inhabit the new heavens and the new earth, that this will be the eschatological conclusion to the history of the people of God. Passages such as Revelation 7:9–17 and 21:1–5 deal with the totality of the people of God, whilst Revelation 6:9–11 deals with the martyred people, and Revelation 7:4–8 and 14:1–8 with the specifically named 144,000.

In the Epistles the people of God, the community of God,

and the household of God are people of the New Covenant. This is seen in Romans chapters 1 to 8, in Galatians 2:1ff. and 3:6–29, in Ephesians 2:13 to 3:12 (amongst others) in the Pauline corpus, whilst in the Johannine writings the children of God are the beloved community, and must reflect God with their love (I John 4:7 to 5:3). In I Peter the community of Israel now passes over ‘a kingdom of priests and a holy nation’ to the redeemed by Christ (cf. Exod. 19:5–6; I. Pet. 2:9–10). In both Peter’s and Paul’s writings the community is being built as a temple and as a dwelling place for God, in which members are ‘living stones’. That community will only be built fully ‘right up to the day of Jesus Christ’. In this sense it is the eschatological community. The promise of heirship is also linked with the new heavens and the new earth.

CHAPTER THREE

CHRIST AND ESCHATOLOGY (2)

CHRIST AND PROPHECY

If we take Revelation 19:10 at face value, then the substance of all prophecy is Jesus. This is clear also from Luke 24: 25–27 and 44–49. I Peter 1:10–12 also confirms this, as also the statements in the Acts, that the *kerugma* is delivered on the basis of what the prophets have said, that is, that Jesus had come in conformity with them, and bears their fulfilment in his person and acts. For example, see Acts 2:22ff.; 3: 18–26; 10:42ff.; 15:15ff.; 17:2, 11; 18:22–27; 28:23. Acts 26:22 (‘nothing but what Moses and the prophets said would come to pass’) and Acts 13:27 (‘their rulers, because they did not recognise him [Christ] nor understand the utterances of the prophets which are read every sabbath, fulfilled these by condemning him’) show us that Christ was indeed, and still is, the substance of the prophets.

Prophecy which is Christological and eschatological together can be seen in two ways to relate Christ and eschatology: (a) Christ is the substance of the Old Testament prophecies; (b) Christ is the accomplished fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies insofar as he acted in his life and ministry, and will act up to the eschaton.

CHRIST THE SUBSTANCE OF THE O.T. PROPHECIES

Quite apart from Christ’s own claim to be so, any study of Christology* will show this fact. The ‘Seed’ concept of Genesis 3:15 is linked with that of the promise to Abraham, and also with the Emmanuel promise of Isaiah 7:14, which in turn is linked with Matthew I :22–23. This is developed by; Paul in Galatians 3. The *Messiah* prophecies are varied, and in number. Likewise the *King* idea which is both Messianic and Davidic, the ‘son of David’ being the Messianic King. The New Testament term ‘*Lord*’ for Christ, finds its basis in the Old Testament, and is mentioned by Christ as such, as he quotes Psalm 110. Messiah, Lord and King are ideas which cannot be truly full unless they relate to true humanity and to true Deity.

In addition to these terms, there are others such as ‘*the Son of man*’, ‘*the servant*’, and ‘*the prophet*’. None of these would be greatly significant for our study except that they all have eschatological connotation. *The Seed* crushes Satan, and is ‘God with us’ with a view to victory over Israel’s enemies *Messiah is King* of the eternal Kingdom, whether it be Davidic, or the defeat of the rebellious nations and elements of this world, as we see them in Psalm 2. In Psalm 110 *the Lord* has victory over his enemies, and the New Testament uses this plentifully in regard to the ascended Jesus. *The Servant* of the latter chapters of Isaiah is the servant of Mark 10:45. He comes to suffer and give his life for others, a theme brought out strongly in Isaiah 53 (amongst other passages). *The Prophet* of Deuteronomy 18 is a ‘greater than Moses’. Jesus not only epitomises the true prophet, but he is the substance of the prophets, and himself prophesies in a manner which is unique. Hence, later, the

* See the following publications by the author: *The Person and Work of Christ* (NCPI, 1983); *Christ the Conquering King!* (NCPI, 1985). These are amongst many other treatments.

followers within the Kingdom of God 'have the testimony of Jesus'. Such statements are numerous in the Book of the Revelation, as well as being borne out by Pentecost, which must be understood fully in the light of Acts 1:8–11 and Acts 2:14–21.

Christ the Fulfilment of the O.T. Prophecies Insofar as He Acted in His Life & Ministry & Will Act Up to the Eschaton

Again, any comprehensive study of Christology will show that Christ was the essential fulfilment of the prophecies of the Old Testament up to the point of his ascension. His birth, life, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension are in conformity with these prophecies. At the same time, the Old Testament depicts his various offices as being linked with the eschatological conclusion, the *telos* of God's plan. Acts 3:21 depicts him as being in heaven with a view to the restoration of all things. He himself said he would come in the 'regeneration of the world' (Matt. 19:28). Hebrews 10: 12–13 (cf. 1:2–3) depicts him as expecting eschatological victory as the fruit of his Cross (cf. Isa. 53:11–12). Certainly passages such as Philippians 2:9–11 and I Corinthians 15: 24–28 (cf. Rev. 11:15) show him victorious to, and at, the end-time.

It is clear from Daniel 7 that the 'Son of man' will ultimately have the eternal Kingdom. This is also clear from Isaiah 9:6–7, 11:1ff., and Jeremiah 23:5–6, although in this case it will be the Davidic King. As we have seen, the Suffering Servant will also know victory (Isa. 53:1 11ff.). Sometimes in the Old Testament it is God Himself who will come, and this will be on the Day of the Lord (Joel 3:16; Zech. 14:5; Mal. 3:1 –2). This 'Day of the Lord' in the New Testament is linked with Christ as, for example, the one who is to baptise with the Spirit and fire (Matt. 3:7–12). This one comes proclaiming the Kingdom and so the end is near. In the former

days God has spoken to the fathers by the prophets. In the last days He has spoken by His Son (Heb. 1:2).

Given in all the fulfilment Christ effected by his life, death and resurrection, he is yet to complete the work at the end of the age. Meanwhile, as I Corinthians 15:24–28 shows us, he is putting down all rule and authority and power, by virtue of his own authority (Eph. 1:21), and will complete that right up to the point when he appears and subjugates all things with irreversible finality.

CHRIST THE LORD OF THE FUTURE

In Acts 1:8 Jesus tells his disciples they will witness to him in the three spheres of Jew, Samaritan and Gentile. This is the Kingdom, but not simply restored to Israel, as the prophets said would happen, but beyond Israel, as they also said would happen. Hence the preaching in Acts is that of salvation, and yet is that of the Kingdom. See, for example, Acts 20:18–32, where the *kerugma* is also called 'preaching the kingdom'.

In Matthew 28:18–20 Jesus says all authority is given to him. References to Psalm 110 are numerous, and chiefly depict him sitting at the right hand of God, the place of authority. Likewise references to Psalm 2 depict him winning the nations of the earth. Hence in this passage Jesus commands them to make disciples of all nations. In Mark 16:14ff. he shows himself as commanding a universal preaching of the Gospel, and then as going with them confirming the word.

The Acts, Epistles and the Revelation depict him as Lord. All history is now under his hand. In the Revelation he is shown as unfolding history itself from chapter 5 onwards. Of course the Gospels depict him as the coming Lord and Judge. John's Gospel shows that all things are committed to

him, even the resurrection of men to death or life. Judgement is in his hands (cf. John 5:19–29; 3:35; cf. Matt. 11:27). In I Corinthians 15 Paul speaks of the power of Christ's death and resurrection to effect the resurrection from the dead of those who believe in him. Hence Jesus is called 'the Prince [Author] of life' in Acts 3:15. All the end things are contingent upon him for their happening.

In passing we may note that the Lord at the right hand of God intercedes for his own, so that they need not fear the present, nor—for that matter—the future. It is his present reigning which is the source of so much powerful hope for the present and the future. That the future is in his hands is powerful comfort for his people.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHRIST AND ESCHATOLOGY (3)

CHRIST'S VIEW OF THE FUTURE

Christ's view of the future, which we may call his eschatology, is most important. Since he has been present in all history, and having come to earth has set the modes of the future, then to know his mind regarding the end things is both essential and profitable.

When we say we will formulate Christ's view from the Gospels, then we find in practice that it is not simple. First of all, we have two somewhat differing approaches, one being from the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke), and the other from John's Gospel. Then again, some elements within the three synoptic accounts seem to differ somewhat. Doubtless a reconciliation can be effected, but again not easily since so many commentators differ in this. Finally we have the fact that Jesus sees a number of things as historical, and not as totally eschatological. We mean that whilst all things in the last days are in one sense eschatological, yet also many of them are historical since they lead to the eschaton without technically being things of the actual eschaton.

THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

Jesus anticipated a judgement of God which would fall on Jerusalem. This can be seen in Luke 13:34ff., Matthew 23: 37-39, and again in Luke 19:41-44 and 23:27-31. Mark 13:1-2 shows the temple as being razed to the ground. This evil generation would feel the impact of judgement (Matt. 11:16-19; Luke 13:1-5). The Kingdom of God would be taken away and given to another set of people. In the parable of the vineyard, God was to visit Israel, and destroy the tenants, giving the vineyard to others (Mark 12:9). Matthew 23:23-35 shows that was because of the murder of the prophets, and finally, the Son of the Father.

