

Relationships: Divine–Human

PASTORS' SCHOOL 1994

Published by



NEW CREATION PUBLICATIONS INC.
P.O. Box 403, Blackwood, South Australia, 5051
1994

Published by
NEW CREATION PUBLICATIONS INC., AUSTRALIA
P.O. Box 403, Blackwood, South Australia, 5051

© Geoffrey Bingham 1994
© Deane Meatheringham 1994
© Ian Pennicook 1994
© Grant Thorpe 1994
© Martin Bleby 1994
© Rod James 1994
© Dean Carter 1994

National Library of Australia card number and
ISBN 0 86408 177 4

This book is copyright. Apart from any use as permitted
under the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part may be
reproduced by any process without written permission.
Inquiries should be addressed to the publisher.

Wholly set and printed at

NEW CREATION PUBLICATIONS INC.
Coromandel East, South Australia

Contents

Study 1:	The Pastoral Power of Trinitarian Theology by Geoffrey Bingham	1
Study 2:	The Law of the Triune Godhead by Geoffrey Bingham	5
Study 3:	The Triune God in Creation by Ian Pennicook	9
Study 4:	The Triune God & the Eternal Covenant by Martin Bleby	14
Study 5:	The Triune God in Israel by Ian Pennicook	18
Appendix to Study 5:	The Words & the Word of Jesus by Ian Pennicook	23
Study 6:	The Divine Relationships Displayed in the Law of God by Rod James	29
Study 7:	Law & Gospel—Their Interrelationship by Geoffrey Bingham	34
Study 8:	Calvin’s Mystery of the Trinity by Dean Carter	40
Study 9:	Christ: God’s Priest & Oblation by Deane Meatheringham	43
Study 10:	The Trinity in Justification & Sanctification by Geoffrey Bingham	50
Study 11:	Renewal in the Image of God—By Christ & the Spirit by Ian Pennicook	56
Study 12:	Reconciliation Within the Mystery of the Godhead by Grant Thorpe	62
Study 13:	Man, the Law & Trinitarian Relationships by Deane Meatheringham	66
Study 14:	True Being is Communion—Divine & Human by Martin Bleby	70
Study 15:	Marriage—The Profound Mystery by Geoffrey Bingham	73
Study 16:	The Law of Love—Now & Forever by Grant Thorpe	80
Study 17:	The Kingdom of God—Relationships Divine & Human by Geoffrey Bingham	84
Workshop:	Christianity Rediscovered by Geoffrey Bingham	90

Introductory Study

The Pastoral Power of Trinitarian Theology

(BY GEOFFREY BINGHAM)

INTRODUCTION: TRINITARIAN PASTORAL COUNSELLING

Many years ago I gave a series of studies under this title to denominational groups of clergy. The essence of the studies was that since we were made in the image of the Triune God, reflecting His nature, then constitutionally we could not be at peace in ourselves if we rejected that likeness and affinity and went our own way, seeking autonomy and refusing communion with God. Created as creatures to the Creator, sons to the Father and Servants to the King, we would be at peace as creatures, sons and servants. We could expect to live in misery and guilt when we were not one *with* Him and *in* Him. As ‘like calls unto like’ and ‘deep calls unto deep’, so we would find our fulfilment, our sense of vocation, our security and our deepening maturity as we related to the Triune God. I then showed the work of the Father, the Son and the Spirit not only in creating us but in redeeming us, and in taking us on to that maturity called ‘glorification’. I pointed out that God is love and does not abandon us, but history is His working to reconcile us to Himself, and give us a life free of guilt and the dread of judgment. Through the work of the Three Persons, and especially through the work of the Atonement, we can return to the Triune God as creatures, sons and servants, thus resuming what it is to be truly human. I pointed out that baptism into the (One) Name of the Father, of the Son and of the Spirit caused all those affinities with God which created Man had now to be renewed. Not only were our links with Satan and evil powers destroyed, our fear of death and judgment eased, but the positive life of communion with God and participation in His plan for His creation gave us dignity, destiny and ultimate destination. A teaching of these things presupposed the fact and teaching of salvation history.

I suggested counselling along these lines would help clients to receive all the goodness and gifts of God both for healing of sin’s depredations and for fullness of vocation and life, and then for participation in God’s plan for creation.

I think—with some correction and additions—I would stand by that sort of biblical counselling today. Prior to that time I had not read or heard of such a scheme theologically and pastorally.

Since those days—over 20 years ago—Trinitarian theology has come into its own in a way which I think is unprecedented in Christian history. Of course the early Christian centuries were occupied with sorting out the deity of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and trying to express the truth of the Trinity. The great church Councils helped

to determine the magnificent Creeds, and whilst their language may sometimes seem archaic we owe a great debt, especially to men such as Athanasius and to the devotional and theological brilliance of men such as the Cappadocian Fathers. It was on such that the Reformers built their liberating doctrines, and perhaps Calvin—who imbibed deeply of the Cappadocian Fathers—opened up the riches of Trinitarian theology.¹

At the end of the brochure and letter which was sent to you I gave a brief bibliography, and I have appended this at the close of this study, but have also enlarged it for those who are energised and motivated to read and contemplate further. Most of the added books come from the present vital research into the Trinity by Roman Catholic scholars and their work is really stimulating and evocative.²

The Pastoral Power of Trinitarian Theology

‘Pastoral power’ is a strange term, no doubt, but what we mean is that all biblical theology when it is not merely noetic to the student, and is not dryly doctrinaire to the teacher, has power because it brings us into communion with the living Triune God, and allows us to have that existential knowledge of Him that ensures effective proclamation. We are in God and He is in us. He is love, and we are the loved who are now evoked to love others, and this is what God is primarily about in history.

If we ask ‘What is Trinitarian Theology?’ then the themes of this School must be helpful.³ As we cover the vast range from creation by the Triune God, to His making of the covenants with sinful Man, His redemption of the human race, and finally, His ultimate glorification of that race and all His creation, then we are introducing themes which will fire our congregations and reach out to the world, especially if we keep in mind that it was—and is—through the Triune God that such things are effected. Faith, hope and love will have substance because they are based on the action of the living God in history, on the prophetic assurances of ‘things to come’, and on the brilliant eschatology that draws us to its goal. These things are the basis for, and inspiration of, pastoral power that is for teaching and life in the Community of Christ.

A Note on Cultural Conditioning in Theology: Faith and Practice

Many of us are not aware that Trinitarian theology, and the action of the Triune God in history, are not just the latest things of interest in theology, nor even a revival of old doctrines. We have so long shaped our cultures within our various denominations, and have formed up practices which we think are congruous with biblical truth and its outworking, that it often comes as a shock to find we have been culturally conditioned within our ecclesial configurations. I would appeal to us to open our minds and hearts wide to radicalising Trinitarian theology. I am sure some of our studies are going to lead us to such transformation of faith and practice as are enlivening. In addition to the particular themes laid out in our School I suggest the

¹ G. L. Bray in the *New Dictionary of Theology* (IVP, 1988), in his Article ‘Trinity’ (pp. 691–694), says Calvin taught, ‘that Christians are admitted, through the Holy Spirit, to participation in the inner life of the Godhead’. R. S. Wallace in the same volume in an Article ‘Calvin’ (pp. 120–124) said, ‘Calvin brings the Trinity into the centre of his discussion on the nature of God, since revelation admits us to the heart of the mystery of the divine Being himself’.

² Some of these books are in our New Creation Library.

³ We would also like to refer you to the NCTM Pastors’ School of 1991, ‘Trinitarian Theology: Human Unity and Relationships’ (NCPI).

following subjects—not all of which could be included in our program—are of immediate importance:

A Helpful Sight and Schema of Trinitarian Theology

The History of Trinitarian Theology: Its Development, Difficulties and Present Formulations.

The Biblical Basis of the Doctrine of the Trinity.

The Co-inherence and Intrasubjectivity of the Divine Persons.

The Divine Relations and Works of the Triune Community: Matters *ad intra* and *ad extra*. A Fresh Examination of *Perichoresis* and *Circumincession*.

The Trinity as Love and Its Outworking in the Event of the Atonement.

The Trinity in Justification, Sanctification, and Glorification of ‘All Things’.

Relations in the Ecclesial Community of Love Which Issue from the Divine Trinitarian Relationships.

The Trinity and the Church: Ecclesial Trinitarian Theology in Hierarchical Love.

The Trinity and Relations in the World Community—‘The Trinity “En-worlded” and the World “Trinified” ’.⁴

Trinity as Eschatology and the Achievement of *Telos*.

The Trinity and the Eternal Community: The Community Beyond the End.

I suggest that a program of reading and development of theology will not only stimulate us and help us to tend and feed the flock, but it will help to open the eyes of our congregations to wider issues than we have thought to be biblical and contemporary.

**CONCLUSION: TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY IS LIVING
IN THAT IT IS RELATIONAL**

Often folk have dreaded Trinity Sunday as though once in the year they had better try to solve the mystery of the Trinity, try to rationalise it with its obvious arithmetical problem. Trinity is a mystery, but then—like all God’s mysteries—one we do not solve, but one in which we live. It will be good to live in it and share it in these days of Pastors’ School.

A HELPFUL READING LIST

The Mediation of Christ, T. F. Torrance, Eerdmans, 1983.

The Trinitarian Faith, T. F. Torrance, T. & T. Clark, 1988.

The Trinity and the Kingdom of God, Jurgen Moltmann, SCM, 1981.

History and the Triune God, Jurgen Moltmann, SCM, 1991.

⁴ This last statement taken from the ‘Contents’ of *The Trinity of Love* by Anthony Kelly (Michael Glazier, 1989). This book has an excellent bibliography.

- Persons Divine and Human*, Edited by C. Schwobel and C. E. Gunton, T. & T. Clark, 1991.
- The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, C. E. Gunton, T. & T. Clark, 1991.
- The Doctrine of the Trinity*, Eberhard Jungel, Eerdmans, 1976.
- God as Mystery of the World*, Eberhard Jungel, Eerdmans, 1983.
- The Everlasting God*, D. Broughton Knox, Evangelical Press, 1982.
- Calvin's Concept of the Law*, I. J. Hesselink, Pickwick, 1992.
- Theonomy in Christian Ethics*, Greg. L. Bahnsen, Craig Press, 1977.
- The Grace of Law*, Ernest F. Kevan, Carey Kingsgate, 1964.
- God and Marriage*, Geoffrey W. Bromily, T. & T. Clark, 1981.
- Pauline Teaching on Marriage*, J. J. von Allmen, Faith Press, 1951.
- Being Human*, Ray Anderson, Eerdmans, 1982.
- Theological Foundations for Ministry*, Edited by Ray Anderson (appropriate sections), T. & T. Clark, 1979.
- The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation*, James Denny, Hodder & Stoughton, 1917.
- All Things Are Yours*, G. Bingham, NCPI, 1991.
- Christian Dogmatics*, Edited by Braaten & Jensen (2 vols), Fortress Press, 1984.
- The Trinity of Love*, Anthony Kelly, Michael Glazier, 1989.
- Trinity and Society*, L. Boff, Burns & Oates, 1988.
- The Triune Symbol*, Joseph A. Bracken, College Theology Society, 1985.
- The Trinity as History*, Bruno Forte, Alba House, 1989.
- The Christian Trinity in History*, Bertrand de Margerie, St. Bede's Publications, 1982.
- Trinitas: A Theological Encyclopedia of the Holy Trinity*, Michael O'Carroll, Michael Glazier, 1987.

Study Two

The Law of the Triune Godhead

(BY GEOFFREY BINGHAM)

INTRODUCTION: THE LAW OF GOD

The biblical term ‘the Law of God’¹ is common enough. It is capable of two meanings, (i) the Law which is God’s own Law (subjective genitive), meaning the Law in which He, by nature of Himself subsists, and (ii) the Law which God set forth for creation (objective genitive) and which, whilst it may be said to obtain functionally for the creation, is the Law by which Man should live. In the Law by which God subsists there can be no thought that there is a law higher or other than God to which God is subject. He is the subject of such a Law and not its object. If God were subject to a law then there would be a fourth hypostasis in the Trinity, namely the Three Persons plus the Law and this could not be. When we speak of the Law of God (subjective genitive) then we must mean it arises out of God Himself, and, in that sense is God Himself subsisting.

When we take the second sense of ‘the Law of God’ as the Law which God gives to creation (objective genitive), and Man in particular—Man being a moral creature—then we can in some sense work back to the Law of God (subjective genitive). For example, the passage of Psalm 19:7–9:

The law of the LORD is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the testimony of the LORD is sure,
making wise the simple;
the precepts of the LORD are right,
rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the LORD is pure,
enlightening the eyes;
the fear of the LORD is clean,
enduring for ever;
the ordinances of the LORD are true,
and righteous altogether.

This passage can be easily understood. The word *torah* here has the synonyms² of

¹ I have kept upper case for ‘the Law of God’ to distinguish it from the use of the word ‘law’ more generally. I have also adhered to the use of ‘Love of God’ in the upper case to distinguish it from ‘love’ in its more general use.

² ‘Testimony of the Lord’ must be something God witnesses to or declares of His nature, Law-wise. ‘Precept’ must be an injunction given: and so on. Whilst *torah* is translated *nomas* in the LXX and *nomos* is used in the Greek New Testament and *lex* in the Vulgate, their meanings are not wholly identical. *Nomos* and *lex* have to take on the meaning of *torah*, and Christ’s revelation of God as love through the Atonement, must also affect the view

‘testimony’, ‘precepts’, ‘commandment’ and ‘ordinances’, though each has its particular, specialised meaning. If, for an experiment, we cut out the words ‘law of’ and its synonyms we could legitimately say something like this, ‘The Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the Lord is right, rejoicing the heart; the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the Lord is true, and righteous altogether, easily to be understood’. In this sense the stated nature of the law as humans are given it, and instructed in it, helps to conduct us back to the character of God, and this without the use of analogies.³ Man, being made in the image of God would, properly speaking, reflect what goes on in the Law of God as God subsists in it. It has been said that Law given by God is a transcript of His own being, of His own holiness.

We might even go a step further and say that when God created Man in His own likeness and image, He expected him to act in character with Himself, Man living out on the human plane that which God ‘lives out’ on the Divine plane, in which case ‘Man is the personal, living image of God living out the law of God in both its subjective and objective genitival expressions’. It has been said that the Primal Law⁴ Man knew he only fully knew in the creational communion God gave to him in creation. The Fall affected his view of Law which he came to hate and subvert.

We will have cause to come back, time and again, to both aspects of the Law of God, Law as operative on the Divine and human levels.

THE LAW OF THE TRIUNE GOD

The Law of the Triune God we now take to mean that way of being and acting in which the Three Persons subsist. It is the Law of the Father, the Son and the Spirit but is not a law of each Person—three laws—combining or aggregating to make one Law for the Godhead. In the most general way it would be easy to explain that (i) God is love, and (ii) God thus acts in love and this is His law which, from our point of view, is internal to Him. However, having said that, as fallen human creatures we do not know what Divine love is, and so we cannot complete our description or understanding of the Law of the Triune Godhead.

Revelation of Law

In Psalms 1, 19 and 119 (cf. Rom. 7:22) it is evident that the Psalmists know a lot concerning the Law of God as given to Man by God, and contemplate it with reverence and relish. They seem in a position to work back to the God Who gives the

of it. *Torah* as a word and concept needs a wide treatment. It contains the idea of instruction (‘the way’), becomes associated with prophecy—hence ‘the law and the prophets’—and seen in the light of Love and Love’s immutability, becomes directive where the regenerated heart wishes to do the will of God.

³ In seeking to understand the nature of God we necessarily work from analogies, but the Law of God given to Man is not an analogue of the Law of the Triune God. If anything it is a homologue, that is ‘of the same order’. In any case it is ontological for God and Man and the question of analogy does not arise. Analogy always starts from the seemingly known on the human level, working ‘up’ to God, but since God cannot be compared—that is, be shown to the like of anything He created—then analogy which must use the comparative element is never full in its communication about God.