In this context the disciples will take the Gospel to all nations. It will not be confined to 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel', as it was when Jesus was in Palestine (Matt. 10:6). In Matthew 10:17 (cf. Mark 13:9; Luke 21:12) the disciples go before kings and governors. This is when the Gospel is first preached to all nations before the end comes (Mark 13:10; cf. Matt. 24:14). The statement of Matthew 10:23, 'Truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of man comes', has been taken to mean that the eschatological Kingdom would come before they had even finished preaching in Israel, but is best understood to mean that preaching to Israel will still be happening when the Son of man comes. Romans chapters 9 to 11 indicates that preaching must continue, and will ultimately have its effect.

One of the problems connected with the Olivet discourses, as seen in Mark 13 and Matthew 24, is that two events are discussed, and often they appear to be the one. Some commentators opt to make them either one of the two that others see. The first is the visitation of judgement on Jerusalem, which in fact took place in A.D. 70 under Titus, and the other is *the parousia*, the ultimate coming of Messiah.

It is true that the threads of the two interweave, but this is primarily because the same *principle* of visitation obtains for both, although the *modes* differ.*

It is evident that the disciples associate the destruction of the temple with the end events, whilst Jesus indicates it would happen at the near and impending judgement of the city. One of the elements which seems to confuse is that the Son of man will appear in glory in the clouds with his coming, and this could scarcely be said of the destruction of Jerusalem. The question then is what elements relate to (a) the destruction of Jerusalem, and (b) the Parousia. This disentangling of the two threads cannot be accomplished within the scope of this book. However, what must be understood are the signs which precede both events, and particularly what warnings would fit the first and what the second of these events. This is sometimes complicated by certain presuppositions of prophecy which readers bring to these passages, such as a 'rapture' and then a 'rapture' which precedes or follows the tribulation spoken of in Matthew 24:21 and 29. These are not easy matters to solve.

It must be noted that even when the signs appear, 'the end is not yet' (Mark 13:7), for this is but the 'beginning of sufferings' (Mark 13:8). What must be seen is that Jesus is not merely teaching them of the events to come so that they will have a kind of almanac, but rather that they will know what they are about. Succinctly put, it means that those who are marked out as disciples will have to face great tribulations. This is because the love of many shall wax cold, men shall become worse, and the conflict between the kingdom of darkness and that of light will intensify to the point where the faithful will suffer death, although in fact they will gain life.

What is perhaps even more to the point is that Jesus

* For a simple but excellent treatment of this, see pp. 196-198 of G. E. Ladd's *A Theology of the New Testament*, Eerdmans, Michigan, 1974.

teaches that it is God who triumphs, not by reason of greater strength (which is true enough), but by the fact that His purposes are being worked out, and this through the climaxing of evil. The same principle is taught even more powerfully in the Revelation, where evil powers are actually given authority to work certain forms of suffering. It is out of suffering that the Kingdom comes. This last principle was well known to the prophets (Isa. 66:8; Jer. 22:23; Hosea 13:13; Micah 4:9f.), and is also used by Paul in Romans 8:18–30. Out of this suffering the true people of God will be born and matured. In all of Jesus' view of the future, the great theme of the Kingdom of God is present. It conditions all we have said.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Some matters are clear in John. One is that of the Kingdom. A close study of John 2:23 to 3:14 shows that Jesus, in doing signs of the Kingdom, could not accept Nicodemus's affirmation of him as a man come from God. Except one were born of water and Spirit, one could not *see* nor *enter* the Kingdom. Presumably one did when one was born of the Spirit, which would accord greatly with John 1:11–13, where true birth is of God. This also would parallel Matthew 18:1f., where one enters the Kingdom by being a little child. In John 18:33–38 Jesus avers that the Kingdom is 'not of this world'. It is *spiritual* but nonetheless *real* for that. Against such a kingdom is *this world*. Satan is the prince of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11).

Jesus is going to come again. This is seen in John 14: 1–3. Whilst doubtless he also comes with the Holy Spirit (John 14:18), yet in 16:7–15 it is evident that he is going away and leaving the Holy Spirit in his place. They will see him no more. In 21:22 Jesus indicates a coming back. His prayer of

John 17 can mean nothing less than that he is going to the Father, and longs to have them there with him, one day. This is also the purport of John 14:1ff.

Whilst doubtless a man may pass from death to life now (John 5:24), yet such a statement has no significance if it does not obtain in the after-life. Likewise eternal life, even though entered into now, must also be there. This is especially so for the judgement in which Christ will be the judge. Some will be raised to life, and others to 'the resurrection of judgement' (John 5:25–29). He himself rises from the dead in one event and ascends in another. This is apparent from John 20:17. Whilst future history and the events of the eschaton as such are not told by Jesus, his going to the Father, his preparation for their coming, and his return, are all indicated. The nature of the Gospel and its purpose as explained in John 20:30–31, whilst not precluding the inclusion of the nature of the Olivet discourse in the synoptics, does not call for such, by the same token.

It can then be said that nothing within the Gospel of John precludes the historical and eschatological view of Jesus as seen in the synoptics. Nor is there anything which is at variance with the synoptical view.

CHAPTER FIVE**A GENERAL ESCHATOLOGY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT**

As we have said, Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would (a) lead the believers into all the truth, and (b) show them *things to come* (see John 16:12–15). This was to be because he was himself to go to the Father, and they would see him no more. The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost actually led them into this truth. Hence in Acts 2:42 the early believers continue in the apostolic doctrine. Paul in Romans 1:5 is quick to claim his apostleship, inferring it to be a unique gift from Christ. His long defence of his apostleship in Galatians is to show that what he taught was to taken as the truth. Hence there must be what we may call ‘an apostolic eschatology’, and it must accord with the teaching of Christ.

As we have mentioned, all events of this age are slanted to the eschatological, since these are the last days (Acts 2:17ff.; Heb. 1 :2). Hence the historical as well as the wholly eschatological are of one piece. We shall proceed to deal with them under preceding events and ultimate events.

PRECEDING EVENTS

The Old Testament had pointed to the last days and the Day of the Lord. It had also pointed to the fact and coming of

the Kingdom. In this was included the person of Messiah, and the Son of man.

Whatever may have been the Kingdom, the Kingdom is yet to come. Israel having been a rebellious people has been chastised by the exile, and then told by its prophets that a new age was coming (e.g. Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 37:1 –14; 36: 24–28). That age was spoken of by the prophets. Hebrews 1: 1–2 speaks of another age. In fact this age is called ‘this present evil age’ (Gal. 1 :4), and the practical facts are that the age has its prince or god who is Satan (John 12:31; II Cor. 4:4). He has his children, and in fact has all in thrall who are not directly of God (Eph. 2: 1–3; John 8:44; I John 5:19). At the same time God is Creator, and King of all the earth, and ‘King of the ages’ (see Rev. 15:3). The earth and its fulness belong to God and not to Satan (I Cor. 10:26).

The tension set up by these facts arises from an unrelenting battle between the power of God and that of Satan. Into this, historically and effectively, Messiah has come. He announced his intention to destroy evil (Luke 11:21f.; John 12:31), and it was said he had come for this purpose (I John 3:8; Heb. 2:14–15). With his coming, came also the Kingdom in practical, dynamic form. Demons were exorcised, persons healed, and all who were oppressed of the devil found release from the power of evil (Acts 10:38; Matt. 12:28). Yet in a greater way Messiah defeated evil. It was through the Cross. By this he released from sin (John 8: 34–36; Rom. 6:17–18), Satan (Heb. 2:14–15), the world (Gal. 1:4; 6:14), the world powers (Col. 2:14–15), the flesh (Gal. 5:24). This whole evil system had its essential power broken, since this power was by the law.

The practical proof of this deliverance was that God’s people now possessed powers of the ‘age to come’ (cf. Eph. 1:21; Heb. 6:5; cf. 2:5). They commanded demons, they healed, they delivered from the thrall of Satan. The key to this was the forgiveness from sins which was a sign of the

new age (Jer. 31 :31–34; cf. Matt. 26:28; Luke 24:44ff.). The Kingdom which was yet to come eschatologically was nevertheless present in power (I Cor. 4:20; cf. Rom. 14:17), for men were now transferred from the powers of darkness into the Kingdom of His Son, by forgiveness (Col. 1:13–14). These could be said to be those ‘upon whom the end of the ages has come’ (I Cor. 10:11). In time they are in this present evil age. In truth they are in the age to come, the age of newness, the new world. Hence the tension.

Because they are not of this world they are persecuted (John 15:18ff.). They must expect tribulation (Matt. 24:21; John 16:33). They suffer for the Kingdom’s sake, since it has not yet come in full (Acts 14:22; II Thess. 1 :5; cf. Matt. 5:10). They battle continually against Satan (see II Cor. 10:1ff.; Eph. 6:10ff.; I Pet. 5:8; Rev. 12). On the one hand, Christ is putting down the powers who have no legal hold over the people of God, but seek to threaten and seduce them. On the other hand, Satan and his powers are seeking to build their kingdom and defeat God.

Events are spoken of in which such endeavours will climax. Some eschatological personage will appear or emerge in regard to ‘the desolation of abomination’ spoken of in Matthew 24:15 and referred to in the prophecy of Daniel (11:31; 12:11). Abominations in the Old Testament were generally idolatrous uncleanness. The ‘man of lawlessness’ will arise. He is the ‘son of perdition’ (II Thess. 2:3). This form of evil is related to antichrist. There are many antichrists, but they peak in this one (cf. I John 4:1). This one may be equated with, or related to, the beast of the Revelation (13:1 and other places). This one will do great signs and gather the admiration of men, seeking as he will the adoration and worship of man. In fact he will demand and force allegiance, seeking to destroy those who do not bear his mark.

Those who do not submit to his power, and his lesser

powers, will go through great tribulation (Matt. 24:21, 29; Rev. 13:7). God will intervene to save His elect (Matt. 24: 22). Even though these things will happen towards the end of time and portend its finality, yet in another sense they have always been happening in principle. This is why some schools of thought attach their fulfilment to times which have already happened in history.

On the other hand, Satan and his hosts will face the judgements of God. This is seen in the Revelation. There will be tribulation for the forces of evil. In fact they are never depicted as at peace. They are compulsively seeking to destroy, but they cannot build. They receive the judgements of the seven trumpets (chs. 8 and 9), the seven bowls (ch. 16), that is, plagues and disasters as manifestations of God’s wrath (15:1, 7; 16:19). These will be felt by the beast and his adherents (14:9–10; 16:2–10). God’s people will be sealed so that the wrath will not touch them (cf. 7:1–8; 9:4). When martyred, nothing can touch them (7:9–17; cf. 6:9–11). The 144,000 may appear to be a special group, and even Israel of blood descent, but Revelation 14:3 says they are from all mankind, and the list in 7:4ff. has no parallel in the Old Testament. Whoever they are does not matter. They succeed.

When we come to chapters 19 and 20, we see the culmination of the defeat of evil. In 19:11–21 (which may well parallel 16:12–16) we see the forces of evil gathered to make war against Christ and his army. In fact war is not described. It is the powers of evil which are defeated so that the beast and the false prophet, captured, are thrown alive into the lake of fire. The slaughter of the defiant kings and armies is complete. Again in 20:7–10 the faithful people are described as ‘the camp of the saints and the beloved city’, and it is around these that the forces of Gog and Magog—the last stand of evil in the nations—take up their position. However, fire comes down from heaven (cf. II Thess. 1:7–10)

and destroys the enemy, and their inciter, Satan, is also cast into the lake of fire.

It is worth observing, at this point, that although the coming events may be a cause of terror for the rebellious, they are a cause of great comfort to the people of God, who ‘look for his coming’. They are told, ‘See that you be not troubled’, and ‘Comfort one another with these sayings’. The Book of the Revelation seems to send fear into Christians, and yet it is the Book which explicitly promises blessing when it is read. The message of the Book is primarily devotional, i.e. God is in control of all things, and evil could have no power unless it were given authority to do the things it does. In this Book we see that eschatology is one of the greatest sources of comfort believers may know.

THE COMING OF CHRIST

The ‘Day of the Lord’, so important in the Old Testament prophets, is in fact the ‘Day of Christ’ (Phil. 1:10; 2:16). It has many names, such as ‘the day of the Lord’ (Acts 2:20; I Thess. 5:2; II Thess. 2:2; II Pet. 3:10), as also ‘the day of the Lord Jesus’, ‘the day of our Lord Jesus Christ’, ‘the day of Jesus Christ’, ‘the day of God’, and even ‘that day’. In John’s Gospel it is ‘the last day’.

There are a number of words which relate to Christ’s coming or appearing, and they each have a certain meaning. In Hebrews 9:28 the day is called his ‘second coming’. This is as against his first coming which is discussed in the context. The Greek word *parousia* means ‘presence’ or ‘arrival’ (I Cor. 16:17; II Cor. 7:7), and was used in Greek to denote the arrival and appearing of a king or ruler. As Christ went in glory so he will appear again in glory. Glory received him out of their sight. Then it will reveal him. In this context see Acts 1:11. This appearing is to be at the end of the age

(Matt. 24:3), and he is to come ‘in the glory of the Father’ (Matt. 24:30; 16:27). He will gather the elect from all the earth (Matt. 24:31), and catch up his true people (II Thess. 2:1; I Thess. 4:13ff.) because the dead will be raised (I Cor. 15:23, 51ff.). I Thessalonians 2:19, Philippians 3:20, I Thessalonians 3:13, 4:15 and 5:23 all speak of the coming of Christ. For believers it will be a very wonderful experience, but it will be judgement for the evil. Antichrist will be destroyed (II Thess. 2:8).

The word *apokalypsis* means an unveiling of what has been, but been veiled. Already he has been seated at the right hand of God, and interceding for his people. Then he will be revealed. I Peter 5:1 says his glory will be revealed. I Corinthians 1:7 talks about ‘the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ’, whilst I Peter 1:7 speaks about ‘the revelation of Jesus Christ’, a statement repeated in the thirteenth verse of the chapter. In the first ‘praise and glory and honour’ will spring from the work of the saints, and in the second grace will come to them.

Another word which is used is *epiphaneia*, that is, ‘appearing’. In II Thessalonians 2:8 this appearing will slay the lawless one. It is the equivalent of *apokalypsis* in II Thessalonians 1:7–8, where the judgement of the unbelievers is described. ‘Appearing’ is also used in I Timothy 6:14, II Timothy 4:1, 8 and Titus 2:13. All of these words have very wonderful and powerful connotation. They surely confirm what we have said—that eschatology is a source of joy and encouragement and not of fear and apprehension.

CHAPTER SIX**THE MILLENNIAL QUESTION****INTRODUCTION: IS THERE A MILLENNIUM?**

Before we can study the elements of death, life after death, the resurrection, judgement, glorification and eternal life, we are forced, by nature of the case, to examine the question of the millennium. It is generally known that Christendom has come to different conclusions on the meaning of the events of chapter 20 of the Book of the Revelation. The three main views are called premillennial, postmillennial, and amillennial. However, there are still further variant views within each approach to the subject. There would be more gradations within the premillennial view than the others, but all have variant views.

The answer to our questions must be, 'Without doubt there is a millennium!' It is stated in chapter 20, and that is that! The answer is simple enough. The other questions as to the duration, meaning and modes of the millennium are not so simple. If they were, there would not be such divergence of opinion on the nature of the millennium by fine scholars in every age.

THE MILLENNIAL VIEWS

The following are the views of the various schools:

THE POSTMILLENNIAL VIEW

This is the view that believes that the Kingdom of God is being extended throughout time and geography. Ultimately the whole world will become Christianised. This will not be through planned evangelism as such, but by the remarkable work of the Holy Spirit who will convince *the world* of sin and righteousness and judgement. The nations will come to the feet of Christ. Thus a long period of peace and righteousness will ensue which is called 'the millennium'. At the end of this time Christ will return, and his return will be followed by the general resurrection, the general judgement, and the settled facts of a new heaven and a new earth. It is here we take up the principle of eternal judgement, i.e. the wicked being cast into hell, and of eternal life, i.e. the righteous in heaven, and yet reigning upon the earth (Rev. 5:10; 22:4-5).

Doubtless the events nominated in Revelation 20 will happen, i.e. the defeat of evil—Gog, Magog and Satan—but these are part of the ultimate denouement and are capped by the judgement—resurrection event.

THE PREMILLENARIAN VIEW

More correctly, we should say 'premillenarian views', since there are two strongly demarcated views.

(a) Premillennialism

Sometimes called 'historical premillennialism', to differentiate it from 'dispensational premillennialism'. It is the teaching that after the Second Coming of Christ, he will reign for a thousand years over the earth before the final end events of the resurrection from the dead, judgement, the renewal of the creation, and the like.

It sees chapter 20 following chapter 19 chronologically

that is, antichrist and other evil powers are defeated, and the millennial Kingdom thus set up. Satan is bound for this period, but loosed at the end of it, whereupon he stirs up what rebellion there is in the world, deceives the nations, and climaxes his opposition by war against the saints.

Premillennialism believes that Christ's second coming is prior to, but at the point of, setting up the Millennium. However, there are still further differences in ideas. The great tribulation precedes Christ's coming for some, and the church must go through it, whilst others see the second coming as preceding the great tribulation. Both see a rapture— one before, and one after the great tribulation.

Historic premillennialism sees the saints and martyrs reigning with Christ, they having been already resurrected in a first resurrection. Such do not go through a second resurrection which is only for those who did not share in the rapture. They see the vindication of this in I Corinthians 15:22–28. At the coming of Christ the saints will be raised. Christ will then reign, putting all enemies under his feet (the Millennium), so that this objective act will prove his Lordship. Having accomplished such victory, he will give the Kingdom (which he has proved) to the Father. After this will come the events of Satan being loosed, the battle with Gog and Magog, the defeat of evil, the casting of Satan into the lake of fire, the second resurrection of the remaining saints and/or those who are judged for the second death. Thus will follow the new heavens and the new earth, and so on.

(b) Dispensational Premillennialism

Dispensational premillennialism is based on a certain approach to Scripture. Its roots are in the Old Testament. It relates primarily to Israel. It sees all the prophecies in the Old Testament relating to Israel coming to literal fulfilment. It is true that Israel did not accept Christ's offer of the

Kingdom, so that then the Cross became a thing secondary to God's intention of the Kingdom for the nation of Israel. The church also is a secondary matter. Temporarily God has turned from Israel, but the millennium will be the time when Israel, restored to the land of Palestine, will be under the Messiah Jesus who will sit on David's throne, and rule the world from Jerusalem. The Old Testament worship and priestly order, as also the sacrificial system, will be restored. The Millennium will be the true age of the Kingdom.

Dispensational premillennialists see Scripture come together, all its Old Testament verses which are prophetic being literally fulfilled. There is no confusion, no 'spiritualising' of prophecy. What the Jews expected, and expect, surely will come to pass. The Jews will recognise Jesus as the true Messiah.