⁴ Here we do not enter into the question of ‘natural law’ which is what Man observes about functionality and practice of elements by examining the phenomenology of things. ‘Natural law’ cannot be said to be the total law of God. ‘Creational law’ might be a term we could use, and whilst it is undoubtedly functional—corresponding to, paralleling the way God would have us live—yet the term ‘Primal Law’ which some Puritans used is a good term. It would seem that this is in the hearts of all human beings, but that resulting from the Fall, Man does not desire to know it. He ‘suppresses it’ (Rom. 1:18), whilst ‘knowing’ it (Rom. 1:32). It is often argued from Romans 2:14–16 that the Gentiles have ‘the law’ written in (or, on?) their hearts.

Law for the Law is itself a revelation to them of the nature of God. They are not trying to penetrate and solve an esoteric mystery. For them to live in the Law is to live in God. God has given enough revelation of Himself for Law to be ‘rational’ or ‘reasonable to them’. We might say that for God to live in His Law of Triune Being is to be God. Certainly for a human person to live in the Law of God is for him to be human. Homination lies in the genuine practice of law. Homologically Man in obeying the Law can get glimpses, at least, of the living of God in His own Law of Triune Being.

The Way/s God Lives His Law of Triune Being

Theology declares the ontological relationships of the Three Persons which constitutes their way/s of living. Comprehending this involves understanding how the Three Persons are in the Godhead—their ‘origins’, so to speak. In fact all Three Persons are unoriginate but it is important to see the Father as unoriginate yet the *fons divinitatis* of the Godhead. The Son proceeds from him in the continuing order of ‘eternal generation’: he is always dependent upon the Father for his being as Son, and so for his works as the Son. The Spirit is said to (continually) proceed from the Father and the Son, that is, not from the Father only but also from the Son. Some later theologians would prefer to say, ‘from the Father, through the Son’, a description which is debatable. ‘Eternal generation’ and ‘procession’ raise certain questions. Whilst the Creeds—shaped from Scriptural statements—speak of all Three Persons being unoriginate and equal as regards their Deity so that ‘none is afore and none after the other’, yet the Father being the source or fountain of Deity must in some sense have a *prius* to the two others, however that *prius* may be understood.

Discursus: a Relevant Note on Superordination and Subordination

Popular today in the interests of the establishing of certain social mores is the democratisation of the Trinity. For example, ‘patriarchalism’ has become the detested term for male oppression in cultures.⁵ No one doubts there has been male oppression but this begs the question of whether there is an ontological patriarchy. It is conceivable that there is a Trinitarian hierarchy and we may miss the love-dynamics such Divine hierarchy may hold—and thus the love-dynamics the human equivalent may hold—in dismissing hierarchy because, as is the case with all ontological categories, there has been misuse and abuse of it. The ineradicable (fallen) human idea that superordination and subordination mean superiority and inferiority is countered by Christ’s loving subordination to the Father whilst being ‘one’ with Him, and his teaching of the greatness of the one being the servant.

The Trinity as Love: Love Relationships and the Law of God

Because we have other studies in this School which address relationships which have to do with the Law of the Triune God, we will simply attempt to show the *prius* God has as *fons divinitatis* in the Triune Godhead. A close study of I John 4:7–21 reveals that when the Apostle John makes his statements ‘love is of God’, and—twice—‘God is love’ he is speaking of the Father, for the passage shows it is the Father’s love to send the Son into the world to be its Saviour. Verses 9–10 state, ‘In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation [propitiation] for our sins’. Thus

⁵ I suggest a reading of my *All Things are Yours* (NCPI, 1991) and in particular the Appendix ‘Superordination and Subordination’, with special attention also to the supportive bibliography.

we conclude, ‘The Father is love’. It is said clearly elsewhere that the Son loves (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:2) and the Holy Spirit loves (Rom. 15:30), but not that the Son *is* Love and the Holy Spirit *is* Love. In Colossians 1:13 Christ is ‘the Son of his love’, and in Romans 15:30 (cf. Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22; Col. 1:8) there is the love of the Spirit. Most significant in Romans 5:5 is that it is the Love of God which the Holy Spirit brings to the heart, and whereas in Romans 8:35 ‘the love of Christ’ is nominated, in 8:39 it turns out to be ‘the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord’.

The Law of God (subjective genitive) is unquestionably the Law of love. The Father is not just loving—He *is* love: love has no hypostasis of its own, otherwise the Godhead is a quaternity. The Son is in Him and He is in the Son (John 17:20–22; cf. John 10:38; 14:10), and no less is the Spirit in Him and He in the Spirit. In this Triune life of communion the Law of the Three Persons is Love. Of course the Law of God (objective genitive) is the Law of love that is the Primal Law for Man spelled out as ‘the Ten Words’ in Deuteronomy 4:12–14 by God Himself. In the New Testament Jesus radicalises this Law in the Sermon on the Mount, and elsewhere says it is summed up in the two principles of (i) love to God, and (ii) love to the neighbour, whilst Paul and James confirm it is the Law of love. We can conclude, then, that the Law in which the Three Persons subsist is certainly the Law of Love.

In various studies⁶ I have pursued the principles of the internal relationships of the Three Persons as Trinity. These are that all Persons are ‘other Persons regarding’ or ‘other Persons centred’, that they honour, serve and give to One Another as they also receive from One Another. Of course the fact that God is Father, the Son is His Son, and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of the Son, establishes the Familial relationships, which, again are ontologically of Love and are Love.⁷

CONCLUSION TO ‘THE LAW OF THE TRIUNE GODHEAD’

It is interesting to note that the—so-called—internal Law of the Triune Godhead is the one given to Man as Primal law, and later spelt out as ‘hard copy’ and yet later radicalised by Jesus because the ‘hard copy’ had been rationalised in Judaism in forms and precepts not commensurate with its pure Divine form. We say it is interesting, because in one sense we can work back from its form as radicalised by Jesus to the Law as it is in the Triune Godhead. We shall have cause to see that it is thus immutable though not as a cast-iron system nor an aggregate of Divine legislation but wonderfully immutable as Love itself (Himself) is immutable.

⁶ See the 1991 S.A. Pastors’ School Notes ‘Internal Relationships of the Trinity’ (pp. 16–18), also the Monday Pastors’ Study Group Notes for June 1990 ‘The Study of Relationships—Human and Divine’ (with addendum).

⁷ We must be alert never to think or say that ‘Love holds the Trinity together,’ or ‘Love makes the Three to be One,’ for that would be giving Love a separate hypostasis and thus be establishing a quaternity. We must hold to the fact that the Father is Love, and so the fountain of Love.

study three

The Triune God in Creation

(BY IAN PENNICOOK)

KNOWING THE CREATOR

There is a considerable difference between knowing the creation and knowing the Creator. ‘Popular’ Christian material may very well give an impression to the contrary. It is one thing to be impressed with the beauty of what we call ‘creation’, but creation is not God. This may seem like a truism but it is essential that we understand the distinction between God and all that he has made.

It is not only popular posters and clichés which force us to examine this matter; there is a considerable amount of teaching around which sees very little distinction between God and creation and, indeed, often treats God as being locked into the processes within creation.

Romans 1:18ff. insists that creation speaks about God. God has so structured his creation that ‘his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made’ (v. 20). This is similar to Psalm 19:1, ‘The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork’, and to Psalm 97:6 where the psalmist goes further, saying, ‘the heavens proclaim his *righteousness*, and all the peoples behold his glory’. From this perspective, creation is dynamic. These statements are not saying that God may be inferred from the world, but that from God’s revelation the *true* nature of creation is seen.¹

However, it must also be noted that if creation is as it is, then Man is obliged to see that God as its Creator must be worshipped. It is at this point that the nature of fallen man is exposed. Sin has so corrupted the mind of man that he is utterly incapable and thoroughly unwilling to see God as he is (Rom. 1:20b–23).²

¹ cf. Bornkamm’s comment on Romans 1:20, ‘The intention of the Apostle is not to infer God’s being from the world, but to uncover the being of the world from God’s revelation’, quoted in James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, Word Biblical Commentary 38a, Word Books, Dallas, 1988, p. 58.

² It is worth noting that Paul did not originate these observations. The following excerpt is worth pondering:

¹ For all people who were ignorant of God were foolish by nature; and they were unable from the good things that are seen to know the one who exists, nor did they recognise the artisan while paying heed to his works;

² but they supposed that either fire or wind or swift air, or the circle of the stars, or turbulent water, or the luminaries of heaven were the gods that rule the world.

³ If through delight in the beauty of these things people assumed them to be gods, let them know how much better than these is their Lord, for the author of beauty created them.

THE GREAT TRANSCENDENCE

If God is not to be found in creation it is because he stands in ‘infinite qualitative distinction’³ from his creation. Psalm 102:25–27, puts it:

Long ago you laid the foundation of the earth,
and the heavens are the work of your hands.
They will perish, but you endure;
they will all wear out like a garment.
You change them like clothing, and they pass away;
but you are the same, and your years have no end.

⁴ And if people were amazed at their power and working,
let them perceive from them
how much more powerful is the one who formed them.

⁵ For from the greatness and beauty of created things
comes a corresponding perception of their Creator.

⁶ Yet these people are little to be blamed,
for perhaps they go astray
while seeking God and desiring to find him.

⁷ For while they live among his works, they keep searching,
and they trust in what they see, because the things that are seen are beautiful.

⁸ Yet again, not even they are to be excused;

⁹ for if they had the power to know so much
that they could investigate the world,
how did they fail to find sooner the Lord of these things?

¹⁰ But miserable, with their hopes set on dead things, are those
who give the name ‘gods’ to the works of human hands,
gold and silver fashioned with skill,
and likenesses of animals,
or a useless stone, the work of an ancient hand.

¹¹ A skilled woodcutter may saw down a tree easy to handle
and skilfully strip off all its bark,
and then with pleasing workmanship
make a useful vessel that serves life’s needs,

¹² and burn the cast-off pieces of his work
to prepare his food, and eat his fill.

¹³ But a cast-off piece from among them, useful for nothing,
a stick crooked and full of knots,
he takes and carves with care in his leisure,
and shapes it with skill gained in idleness;
he forms it in the likeness of a human being,

¹⁴ or makes it like some worthless animal,
giving it a coat of red paint and coloring its surface red
and covering every blemish in it with paint;

¹⁵ then he makes a suitable niche for it,
and sets it in the wall, and fastens it there with iron.

¹⁶ He takes thought for it, so that it may not fall,
because he knows that it cannot help itself,
for it is only an image and has need of help.

¹⁷ When he prays about possessions and his marriage and children,
he is not ashamed to address a lifeless thing.

¹⁸ For health he appeals to a thing that is weak;
for life he prays to a thing that is dead;
for aid he entreats a thing that is utterly inexperienced;
for a prosperous journey, a thing that cannot take a step;

¹⁹ for money-making and work and success with his hands
he asks strength of a thing whose hands have no strength.

(The Wisdom of Solomon, ch. 13)

³ Kierkegaard’s phrase, quoted in S. J. Grenz & R. E. Olson, *20th Century Theology: God & the World in a Transitional Age*, Inter Varsity Press, Downers Grove, 1992, p. 91.

The significance of this insight was not lost on the writers of the New Testament as we will see.

But while creation is not to be identified with God, neither is it independent from him. Thus, Psalm 104:29–30:

When you hide your face, they are dismayed;
when you take away their breath, they die
and return to their dust.
When you send forth your spirit, they are created;
and you renew the face of the ground.

Looking at the creation we see, then, that unless God is continually present to his creation it cannot exist.⁴ By this it is not meant that we must somehow fuse God's transcendence and immanence. It does mean that God stands as Creator and that all of creation, and in particular we, as the personal image of God, must acknowledge our relationship to him as creatures.

WHO IS THE CREATOR?

While we may say that we are creatures, that statement does little justice to the way the Scriptures describe creation. We simply do not just relate to God as creatures to a Creator. Within the Scriptures men and women are depicted as having a personal and indeed intimate relationship with God. Even to say that 'obedience' is required of creatures implies that there is a rich personal element in the relationship.

How could the author of Genesis 1 say that 'in the beginning when God created the heavens and earth, the earth was a formless void . . .'? Plainly it could not have been by observation on the absurd level because he was not there, and from what was said above, because God is not to be found in the creation. The answer must be that the Word of God had come to him. In other words, it is Moses' prophetic role which provides the key to his knowledge, and so to ours. Surely it is this that lies behind the declaration of Hebrews 11:3 that 'by faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word⁵ of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible'.

It is the presence of the word which demands obedience from creation (cf. Ps. 103:20; 147:15). Whereas Psalm 19 says that the heavens declare the glory of God, Psalm 119:89 insists that God's 'word is firmly fixed in heaven'. The Creator is, therefore, never understood metaphysically; he is always the personal God who is continually present to the creation.

THE TRIUNE GOD AND CREATION

If Moses wrote because the word of God came to him, then how much more can we say 'I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth'. This is

⁴ cf. Barth: 'The statement that God has created heaven and earth speaks of an incomparable perfect, and tells us that this perfect is the beginning of heaven and earth. It is also true that this beginning does not cease, but determines their duration; that the Creator remains Creator and as such is present as such to his creation—actively present . . .'; CD, III, 1, p. 13.

⁵ The Greek word here is *ῥῆμα* (*rhema*) and not *λογος* (*logos*), however, there is no substantial difference between the two words and the meaning of this statement is virtually identical with John 1:1–4.

because the word which came to Moses has personally come to us; ‘The Word became flesh and lived among us’. We must say that the Creator is known to us as Trinity, because he has come to us and revealed himself in a way previously only hinted at.

I suggest that it is important that we do not treat the statements of the New Testament as the ‘solution’ to the Old Testament ‘clues’. That may actually give the Old Testament statements a status which they do not really have of themselves. There is no doubt that God is always Trinity, but the revelation of the Trinity is singularly dependent on Jesus. It is therefore Jesus who is the one now seen in Psalm 102:25–27 (quoted above, see Heb. 1:10–12).⁶ In Christ there is a final and definitive revelation. Now we can only come to creation through Christ and this is something which even Moses could not have known. We know that the Old Testament account of creation is true because the word of creation has personally confronted us in Christ.

THE PURPOSE OF CREATION

Statements such as those in Colossians 1:15–17 indicate that creation, while dynamic, has no purpose or rationale of itself. We can only understand creation as we understand the inner relationships of the Trinity. ‘All things have been created through him and for him’ (Col. 1:16). God the Father created through his Son and did it all for his Son. Of course it is plain that the Son never functions apart from the Spirit as, in the Old Testament, the word and the Spirit are always co-functionaries.

Karl Barth makes much of the notion of covenant as the rationale for creation. In CD III, 1 he devotes much space⁷ to arguing, by means of a play on words, that ‘Creation [is] the External Basis of the Covenant’ and that ‘The Covenant [is] the Internal Basis of Creation’. His approach is based on his view that both creation and covenant belong to the sphere of grace, a position which has been elsewhere rejected. But, further, his discussion of ‘covenant’ relates to God’s covenant with man. His proposition is that God has freely decided not to be God alone and has covenanted with man that he will be our God and we will be his people.

This matter is significant, in so far as Barth then proceeds to describe the image of God, Man, as being bisexual, corresponding to the archetype, namely Christ and his bride. This insight is one which is well known to us. Barth’s comment is:

When the Old Testament gives dignity to the sexual relationship, it has in view its prototype, the divine likeness of man as male and female which in the plan and election of God is primarily the relationship between Jesus Christ and His Church, secondarily the relationship between Yahweh and Israel, and only finally—although very directly in view of its origin—the relationship between the sexes. It is because Jesus Christ and His Church are the internal basis of creation, and because Jesus Christ is again the basis of the election and call of Israel, that the relation between Yahweh and Israel can and must be described as an erotic relationship.⁸

However, we ought to ask whether this goes far enough. First, is the image of God restricted to the male–female relationship, or does the Triune being of God find expression in even wider dimensions of human relationships?

Second, is the covenant, if that is an appropriate word (it is certainly not biblical in

⁶ The same principle is seen in John’s reference to Isaiah 6:1–10 in John 12:39–41.

⁷ pp. 42–329.