AMILLENNIALISM

Technically meaning that those who hold this view do not believe in a millennium, the title is not helpful. Amillennialists do believe in a millennium, but not as do postor premillennialists. Amillennialists believe that the millennium spoken of in Revelation 20 is in fact the period stretching between Pentecost and the Parousia. They do not believe that chapter 20 chronologically follows chapter 19. Believing in the principle of parallelism or recapitulation, they see many of the series of seven in the Revelation as the same events seen from different vantage points, and intended to teach different things. Hence they do not use the hermeneutics practiced by other millennialists.

They believe that Satan was bound by Christ through the Atonement, and is at the moment unable to deceive the nations and so destroy the people of God. They see the millennial reign as real enough, but it is not on earth. It is in heaven. Nowhere else in the Revelation are thrones on

earth. Also they see the martyrs and others who ‘come to life’ not as those who are resurrected bodily, but as those who are ‘souls’, i.e. persons who have died and have come to life in Christ, but who still await, with others, the resurrection of the body, i.e. ‘the second resurrection’. They see that these souls are not sleeping, but active in the reign of Christ until his return to earth at the Parousia, after which Satan will be released for a time, consummate the rebellion of the people who oppose the Gospel, and himself be defeated and thrown into the lake of fire. Then will come the events of the resurrection, the judgement, the new heavens and earth, and so on.

WHICH VIEW IS CORRECT?

It is certainly difficult to say. Those who hold these various positions and who are experts in them have studied the Scriptures deeply and have thoughtful and astute rationalisations of them. If each proponent is read without prejudice, then it would seem that each is correct. Each, too, counters the objections of the others. Yet each appears to have differences in the use of hermeneutics, and in understanding of some of the biblical themes such as the kingdom of Israel, and the church. It is a temptation to say that all are wrong, but that all enshrine certain elements which may ultimately be reconciled. It does seem, however, that the various views are not reconcilable. Perhaps the subject cannot be contained within one particular schematization.

Doubtless we have only touched the fringe of the subject. The reader, if he has not yet made up his own mind, should do so quietly and gradually. He may not see any view as covering all his questions, nor in conformity with his own understanding of Scripture. Whatever the outcome, we should not be contemptuous of those who hold views other

than our own. There must be room for humility. Another may even be right and we wrong! However, no one is committed to one or other of the alternatives we have examined.

For a fair enquiry into these eschatological positions, two books are singled out for special reading: *The Meaning of the Millennium*, four views edited by Robert G. Clouse (IVP, Illinois, 1977), and *Contemporary Options in Eschatology* by Millard J. Erickson (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1977). Commentators on the Book of the Revelation generally hold one of these four views. It is profitable for us to study all four views. The first title quoted above has a comprehensive list of books which deal with each of the millennial views.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE VERY END THINGS (1)

Is it a fair thing simply to give the four variant views of the millennium, and leave it at that? Does not the interpretation of the millennium deeply affect eschatology? The answer is ‘Yes’ and ‘No’. All four agree that the millennium is the triumphant reign of Christ. Three see it as on earth; the fourth as in heaven. One sees it as the reign of Christ over Israel (primarily), and another as over the world as the earthly Kingdom of God through the Gospel, whilst yet another sees it as such a reign but by Christ and his people—mainly martyrs—risen from the dead.

However, when it comes to the really final or end things, all agree on the following principles:

- (a) There will be a tribulation. (Some see the saints as involved; some do not.)
- (b) There will be a millennium, whatever its nature. (All agree.)
- (c) Christ will return to earth, seated on the clouds in glory. (All agree. Some see it before the millennium some after; some before the tribulation, some after.)

Some have two ‘second’ comings, one in which the church is secretly raptured.)

- (d) All agree there will be a rapture, i.e. believers will be caught up with Christ and those he brings with him. (Some see this as before the millennium; some after. Some see the coming and rapture as coincident with Christ’s coming fully to earth for the last events.)
- (e) There will be the final judgement, before the great white throne, of all the dead. This entails (whatever form it takes, and whenever) a resurrection to life of believers, and what is called ‘the resurrection to judgement’ of the impenitent.
- (f) The redeemed elect of God will know eternal bliss and the finally impenitent will know eternal judgement and suffering. The elect of God will constitute a kingdom of priests to God and Christ, and will reign forever.
- (g) All of these things will then constitute the final triumph and establishment of the Kingdom of God. Also the people of God will come to their true *telos* as the dwelling place of God.

These things being so, we may now proceed to see the very last things. For almost all human beings, especially for those who view history as being linear and the end-time as being the consummation of history, the things of the future must fascinate or repel. The enormous attraction of divination, astrology and other forms of future-telling, plus political and ideological futurisms, all witness to the fact that man is interested in what is ahead. Even in dualistic religions and philosophies there must be something just ahead, if not far ahead. The ideas of annihilation or conditional immortality

still have a strong element of futurism, and so have their attraction. Thus death, the possibility of future life, its modes and forms, all find interested enquirers.

For the Christian the present lies in the future, as the future in the present. The future conditions the present on the basis of hope. Faith itself is the assurance of things hoped for, and the conviction of things (as yet) not seen. Thus the things of hope are also the things of faith. Faith and hope are based in the revelation of the Word (whether of law or prophet) of God through His media such as Christ the Word, and the Spirit of the Word, the Holy Spirit. We may then proceed to look at some of these matters which interest us personally, because they are things which pertain to us, and very especially so at the end-time.

THE RESURRECTION

The resurrection naturally relates to death. Christ said clearly that those who believed on him would never die (John 11:25), and also that in this life they passed from death to (eternal) life (John 5:24). His meaning was that when physical death comes to man then that man does not see death. He simply goes on into life. Also he must have meant that the fear of death (Heb. 2:14–15– cf. I John 4:17–18) and the sting of death (I Cor. 15:55–56) were removed. Hence ‘he has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light’ (II Tim. 1:10).

How then does this work out at the end-time? In the Old Testament there was anticipation of resurrection or Peter would not have quoted Psalm 16 of Christ’s resurrection on the day of Pentecost. Passages such as Isaiah 25:8, 26:19 and Daniel 12:2–as perhaps Ezekiel 37–show that there was hope for resurrection. We are not always aware, not even from Scripture, of the beliefs of those in other times.

We have to search through much of what they say and sing to catch the nuances of belief. Some intimations of personal ideas concerning resurrection may be seen in Job 19:25; Psalms 16:10ff.; 49:16; 73:26; 17:15. We know that at the time of Christ certain groups, such as the Pharisees, believed in the resurrection, and other groups, such as the Sadducees, did not believe in it.

Christ announced his own resurrection (cf. Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34). After his resurrection he rebuked the disciples for not hearing, and not understanding the (prophetic) scriptures (see Luke 24:25–27, 44–46). His own resurrection becomes the basis for the resurrection of believers, the true community of God. All his people are *in* him (Gal. 3:26–29; 11 Cor. 5:17), as he *in* them (Rom. 8:9–11; Col. 1:27; Gal. 2:20). Romans 4:25 says he was delivered for our sins and raised for our justification. Galatians 5:5 suggests that justification is eschatological. In the famous chapter of I Corinthians 15, Paul states the original Gospel: ‘He died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and was raised again the third day according to the Scriptures.’ He points out that forgiveness and eternal life are contingent upon his resurrection. In Romans 6:1–10 he again points to the power of the Cross and Resurrection to deliver men now from the penalty and power of sin. He teaches that believers are living a resurrection life now, hence they can look forward to ‘a resurrection like his’ (Rom. 6:5).

Jesus’ resurrection body was able to be handled. It could eat food. At the same time it had properties not known to mortal bodies. In Philippians 3:21 it is called a ‘body of glory’, and in I Corinthians 15 the believer is promised a body of glory or ‘a spiritual body’, although there is no dualism here of flesh and spirit. A spiritual body can presumably be physical in the way Christ’s body was, after resurrection. It will have powers of incorruptibility. Romans 8:18–30 is a helpful passage. It shows that the body shall be

redeemed, and implies total freedom from corruption, and liberty of a new kind. The passage concludes that Christ will be the first-born amongst many (such) brethren. I John 3: 1–3 points out that we shall be like him, and this is confirmed by Philippians 3:21. Christ is the first-fruits of them that slept, meaning that he represents the first of what is to come, and that which comes will be like the first-fruits.

There are some difficult passages to interpret, one being that of 11 Corinthians 4:16 to 5:5. What we can be sure of is that the inner man being built up will be the full man in the resurrection time, and will have his own body. There is undoubtedly continuity with the body sown, but certainly not total identity. It is sown a natural body and it is raised a spiritual body. It is sown in corruption but will be raised without corruption.

The idea, too, is that just as here we are raised in Christ (see Col. 2:12–13; 3:1–3; Rom. 6:1–10; Gal. 2:20; cf. Phil. 3:10), so in the end-time we shall also be raised with him. He is our life, and now our life is hid with Christ in God. When he appears we shall appear with him in glory, i.e. glorified form. In fact the doctrine of the resurrection presupposes the whole teaching of man's glorification, which is itself a vast subject. With it, it also presupposes the doctrine of sonship and inheritance.

Whilst what we say now really relates to the state of the dead, nevertheless it also relates to the resurrection. I Corinthians 15:51–57 says that at Christ's coming there will be an immediate transformation into resurrected being. This is confirmed both by Philippians 3:21 and I Thessalonians 4: 13–18. All will be raised at the appearing of Christ. The elect living at that point will be transformed without dying, and the dead will be transformed by the act of resurrection. The more delicate point of a 'rapture' which does not happen at the end of time so much as in the midst of time as a precursor to a millennial reign, is a question of a different nature.