⁸ CD, III, i, p. 322.

this context), really between God and man? In other words, is creation merely for Christ as the husband of the bride, or are we to see creation as finding its rationale *within* the Triune Godhead? When Paul wrote that all things were created ‘through him and for him’, and when Jesus told the crowds, ‘Everything⁹ that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away’ (John 6:37), were not these statements indicating that the Father has given all things to the Son? Creation, including men and women, finds its reason for being in that it is the gift of the Father to the Son. While we may rightly see ourselves depicted as the recipients of God’s grace in Ephesians 1:3ff., the language ‘in Christ’ etc. should surely be seen as pointing first to the Father’s relationship with the Son; God is, after all, ‘the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ’, and his plan ‘for the fullness of time [is] to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth’ (Eph. 1:10). Perhaps we could say that the man with whom God makes the covenant is Jesus Christ, and we would no doubt be correct, but I sense that this overlooks the fact that as the Son, Jesus had glory in the Father’s presence before the world existed (John 17:5).

CONCLUSION

To speak of the Triune God in Creation recognises that creation came into being through the Triune God and continues to function only because the Triune God continues to sustain it. However, the main point has been that the purpose of all of this lies not so much in God’s plan for creation but in the relationships within the Triune Godhead, as the Father, Son and Spirit have determined in love to give all due glory to each other. The great miracle of grace is that we, along with all created things, are permitted to share the glory:

Around the throne, and on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with a face like a human face, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and inside. Day and night without ceasing they sing,

‘Holy, holy, holy,
the Lord God the Almighty,
who was and is and is to come.’

And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to the one who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall before the one who is seated on the throne and worship the one who lives forever and ever; they cast their crowns before the throne, singing,

‘You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they existed and were created’.

(Rev.4:6–11)

⁹ RSV and NIV ‘All that the Father gives me . . .’ tend to obscure the fact that ‘All’ is the Greek *πάν* (*pan*), the neuter form, which the NRSV has correctly translated as ‘Everything’.

Study four

THE TRIUNE GOD & THE ETERNAL COVENANT

(BY MARTIN BLEBY)

WHAT IS A COVENANT?

Covenant in the Scriptures is that which *binds* two parties to each other, virtually in a blood relationship. Not just a contract or an agreement.

Much has been made of the resemblance between the form of covenant documents in the Old Testament (e.g. Deut.) and suzerainty treaties of the 'Near East'. The point is made that these were copied in a human way, or that God accommodated Himself to these contemporary forms. However, it could be that human beings have a sense of the divine covenant that underlies their being, and unconsciously structure their secular covenants according to this ontological reality. It would then hardly be surprising to find them resembling God's own expression of covenant in Hebrew history.

THE BIBLICAL COVENANTS

It is helpful at the start to set out the line of covenants in the Scriptures.

Note: Was there an implied covenant in the act of creation? We think not. Creation was sheer gift from the heart of the Father, with no conditions attached. Relationships were direct, warm and uncomplicated, with no need to spell out mutual obligations. The need for covenant comes, as we shall see, with the onset of sin. Yet some sinners, with their distorted view, see the whole of life not as a gift but as a tedious obligation. The gospel thankfully dispels this (see Rom. 13:8).

Covenant with Noah —Pre-Flood (Gen. 6:11–22)

With Noah and his family. A saving covenant of grace, prefiguring our salvation in Christ (I Pet. 3:18–22).

Covenant with Noah —Post-Flood (Gen. 8:20—9:19)

With Noah and his descendants, i.e. the whole human race as presently constituted, lasting up to the time of the final judgment. A restraining of judgment with a view to repentance under grace (see Matt. 5:45; II Pet. 3:3–10).

Covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12; 15; 17; 22)

With Abraham and his descendants, reiterated to Isaac and Jacob (Gen. 26:1–5; 28:10–22; 35:9–15), with temporal elements (e.g. the promised land), but with a view to all the nations being blessed, and the eternal inheritance in the holy city (Gen. 12:3; Heb. 11:8–16).

Covenant at Sinai (Exod. 19–40; Lev.; Deut.)

With Israel under Moses after the deliverance from Egypt, pertaining to their life as a nation, in the wilderness and into the promised land. A revelation of God's steadfast love and faithfulness, and of His holiness in the setting out of His glorious law, and the detailed spelling out of the blessings and curses attendant upon the keeping or forsaking of the covenant by Israel. Renewed again and again by, for example, Joshua, Samuel, Joash, Josiah, Ezra, and constantly referred to by the prophets as the touchstone of Israel's subsequent history.

Covenant with David (II Sam. 7; I Chron. 17; Ps. 89; 132; 2; 110)

A promise to David and his royal household that one of his descendants would rule forever. Messiah and His mission to the nations.

The New Covenant (Jer. 31:31–37; Matt. 26:26–29; Heb. 8–10)

This 'mother of all covenants', the last in the series, gathers up all the former covenants into the one *new* covenant that Jesus fulfilled and established forever. It has to do with the total forgiveness of sins and with knowing God intimately, with His law written on our hearts. Being par excellence, the covenant of the grace of forgiveness and eternal life, it is contrasted with the Mosaic covenant of the law, which it both fulfils and supplants, and is seen as being of one piece with the Abrahamic covenant (see Jer. 31:32; John 1:17; Heb. 8–10; Gal. 3–4).

All these covenants are linked with each other: see for example Exodus 2:24; Ezekiel 16:60; Isaiah 55:3–4; Luke 1:67–79; Acts 3:25; Galatians 3. While distinct, they are all part of the one movement of God towards us in holy love.

THE HEART OF COVENANT

'I will be your God, and you shall be my people' is the constant refrain (see Lev. 26:12; Gen. 17:7–8; Exod. 6:6–8; Deut. 29:10–15; Jer. 30:22; 31:33; 32:38; Ezek. 36:28; etc.).

This relates to present temporal blessings (e.g. Deut. 28:1–14) and eternal future inheritance (Rev. 21:3, NB v. 7). They are always covenants of promise.

This, of course, also necessitates that God's people be holy (Lev. 19:2; Eph. 1:4–5; II Pet. 1:3–11).

COVENANT IS FOR SINNERS

This intimate relational fellowship with God has ever been God's eternal purpose (see Eph. 1:3–4; I John 1:3). Covenant becomes necessary with the onset of sin. Without

sin, relationships would be direct, warm and uncomplicated. Because of sin, covenant must be largely concerned with a preserving from wrath, by the restraining of wrath and the final dealing with it in order to provide covenant access to this holy and joyful fellowship.

This is why the forsaking of the covenant on our part incurs the wrath of God:

- (a) As sinners, we are in wrath anyway outside of covenant (see Eph. 2:1–3, I Cor. 5:1–5). Hence the meticulous and insistent precautions that must be provided to enable the people to ‘meet God’ at Sinai (Exod. 19:10–25).
- (b) For covenant to be a training in holiness, there must be true, direct and responsible judgment (see Amos 3:2; I Pet. 4:17–19; I Cor. 10:1–13; Heb. 2:1–4), always of course in the context of covenant mercy (see Hab. 3:2; Exod. 34:6–7; 20:4–6; Jer. 5:18–19; cf. Nahum 1:6–9). Grace is not a cover for licentiousness. Hence the detailed spelling out of blessings and curses (e.g. Deut. 28, Lev. 26). Why is more space given to detailing the curses than the blessings? Because sin is much more devious than simple straightforward righteousness.) The whole of Hebrew history is the outworking of God’s faithfulness to both sides of the covenant (see Lev. 26:25, 44–45).
- (c) Covenant judgment and forbearance are always with a view to repentance under grace (see II Pet. 3:9, 15). How could God promise to Noah that he would never send another well-deserved flood on the earth, when man’s heart and behaviour remained essentially unchanged? Because he knew that he would be dealing righteously with all sin in the deluge of the cross, that all might be saved (I Tim. 2:3–4).

COVENANT AND TRINITY

All this is to explicate the nature of God, in His relationships with us.

God is Covenant Father

God regards Himself as the Father of His people and acts accordingly (Exod. 4:22; Deut. 32:6; Hosea 11:1; Mal. 2:10). More specifically in the New Testament He is shown to be the Father of the *Son*, and so of all God’s people *in Christ* (Matt. 2:14–15; 3:17; 11:25–30; 16:16–17; 26:63–66; 27:54; 28:18–20).

The Son Himself is the Covenant Given by the Father

As the Davidic covenant unfolds, it becomes clear that all God’s covenant action is focussed in the Son, especially in the passages on the Servant of the Lord. He in fact encapsulates the covenant, and *is* the covenant (Isa. 42:6; 49:8; 55:3).

The Spirit Establishes Covenant Relationship & Obedience in the Hearts of God’s People

Ezekiel 36:22–32 (cf. Jer. 31:33–34) and 37:1–14 show the role of the Spirit in establishing the new covenant. In Galatians 3:14 the Spirit Himself is the blessing

promised to Abraham, the promised inheritance (see Eph. 1:13–14).

So the baptism of the nations is *into* the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19).

GOD IS AS GOOD AS HIS WORD

This is sure, because God Himself has promised it (Gen. 22:15–18; Heb. 6:13–20).

study five

The Triune God in Israel

(BY IAN PENNICOOK)

In I Corinthians 10:1–4, there is the following assertion:

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ.

Within the context of Judaism, the supply of food and drink was regarded as highly significant, not merely because it met physical needs but for what it represented. Philo, a contemporary of Paul, wrote:

Moreover, the soul falls in with a scorpion, that is to say, with dispersion in the wilderness; and the thirst, which is that of the passions, seizes on it until God sends forth upon it the stream of his own accurate wisdom, and causes the changed soul to drink of unchangeable health; for the abrupt rock is the wisdom of God, which being both sublime and the first of things he quarried out of his own powers, and of it he gives drink to the souls that love God; and they, when they have drunk, are also filled with the most universal manna; for manna is called ‘something’ which is the most primary genus of every thing. But the most universal of all things is God; and in the second place the word of God.¹

Elsewhere² he describes the supply of manna, understood as food for the soul, as ‘the reasons which God rains down out of his sublime and pure nature, which he calls heaven’.

It is significant that Philo took the source of the drink and the food as representing the wisdom and word of God. Looking at Proverbs 8:22ff., we see wisdom saying, ‘The LORD created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago’. This may be an example of latent ‘hypostatization’³, the principle of attributing a personal independent identity and existence to something which by nature does not possess them. In the Psalms there are occasional statements which seem to indicate

¹ ‘Allegorical Interpretation,’ II, 86, in *The Works of Philo*, translated by C. D. Yonge, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody Mass., 1993, p. 47.

² *Allegorical Interpretation*, III, 162. For a brief discussion of the degree to which Philo was representative of all Hellenistic Judaism, see R. M. Wilson, ‘Philo Judaeus’, in G. W. Bromily (Ed.), *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 3, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1986, pp. 847.

³ Whether either wisdom or the word were ever really regarded as having an independent status within the Scriptures is doubtful. For ‘wisdom’ see H. P. Muller, *chakham*, in G. J. Botterweck, H Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. IV, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1980, p. 380ff.; for ‘word’, see W. H. Schmidt, *dabhar*, in R.D.O.T., vol. III, 1978, p. 120–125.

that the word of God may somehow be seen acting with some sort of independence. For example, Psalm 107:20, ‘he sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from destruction’ (cf. Wisd. 16:12, ‘For neither herb nor poultice cured them, but it was your word, O LORD, that heals all people’), and Psalm 147:15, ‘He sends out his command to the earth; his word runs swiftly’. Certainly, later writers were more explicit. Wisdom 18:14–16, for example:

For while gentle silence enveloped all things, and night in its swift course was now half gone, your all-powerful word leaped from heaven, from the royal throne, into the midst of the land that was doomed, a stern warrior carrying the sharp sword of your authentic command, and stood and filled all things with death, and touched heaven while standing on the earth.

There is also the conspicuous activity of ‘the Spirit of the LORD’ (etc.) within the Old Testament, briefly mentioned at creation but prominent in the lives of the judges and the prophets. H. Wheeler Robinson has pointed out⁴ that:

Where the Spirit of God is, there is God, and where God is present, God is active, and these are the token of His activity. The primitive and fundamental idea of ‘spirit’ (*ruach*) in the Old Testament is that of active power or energy (ἐνέργεια not δόναμις), power superhuman, mysterious, elusive, of which the *ruach* or wind of the desert was not so much the symbol as the most familiar example.

He points out that there is only one instance where *ruach* is explicitly used in a personal way in the Old Testament, namely I Kings 22:21, where ‘a lying *ruach* [is] employed by Yahweh to “inspire” the optimistic prophets’.⁵ The language of the psalmist in Psalm 51:11, ‘Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me’ is a notable use of parallelism. His Spirit is his presence. To grieve his Holy Spirit (Isa. 63:10) is to offend his holiness. When Psalm 139:7–10 acknowledges the omnipresence of God it plainly equates the Spirit of God with his personal presence, expressed by him leading the psalmist by his (that is, God’s) hand:

Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.

It cannot be proved that the Old Testament Scriptures ever understood anything to stand beside the one God of Israel. The same point made in Study 3 must be repeated. Paul’s comment that the rock was Christ does not come from reading back a trinitarian understanding into puzzling Old Testament statements. The Old Testament statements were not puzzling in that way! The issue is that in Christ, in the incarnation of the Word, God has done something new. Apart from a personal confrontation with the Word himself, the Triune nature of the ‘one LORD’ (Deut. 6:4) would never even be considered. Doubtless this lies behind John’s observation that Isaiah had seen the glory of Christ (John 12:39–41). He knew that it was Christ’s glory that Isaiah had

⁴ *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit*, Nisbet, London, 1928, pp. 8–12.

⁵ *Christian Experience*, p. 9.

seen because he, too, had seen the glory (John 1:14). As Moltmann put it, ‘it is only christology that makes the knowledge and concept of the triune God necessary’.⁶

Paul can therefore say that ‘the rock was Christ’ because now he knows that the eternal God who created and who was present and active in Israel, is none other than Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In other words, it does not really matter, in one sense, whether or not we can discern the *precise* trinitarian presence in the Old Testament, in the life of Israel. The point is that knowing Christ we know that this is the way it was nonetheless.

THE TRIUNE GOD IN ISRAEL

In Luke 24:44–48, Jesus spoke to the disciples after his resurrection:

he said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

Earlier, Jesus had ‘interpreted to [the two on the road to Emmaus] the things about himself in all the Scriptures’ (Luke 24:27). The Old Testament spoke of him; but in what way?

If we were to see the second and third persons of the Godhead hidden under, say, the forms of the word and the (s)Spirit of the Old Testament, then we may be tempted to explicate the presence of the Triune God in these terms. We would, then, for example, see the word which came to the prophets as being Christ, pre-incarnate, as speaking to the prophets. The difficulty with that approach is that the Letter to the Hebrews does not use it; on the contrary it commences by, to a certain extent, *contrasting* the prophetic word of the old covenant with the definitive revelation in the Son (1:1–2).

Others have attempted to see Christ in the various ‘theophanies’ of the Old Testament. Genesis 18, for example, commences with three men standing near Abraham (v. 2); without explanation, it is ‘the LORD’ who responds when Sarah laughs at what the three men had said to Abraham (v. 13). Verse 17 possibly has ‘the LORD’ as one of the three (cf. v. 16). However, verse 22 has ‘the LORD’ as distinct from ‘the men’. In Genesis 19:1, again without any explanation, the three men are simply described as ‘the two angels’. E. F. Kevan strongly suggests, (i) that one of the three was ‘the angel of the LORD’, and (ii) that ‘the fact that the story opens with the categorical affirmation that it was ‘the LORD’ who appeared lends strong support to the suggestion that the ‘angel’ may be identified with the second person of the Trinity’.⁷ But in the Old Testament, ‘the LORD’ is the name of God himself. It is the name explicitly belonging to the one God of Israel (cf. Exod. 3:13–15; Deut. 6:4). Against Kevan’s suggestion, others regard the theophanies not as the presence of God or of Christ, but as ‘signs’ of the presence. G. A. F. Knight⁸ says:

These three men had ‘appeared’ to Abraham as a ‘sign’ of the appearance or presence of the

⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, SCM, London, 1981, p. 97.

⁷ ‘Genesis’, in F. Davidson (Ed.), *The New Bible Commentary*, Inter-Varsity Fellowship, London, 1954, p. 91.

⁸ ‘Theophany’, *I.S.B.E.* vol. 4, p. 829.

Lord. Even though they conveyed His word, they were certainly not the Lord himself . . . In a word, the O.T. regards its own theophanies in terms of the idea of 'sacrament'.