Also the use of the terms 'first resurrection' (explicit) and 'second resurrection' (implicit) found in Revelation 20 may be capable of various interpretations, according to the hermeneutics of the interpreter. The New Testament writers generally speak of a first resurrection within this life, and point to a total bodily resurrection yet to happen. This could well be the explanation of these terms. It could well be also that the 'second death' (Rev. 20:6) is in fact the death of judgement. Romans 5:12f. seems to imply that the death through sin is physical as well as moral. Leaving aside these last two debatable points, the issues are clear:

- (i) on physical death the believer goes immediately to be with Christ;
- (ii) in time—at the point of the ultimate resurrection—all believers shall rise bodily.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE VERY END THINGS (2)

THE STATE OF THE DEAD

Man views death with dread (Heb. 2:14–15) because it has a sting—sin (I Cor. 15:55–56). The power of sin, both moral and penal, lies in the law (cf. Rom. 6: 12–14), for the law for the sinner becomes ‘the law of sin and death’ (Rom. 8:1–2). Christ kills death (a) in the Cross, and (b) in ultimate history (I Cor. 15:25–26; cf. II Tim. 1:10). What, then, happens after this life? What is the state of believers and unbelievers? Do both have a continued existence, and if so, what form does it take for believers, and what mode for unbelievers? Is there such a thing as ‘soul sleep’? Are believers who die bereft of a body? These are questions which we ask timorously because they mean so much to us, and we are often afraid of the answers.

First of all, we must recognise that the whole doctrine of God as Creator, Father and Redeemer must be taken into consideration. To seek to eke out scraps of information about the state of the dead is pitiful if we do not see Jesus’ assurance that he has gone to prepare a place for us, and if we miss the import of Jesus’ statement, ‘This day shalt thou

be with me in Paradise! ‘Even to scan the parable of Dives and Lazarus for information about the intermediate state’ is pitiful. A parable is not about such information, as such. On the other hand, we are informed as far as we need to know.

Paul said in Philippians 1:21, ‘For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.’ He could have meant no less than to live or to die was to be with Christ, and death would bring him closer. To depart and be with Christ was ‘far better’. Hence no one need feel that to die and be with Christ would be less attractive than to live in this world with Christ. In Romans 7:24 Paul says, ‘O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?’ In other places he speaks about contentment in every state, but here he is talking about the internal conflict with sin which is known to every believer.

In II Corinthians 4:16 to 5:5 (this passage has been strongly debated) the debate is whether Paul is clothed with a new body or not. Some conclude that this is what Paul is claiming—that no sooner will he die than he will be clothed with a new body. Some even see that body inherent *in* and *as* the *inner man* of 4:16. Whatever the debate, Paul is glad that *what is mortal will be swallowed up in life* (5:4). There is also the point of Romans 8:9–11 where Paul speaks of the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead, dwelling in the body of mortality, the inference being that he will not cease to dwell with the believer, and will indeed raise him from the dead, which may give point to II Corinthians 5:4–5 when he says that ‘He who has prepared us for this very thing [i.e. swallowing up mortality in life] is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.’

‘God is not the God of the dead, but of the living’ is a principle which insists that His people are not dead as we know death. It is perhaps tenuous to point to Moses and Elijah appearing in glory with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration, but it happened! The thief was with Christ in

Paradise on the day of the crucifixion, whatever the *mode* of his being there may have been. II Corinthians 5:8 says, in regard to the state after death of the believer, 'We are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.' 'At home with the Lord' is a very beautiful state, as well as a very beautiful statement. It accords with Philippians 1:21–23. Whilst the debate concerning whether we are embodied or not cannot be satisfactorily solved to the satisfaction of all, what can be said is that it will be a very beautiful and desirable state.

There are other considerations. How could we understand the modes of this life after death? Some even question whether there is an 'intermediate' state. The Scriptures do not speak of it exactly in these terms. Some see the death of a person as coincident with the resurrection day, allowing that time does not exist—anyway, as we know it—in eternity. In time we will rise at the resurrection day with the new body, but in fact this will happen at death, with *no time-lag* between death and (the ultimate) resurrection. This is, of course, conjecture.*

In the Old Testament, the state after death is *sheol*, which is sometimes translated as 'grave', 'hell' or 'pit'. It is pictured as a place beneath (Ps. 86:13; Prov. 15:24; Ezek. 26: 20), as a region of darkness (Job 10:22), and the land of silence (Ps. 88:12; 94:17). In *sheol* there are the dead, gath-

* Some are adamantly opposed to any suggestion that a believer receives his heavenly (spiritual) body of glory when he dies. It is clear to all that everyone will receive this in the ultimate and visible resurrection in time. The objection to receiving it on physical death is that there will be two *bodies*, i.e. one in the grave, and the other in eternity. Our basic problem is trying to place time in eternity. All *we know is time*. So *we* must speak as creatures of time. This, however, does not rule out the possibility stated, that believers are clothed with their new body on death. The difficulty of exegeting 11 Cor. 4:16 to 5:8 is well known. It could mean (a) Paul looks forward to one day being clothed with the heavenly tabernacle (body), i.e. at the ultimate time of resurrection, or (b) he is confident that immediately on death he will not be unclothed, but clothed with the new body of glory. Some see in 11 Cor. 4:16 that the 'outer man' is being worn down to a mere fragile covering and that the 'inner

ered in tribes (Ezek. 32:17–32). These dead receive the dying (Isa. 14:9–10). *Sheol* is not so much a *place* but a *state* of being. Not a state of *living so* much as one of mere existence.

Psalms 16 says God will not abandon His loved ones to *sheol*. He will bring them into His presence (Ps. 49:15; 73: 24; Job 19:25). Both Enoch and Elijah were taken into the presence of God without passing through *sheol*.

It seems that *Hades*, sometimes translated 'hell' (AV), but better 'the grave', is the equivalent to *sheol*. See Matthew 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; 16:23; Acts 2:27, 31; Revelation 1:18; 6:8; 20:13, 14; I Corinthians 15:55. This is the picture in the parable of Dives and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–21). Also Peter has a reference to the unrighteous dead as spirits in prison (I Pet. 3:19).

Finally in this intermediate state (so-called) there is the mention of the term 'sleep'. Sleeping must not be taken as an actual sleeping, from the 'other side' vantage point, since Paul speaks of being with Christ, and that is better than this side. He has also said that nothing will separate us from the love of God in Christ, and says one of the things unable to separate is death (Rom. 8:38). Jesus said that Lazarus slept, meaning that death is not deadness. He said of the little girl, 'She is not dead but sleeps'. The realm of death has been conquered by Christ in every possible way so that it is longer death. It now becomes a living situation. Death, from this side, at its least is a going to sleep. At its best it is not sleep

* 'man' is not something so much inhabiting the 'outer man' (body) as it is something about to *replace* the body. If this is the case, then the casting off of the outer man means the 'inner man' is both (in one sense) the new 'outer man' as well as the 'inner' . This means that what is cast into the earth is not a body in the true sense, any more, perhaps, than the casting off of the skin of the snake is the casting off of the snake. Hence there are not two bodies. In I Cor 15:35–41 Paul discusses this matter. He says, in effect, that the body is sown as a seed, but the body which shall be is not the body sown (see v. 37). Of these elements, no one can be dogmatically certain; hence they remain in the realm of speculation. This form of speculation may not be denied to anyone. As to the factuality we must remain agnostic, and this is the position the church has wisely maintained.

on the other side but conscious life with Christ (see I Thess. 5:10; Matt. 9:24f.; John 11:11–14).

CHAPTER NINE

THE VERY END THINGS (3)

JUDGEMENT

God's judgement is righteous. If He forgives He may only do this because 'He is faithful and just to forgive', that is, He has made provision for forgiveness on the basis of His righteousness and justice, and not simply on love divorced from justice. God's wrath is related to judgement, but His wrath is never arbitrary or irrational, as is often the case with man. Abraham calls God 'the judge of all the earth', meaning that because He is Creator it is His prerogative to judge. He sets the functional and governing principles. In Hebrews 9:27 it is said that it is appointed unto man once to die, and after that the judgement. James 4:12 represents God as ruler, judge, and lawgiver. Christ said that the Father had authority to judge but that He had invested this in the Son (John 5:22–29). The Acts speak of Christ as the judge (Acts 10:42; 17:30–31), and in the Epistles the judgement seat is both that of God and Christ (Rom. 14:10; II Cor. 5:10; II Tim. 4:8). The judgement seat of God, as depicted in Revelation 20, is really the judgement seat of Christ.

This latter is often questioned, but it is seen that the righteous already have their names written in the Book of Life, whilst others are judged by their works (Rev. 20: 13–15). Paul says in Romans 2:14–15 that the Gentiles will be judged according to the law written on their hearts. This is the *measure* of judgement. In Romans 2:4–6 he says impenitent men are building up wrath for the day of the revelation of righteous judgement. In Romans 2:14–15 he indicates that the rehabilitated conscience will in fact judge, so ‘accusing or else excusing’.