Later, Jacob, having wrestled with 'a man', concluded 'I have seen God face to face' (Gen. 32:30). In the light of God's firm declaration to Moses, 'you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live' (Exod. 33:20), Knight's suggestion seems the more likely.

In what way, then, was Christ present in the Scriptures? Surely, Luke's description of the discussions with the two (Luke 24:13–32) and with the eleven (plus) (24:33–49), provides the answer. Luke describes the conversation that followed the sad bewilderment of the two:

Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory? Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

Both here and in verses 44ff. (quoted above) the issue is that of anticipation. Had the two been people of faith then they would have believed the prophets and so have been overjoyed when Christ suffered. Faith in the God of Israel would have meant that they had seen the event of the cross as fulfilment both of the explicit promises and of the overall thrust of the scriptures.⁹

From another angle, this is the argument of the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews. His basic point is that the validity of 'Judaism' is finished because Judaism itself pointed to its own conclusion; a perfect rest over against the merely anticipatory rest of Israel (Heb. 3:7—4:11), a perfect priesthood superseding the Levitical priesthood (5:5—7:28) and a perfect covenant superseding the old, sin-weakened covenant (8:1—10:18). This conclusion of Judaism is, of course, found in Christ the 'great high priest'. To prove this point, there are copious references to 'Moses, the prophets and the psalms'. The point is that when the New Testament writers look for Christ in the Old Testament they do so by looking at the way in which he fulfils the Old.

Without doubt, the Spirit of the Lord is present in Israel and the word of the Lord comes to Israel. But it is only in the light of the incarnation (and Pentecost) that the writer of Hebrews could say:

Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,
'Today, if you hear his voice . . .'
(Heb. 3:7).

Likewise, it is only because he has seen the Word become flesh that John could reflect that it was Christ who was the creative and sustaining word (John 1:1–4). Only in this way can we see that 'the word of the Lord' which came to the prophets was the Word functioning prior to his taking flesh, although the New Testament with one possible exception, never makes that identification. That exception is Revelation 19:10, where John is told that 'the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy'. Against that, Jesus in John 6:45 told his hearers that it is the Father who teaches, and Peter wrote that Old Testament prophecy came via the Holy Spirit (II Pet. 1:21).

⁹ As has been suggested elsewhere, I believe a good case can be made out for the argument that the Synoptic Gospels are written, in part, as the closing documents of the Old Testament. See Appendix following.

THE COMMAND OF THE TRIUNE GOD

You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD (Lev. 19:18).

The phrase, 'I am the LORD [your God]' occurs a number of times in the Old Testament, in particular in direct association with commands to Israel. Doubtless, the fact of Israel's redemption is the primary factor in understanding the commands, hence:

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me (Exod. 20:2-3).

The people of Israel are to obey because they have been redeemed. But can we go further and ask concerning the nature of the commands? On one occasion (Lev. 11:44) we are told:

For I am the LORD your God; sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy.

The routines for sanctification are to be followed because of the character of God. Redeemed Israel is to be holy because God is holy. They are thus to reflect the nature of God in their own lives and relationships. The rationale is that the commandments are the vehicle by which the character of God is known.

We are possibly familiar with Motyer's statement, 'Man is the living personal image of God; the law is the written preceptual law of God'.¹⁰ From this perspective, can we not ask whether the 'tri-unity' of God is to be seen in the law. The various commandments, especially those dealing with the interpersonal relationships in Israel, can be seen, with the hindsight provided by the incarnation, to be an indication of the interpersonal relationships which exist within the Godhead. 'I am the LORD your God'! (Further implications of this will be dealt with in later studies.)

See page 23 for an Appendix to this study.

¹⁰ J. A. Motyer, 'Law, Biblical Concept of', in W. A. Elwell (Ed.), *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1984, p. 624.

Appendix to

Study Five

The Words & the Word of Jesus

(BY IAN PENNICOOK)

Church Growth and other similar techniques are often countered by such phrases as ‘I just want to preach the word’, etc. Use of this phrase often means that the speaker wants to remain loyal to the Scriptures and to so preach and teach that only the Scriptures are prominent. Parallel to this is an increased stress in some areas of Evangelicalism on ‘Expository Preaching’ and without doubt this has resulted in much fine teaching and in congregations which are often very knowledgeable.

The aim of this paper is by no means to call any of this into question; on the contrary, while churches in other countries are crying out for theological training, even of the most basic sort, we can count ourselves deeply blessed that we have such vast resources at our fingertips. While the gift of teaching is one of the gifts distributed by the Spirit to the church, clearly some parts of the church find the exercise of that gift far more supported than do many other parts.

There is, however, one matter that needs to be raised. Is the focus on ‘*Sola Scriptura*’, as expressed in contemporary Evangelicalism, what is meant by the biblical term ‘the word of God’? Further, is there a development within the Scriptures themselves which forces us to treat different parts of the Scriptures in different ways? Put another way, is there the twofold danger of elevating the scriptures in such a way that they actually take the place of God (‘bibliolatry’) and of so using them that the pragmatism of the techniques we may oppose is in effect replaced by the pragmatism of ‘using’ the Scriptures to accomplish the desired ends?

However, there are a number of issues which ought to be addressed. The first involves our hermeneutic. That is, what is the principle which we employ in interpreting the Scriptures? While probably few would expound, say, Leviticus as being a paradigm for Christian worship or Esther for inter-cultural relationships, could it be possible that much of our exegesis of Scripture is dictated by what may actually be an artificial distinction between the ‘Old Testament’ and the ‘New Testament’? This is not to dispute that these two ‘testaments’ or ‘covenants’ exist, or that they are significant, but it does demand that we enquire what the focal point of the distinction really is.

Jeremiah had located the new covenant quite precisely when he said:

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors

when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more (Jer. 31:31–34).

The focal point, of course, is not the close of a number of documents but the moment when guilt is removed and ‘the house of Israel and the house of Judah’ are radically transformed in their knowledge of God. The Letter to the Hebrews takes up this prophetic promise and says that the new covenant has been established and made operative at the cross. Thus, after introducing the topic of Jesus being the ‘guarantee’ (7:22) and the ‘mediator’ (8:6) of a ‘better covenant’, the writer having quoted Jeremiah, proceeds to contrast the provision of the old, obsolete covenant (8:13) with the effectiveness of the new:

For if the blood of goats and bulls, with the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer, sanctifies those who have been defiled so that their flesh is purified, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God! For this reason he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, because a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant (Heb. 9:13–15).

The point of the argument is that the death of Christ, in particular his ‘blood’, has established the new covenant. Hence the words used by Jesus at the last supper, ‘This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood’ (Luke 22:20¹). The implication must surely be that Jesus was conscious that this meal was far more than a Passover, or even a fulfilment of the Passover. It was of course that, as the Gospel of John strongly suggests, but it was an anticipation of the establishment of the new covenant.

If this is so, then we may argue that not only is the ‘theological’ concept of ‘the new covenant’ to be understood in the light of the cross, but also that the hermeneutical point where the Scriptures are to be divided is also the cross.

(Without going into details here, it may be accepted that the cross of Christ is not an event to be contrasted with the resurrection, the ascension and the outpouring of the Spirit, but is indissolubly one with them. To speak of the cross is, then, to speak of the whole complex of these four constituent events.)

If this is so, then possibly we will be forced to re-evaluate our approach to some of the New Testament documents, in particular those which recount the teaching of Jesus before the cross. For example, in the Synoptic Gospels, the use of the words ‘faith’ and ‘believe’ (the noun and verb of the same root word) are never used by Jesus or the evangelists in any way similar to their use by Paul in his letters.

Within the Synoptics, ‘faith’ is never associated with ‘justification’.² Rather it is used to refer to an immediate willingness to trust that Jesus is in control of a particular situation, as for example, when the disciples were terrified while Jesus was asleep in

¹ Also I Cor. 11:25 ‘In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”’ Compare with Mark 14:24, Matt. 26:28, where ‘new’ is probably to be omitted, although some MSS also omit Luke 22:19b–20.

² Even in Mark 2:1–12 (and parallels), faith while indirectly linked with forgiveness is directed towards healing.

the boat on Galilee (Mark 4:40), or when people either looked to him or refused to look to him for healing (Mark 5:34), or again when faith in God's providence or willingness to answer prayer was required (Matt. 6:30; 17:20).

In the Fourth Gospel, where there are repeated references to people 'believing' in Jesus (the noun is never used), a majority of the occasions reveal that the 'believing' is defective. So, in John 2:23–25, it is recorded:

When he was in Jerusalem during the Passover festival, many believed in his name because they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part would not entrust (lit. *believe*) himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to testify about anyone; for he himself knew what was in every one.

And similarly in John 8:30–34(ff.):

As he was saying these things, many believed in him. Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, 'If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.' They answered him, 'We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, "You will be made free"?' Jesus answered them, 'Very truly I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin . . .'

The point here is that on a number of occasions John intends us to see that 'believing' in Jesus must not be taken to mean that people have received him as he is, so much as that they have been dazzled by the signs they have seen or by the things he has said. In fact, and here John is distinct from the Synoptics, John has from the beginning specified that true believing is of a totally different order (see John 1:12, 'But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God'). From this perspective, we see that in the Fourth Gospel we are meant to suspend judgment when the word 'believe' is used and to wait until the story is complete before determining whether the believing is genuine.³

Now, although the emphasis in John is closer to the Pauline position, neither John nor the Synoptics treats the issue with anything like the clarity of the post-Pentecost situation. Does this not imply, therefore, that simply to treat the whole of the 'New Testament' as teaching the same doctrine at every point is to mistake the difference that the cross makes not only to theology, but to the very form and content of the documents themselves.

Another illustration, perhaps, appears in 'the parable of the sower' (Matt. 13:3ff.; Mark 4:3ff.; Luke 8:5ff.). In this story, 'the sower sows the word' (Mark 4:14). Doubtless the immediate response would be to see this as a pattern for present day preaching.⁴ But is it? First of all, the varied responses described by Jesus seem nothing like as clear cut as those in the book of Acts. One writer has pointed out that in the Acts the preaching always brings either a revival or a riot.⁵ References to the powerful effect of the word (Word) outside the Synoptics are far removed from the more 'explanatory' form of the parable.

But then, I suggest that the parable was never intended to be a pattern for Christian proclamation; on the contrary, it was always (and only?) intended to explain the varied responses to Jesus teaching within Israel during his earthly ministry.

³ Reference to Acts 11:17, 'If then God gave them the same gift [the Holy Spirit] that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?' Here Peter identifies 'saving' faith with the reception of the Spirit, and it must be assumed that prior to that event there was no true faith.

⁴ cf. the delightful letters of John Newton, 'Grace in the Blade', 'Grace in the Ear' and 'The Full Corn in the Ear' in *Letters of John Newton*, Banner of Truth Trust, London, 1960, pp. 13–28.

⁵ Robert H. Mounce, *The Essential Nature of New Testament Preaching*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1960, p. 58.

Furthermore, the word which he brought was not the word found so powerfully later. His was the word of ‘the kingdom’; later preaching was *substantially* different.

It is quickly evident that although the ‘kingdom’ is not absent from later preaching, the phrase ‘the kingdom of God’ appears only eleven times from Acts to Revelation compared to fifty-one times in the Gospels. In place of ‘the kingdom of God’ the substance is ‘the preaching of Christ’. Observing the shift, and noting that the preaching of Christ is expressed in such forms as ‘Christ crucified’, ‘Christ raised’, ‘Jesus Christ as Lord’ etc., Mounce asks ‘What accounts for this shift?’. In reply he quotes P. T. Forsyth, ‘The Gospel of Christ replaced the Gospel of the Kingdom, because by his death he became the kingdom’.⁶ This is the substance of Origen’s comment in his commentary on Matthew 18:23⁷, ‘For He is the King of the heavens, and as He is absolute Wisdom and absolute Righteousness and absolute Truth, is He not also absolute Kingdom?’ Origen’s word for ‘absolute Kingdom’ is αὐτοβασίλεια (*autobasilea*) ‘the kingdom himself’.

P. T. Forsyth takes up this theme in *The Preaching of Jesus and the Gospel of Christ*⁸, when he asks the question, ‘Is Christ a preacher for us in the same sense as he was for His own generation?’ An extended quotation is appropriate:

The issue raised by [this question] is one of great moment for our whole construction of Christ’s life work. In what He said to the Jews round Him, had He any direct or conscious reference to a remote posterity? Was he speaking to a real public, or, over their heads, to far later ages?

There can be little doubt about the answer, surely. There is no sign that He was talking over the heads of the people round Him in order to reach us through the reporters. He never made His disciples His reporters in the sense of taking His words down or memorizing them for a distant future. He never examined them to see if they had got them correctly. It is now freely recognised that He regarded the mission of His life as confined to Israel—at least till near its close. The Gentiles did not enter into His direct concern while He was dealing with His nation by parable or miracle. Allusions to their reception of these but point His rebukes to Israel for its rejection of Himself; and miracles to Gentiles did not flow, but were wrung from Him. Insofar as He was preacher and teacher, insofar as His historic personality went, He was a prophet to Israel alone. He met His people with a *bona fide* call, and not one perfunctory and useless, whose failure was forgone. It was a call, at first hopeful, to the greatest decision and the deepest repentance to which that people had ever been summoned by all the prophetic line. It was not impossible that he should have been heard, though . . . it soon grew improbable. He took His mission to Israel with entire seriousness. With all His heart He taught not only the lost sheep, but at first the national soul. But without effect He sought. He failed with His public. And it was His failure as prophet that extorted His resources as Redeemer. The Kingdom, His great theme, could only be established in His Cross.⁹

Forsyth’s point, so obvious in this way, is that Christ did not preach to the early church (or to the later church for that matter) so much as he created it. Forsyth continues:

Christ began in the form of a prophet; but He prophesied as one much more than a prophet, as only Messiah could. And He behaved as Messiah as only the Son of God could. His Messiahship rested on his Sonship, not his Sonship on his Messiahship. He was not the Son of God as Messiah. He was Messiah as being Son of God. He preached not in an interpretive way but in a creative way. He did not simply proclaim and expound the Kingdom of God, like a

⁶ Mounce, 1960, p. 52, quoting P. T. Forsyth, *The Work of Christ*, p. 122 (no publication details).

⁷ 14:7, translated by J. Patrick, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1986, vol. X, p. 498.

⁸ NCPI, Blackwood, 1987.

⁹ p. 5.

prophet; nor did He simply put Himself at the head of his Kingdom like a Messiah. He did what none of the Messiahs could do, what they failed because they could not do—he created the men that composed the Kingdom.¹⁰

Forsyth's point in all this is to make clear that the preaching of Jesus is, and must be, distinct from the Gospel of Christ. We have seen that mere 'biblical' preaching which ignores the centrality of the cross is not 'biblical' preaching at all. It may delight in the stories and revere the Bible, but it misses the fundamental thing that Jesus was about. If the words (and deeds) of Jesus are not seen as they appear in the context of his ministry, then we will fail to represent him as he is.

So, if we ought to regard the Gospels, and in particular the Synoptics, as coming within a different context than the documents directed specifically to post-Pentecost churches¹¹, how should we understand the life and ministry of the church today? Well doubtless we should begin by locating the contemporary church in the same context as the post-Pentecost church of Acts, the Letters and the Revelation. In other words, we stand today in the context of 'the Gospel of Christ', the context of the established and operative new covenant.

Within this context it is interesting to note that the details of Jesus' 'earthly'¹² ministry (that is, pre-cross ministry) are apparently ignored. The collection of the sayings (words) of Jesus, which many regard as fundamental to the formation of the Synoptics¹³ is surprisingly not in evidence in the preaching and writing of the non-Gospel documents. Yet the language used in them indicates powerfully that the word of God/word of Christ was of fundamental importance (cf. I Thess. 2:13).

In setting the agenda for the corporate life of the churches, Paul urged the Colossians to 'let the word (*λόγος*, *logos*) of Christ dwell in [them] richly' (3:16). This is evidently the same as 'continuously being filled with the Spirit' (Eph. 5:18). Thus the coming of the Spirit is identified with the presence of Christ who speaks to the church. This is the same principle as that presented in the seven 'letters' to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3. There it is the risen, triumphant Christ who is speaking (Rev. 1:17 —2:1, etc.), yet each communication concludes with the instruction, 'Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches' (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, etc.).