Judgement has already happened in this world. It is simply the pronouncement and execution of the judgement which will take place in the future. Romans 1:18 says God’s wrath is upon those suppressing the truth in (acts of) unrighteousness. John’s Gospel makes it clear that those refusing to believe Christ are already under condemnation, and those believing will not come under condemnation. They have already passed from death into life. In fact the believer is acquitted from condemnation by justification (Rom. 5:1; 8:1–2; etc.). At the same time there will be a judgement for believers which will be a judgement of losses and rewards* (II Cor. 5:10; see also I Cor. 3 for the test of the works). Whilst the believer is acquitted in this life, he looks with hope for the definitive acquittal on ‘that day’ (Gal. 5:5). In

* The judgement for Christians of losses and rewards is a significant matter. Rom. 8:1 is an unequivocal statement (amongst many others) that there is no condemnation for believers, which means ‘no judgement in regard to guilt of sins, hence no punishment’. If this is not so then grace is conditional (and hence not grace at all), and forgiveness is a gift which God recalls (cf. Rom. 11:29). 11 Cor. 5:10 speaks of ‘the judgement seat of Christ’ and of ‘receiving back the things done in the body, whether good or evil’. This must mean losses and rewards. It does not, however, affect the principle of ‘no condemnation’. There are rewards (cf. 11 John 8; the promises to ‘overcomers’ in Rev. 2: 3; 21:7) which are spoken of in many ways, e.g. ‘resurrection out of the dead’ (Phil. 3:11), ‘an abundant entrance in to the Kingdom’ (11 Pet. 1:11), ‘reap everlasting life’ (Gal. 6:8). None of these means man of his own work merits eternal life, salvation, or resurrection, but that *the fulness* of such comes as a reward where believers have been ‘patient in well doing’. The reverse is also (see next page)

this sense all salvation is eschatological, since the redemption of the body (the sonship) will be known on that Day, in its fulness.

Jesus indicated that judgement would follow *the resurrection*. For the evil it will be *the resurrection to judgement* (John 5:29). It is worth noting that judgement, whilst based upon the moral law, has its primary thrust in the rejection of Christ. II Thessalonians 1:8 speaks of judgement on those ‘who do not know God and upon those who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus’. The principle of ‘He that is not for me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth’ (Luke 11:23), seems to be the principle of judgement. In the Book of the Revelation those who have the mark of the beast are judged accordingly, and those who refuse it are those whose names are already written in the Lamb’s book of life (cf. Rev. 19:20–21; 20:14–15).

It is also to be noted that ‘Death and Hades’ are cast into the lake of fire, i.e. they are judged and their judgement executed. These two terms are synonymous, and it means that what we call ‘the intermediate state’ is dissolved. There remain now only two states—Heaven and Hell.

correct.. I Cor. 3:1–15 shows the alternatives of being stunted spiritually and not working—certainly not out of love—and so although saved, one is saved ‘as by fire’, i.e. one gets in by the skin of his teeth, but as regards works (Eph. 2:10; Titus 2:11–14; Rev. 14:13) is barren and fruitless. I Cor. 3:1–3 shows that any thing done without love is worthless (cf. Gal. 5:6, ‘faith which works through love’). The parables often speak of workers who are rebellious against the Master. In this case they can scarcely be classed as ‘believers’. Doubtless there are believers who may receive (loving) stripes from the Master (cf. Heb. 12:7–11), i.e. feel the loss keenly of having idled their lives away, but grace will not allow the loss of eternal life. The true believer lives in a state of contingency on the one hand (Phil. 2:12–13), and motivated obedience on the other (11 Cor. 5:14). *This is the reasonable expectancy of grace*. Finally Rev. 20: 11–15 should be closely studied. However, the book of life decides judgement. If one is not written in it, then one is cast into the lake of fire. If one is written in it, one is not cast into the lake (cf. Rev. 13:8; 3:5; Luke 10:20; etc.).

CHAPTER TEN

THE VERY END THINGS (4)

HELL

This is probably one of the most difficult of all subjects to approach, seeing those who dread judgement will reject it, and those who have ordinary human pity will find it repugnant. It is therefore a subject which must be treated with as much delicacy as firmness, and as much truth as the Scripture teaches. What it is *not* needs to be emphasised as much as what it is. This is needed because weird and perverse ideas have developed, over history. Hell is really the doctrine of eternal punishment.* Not all scholars see hell as eternal, even though many who deny the doctrine may agree that exegetically *the fire is* eternal. They would say that the fire, but not the torment, is permanent (see Rev. 20:10; 19:20; 20:15; 21 :8).

What, then, is hell? It is well known that the Hebrew word *ge-hinnom*—‘the valley of Hinnom’—was named from this valley which was just outside Jerusalem and where the rubbish

burned continually, hence the ‘fire and worms’ (fire consuming the rubbish and maggots which lived in the rotting mess). The fires of Molech worship burned there (II Chron. 28:3; 33:6). It was thus used as a prophetic word for judgement (Jer. 7:31–32) and later for final judgement (cf. Isa. 66:24, which must be compared with 66:22–23).

In the Gospels it is Christ who makes many references to judgement and suffering, especially in terms of fire and anguish. God—and no one else—has power to cast both body and soul into hell (Luke 12:5; Matt. 10:28; 5:29–30). The fire is eternal and unquenchable (Mark 9:43; Matt. 18:8). We have seen in the above references that hell is a lake of fire and brimstone. Into this will be cast the beast, the devil, and the rebellious. Death and Hades are also cast into it, and on any score this must mean the fire is not—primarily anyway—literal. That does not mean it is not actual. It is called ‘the second death’ which means ‘the death after death’, i.e. the final judgement and its executed sentence. For the justified there is no sting to death, that is, there is no second death. Other references which relate to this judgement are seen in Matthew 13:42, 50; 25:30, 41; II Peter 3:7; Jude 13. See also Matthew 7:23 and II Thessalonians 1:9. Within them we find the principle that men are banished from the presence of God, live in utter darkness, suffer alienation, and are deprived of the creational and redemptional blessings man may know on this earth through repentance and faith, and in the state of heaven (to come).

Some see the fire as the fire of love, and the light as the light of truth and God. God is a ‘consuming fire’ (Heb. 12: 29) and ‘God is love’ (I John 4:8, 16). They see the anguish of man as he is eternally enveloped in the love he hates in his irreversible impenitence. They see the light which others see as darkness (Isa. 5:20–21; Matt. 6:23) being the eternal judgement upon deliberate perversity. However this may be, two elements must be considered, namely the doctrines of

* An extended treatment of this may be found in H. Buis's *The Doctrine of Eternal Punishment*, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1957.

annihilation and conditional immortality. The first denies that man has anything about him which is immortal, and the second says that his immortality is conditional upon him being united to Christ. Man is not *innately* immortal, but because God has created him, and gives him continued being, this means he will not be annihilated. To claim that he will be annihilated is to misunderstand the doctrine of creation. What can be said is that he will not *live* in the sense that he has lost life, for in fact eternal punishment, if it is anything, is existence without true life (cf. John 10:10).

It is only when we contrast hell with heaven that we understand the difference between eternal life and the second death. Even so, we do not fully understand the term ‘eternal’,* and until we do we may not dogmatise on what eternal punishment is essentially. We simply know enough to wish to evade it, and to warn others from it. What we need to remember positively is that the preaching of hell, as such, was not part of the *kerugma*. Certainly it was not explicit, but then the thought of judgement may be universally a category of thinking that is innate in mankind.

HEAVEN

Heaven is obviously to be resurrected in the body of glory and be with the Father, and with the Son, to say nothing of the Spirit. This would be a most acceptable state. The term ‘heaven’ in the Old and New Testaments refers of course to the physical heavens (Gen. 1:1; Matt. 5:18); however, it is not thought of literally as the eternal dwelling place of the righteous but rather as a symbol of that beautiful reality. The Hebrews were not wooden literalists and did not really have a three-tiered idea literally. Most persons have the

three-tiered imagery but understand it to be simply symbolical.

Hence when the Israelite prayed, ‘Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven’, or spoke of God as ‘the God of heaven’, or ‘the Lord God in heaven’ (Deut. 26:15; Jonah 1:9; Ezra 1:2), he was speaking as in the New Testament:

‘Our Father. . .in heaven’ (Matt. 5:45; 6:9). Solomon had said, ‘The heaven of heavens cannot contain thee’, meaning that heaven is not merely spatial. Whilst we do not see heaven, yet that does not mean it does not exist. It is simply that we do not see it, or the heavenly creatures which inhabit it. Those who are God’s faithful people also inhabit it. On death it seems they go to Paradise. In II Corinthians 12:1–4 Paul speaks of a man caught up into the third heaven, and says simultaneously that he was caught up into Paradise. Paradise is the place Jesus promises the thief would enter on his death. The word ‘Paradise’ actually means ‘a garden’, and it has been surmised that man who was banished from the garden (Eden) is restored to it.

However, many of these elements are speculative. The Book of the Revelation speaks of the heavens and the earth as we know them (or know of them), being displaced or replaced by new heavens and a new earth, and thus it would appear from other Scriptures (e.g. II Pet. 3:10–13) that they will be the old renewed, reprimed, freshened, purified and cleansed. This seems to be the import of Revelation 21:1. In Ephesians 1:9–10 we are told that Christ will head up or unify all things, and that these will be ‘things in heaven and things on earth’, of which Colossians 1:15–17 tells us he was Creator. Colossians 1:20 tells us that these things will be reconciled by the blood of his Cross. Also Ephesians 4:10 tells us Christ ascended that he might fill all things. It seems from the twenty-first chapter of Revelation that the holy city is heavenly, for it descends from heaven, yet it descends to the earth. The description in the chapters

* See, for example, A. H. Strong’s *Systematic Theology*, p. 10335 and context.

21 and 22 make the city so vast that the nations walk by its light, and God Himself dwells in it, and is its light and its temple.

This language cannot be spatial as such, for God to be contained even by the eternal city—which itself is spoken of as descending to earth—is inadmissible. We take it then that there will be division between what we call the heavens and the earth. In one sense they will be distinguishable, but in another sense will be of one, the unity of which we have just spoken, effected by Christ and his Cross.