Within the Acts, again the powerful element is never the apostles; it is always the word of God.¹⁴ Of course, that requires some qualification, for the word is never apart from the apostles, either coming directly from their lips or via their apostolic message, but it is nonetheless the word which accomplishes all. Thus Luke wrote:

The word of God continued to spread; the number of the disciples increased greatly in

¹⁰ p. 10. He argues that Jesus could not have preached the Gospel—He was making it!

¹¹ This does not mean that we must treat them as pre-Pentecost documents, as indeed they are not. But it suggests that the conscious frame of reference for the Synoptic evangelists is old covenant Israel. I think a good case can be made for regarding John as recounting the details of Jesus' ministry with a post-Pentecost frame of reference. Some light may possibly be shed, then, on the question of whether the Fourth Gospel was actually addressed to believers or whether it was a deliberately evangelistic work.

¹² It is regarded as obvious that it is only Christ's physical presence which is lacking; he still exercises a ministry on earth.

¹³ This is the so-called 'Q', the collection of 230 or so sayings of Jesus which are found in both Matthew and Luke but not in Mark; see G. N. Stanton, 'Q' in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (J. B. Green & S. McKnight, eds.), IVP, Downers Grove, 1992, pp. 644–650.

¹⁴ cf. Luther's statement: 'I simply taught, preached, wrote God's Word: I did nothing . . . The Word did it all,' quoted in James Atkinson, 'Luther', in *New Dictionary of Theology* (Sinclair B. Ferguson, et al, eds.), IVP, Downers Grove, 1988, p. 404.

Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith (Acts 6:7).
But the word of God continued to advance and gain adherents (Acts 12:24).

So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed (Acts 19:20).

This latter statement reveals a point of some significance, namely, that the message of the apostles was essentially, and often specifically, ‘Jesus is Lord’, and that on some occasions the phrase ‘the word of the Lord’ is a reference to the word of Jesus. We see this in Acts 19:20 (above), especially where the context is that ‘the name of the Lord Jesus was praised’ (v. 17), as also in Acts 11:16, where Peter is quoting the promise of Jesus in Acts 1:5, and in Acts 16:32 where Paul speaks the word of the Lord to all in the house of the gaoler in Philippi and the immediate context is that Paul has said ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved . . .’ (v. 31). When compared with the other uses of ‘the word’ in Acts and elsewhere we see, (i) that ‘The Lord’ is a phrase which is interchangeable for both God (the Father) and Jesus, and (ii) that the word of the Lord/God etc. indicates that it is not so much the recounting of information *about* Christ which is primary but that the dynamic of the early church was (and is) ‘all that Jesus *continues* to do and to teach’ (Acts 1:1).¹⁵

The Spirit is poured out by Jesus (Acts 2:32–33) and, as we have seen, the coming of the Spirit and the action of the Spirit is the coming and action of Jesus the Lord (cf. John 14, *passim*). So the triumph of the word is nothing less than the triumph of Christ. In Romans 10, Paul is specific that it is Christ who is actually the speaker who effects faith in the hearers:

But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? . . . So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ (vv. 14, 17).

It is evident that unless Christ speaks¹⁶, ‘they’ will never believe. Likewise the angel told John in Revelation 19:10 that ‘the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy’.

In the post-Pentecost proclamation of the word, the focus is on the direct communication of the crucified, risen, ascended and reigning Christ. In this, Christ speaks as King and men and women, in hearing the word, hear him. He is the Word of God (John 1).

What is it, then, to ‘preach the word’ (II Tim. 4:2)? It is far more than to repeat the words of Jesus; it is to be as one who speaks ‘the oracles of God’ (I Pet. 4:11). It is to be one who lives personally in the context of the triumph of Christ, and who is attuned to his proclamation so as to be determined to know nothing else than Jesus Christ and him crucified. For to preach the word of the cross (I Cor. 1:18) is to preach the triumph of Christ as one who is intimately caught up into it. The context of the ‘new covenant’ is not only a theological description, but a powerful reality as ‘they all know me from the least of them to the greatest, for I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more’.

¹⁵ NRSV of Acts 1:1 has ‘I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning’, but this tends to obscure the Greek use of ἤρξατο (*erxato*) ‘began’.

¹⁶ This is the ῥήμα (*rhema*) of Christ, the utterance of Christ, although ῥήμα and λόγος (*logos*) are virtually synonymous.

study six

The Divine Relationships Displayed In The Law Of God

(by Rod James)

THE LAW OF GOD

It is important for us to begin by reminding ourselves that the Law of God is not external to the Triune God. Rather it is the expression and outworking of the life of God, i.e. the ‘law’ which obtains in the life of the Godhead.

This Law is the law of love, and it finds its authorship in the Father who is the *fons divinitatis*, the fountain of the Godhead.

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him (I John 4:7–9).

The Son, then, is the Son of his love (Col. 1:13), and the Spirit sheds abroad the love of God (the Father) (Rom. 5:5). This ‘law’ of love within the Godhead is seen in passages such as:

The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands (John 3:35).

... but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me (John 14:31).

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law (Gal. 5:22–23).

MAN—THE IMAGE OF GOD

As far as we can tell no ‘hard copy’ of the Law of God was given to humanity at Creation. However, it is important to see that the Law of God, as present in the life of the Godhead, was imparted in full to the first human beings and was inherent and primal within their being as God’s image creatures.

Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them (Rom. 2:14–15).

THE LAW SPELLED OUT AT SINAI

The Ten Words at Sinai delineate the Law of God which was inherent in the heart of Man at the beginning, but which had been suppressed in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18). The Law has now come as 'hard copy' because of sin. Having been written on their hearts at the beginning it is now written on tablets of stone.

It is given to God's chosen people as their covenant Law expressing the relationship which God's people are to share within the Divine Community. But Israel as the priestly nation among all the nations also had the revelation of God in his Law so that they might be '*a light to the nations*' (Isa. 49:6).

See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the LORD my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him? And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today? (Deut. 4:5–8).

LOVE OF NEIGHBOUR—THE FULFILMENT OF THE LAW

In the New Testament Jesus, Paul and James all say that the Law is really shown in our love of our neighbour:

And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments (Matt. 22:39, 40).

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not covet,' and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law' (Rom. 13:8–10).

If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing right (James 2:8).

It is possible to describe your neighbour as 'one who is near to you but different from you'. Our neighbour is 'other' to us, both in the sense of being a separate and discrete person, and also in the sense of being a different kind of person, i.e. in gender, age, race, circumstances, etc.

It seems to me that this definition of the love of neighbour is a creational reflection of the divine economy of love. In one sense the Three Persons of the Trinity are 'neighbours' who are very near but distinctly different to each other. It is their other-person centredness that makes them one, and this other-person centredness is the inherent character of our humanity made in their image. Masculism, feminism, homosexuality, racism and class hatred are all efforts at loving those who are near to us but the same as us (Matt. 5:43–48). In the end this is the love of self.

One aspect of the neighbour relationship is that of authority. The superordination of the Father and the subordination of the Son and the Spirit make the perfect love within the Godhead even more awesome as there is no abuse of, or offence at, authority. We would expect, then, that there would be no human love relationship without an authority factor.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT, THE FULL EXTENT OF THE LAW OF GOD

Jesus takes the authority of One who knows the Law of the Godhead, and he corrects the misapprehensions that existed in Israel at that time:

You have heard it said . . . but I say unto you (Matt. 5:21–48).

In contrast to the rationalised and limiting interpretations of the divine Law with which Israel had comforted itself Jesus reveals the true extent of the Law of love.

The Divine Law of Love

- reverses accepted human ideas about blessedness. True blessedness is found in humility, mercy and suffering for the righteousness of God. Blessedness is not grabbed. It is given.
- is not limited to external deeds but extends inward to include the hidden thoughts and desires of the heart.
- does not require justice by retaliation but unexpected mercy.
- extends beyond neighbours and friends to include even our enemies. Indeed attitude to one's enemies is the standard by which this love is known and recognised.
- is not showy self righteousness but discrete piety.
- has as its goal not material treasure and well being but heavenly treasure, God's kingdom of righteousness and *his* provision of all things needful.
- is to be lived by asking the Father for the gifts of his love at every point of need.
- is not lip service and passive assent, rather it is hearing and doing the will of God.

As the true law of love is expounded in the Sermon on the Mount, it clearly contrasts with human ideas of 'doing the right thing'. Jesus' warning needs to be heeded today:

For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:20).

THE CROSS—'THE LAW OF CHRIST'

It is in Christ's death on the Cross that we see the divine Law of love lived out in the fullness of its implication and consequences. This life of love has appeared and John has seen it, heard it and touched it (I John 1:1, 2). He can tell us, then, what love really is:

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins (I John 4:10).

Paul says that ‘the law of Christ’ is to bear one another’s burdens:

Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2).

It is in the Cross that we see Jesus revealing, expressing and fulfilling this principle of law:

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed (I Pet. 2:24).

So Jesus lives out the Divine Law of love by bearing in himself the moral burden of guilt and failure which we human beings incur by denying the law of love which is within us. This Law will require of anyone who wishes to obey that they deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Jesus in his burden bearing ministry (Mark 8:34).

‘IN CHRIST’—THE RIGHTEOUS REQUIREMENTS OF THE LAW FULLY MET IN US

As morally compelling as the royal Law of love is, the plain fact is that sinful humanity cannot live it. However, in Christ a new and powerful possibility exists:

For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, *in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us*, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit (Rom. 8:3–4).

In Ephesians 2:14–22 we see the magnificent labour of love that Christ does ‘in his flesh’:

His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility (v. 15, 16).

By putting to death all distinctions of self-righteousness and unrighteousness, and by giving all people ‘*access to the Father by one Spirit*’, i.e. the Spirit of God’s forgiving grace, Christ has opened the way for the new humanity which he created in himself to be united in love.

If we will have it, then, God has united us with all other people three times over:

- (a) He has made us all in his image, i.e. love.
- (b) He has bound us all over to disobedience, i.e. refusal to love.
- (c) He has had mercy on us all, i.e. the power to love (Rom. 11:32).

Within his own body the Law of love, now the Law of Christ can be fulfilled, and this is the Apostolic testimony:

For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink (I Cor. 12:13).

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28).

Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but *Christ is all, and in all* (Col. 3:9–11).

Only in Jesus Christ the Son of God can the indwelling ‘soft copy’ of God’s holy Law of love be fulfilled and humanity reach its goal. And this it will do because ‘*the love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit*’. This outpouring of love results in a great stewardship of God’s grace being given to believers for the peoples of the earth (Eph. 3:1–6). When all things have been brought together under the one head, Christ, then the Law of God will have fully and finally become the Law of Man.

CHRIST—THE FULFILMENT OF THE LAW

Jesus, then, has not come to abolish the Law but to fulfil it. Nothing of the Divine Law of love can ever be eroded because it is the nature of the Triune God,

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:17–20).

Study Seven

Law & Gospel—Their Interrelationship

(BY GEOFFREY BINGHAM)

INTRODUCTION: THE LAW OF THE TRIUNE GOD

To this point in our studies we have seen that God placed Primal Law in the hearts of the first couple, and that, although always opposed and seen in a hostile light, it is still there. Knowledge of it is always being repelled, and yet because Man is made in the image of God he—as created—is ‘the personal living image of God’, and the Primal Law of God which was ‘the preceptual image of God’ because of the Sinai event, can now be called ‘the written, preceptual image of God’. At Sinai God spoke out of His personal being to His personal, covenantal people so that the original ‘soft copy’ of the Law was repeated, first as ‘soft copy’ and then as ‘hard copy’ on the tablets of stone.

VARIANT VIEWS OF LAW AND GOSPEL

Theologians have struggled over many centuries in regard to the matter of Law and Gospel. Some see the Gospel as virtually cancelling the Law as *a* way of life or *the* way of life. Others see the Gospel as grace prevailing against the condemnation of the Law, and releasing believing people from the Law. Yet others see the Gospel as a new Law, first redeeming and then leading into a new way of life which is *not* a Law to be followed as necessary to maintain justification, but as the new way Christ has shown. In amongst these views we see, historically, the tendency towards *antinomianism*—rejection of Law as a principle of life—and *nomism* which sees Law-keeping as essential to salvation. There are those who rightfully believe the Law condemned, exacerbated sin, increased the transgression, brought wrath, yet finally acted as a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ, after which they are now free to obey the Law of God and so to please God (Rom. 8:1–8), without using the Law in any way for self-justification. For them the Law is not abrogated but constitutes the true way of life. Others—those with nomist tendencies—see the Law as the way of sanctification, sanctification beyond justification. To obey the Law is to enter in and live within sanctification. All these views are still to be found. Now, however, we need to have a clear view of the relationship between Law and Gospel, for what we believe concerning them affects our lives very much. In some cases it amounts to the

difference between life and death.¹ Otto Weber helps us in this respect. He says:

No one has ascribed to the law or the work of the law a direct salvific effect—this is essentially true even of the Roman Church. The ‘merit’ of which the Roman Church speaks does not arise out of the law itself but rather in the area of the sacraments, which is of course normatively established. Again, no one wants to reconceive of the Gospel and grace of God as law. But if then the law does not have a direct salvific effect, the question must be what kind of indirect function does it then have? And if the Gospel is not law and cannot become law, we must ask how the law is then related to it. The most obvious approach would be to say that the law has a salvific effect only when it is subordinated to the Gospel. It would then be strictly distinguished from the Gospel but not separated from it’.²

He adds (pp. 364–365):

It is worthy of note that Calvin, who follows Luther in the decisive issues, knows nothing of the non-compatibility of the law and the Gospel, in that, he is chiefly an exegete . . . Certainly Reformed Orthodoxy, to the extent that it dealt with a polarity between the ‘covenant of works’ and the ‘covenant of grace’, did greater justice to the ‘redemptive historical’ aspect of Paul than did Luther, but at the same time it clearly asserted Luther’s well-grounded intention’ . . . It must also be noted that the problem of ‘law and Gospel’ was not one of the controversial doctrines within Protestantism in the 16th century and during the age of Orthodoxy, and it was not strongly emphasised in the age of restorational theology. Only a few voices were raised in the 19th century, some of them simply establishing that there were differences on the question between Lutherans and Reformed, so interpreting Luther from this perspective. But it was the ‘Luther Renaissance’, which is primarily a development of the 20th century which again illuminated the historical problem and the material importance of the issue and in part imbued it with a brusque confessional accent. The role of ‘dialectical theology’ in the new consideration of the old problem was also decisive . . . The predominant factor in contemporary discussion, if we are precise, is not the difference between Luther and Calvin, but the contrast between Karl

¹ The contention concerning law and gospel goes on unabated. The Puritans certainly developed a strong theology concerning the relationship of the two. For this reason all Puritans make helpful reading, remembering that some of them were accused of Antinomianism by their brethren, others of nomism, whilst others saw justification and sanctification both being of grace, and so the law of God became the way of life without prejudice to justification and without making law-observance the essence of sanctification. Especially helpful are the writings of Ernest Kevan. Some of his works are *The Grace of Law* (Carey Kingsgate Press, 1964), *Keep His Commandments* (Tyndale Press, 1964) and *Moral Law* (reprinted 1991, distributed by P & R Publishing) and is really a presentation of the Puritan writer Anthony Burgess. Kevan says, ‘The present treatment of the subject is based on the insights and the material of this clear thinker which are found in his remarkable work entitled, *Vindiciae Legis*; or *A Vindication of the Moral Law*. In this way it is hoped that to some extent the great contribution made by Anthony Burgess may be salvaged and given its place in the thought of today’. An excellent treatment of the views of Luther and Calvin is given in Otto Weber’s second volume of his *Foundations of Dogmatics* (Eerdmans, 1983) especially on pages 362–380. Gustaf Wingren in *Creation and Law* (Oliver and Boyd, Eng. trans., 1961) insists on law preceding grace, a stated rebuttal of Karl Barth’s taking the second article of the Apostles’ Creed prior to the first. See also his *Theology in Conflict* (Oliver and Boyd, 1958). Hendrikus Berkhof’s *Christian Faith* (Eerdmans 1979) also has an extended treatment. The second volume of *Christian Dogmatics* (Fortress Press, 1984) has a fresh Lutheran approach. John R. Loesch’s *Wrestling With Luther* traces Luther’s development of the idea of law from his warnings against Moses to his seeing the law as the way of life of the believer. Geoffrey Bromily’s *Historical Theology* (Eerdmans, 1978) has the advantage of tracing both the Lutheran and Calvinist Reformed approaches. Walter Harrison’s *The Ten Commandments and Human Rights* (Fortress Press, 1980) has a brilliant summary concerning law and gospel in the section of pages 157–172. *The Faith of the Christian Church* by Gustaf Aulen (SCM, Eng. trans., 1954) does not raise the dialectic of law and gospel but expounds *agape* as the major theological concept in regard to law. Perhaps one of the best expositions of the Reformed view is in John Hesselink’s *Calvin’s Concept of the Law* (Pickwick Publications, 1992). Greg Bahnsen’s *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* (Craig Press, 1977) plus his articles—and others—in *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction* (vols. II and V) put the case for biblical law for government, especially in western civilisation. Karl Barth’s famous treatment of law and gospel is diffused in that it is scattered throughout his first two volumes of his *Church Dogmatics* (T. & T. Clark, the Index [Index vol. is No. 10]) indicating that his first two volumes contain his major comments on the subject. Volume II, 2, page 509ff. is his primary discussion of law and gospel. Karl Barth acknowledged his debt to Heinrich Hepp’s *Reformed Dogmatics* (Allen and Unwin, Eng. trans., 1950) and this is a useful volume.

² *Foundations of Dogmatics*—Vol. II by Otto Weber (Eerdmans, 1983) pp. 362–63.

Barth and significant directions of modern Lutheranism.

Weber sees Karl Barth as being in agreement with the distinction of Law and Gospel, ‘The Law is not the Gospel, as the Gospel is not the Law. A refusal to make a distinction here would mean opposing the whole of Scripture’.³ At the same time we have to note the differences Barth and Luther held in their order of Law and Gospel, Luther placing the Law before the Gospel, and Barth the Law after the Gospel, and in fact saw the Law as ‘the form of the Gospel’, but we do not need to discuss this here.

THE NATURE OF LAW IN REGARD TO THE GOSPEL

We need to see the condemnatory and lethal nature of the Law, particularly as set out by Paul in Romans, Galatians and I Timothy in the following quotations:

‘If a law had been given which could make alive, then righteousness would indeed be by the law’ (Gal. 3:21). ‘If justification were through the law, then Christ died to no purpose’ (Gal. 2:21). ‘The righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law’ (Rom. 3:21). ‘. . . the law of sin and death’ (Rom. 8:2). ‘Apart from the law sin lies dead . . . but when the law came, sin revived and I died; the very commandment which promised life proved to be death to me’ (Rom. 7:8–10). ‘For sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, deceived me and by it slew me’ (Rom. 7:11). ‘Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions’ (Gal. 3:19). ‘For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse’ (Gal. 3:10). ‘For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression’ (Rom. 4:15). ‘I through the law died to the law’ (Gal. 2:19).

These references give a view of Law which is fearsome, especially if we understand them existentially; that is, we have lived in them and felt their impact. In some ways ‘through the law is the knowledge of sin’ brings them together, for Paul in Romans 3:20 is not even saying that we recognise what is sin by seeing what is commanded and what is forbidden, but we have an existential knowledge of sin in which we have begun—in some measure—to understand the wrath of God, the curse of God, the lethal nature of Law, the use sin makes of the Law to slay us, the reality of the Law as the principle of sin and death, the futility of attempting to do the works of the Law and the deadly pain of present death we experience, doubtless through the conscience which has become a tyrant because it is an agent of deadly Law, all the time inducing and gathering guilt. One of the passages most quoted of Luther reveals the terror of Man under the pain of his conscience, and the ruthless driving of his spirit by the Law:

There is nothing smaller and more ignored than a dry leaf lying on the ground crawled on by worms and unable to protect itself from the dust . . . But when the *moment* comes, horse, rider, lance, armor, king, princes, all the strength of the army and all power is frightened by its rustling. Are we not fine people? We have no fear of God’s wrath and stand proudly, but yet are terrified and flee before the wrath of an impotent dry leaf. And such rustling of the leaf makes the world too small and becomes our wrathful God, whom we otherwise poo-poo and defy in heaven and on earth.

If this lethal action of the Law were all that is left to fallen Man, then the situation would be indeed horrific. However, Paul said ‘The righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the

³ ‘Gospel and Law’ in *God, Grace, and Gospel* (Oliver and Boyd, Eng. trans., 1959). Also CD, II, 2, pp. 509ff.

righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe' (Rom. 3:21–22), for he claims in Romans 10:4 'For Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified'. Here 'the end' does not mean 'the termination' but 'the fulfilment' and the outcome of this fulfilling is that faith is the way of justification, and not 'works of the law'. In Galatians 3:21–25 Paul reveals that the lethal action of the Law, and our inability to keep it, has put us into custody and we are shut up to faith until Christ comes, and then the Law is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. That is, its works do not save but the Law directs us to salvation. Throughout all this rather grim revelation of the Law Paul has maintained that the Law is essentially 'good', 'holy', 'just' and 'spiritual', that it was intended for life, but through the flesh—Man's hostility to God and His Law—it was 'weak'. The Law was never essentially weak for its lethal powers were great, as when obeyed from the heart it was truly the way of life, but it was 'weak to effect justification' and this only because Man had become flesh.

All of this, then, leads us to the firm conclusion that the Law can never be seen as the Gospel. Undoubtedly also justification through faith cannot obtain on its own; for with justification also comes sanctification, and it is here the confusion of Law and Gospel has resulted in some deficient theological thinking. Even so, Law and Gospel *vis a vis* justification by faith must be seen as different entities. The word of the Law and the word of the Gospel are *both* from God. It is the One God Who speaks them both but we must distinguish the two words and not coalesce them.

The Uses of the Law

J. N. D. Anderson in his article 'Law and Gospel'⁴ states, 'As the Reformers reflected on the Law they came to see three uses for it. First, the Law serves as a guide to society in promoting civic righteousness. Secondly, the Law convicts sinners and drives them to Christ. Thirdly, the Law directs Christians in holy living'.

Luther, for all his view of Law as lethal said of it:

Therefore, there is one law which runs through all ages, is known to all men, is written in the hearts of all people, and leaves no one from beginning to end with an excuse, although for the Jews ceremonies were added and the other nations had their laws, which were not binding upon the whole world, but only this one, which the Holy Spirit dictates unceasingly in the hearts of all.⁵

Calvin has a similar view:

It is a fact that the law of God which we call the moral law is nothing else than a testimony of natural law and of that conscience which God has engraved upon the hearts of men. Consequently, the entire scheme of this equity of which we are now speaking has been prescribed in it. Hence this equity alone must be the goal and rule and limit of all laws.

Whatever laws shall be framed to that rule, directed to that goal, bound by that limit, there is no reason why we should disapprove of them, howsoever they may differ from Jewish law, or among themselves.⁶

He states his general view of the Law, 'I understand by the word "law" not only

⁴ *The New Dictionary of Theology* (IVP, 1988), p. 379.

⁵ Gerharde Forde (*Christian Dogmatics*, vol. II,) p 271. Forde quotes from Luther's *Lectures on Galatians* (1519) in his exegesis of Galatians 5:19.

⁶ Institutes IV. 20, 16.

the Ten Commandments, which set forth a godly and righteous rule of living, but the form of religion handed down by God through Moses'.⁷ The following quotations act as a commentary on this:

A man's life cannot be ordered unless it is framed according to the law of God. In as much as in the law, the difference between good and evil is set forth, it is given for the regulation of the life of men, so that it may be justly called the rule of living well and righteousness. The course of human life is uncharted and unsound as soon as it departs from his law.⁸ . . . Only those who obey God do what is agreeable to the law of God.⁹

Calvin sees the fathers—the patriarchs and those of Israel—as looking to the grace of God, as those in the new covenant now look to that grace:

We today have the hope of the same inheritance as the fathers under the old covenant; for they were partakers of the same adoption . . . In spite of their external slavery their consciences were free . . . They so bore the yoke of the law on their shoulders that they worshipped God with a free spirit. More particularly they had been taught about the free pardon of sins, and their consciences were delivered from the tyranny of sin and death. Hence we must conclude that they held the same doctrine as ourselves, were joined in the true unity of faith placed reliance with us on the one Mediator, called on God as their Father, and were governed by the same Spirit. All this leads to the conclusion that the difference between us and the Ancient Fathers lies not in substance but in accidents.¹⁰

Hesselink in his chapter 'Calvin's Dynamic Understanding of the Law' repeats his continuing thesis that Calvin acknowledged the first two uses of the Law but insists that for Calvin, 'Properly understood and applied, law and gospel complement each other . . . There is a "sacred tie" (*sacrum nexum*) between the law and Gospel, he [Calvin] insists although "many erroneously try to break it. It has no small effect on consolidating our faith in the gospel," he adds, "if we hear that it is no other than the complement (*complementum*) of the law, both in mutual agreement claiming God as their common author." ' Hesselink goes on to reiterate what he has carefully worked out in previous chapters, that the purpose of the Law is 'to instruct us in godly living and guide us in the ways of righteousness' and that the whole of the Scriptures—for Calvin—can serve that purpose. He then makes the foundational point that ultimately it is not to precepts and commandments that the doer of the Law is loyal but to God Himself. Hesselink then works out his chapter on the following three points:

- (1) Christ as the exemplar and image of the Law.
- (2) The guidance and leading of the Holy Spirit in understanding and living out the Law.
- (3) The goal of the Law: the restoration of the image of God.

⁷ *Institutes of Religion*, II.7.1.

⁸ Quoted by Doyle in his unpublished thesis *The Context of Moral Decision Making in the Writings of John Calvin*, 1981, p. 177.

⁹ Quoted by Doyle, p.185.

¹⁰ Commentary on Galatians 4:1 in *Calvin's Commentaries* (Eerdmans, 1974).

Law and Gospel in the Puritan View

We have dealt slightly with this in our first footnote but there is a large body of teaching on the subject and this partly available in the Puritan books mentioned. It leaned almost wholly to Calvin's view but was also dogged by the endeavour not to be caught back again in nomism, and sometimes its writers show distinct signs of antinomianism. There is probably no body of biblical doctrine which is more practical for true preaching and for pastoral ministry than the written resources of Puritanism. It certainly outclasses the thin psycho-religious therapies now current.

**CONCLUSION: THE IMMUTABLE LAW OF LOVE IS THE LAW
OF THE TRIUNE COMMUNITY**

In this Study we have simply introduced the problems which face seeing Law and Gospel as separate entities, yet bound together within the economy of God for Man's salvation. Study 10 will show the Three Persons working in justification and sanctification, but we conclude that the Law does its work in convicting of sin and bringing to Christ, whilst the Gospel does the work of saving those who are brought. Grace is only seen in the light of the Law's lethal work and Christ's rescuing us from it. Rejection of the Law as a way of life—the way of life—once a person is redeemed, is fraught with many perils. It is fair to say that if theologians had kept in mind the Law of God as being that of the Community of the Three Persons (subjective genitive) and realised that the Law is Trinitarian then the twin dangers of nomism and antinomianism would have been better avoided. The Law is Love and is intended to be the way of life in the community of mankind in this world as it is the way of the Divine Triune Community on what we call 'the Divine plane'.

Study eight

Calvin's Mystery of the Trinity

(by Dean Carter)

The Eternal Being reveals Himself in His triune existence even more richly and vitally than in His attributes. It is in this holy trinity that each attribute of His Being comes into its own, so to speak, gets its fullest content, and takes on its profoundest meaning. It is only when we contemplate this trinity that we know who and what God is.¹

May the Lord grant that we study the heavenly mysteries of his wisdom, making true progress in religion to his glory and our upbuilding (Calvin's introductory prayer for his Academy lectures).

INTRODUCTION

This study surveys John Calvin's view of the 'mystery of [which is] the Trinity', the reasons for his views and their articulation, historical setting and pastoral implications. We will concentrate on Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, complemented by his other writings (commentaries and sermons, etc.), and seek to isolate his particular concerns or contributions, theological methodology and pastoral praxis. Brief comments on contemporary Trinitarian theology conclude our investigation.

§1. JOHN CALVIN: LIFE AND MINISTRY

- 1:1 John Calvin (1509-64): his early life and studies (1509–1534)
- 1:2 Reformer in Geneva: the first episode (1535–1538)
- 1:3 Strasbourg: marriage and ministry (1538–1541)
- 1:4 Return to Geneva: the great reformer (1541–1564)

¹ Herman Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith* (Baker: 1977), p. 143.

§2. CALVIN AND THE INSTITUTES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

2:1 The Editions of the *Institutes*

1536—small booklet of six chapters, written in Latin, as summary of the Faith.
1539—seventeen chapters, in Latin, now in theological format to govern all other editions.

1541—first French edition with twenty one chapters: unlike Latin, in vernacular, so became popular.

1543 and 1545—republished the Latin version, with minimal additions.

1550–1557—three further Latin editions, four in French, contain twenty one chapters.

1559—Latin, and 1560—French, with a new plan of four books and eighty chapters.

2:2 Factors shaping the structure and development of the *Institutes*

Dependence on the Scriptures and Church Fathers (esp. Augustine's dogmatics and John Chrysostom's exegetics); the influence of Martin Bucer; the pastoral links; his friends and enemies; the needs of Geneva; his personal experience.

§3. THE CONTEXT FOR CALVIN'S VIEW OF THE TRINITY

3:1 The Historical context for the Reformation

The Orthodox view of the Trinity; the Latin heresy.

3:2 Trinitarian dispute in the Reformation

Michael Servetus and other anti-trinitarians; theological method and terminology.

§4. THE MYSTERY OF THE TRINITY

4:1 The Orthodox Doctrine of the Trinity: Positive Statement

i. The Significance of the Persons (1–6)

ii. The Deity of the Son (7–13)

iii. The Deity of the Spirit (14–15)

iv. The Trinity as Oneness and Threeness (16–20)

4:2 Refutation of Some Recent Heresies: Polemic Defence

i. The necessity of faith (21)

ii. Servetus' rejection of the Trinity (22)

—his view of 'theogony', with the Son and Spirit indiscriminately mingled with created beings, with substantial deity in other created beings.

iii. The full Godhead of the Son as with the Father, etc. (23–26)

iv. Adversaries (esp. Valentinus Gentilis) improperly appeal to Irenaeus (27)

v. Further appeal to Tertullian (28)

vi. Unanimous affirmation by Church doctors to orthodox view of Trinity (29)

§5. CALVIN'S CONTRIBUTION TO TRINITARIAN THOUGHT

The doctrine of God necessitates Trinity: 'The doctrine of the Trinity is not a special area of the Christian doctrine of God, but its overall epistemological framework and content . . . It is concerned with participation in the Father by the Son in the Spirit.'²

5:1 Particular Trinitarian contributions

The word 'Person' or 'modes of being'; simplicity of thought; elimination of subordinationism.

5:2 Further implications of Calvin's thought

Union with Christ and vicarious humanity.

§6. CALVIN, CALVINISTS AND THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

6:1 The twin dangers of Unitarianism and Tritheism

6:2 The eclipse of Trinitarian theology

6:3 The recovery of Trinitarian theology—Karl Barth

CONCLUSION

Our brief survey has covered the context and contribution of John Calvin, and brought us to the contemporary scene. While we may have not answered all the questions raised, nor followed all the intriguing paths along the way, we may at least echo the words and sentiment of Jonathan Edwards, 'I would not be understood to pretend to give a full explication of the Trinity; for I think it still remains an incomprehensible mystery, the greatest and the most glorious of all mysteries.'³

² Dietrich Ritschl, *The Logic of Theology* (SCM: 1986), p. 144.

³ Miscellany 308 'Trinity': in *The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards from His Private Notebooks*, ed. H. G. Townsend (Greenwood Press: 1977), p. 260.

study nine

Christ: God's Priest & Oblation

(BY DEANE MEATHERINGHAM)

INTRODUCTION

The stark truth of the incarnation of the Logos of God marks the commencement of Jesus' priestly service. Christ's priestly intercession culminates in the solitary greatness of the sacrificial offering of himself for the sanctification of his human family. But our sanctification is only realised through Christ's indissoluble life and eternal priesthood. It is only as the High Priestly ministry of Christ is reproduced in his people that they have anything acceptable to offer God.