There are many elements we can trace from various Scriptures. Primarily, heaven will be where God is, and where He is constantly adored and served. Jesus, in telling many of his Kingdom parables, spoke of future authority, and exercise of it. Since ‘eternal’ (Greek: *aiownos*) means ‘the ages upon the ages’, there is no harm in thinking that heaven will not be in any sense static. We note that all the redeemed will be in the full likeness of Christ. The seven ‘he who conquers’ of Revelation chapters 2 and 3 tell us that there will be special rewards, and these will mean individual attainments, useful in the eternal realm. We are told that this realm is a place of constant worship and service, and the two are the one. ‘They serve him day and night in the temple’. To be like the Son will mean being sons, with a great inheritance. Thus the household of God will surely be dynamic in nature and operations. They will use their inheritance wisely and effectively. All of these things ensure a rich and positive experience in the eternal realm.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CONCLUSION ON THE END THINGS

THE TRIUMPH OF GOD

Before we go to our general conclusion (below), let us look at the fact that God is called ‘a faithful Creator’ (I Pet. 4:19). Knowing that the work of creation is a work of the Triune Godhead, the Father, Son and Spirit working together, we are then forced to see the ‘end things’ in the light of the ‘first things’. We might think of God as forced by His nature to *become* Redeemer when man sinned and rebelled. However, we have seen that before creation God planned what would happen in creation. He was always what He always was, i.e. the God of grace. True Creator is true Father is true Redeemer. Nothing that He is posterior to creation. Hence when we see the fulfilment of what we call *the themes* of the people of God, the Kingdom of God, the glorification of man and the creation, we must recognise that none of this has called for expedients to meet contingencies. All things are the plan of God. That must be seen as axiomatic.

This being so, we cannot but see that when we come to the new creation of the new heavens and the new earth, that such are God’s triumph through grace, and not at all

through the exercise of some mighty metaphysical energy which is His. We need therefore to see again that those things called His omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence are not basic advantages that God has over a finite creation, but rather are the true exercise of love. God is love. If you like, holy love, righteous love, truthful love—but love!

This then leads us to see that the Alpha and Omega of which we now speak are irretrievably bound as one. The Alpha (in man's history) is with a view to the Omega of it. The 'in-between' of the two must be what they—the Alpha and Omega—really are, and that is *Love!* Hence beneath all the operations and actions within time, the power of love is working. It alone, as we need to say time and again, is the true power which works. Often it is defenseless. It exposes itself even to rebellion and evil, and does not operate drastically to curtail the operations of human and demonic wills, but ultimately by its so-called 'weakness' it defeats the (so-called) strength of evil. It all begins with love, in creation, and completes the ultimate aeon in love. It is love without self-display, flamboyance or self-proclamation, but it succeeds. Hence we see that the redemption of creation, the renewal of it, in and through love, are all the one. This is what creation was ever about, or rather, what God was ever about in His creational act and intent.

GENERAL CONCLUSION TO ESCHATOLOGY AND (SO) THEOLOGY

God is the Alpha and Omega. His Son is also called the Alpha and the Omega. God is Lord of heaven and earth His Son is also Lord of all. The Holy Spirit is Lord. This is the thrust of Scripture. Christ is the pioneer in bringing many sons to glory, and he is the pioneer and completer of their

faith. The Godhead, then, initiates the action and the climax of history. True, but then the whole action from Alpha to Omega is the total work of God. The 'in-between' is deeply significant.

All of this means that the end is not merely a subject for man's curiosity. It is not simply that we study Scripture like some almanac to see it as a celestial Pandora's Box. It is the story of God. It is the story of His love for His created humanity and indeed for His whole creation. The plan of God is contained within the Scriptures, and reveals that before the foundation of the world God had planned the glory of His people, and that His glory should cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. All the time, behind the scenes, love is working out its plan processively and progressively. It is working towards the *telos* when all things will be filled up, harmonised, unified and completed. The true building which love is currently executing, will be seen in the end result, the New Jerusalem, the beloved 'Holy City', the people of God, the Family of the Father, the Bride of Christ. This is love's goal and accomplishment.

It is into that context that the last things fit. They are in perspective with *all that God has done*. In other words, when in the Old Testament we have certain revelations of God, then *these revelations are not complete*. We have progressive revelation of God, and in the New Testament certain things, partly concealed in the Old Testament, blaze into light. His Fatherhood and Christ's Sonship become two brilliant and guiding factors. The *people of God* (or, the community of God) now becomes a paramount theme. Also there is a revelation of God's love which is brilliant, because without the incarnation, life and acts of Christ, God's love could never have been seen so largely and clearly. The *end things*, then, are to complete this revelation, and make the plan of God come to fulfilment.

Take, for example, the truth in Proverbs that the meek

shall inherit the earth, and even a similar promise to Abraham. The New Testament makes this truth and fact shine with new glory. The making of sinners into saints, and into the brethren of Christ and the sons of God, is breathtaking, and no less than utterly stunning. Hence ‘to be like Him’ and to ‘see Him face to face’, and to ‘inherit all things’ –these are wonders. Hence when we talk about the Father’s house, and prepared places for us in it, and when we talk about reigning upon the earth, all of these things transcend mere curiosity about ‘What is it like on the other side?’! The doctrine of hell must be seen in the light of the loss of these greater glories of the elect, and the loss of the unspeakable love of God and the fellowship with Him. The doctrine of the resurrection must be seen in the light of the body of glory.

Most of all, the end–things tell us of the high and lofty Godhead, also being the Father of all who come to Him through His Son. The nature of the elect being given the inheritance of bodies of glory, and the habitation of the new heavens and earth, cannot be truly told. Hence *hope* remains the brilliant incentive of all believers who look to ‘the hope of his appearing’ and ‘the blessed hope laid up in heaven’. *Faith*, being the substance of these things hoped for and the evidence of things (as yet) unseen, is the present rich and enriching experience of the children of God. Yet towering above these is *love*, subserved by faith and hope. It prepares the people of God–the children of the Father–for the day when love shall be known as the very life they will live. This will be the fulfilment of the deepest prayer of Jesus to the Father:

Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory which thou hast given me in thy love for me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world has not known thee, but I have known thee; and these know that thou hast sent me. I made known to them thy name, and I

will make it known that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

THE CURRENT VALUE OF ESCHATOLOGY

We have suggested that eschatology is not for the curious–those who have a penchant for the bizarre, or who are almanac–minded–but for those who have faith. Indeed, we might add ‘hope and love’. Even a cursory glance at the New Testament shows us that the point of eschatology is for the enlargement of hope. Prophecy promises and hope seizes upon such promises. Even so, eschatology is not merely a barrier against despair. It is a current incentive to obedience, truth, ethics, and responsible action. A look at the following references (amongst many others) will show that hope is not an individualised, privatised matter that will sustain the spirit, but rather the stimulus to full ethical action, wholesome participation in the will of God. It not only informs us that God is good, but that God demands a healthy response from His people. So see Romans 4 where the promise is what motivated Abraham in all his life. So see (with him) the dynamic of the promise of inheritance. Also the hope of ultimate sonship, and the redemption of the body. I John 3:1–3 is an excellent example; he who looks for (eschatological) sonship will purify himself as the Son is pure. See also Revelation 21:7 where sonship is an incentive to overcome.

The New Testament is studded with such examples. In Romans 13:11–14 a living ethic is stimulated because ‘the day is at hand’. This is the same point as in I Thessalonians 5:11, as also II Peter 3:10ff. In Philippians 3:10–14 Paul is motivated by the thought of ‘resurrection out of the dead’, that is, ‘the abundant entrance into the kingdom’ of II Peter 1: 1011. And so on. Doubtless hope and faith both work by love (Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:6). So even with these fragmentary

glimpses we can see that eschatology is a great spur to true current living. Far from being an ‘ethical cop-out’, it drives us on to wholesome and purposive obedience. As has been said,

‘The one who is awaiting his appearing is not sitting on the fence, looking upwards, but is in the field, working.’

So then, this is the grand finale to all time–history, and the beginning and basis for all eternal life and action. Only in the light of this should we examine, understand and explore the end things. In the light of this we will feel the rivers of praise and adoration flow from us, and move towards our most adorable, personal, and ineffable God.

APPENDIX ONE

SOME VIEWS OF BAPTISM

It is interesting to note that over the Christian centuries, many of the divisions of the church have come, not so much on the basic Christian doctrines of God, man, sin and salvation, as on the church, ministry and sacraments. Of course varying views of the sacraments have arisen. Even within one denomination these views may vary somewhat.

For the most part, what are called the ‘confessional churches’ (those who have a confession of faith) adhere to a certain view of the church which requires baptism of children in their infancy, whilst those who are not known basically as confessional churches (although some may have a confession) insist on baptism only being administered where there is a confession of faith in Christ. The two approaches are known generally as those of ‘infant baptism’ and ‘believer’s baptism’. These two titles can be misleading in that (a) most churches baptising infants insist that it is primarily ‘covenant baptism’, and (b) the title ‘believer’s baptism’ seems to insist that all who are baptised have believed, which cannot of course be guaranteed. We will take a cursory look at both these views.

INFANT OR COVENANT BAPTISM

For the denominations or church groups which hold a covenant view of baptism, the explanation is quite simple. They see the congregation (*qaha*) of the Old Testament being viewed as the true people of God. It is assumed that those circumcised into the covenant can claim all the blessings of covenant. Paul teaches that *initial circumcision* of Abraham was the seal of God's promise(s) and Abraham's faith (Rom. 4:9–12). Hence baptism in the New Testament is viewed as the equivalent of circumcision in the Old Testament. Often Colossians 2:11–15 is used to show that the basic spiritual principle which underlies circumcision of the flesh in the Old Testament is the same as that of baptism in the New Testament. An examination of Deuteronomy 30:6 and Romans 2:25 to 3:4 shows that there have been those of Israel who were inconsistent with the true meaning of the circumcision they had had. Likewise many uncircumcised Gentiles lived as those who were circumcised Jews (cf. Eph. 2:11; Phil. 3:2; Gal. 5:10–12), and in this sense were better than truly circumcised covenant-members.