As the title of this study indicates, the major emphasis will be given to the climax of Christ's priesthood in the offering of his body as an oblation for our sins. The whole matter of the incarnation has this in mind for it is the goal of Christ's coming. However, there is also a danger, and it is that we consider Christ's oblation of himself in isolation from the incarnation. Should we approach the atoning death of Christ in such a dualist fashion then the essential aspects of penalty, merit and satisfaction will be removed from the trinitarian harmony of relations into the realm of abstract credits to be balanced by a judicial calculus.

What I trust we shall see is that the death of Christ for our sins is not setting Christ against God to save us from a wrathful deity, but the incarnate humanity of God saving us in Jesus Christ.

Reconciliation is not just a truth God has made known to us; it is what God has accomplished for us, the Truth of God who freely gives Himself to us in the Revelation (T. F. Torrance, *Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy*, ST5, SJT 39, 1986, pp. 461–482).

THE TRINITARIAN PRIESTHOOD

Priesthood not only emanates from the Tri-unity of God but is essential if humanity is to realise salvation *in* God.

Preceding studies may have already expounded the purpose of the Triune Society to bring humankind into the harmony of relationships within the Godhead. But at the risk of repeating what has been said I will inject the penetrating quote of Jonathan Edwards:

The end of the creation of God was to provide a spouse for his Son Jesus Christ, that might enjoy him and on whom he might pour forth his love . . . [H]eaven and earth were created that

the Son of God might be complete in a spouse (Quoted by Robert W. Jenson, *America's Theologian*, Oxford, 1988, p. 42).

God's decreeing is his life, it is a *Triune* event. The living God's rule is but the sovereignty of his life. In the primary sense God's eternal decree is not about which persons shall or shall not be saved. It is primarily about the destiny of Christ—with his spouse the Church.

Seeing there is one of the persons of the Trinity united to the human nature, God [note well, the *Trinity*] chooses in all his transactions with mankind, to transact by him. He did so of old . . . when, although Christ was not actually incarnate, yet he was so in design . . . , in the covenant of redemption. . . . And since the incarnation God governs both the church and the world by Christ (*ibid.*, p. 105).

In accord with such Scriptures as Ephesians 1:3–23; 3:14, 19; 5:21–32 and John 17, we see that all of God's decrees are comprehended in that eternal relation that there was between the Father and Son. It is here that Jesus Christ is chosen as the universal mediator within the Triune life and within humanity. Thus the Son's role in the Triune life makes him the only fit person of all persons to carry out the mediatorial role of High Priest.

THE PRIESTHOOD IS MEDIATORIAL

The pattern of the heavenly realities depicted in the Tabernacle worship shows that the High Priest is to represent God to the people and to represent the people to God. The mediator of the New Covenant (Heb. 9:15) is the Son of God who is the very radiance of God's glory (Heb. 1:1–3), and made like his brethren in every respect (Heb. 2:17). For this reason we quote Paul, 'There is one God and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all (I Tim. 2:5f.).

As High Priest Jesus has been appointed by God to represent man (Heb. 8:6; 4:14—5:5f.; 3:1ff.). The mediator cannot come from man, least of all defiled man, so that we do not begin with human need and views of salvation, or as spiritual bridge builders to God. The High Priest comes from God to fully represent him and to fulfil his purpose.

In the incarnate Son, God is fully with us. Jesus was not a mere instrument in God's hands, rather it is only God who saves and he saves precisely as this man. This is God giving himself to us, living for us and expending himself on our behalf. As truly as humankind lives, breathes, sleeps, feels and suffers—God has entered unbroken union with us (Heb. 2:11–18; John 1:14).

We need to singularly press what has already come through so far that in Jesus Christ not only was God completely and fully with us, but he was also fully and completely man.

As God's elect, the incarnate Son is the Head of the race. God determined to exalt this man that he should be the one person into whom all human sin should be suffered out of existence and that he should be the one person with whom we would have communion with God. The elect one is the True Man, the second Adam, the Head of his Body, the Redeemer of the race, our only mediator and great High Priest.

THE INTERCESSORY WORK OF THE PRIESTHOOD

The priesthood of the Mosaic Covenant was appointed by God to instruct and to lead the people in the prescribed worship, and to represent the people to God in sacrificial intercession (Heb. 5:1ff.).

Intercessory work is prayer on behalf of others but it is also intercessory or interventionary action. Jesus' whole ministry was really one of intercession where he intervenes to liberate people from demonic powers, sickness, and the blindness and bondage of sin and death. He prays and acts on their behalf.

The man Jesus, as our head, worships the Father, prays on our behalf, obeys his human and messianic vocation and suffers on our behalf (John 17).

Isaiah 53:10–12 gives us the picture of the Servant's intercession which results in his righteousness being imputed to those whose sins he bore. He intercedes by his identification with sinners and in bearing their sins he pours out his soul to death.

Christ's intercession in Hebrews 2:10–18 is summed up in verses 17 and 18 where in somatic union with us and in fidelity to God he bears God's judgment upon sin in making propitiation. In so doing Christ removes sin, freeing us from lifelong bondage to Satan through the fear of judgment.

A PRIEST MUST HAVE SOMETHING TO OFFER

The intercessory work of Christ is his priestly work of interposing for salvation (as we saw in Heb. 2:10–18). In Hebrews 5:5–10 we see that Christ's prayers and supplications have to do with him being able to obey God's purpose, making Christ 'the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him'. Christ's prayers to be saved for the work he was to accomplish on the cross can be linked with those in John 17 and those prayers in the garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:36–46; Luke 22:39–46). From this we are constrained to see that the priestly work of intercession is *sacrificial*.

It is said that it is necessary for a priest to have something to offer (Heb. 8:3). Sacrifice and offerings constitute the worship of the offerer. What does Christ offer? Hebrews 10:5–10 answers this question with 'Sacrifices and offerings thou hast not desired, but a body hast thou prepared for me . . . lo, I have come to do thy will, O God'. What he means is that the sacrifices offered under the Mosaic Covenant could not by their very nature effectively remove human sin, or in actuality be propitious. By his obedience Christ would offer his body as a sacrifice.

What is contrasted in this passage is not sacrifice and obedience, but sacrifice of dumb creatures, of bulls and goats and suchlike, with sacrifice into which obedience enters, the sacrifice of a rational and spiritual being, which is not passive in death, but in dying makes the will of God its own (James Denney, *The Death of Christ*, Tyndale, 1961, p. 131).

Christ's obedience as High Priest was for us and on our behalf. Here is the man who was tempted in all points such as we are, but in not yielding presses back sin. As bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh and as the appointed head of the race, Christ's obedience involves a reiteration of mankind's relationship with God. Christ the new man fulfils the destiny of the original man. This is a radical reversal of the essential direction of man's life before God. It is in this very reversal that man's salvation will be achieved.

... 'as by the disobedience of the one man who was originally moulded from virgin soil, the many were made sinners, and forfeited life; so was it necessary that, by the obedience of one man, who was originally born from a virgin, many should be justified and receive salvation' (Trevor A. Hart, 'Irenaeus, Recapitulation, and Physical Redemption', *Christ in Our Place*, Paternoster Pr., 1989, p. 172).

Christ's obedience is credited as imputed to us. In him we have Christ's merits, for in him restitution for sin is made. But Christ's obedience as such cannot undo the sin done, or waive the penalty which the law demands. Hebrews 10:5–10 says that it is by Christ's obedience that he offers his body for our sanctification. The redemptive value of Christ's obedience is his obedience to the will of God which requires the priest to become the oblation and take upon himself in death the responsibility for the sins of the world. 'For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified' (Heb. 10:14). Hebrews 7:27 says, Christ 'offered up himself'. Hebrews 9:14 says, 'how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God (cf. Heb. 1:3; 7:27; 9:26–28).

Jesus Christ, Immanuel, our true Brother, assumed our humanity and also assumed our disease, our sin and our death. 'What is not assumed cannot be redeemed', says St Athanasius. In his oblation of himself Christ voluntarily enters into the pain, the grief and the horror of sin's penalty and judgment (II Cor. 5:21; Rom. 8:1–4; I Pet. 2:24; John 1:29; Mark 10:45). 'God lovingly treated him as human sin, and with his consent judged human sin in him and on him' (P. T. Forsyth, *The Work of Christ*, Fontana, 1965, p. 130.). It is in this crucified man that God meets us—the God who will not turn away from sin until he has damned it, the God who provides sacrifice for sin.

... we see in Christ a place of divine warfare whereby our moral agony is lifted up and engaged as God's atoning activity in Christ. Though his death on the cross is the culminating conflict, his entire life is atoning, for throughout he has grappled, from womb to tomb, with ancient and primordial conscious and unconscious conflicts endemic to our humanity. In Christ, God gathers up humanity's groaning and travail within his own flesh and makes it part of God's history, which culminates in the resurrection triumph out of failure (Roger Newell, 'Participation and Atonement', *Christ In Our Place*, Paternoster Pr., 1989, p. 98).

As God comes near in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, so too the love of God incarnate in the divine logos becomes passionate to his own. Through Christ's atoning love for us and our faith in him, we are united to a human heart, and God is united to us as divine heart that is passionately human.

When we understand this from Jesus' institution of the Supper we find Christ giving himself to us, that he is the establisher of the new covenant through the forgiveness of sins and that this comes to us through his sacrificial blood. Our mediator is a stand-in for sinners, so that by Jesus' life and death a community of him and us is achieved, so that as the Father is one with the Son so too the Father is one with us.

CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD IS PERMANENT

Through the effectual atoning death of Christ he is High Priest forever through the power of his indissoluble life (Heb. 7:16f.). Having purged sin, tasted death for every

man, and having defeated humankind's chronic enemies, Christ was raised from the dead (Rom. 4:25). On our behalf Christ is the forerunner who has entered the presence of God—the sanctuary—the Holy of Holies (Heb. 6:20). Therefore he continues as our High Priest because in the person of this one man we all enter the sanctuary together.

Hebrews 9:12 says that in virtue of his own blood sacrificially shed we enter the Holy of Holies. So on our behalf Christ appears before the face of God *προσωπω του θεου* (Heb. 9:24). Because we have an everlasting High Priest who continues as head over God's house we have confidence to 'lift up our hearts' and enter the presence of God (Heb. 10:19ff.).

Through Christ's inviolable and continuing priestly ministry we are saved for all time because Christ continues to intervene on our behalf (Heb. 7:24f.; 9:28; Rom. 8:34; Phil. 2:12f.; I John 2:2).

Pastorally what this means is that we are justified in the person of Jesus Christ (e.g. Rom. 4:25). We are not justified by a doctrine or a system of moral calculus. In the indestructible life of Christ's permanent priesthood we are partakers of a new humanity, a new righteousness, a new freedom as sons of God who together with Christ have the same Father (II Cor. 5:21; Eph. 2:18; Col. 3:3). The same could be said of our sanctification—especially as it is expounded in the Letter to the Hebrews. Holiness is not the beginning of a new effort to satisfy a blighted conscience—rather it is the end of it. This is because it is the beginning of a perpetual living in Christ from a centre and source which does not originate in us (Heb. 7:24f.; I Cor. 1:2–9; I Pet. 1:2).

It seems that Luther's problem was not primarily with justification, it was with Christology. The Western church and its theological tradition shared what it believed with antecedent culture religion. This was mainly the antecedent interpretation of Socrates and his inheritors. The heart of the problem was the antecedent dogma that God must be 'impossible'. Incarnation outraged culture religion. The church then sought to graft Christology onto a God of metaphysics rather than a God revealed in Jesus Christ—a God who suffered and redeemed us in the humanity of Christ.

Robert Jenson asks how the church could get along with this duality and answers his own question with the suggestion:

the West could get along without positing a 'real' mutual interpretation of God and the human Christ because the Western church's own mighty reality substituted for the missing Christological reality. The church's own reality served to assert the identity of God in himself and God in Jesus, and so to maintain the interpretive action of the latter on the former (Robert Jenson, *America's Theologian*, Oxford, 1988, p. 113).

Luther came through this impasse of wondering what he could do to make God gracious when in a sermon on John 14:13–14 he said:

'I will hear and know of no other God but I will look and listen solely to this Christ. And if I hear him I already know on what terms I am with God and I need no longer torment myself as I did before with my anxiety about atonement and reconciliation with God . . . Now I can gain a real and genuine trust in God' (George Yule, 'Luther's Attack on the Latin Heresy', *Christ In Our Place*, Paternoster Pr., 1989, p. 235).

Where Christ is not known as our great High Priest who has saved us, and continues to save as Immanuel, we will always substitute other priests to mediate in his place.

CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD IS REPRODUCED IN HIS PEOPLE

The people of God are a community of priests who in Jesus Christ have something to offer God (I Pet. 2:4ff.: cf. Rev. 1:4–6). But the community of priests only have this by their being bonded to Christ and to his continuing priestly service.

Passages such as those we have seen under the last point speak of Christ's continuing priestly service in matters like intercession and so on. But a certain deistic Christology has so permeated much of our culture that we automatically seem to regard Christ's present reign as a dissolving of his humanity and assumption of a remote deity. Contrary to such a view Hebrews 4:14 says '*we have* a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God'. Because Christ has his priesthood permanently he lives to make intercession for his people through his priestly intercession (Heb. 7:24f.). Christ is the λειτουργος in the heavenly worship and we have entered this holy of holies in Christ (Heb. 8:1–2). Our worship is participation in the heavenly assembly (Heb. 12:22–24). Our altar is Christ and it is through Christ, in his name and in communion with him that we offer worship which is acceptable to God (Heb. 13:10, 15f.; 12:28; Rom. 12:1ff.; I Pet. 2:4ff.; I Cor. 10:16ff.).

Intercession is an integral and essential part of worship. Through the gift of the Spirit we are joined to Christ's ministry of intercession. His prayer is made ours. This is our work, our vocation and our active participation in the destination which God has for history (Rom. 8:26f., 34; I Cor. 12:12f.; Acts 2:42; 3:2–6; 4:23–34; Rev. 5:8; 8:4; etc.).

The communion of priests is the holy temple of God, the house of prayer for all nations, which goes with Christ in his priestly service to the world. This is one of the implications of the mysterious priesthood of Melchizedek who came from the nations and not from legal descent (Heb. 5:5–10; 7:15–19; Mark 11:17; Luke 2:49; Eph. 2:11–22; 3:7–13). Our confession of Christ is our worship, our witness to the world—it is the proclamation of the Gospel.

The point I am expounding is a whole subject of its own and needs to be opened up way beyond what is given here. However, I want to draw a very important implication from this which is linked with the Latin heresy as mentioned above.

Because of a pusillanimous Christology, trinitarian theology seems to have suffered in the West. We have seen that the church substituted its humanity for the missing incarnational reality. The problem appears in the doctrine of the Eucharist which, with the explanation of transubstantiation, stated how Christ's body could be in heaven as well as with us. To assure us the body and blood of Christ were on the altar the priest became the authorised miracle-worker which substitutes for the continuing priesthood of Christ.

The Reformers rejected the ancient identity of the loaf and cup with the body and blood of Christ. Lutherans developed a radical doctrine of the 'communion attributes' to explain what an omnipresent body would be.

But the consequences are continuing in their seriousness. The Protestant churches took away the mediating institution of the sacerdotal church but retained a Christology of unresolved conflicts, i.e. the tension between God as despot and friend, the God of pure reason and the God of forgiving presence, and even worse, the Jesus who saves us from God.

According to Robert Jenson, New England Puritanism sought to resolve this by putting the Commonwealth in the place of the papal church. But still the church had to mediate the two halves of a dualist God.

Jonathan Edwards saw through the split of God its deistic notions and a sentimental Jesus. His battle with Arminianism was really a battle with deism and piety.

What goes for much evangelism, church growth, professionalising of the ministry, church government by management principles etc., is really still substituting the church's humanity for that of Christ's. It is as though God has given the church what it needs and we have to work it out. It assumes there is a mechanism (technique) between God and the creation which the church must tap into, etc. But there is no mechanism between God and his creation or between Christ and his church.