The conclusion we might draw is that (a) many circumcised were not true Jews, i.e. that they were not saved by God, and (b) that some who were uncircumcised were indeed counted as true Jews by God, i.e. they were saved by Him. This would simply show that circumcision *of itself* could accomplish nothing. The same, of course, could be applied to baptism in the New Testament.

What, however, disturbs those who do not hold the covenant view of baptism is that the offer of life held out in baptism (in this case, infant baptism) might lead the sponsors of the child, and ultimately the child itself, to believe the act of baptism had necessarily regenerated the child. The question to be asked is, 'Were those of the people of Israel sure that being circumcised and belonging to the common-

wealth of Israel naturally brought them to regeneration, or belonging to Israel they had no need of regeneration?' The answer must be that often Israelites were called 'uncircumcised in heart', showing that they did not obey the covenants or offer acceptable sacrifices to God. Evidently 'circumcision of the flesh' demanded a parallel 'circumcision of the heart'.

To understand fully the covenant of Israel, we must understand that it was primarily a 'people-thing' and not an 'individual-thing'. The individual person had his personhood in the full context of his people. Hence Israel could be called 'a holy nation' (cf. Exod. 19:5–6; cf. Lev. 11:44; I Pet. 2:9–10), whilst in fact it was often not experimentally holy. Circumcision brought a child into the area or sphere of the truth of God. Paul makes this very clear in Romans 3:1–4: 'To them were committed the oracles of God.' Where else, then, would they discover the truth or be influenced by it?

'Covenant-baptists' (to coin a term) make much emphasis on I Corinthians 7:10–16.* In this passage Paul says the believing spouse 'sanctifies' the unbelieving spouse. Likewise a believing parent sanctifies the children. What is meant by 'sanctify'? Covenant-baptists claim this means that the unbelieving husband, or the children, are brought into the covenant sphere of God's true people. This does not mean they are converted, but it means that God regards them as He does His believing people, and gives them the opportunities for faith they would not receive outside this covenant sphere.

Other points brought to bear are the numerous households that are baptised in the New Testament. That of the Philippian gaoler (Acts 16) is immediately baptised. Did all

* Those who hold believer's baptism views also use this passage to justify not baptising until a person consciously repents and exercises faith. They see the believing parent or parents as 'covering' the children.

then consciously believe? Did all believe in the households, when in fact households not only consisted of the parents and children of a single (nuclear) family, but often of brothers and sisters of the parents, their children, as well as many servants and their children? Did all these children believe?

That the children of Christian parents believed they ‘belonged’ to the Christian community is made clear by such passages as Ephesians 6:1: ‘Children, obey your parents *in the Lord*, for this is right’, and Colossians 3:20, which is worded the same. How do these children know they are *in the Lord* if they have not been baptised? So runs the covenant concept.

Not all who baptise infants see it this way. Some believe that the church is not the equivalent of the old Israel, the people of God. They see it as a new body, and a new event. They see baptism as bringing the grace of baptism in forgiveness, cleansing, estrangement from the old world of Satan and demons. Also they see the child brought into a new situation which is not merely influential in bringing children to repentance and faith, but claim that the child has virtually experienced these, and so is regenerate. Some who hold this view distinguish between regeneration and ultimate salvation. They see regeneration as currently renewing the child, and that such renewal will climax in personal salvation. Others hold that salvation is assured by the baptism itself.

Objectors to covenant baptism disagree with the claim that circumcision and baptism are parallels. They often concede that if the two are parallel *in principle* that does not mean they should be *in practice*, since, to them, the order is ‘believe and be baptised’, not ‘be baptised and believe’. Further, they point out two grave problems: (a) that children of parents who are not practising Christians are baptised, and (b) that such baptism seems to remove the necessity for any

acts of repentance and faith in Christ. They agree that infant-baptists do not all say this, but that the danger of misunderstanding makes it advisable not to baptise at infancy.

Since there can be indiscriminate baptism of adults as well as of children, this latter objection may not hold much value. *The wrong use* of anything (i.e. its abuse) does not invalidate any custom if it is itself valid. For this reason those holding believer’s baptism point out that a newly-born child cannot have exercised repentance and faith, and is unconscious of the act of baptism. On the one hand it is forced upon the child. On the other hand it lacks personal commitment.

BELIEVER’S BAPTISM

The case of this view is very clear in the New Testament. In Mark 16:16 the order is ‘He who believes and is baptised will be saved: but he who does not believe will be condemned.’ In Matthew 28:19 it is written, ‘Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.’ In the Acts people believe and are baptised. Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:12; 10:43–11:18; 16:31–33—amongst other references—show the order very clearly, i.e. ‘believe and be baptised’. It may well be that some gave indication of belief and so were baptised when in fact they had not believed, but that is a matter of indifference. The order of baptism was baptism only after belief.

This same order is followed on mission-fields today. People believe and are baptised. It would seem, then, on every score, that the biblical view is that of the believer’s baptism position. It would be difficult to deny this. At the same time, certain problems arise which have to be taken into consideration. They are as follows:

- (a) Were children baptised with their household even if they had not personally come to belief, i.e. did the parents make the choice for all in the household and hence all were included in the grace of baptism?
- (b) What of the children of parents who, believing, were baptised? When were they baptised? What evidence is there in the New Testament as to the time of their baptism? When was a child assured it was 'in the Lord' (Eph. 6:1)? Was this by simply being in the family? If baptism brings one into the body of Christ, then is one who is not baptised out of the body of Christ?

The debates around these points are interminable, and will always remain so. We have little, if any, evidence of infant baptism in the early history of the church. The Jews who used baptism and lustrations in their communities did not include children. It is claimed that infant baptism came with the incursion of pagan notions and practices. It is also pointed out that all the evidences we have for baptism in the first centuries are those of persons who have believed before being baptised. It is also argued that common sense shows that to repent and believe is to enter into the genuine grace of baptism.

It is doubtful whether the matter can be definitively resolved until all the elements that are in the thinking of covenant-baptists and believer's-baptists are clearly answered. No simplistic argument will satisfy both sides. That there are arguments for both sides is very clear, hence we should be slow to be scornful of the view we ourselves cannot hold.

APPENDIX TWO

VARIANT VIEWS ON THE LORD'S SUPPER

It must be recognised that with the centuries of Christian church history, variant views have arisen concerning the nature of the Lord's Supper. These views are so shaped that they require detailed and careful examination. Where that examination has been lacking, views have been ascribed to various churches which they do not, in all fairness, hold in that manner. For this reason we will not enter upon an examination of these variant views. They can be examined in detailed compendiums of theology, and books which deal with historical theology.

Briefly, the **Roman Catholic view** is noted for its emphasis on 'transubstantiation', which is the claim that the bread and wine, especially at the point of consecration of the elements, becomes the actual body and blood of Christ. This actuality is hidden under the *accidents* of the bread and wine (i.e. colour, shape, etc.), so as to prevent problems in the eating and drinking of the Body and Blood of Christ.

The **Zwinglian** view has sometimes been said to hold that the Sacrament is a 'bare remembrance' which benefits only by remembering that Christ died. Again this is a superficial view of Zwinglianism. Calvinistic or Reformed theology holds that Christ is truly present in the elements, but not

after a bodily manner, nor ‘in, through and under’ the elements (consubstantiation), as Lutherans hold. His body is present in heaven, but the Holy Spirit lifts the communicant’s heart to behold and feast upon Christ, or brings Christ down to the believer. The Reformed view is ‘receptionist’ in that it demands faith and repentance on the part of the believer to effectively receive Christ and his benefits in the Lord’s Supper.

Lutheran doctrine is ‘consubstantiation’. Christ is not present in a transubstantiationist manner, but his body is present ‘in, through, and under’ the elements. This, in practice, is difficult to define, but in fact both the faithful and the unfaithful partake of Christ’s body and blood when they eat and drink the elements. Those with faith receive to their benefit, and those without faith to their judgement.

The **Anglican views** are generally two. Technically the Articles tie belief down to a view which is not wholly Calvinistic since there is no emphasis that Christ is made present to believers by the Holy Spirit. Article 22 says: . . . the body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten only after a heavenly, spiritual manner: and the means whereby the body of Christ is received and taken in the Lord’s Supper is faith.

The Anglican view, then, is receptionist whilst also being realist–dynamic, i.e. that Christ is actually received, through faith, although not after a bodily manner.

The second Anglican view is really that called Anglo–Catholic, and it is not easy to define. It appears to claim that the priest, through the power given him by the apostolic succession, does on earth what Christ is doing in heaven in his glorified state, namely re–presenting his sacrifice to God. The priest does simultaneously on earth what Christ does in heaven, and so the grace of the sacrament is received by the faithful. Some rationalisation may relate to Hebrews, especially Hebrews 13:10; cf. 9:24f.

It is probably true to say that in practice most worshippers are simply obedient to the command, ‘This do in remembrance of me’, and trust that God will accordingly bless this obedience. What is certain is that those who share in the Lord’s Supper believe that whatever the modes practised or theological rationalisations held, God is the One who works, and faith in that Lord should accompany the fellowship the worshipper has with his Lord and fellow members of the Body of Christ.

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