The priestly ministry of Christ says that the human Jesus is all of God with us, completely. That there is no remote dark God behind Jesus. That we cannot and have no need to get round the back of Jesus to discover another God. We know that the Logos of God has entered passibility to be affected by time and events.

Edwards said God's love:

as it is in the divine nature, is not a passion, it is not such love as we feel, but by the Incarnation (God the Logos) is really (!) become passionate to his own, so that he loves them with such a sort of love as we have to him, or to those we most dearly love. . . . So that now when we delight ourselves at the thought of God's loving us, we need not have that allay of our pleasure . . . that though he loved us yet we could not conceive of that love (Jenson, p. 118).

God is not God without Christ. We are not sons or priests of God without Christ. There is nothing between us and the living God, either in the intimacy of communion, or in the fellowship of suffering and service.

Study ten

The Trinity in Justification & Sanctification

(BY GEOFFREY BINGHAM)

God the Triune God, will have His creation free from guilt, pollution and shame. The Three Persons who are in themselves ‘other person centred’ will look out to their creation and liberate the elect from the powers of darkness, the turmoil and the oppression, reconciling all things by the blood of the Cross. God loves the world and His Son is the propitiation for our sins, and for the sins of the whole world. A new heaven and a new earth will guarantee the new holy people, the Kingdom of Priests unto their God. To this end the Father, Son and Spirit do their work of justification and sanctification.

INTRODUCTION TO US UNDERTAKING THIS STUDY

The themes of justification and sanctification should only be undertaken by seriously minded and morally responsible people who, recognising their own sinfulness, nevertheless are driven—in humility—to hear the word of God and take it to their hearts. Like Isaiah in the temple (Isa. 6) God’s holiness must strike at their hearts, and they be lost until they hear the words of grace, ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven’. The nature of God requires justification and sanctification that the human spirit may live. Two quotes indicate the serious nature of God’s Law and Man’s predicament.

P. T. Forsyth¹ says:

But God’s holy law is His own holy nature, the principle of His own holy heart, the life action and norm of His moral personality, with no source or authority outside Himself, and no claim He could even wish to ignore or evade. To tamper with it would have been to deny His own soul. He loves it as He must love Himself, or His other self, His very Son, His Holy One, dearer to him than all men and all prodigals. A wound to that holy law of His Being is a stab to His own heart at least as keen and urgent as any love or pity He might feel to men.

Luther says:

The Law of the letter is everything written with letters . . . This is the Law of works, the old Law, the Law of Moses, the Law of the Flesh, the Law of sin, the Law of wrath, the Law of death. It condemns everything, makes all men guilty, increases lusts, and slays; and the more

¹ *The Preaching of Jesus and the Gospel of Christ* (NCPI, Blackwood, 1987), p. 109.

spiritual it is, the more it does so . . .²

Only in the light of such Divine holiness will we begin to understand the dreadful infraction of Law that is ours, the horrible violation of the holiness of God Himself. Romans 3:19–20 lights up in view of this dawning terror of comprehension and understanding which could only come through the Holy Spirit (John 16:7–11):

Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world be held accountable to God. For no human being will be justified in his sight by works of the law, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

This being convicted of sin, this uprush of terror at being guilty before God, is what brings existential knowledge of sin. All efforts at self-justification pale and are as unsubstantial as a wraith. The horror that exhausts the human spirit of all its self-proving arguments now brings man to the edge of his inner abyss, the abyss of death. This is what holy Law does to unholy humanity. As Paul shows, there is no law given that can make alive (Gal. 3:21). Only the gospel can do that! That is why we now turn to the gospel. Yet, apart from Law, we will not turn to the gospel! This is what Paul means by Galatians 3:21–26 when he brings together both the covenantal promises of God—the gospel—and the lethal judgement of the Law:

Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not; for if a law had been given which could make alive, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. But the Scripture consigned all things to sin, that what was promised to faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. Now before faith came, we were confined under the law, kept under restraint until faith should be revealed. So that the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian; for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.

In the ultimate, then, the Law has shut us up to the gospel! It has shut us up to faith, the faith which justifies, because it springs from the sight of the grace of God which provides propitiation for the dreadful infraction of Law. It is the propitiation for sins which Christ effects in his death which is the basis of our new life.

This short introduction takes us to the heart of the matter: God, the Triune God, will justify us that by justification He may fulfil our sanctification which was His ultimate intention for us as Paul, Peter, and John would have us understand; ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him’ (Eph. 1:3–4); ‘chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood’ (I Pet. 1:2); ‘Beloved, we are God’s children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every one who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure’ (I John 3:2–3).

This brief orientation to our subject brings us to the core of the justifying and sanctifying work of the Three Persons.

² LCC 27, 35.

THE TRINITARIAN WORK OF JUSTIFICATION

The Father the Initiating (Fontal) Justifier

Romans 3:21–26 states the gamut of the justifying work of the Cross:

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction; since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation [propitiation] by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus.

'God put forward' (*protheto ho theos*)³ shows the Father to be the initiator, designer, appointer, presenter (cf. *JB, NEB, NIV*) of the justifying act of the Cross. The point is that the Father 'sets forth' in unmistakable, effective completeness that which satisfies Himself and justifies the sinner. Thus I John 4:10, 'In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation [propitiation]⁴ for our sins'. In his teaching of justification Paul employs Abraham (Gen. 15:6), Moses (Lev. 17:11), David (Ps. 32:1f.) and Habakkuk (2:4) to show God had long ago initiated justification by faith.

The Son the Effective Justifier of the Sinful and the Ungodly

We saw that apart from Christ there is no justification, 'But the Scripture consigned all things to sin, that what was promised to faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. Now before faith came, we were confined under the law, kept under restraint until faith should be revealed. So that the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith'. This is because we are 'justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation [propitiation] by his blood, to be received by faith'. In this pericope is contained the whole principle of propitiation which is Christ receiving the wrath of God⁵ and His holy Law (cf. Gal. 3:10–14), and it first takes the form of Christ's being 'delivered to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification' by the Father, whilst it is the Son 'who loved me and gave himself [up] for me', so that John can say (I John 2:2) 'He is the propitiation ['atoning sacrifice', *NRSV*] for our sins'.

We do not have the scope here for showing the nature of that propitiation or the love of both Father and Son that is a mystery to be lived in.

The Holy Spirit and Justification

I Corinthians 6:9–11 speaks of the 'twin' work of Christ and the Spirit, in both sanctification and justification, 'Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit

³ C. K. Barret (Romans) has 'publicly set forth'.

⁴ For the theological difference between expiation and propitiation see Leon Morris's *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*.

⁵ The use of the verb *paradidomi* in Romans is used for God's giving sinful Man up to sin in 1:24, 26, 28, which, in fact constitutes His wrath, and for giving His Son up to death (4:25; 8:32) which averts that wrath from sinful Man to Christ (cf. II Cor. 5:19–21; Gal. 3:13–14).

the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor sexual perverts, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God'. It is clear from Romans 8:1–4 that the Spirit frees (justifies) from 'the law of sin and death' by that which is 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus'. The work of the Cross is linked with Jesus' offering up of himself as pure 'through [the] eternal Spirit', and it was the Father (Rom. 8:11) who caused this Spirit to raise him from the dead (Rom. 1:4). Because 'we walk by faith and not by sight' we therefore 'through the Spirit, by faith, wait for the hope of justification' (Gal. 5:5). The eschatological Spirit encourages us in this hope. Again, it is the love of God by the Spirit who causes us not to be ashamed to hope in sharing the glory of God since we are 'justified by faith' (Rom. 5:1–6; I Cor. 6:11).

Our conclusion, then, is that the objective work of justification—the work of propitiation—and the work of subjectively applying this in the justified sinner is wholly Trinitarian. We must see this work as the loving and intimate work of the Divine *perichoresis* in the works *ad extra*.

THE TRINITARIAN WORK OF SANCTIFICATION

Let us look at the commencement of this study and see the quotes by Forsyth and Luther, keeping in mind the pericope of Isaiah 6:1–7. The Reformers and Puritans were ever on the alert that justification and sanctification should not become confused, coalesced, or layered⁶ and yet that they should never be seen apart from each other. True holiness of life⁷ must be seen as indispensable for salvation. When Jesus said, 'Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God,' he was surely implying the obverse also. Hebrews 12:14 exhorts, 'Strive for peace with all men, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord'. Revelation 21:27 says of the ultimate Holy City that 'nothing unclean shall enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood', and 22:11–12 speaks of the intractable will of evil doers, 'Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy be filthy . . . Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay every one for what he has done'. Psalm 24:3–6 asks who it is that receives the blessing from the Lord. It is the one who has 'clean hands and a pure heart'.

The Father and Sanctification

God's intention for our holiness we have seen in Ephesians 1:3; I Peter 1:2; I John 3:1–3; and II Thessalonians 2:12 (cf. Col. 1:22; I Thess. 4:1–8). Paul states, 'This is the will of God [the Father], your sanctification'. Peter links practical holiness with the Father (I Pet. 1:13–17). 'Therefore gird up your minds, be sober, set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; since it is

⁶ Sanctification is not built *on* justification but is one with it in that both are by grace (Titus 2:11–14; I Pet. 2:9–10; I Cor. 6:11) and faith (cf. Acts 26:16–18; 15:8; 20:32).

⁷ The terms 'holiness', 'sanctification' and 'consecration' call for close study. For a fuller treatment see my *The Splendour of Holiness* (NCPI, 1985).

written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” And if you invoke as Father him who judges each one impartially according to his deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile’.

To ‘invoke him as Father’ is to say the Lord’s Prayer with faith and to live it out in the presence of the Holy Father, for one day we will see Him face to face (Rev. 22:4). The transference—so to speak—of Exodus 19:5–6 to I Peter 2:9–11 is the work of the Father. He will have holy children, so that (i) the purification of the Cross (Heb. 9:14; 10:19–22; I Cor. 6:11), (ii) the justification which is the very foundation and substance of sanctification (Rom. 5:12—6:23; cf. Col. 3:1–11), and (iii) the breaking of the power of all forms of evil, liberates the children to a holy life. The Father’s heart of love must be understood in all this.

The Son as Sanctifier

Christ’s people are his Bride, and he ‘loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of the water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish’. This he did as the Lamb by ‘the precious blood’, himself being ‘without blemish or spot’ (I Pet. 1:19; cf. Heb. 9:14). In the one act of the Cross he ‘washed’, ‘sanctified’ and ‘justified’ (I Cor. 6:11). The mystery of the utter purification of the believer through the Atonement can never be fully explicated, but passages such as Romans 6 and Colossians 3 require us to see that when sin’s power is broken by the removal of guilt, then the presence of the power of Christ (I Cor. 6:11) leads not only to the people of God being holy by covenant inclusion—that is consecration—(cf. I Cor. 6:11; I Pet. 2:9–10), but also in the step by step practical holiness of living. This requires them to sanctify Christ in their hearts as Lord (I Pet. 3:15), and the presentation of their bodies to him as instruments of righteousness ‘unto holiness’ (Rom. 6:15–23).

The walk of love and the walk of holiness (cf. Gal. 5:18–26) are shown in the contrast of the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit, but the paradigm and source for such is Christ, so that we are to ‘walk [together] in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God’ (Eph. 5:2), for it was the holiness of his bride which he had in view as the *telos* of salvation history. He coveted having her ‘clothed with fine linen bright and pure’ for ‘the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints’.

The Spirit the Sanctifier⁸

This has always been the mind of the church, ‘The Holy Spirit who sanctifies me’. Peter has beautifully shown the Trinitarian work of God’s salvation in ‘chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood’ (I Pet. 1:2). Likewise in II Thessalonians 2:13–14, ‘But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ’, whilst I Corinthians 6:11 spells out Christ and the Spirit working together for that same end, ‘And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the

⁸ See my *The Day of the Spirit* (NCPI, 1985) pp. 184–192 for a fuller treatment of the Holy Spirit and holiness.

Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God’.

All of this had been prophetically promised in the great passages of Isaiah 4:1–6, Ezekiel chapters 36 and 37, and Joel 2:28ff. The heart of stone was to be replaced with a heart of flesh, all filthiness was to be rinsed away, and a new law and a new obedience established within the new awe and holiness of the transformed people of God. Ultimately the Holy Bride and the Holy Spirit were to be shown as one for the hour of the Bridegroom’s coming. Together they would repeat the age-long prayer of the church, ‘Maran-atha! Lord, come!’ The longing of the Bride for the Bridegroom is because the Spirit of Christ, of the Son and of holiness, takes the church to her ultimate and proud place in history as the Spouse of the Son, granted to him by the Father. The eternal *Song of Songs* is then to be played out in history beyond the dreams of redeemed humanity.

CONCLUSION: JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION ARE TRINITARIAN

We simply repeat the paragraph which introduced our study, for it covers all we have said: ‘God the Triune God, will have His creation free from guilt, pollution and shame. The Three Persons who are in themselves ‘other person centred’ will look out to their creation and liberate the elect from the powers of darkness, the turmoil and the oppression, reconciling all things by the blood of the Cross. God loves the world, and His Son is the propitiation for our sins and for the sins of the whole world. A new heaven and a new earth will guarantee the new holy people, the Kingdom of Priests unto their God. To this end the Father, Son and Spirit do their work of justification and sanctification’.

study eleven

Renewal in the Image of God—by Christ & the Spirit

(By Ian Pennicook)

The creation of Man in the image of God is a matter of great wonder: ‘What *are* human beings that you are mindful of them . . .?’ However, a matter of almost as much wonder is the variety of answers given to the question, ‘What does it mean to be in the image of God?’¹

A possible way of discovering the answer may lie in asking another question, ‘What does the Lord require of these creatures?’ Put in another form the question becomes, ‘How may Man measure his consistency with his own identity as the image of God?’ and then, ‘How may Man know God’s character?’ Man’s moral nature and his capacity and responsibility to choose, although initially only recounted in terms of the choice between the fruit of the two trees, meant that he was created to be continually making moral decisions. It would be naive not to see the two trees as representative of the moral realm in which Man lived and to which he must continually relate. The choice in the garden was not substantially different from that which Moses presented to Israel:

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the LORD swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob (Deut. 30:19–20).

What is meant is not that Man lives in some continual existential moment of decision—that may also be true, but it is not the whole truth—but that Man, by virtue of being created in the image of God, must continually reflect the character of God. Indeed, as ‘image’ Man has no purpose beyond that. That fulfilling such a purpose is satisfying beyond imagination is repeatedly made plain in the Scriptures, for example:

I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart (Ps. 40:8, etc.).

Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all day long.

Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is always with me.

I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your decrees are my meditation.

I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts.

¹ See the discussion in G. C. Berkouwer, *Man: the Image of God*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1962, pp. 67–118; P. E. Hughes, *The True Image*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1989, pp. 3–9, etc.

I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word.
I do not turn away from your ordinances, for you have taught me.
How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! (Ps. 119:97–103).

Were we to ask the psalmist, he would reply that the law he has in mind and heart is to be found in ‘Moses’, but plainly the law is not restricted to ‘Moses’. For example, ‘Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws’ (Gen. 26:5). Paul, in Romans 5:12–14, makes the same point:

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned—sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come.

The implication here is that sin was in the world before the Law of Moses; that it is not reckoned where there is no law must mean that there was law before Law, otherwise the previous statement becomes meaningless (v. 12). On the contrary, law existed and as a result of Adam’s sin against that law death exercised dominion right up to the point where law was put in specific covenantal form under Moses (and death has exercised dominion ever since).

Motyer’s observation that the law is the written preceptual image of God, while not reflecting any use of the word ‘image’ in the scriptures, at least has drawn our attention to the function of law. The law which existed from creation was and continues to be the expression of the character of God, by which the image of God would understand its own being. Even the statement of Genesis 1:27, ‘So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them’ is of a one with this. While some have regarded this as indicating that the image is to be found in sexual polarity, possibly we should say that male/female is the primary relationship where the image will be seen. Hence Genesis describes it also as the first relationship to suffer the corruption of sin, but, of course other relationships are also affected.

The effect of sin upon Man is thus the defacement of the image. Rejection of the command of Genesis 2:16–17 is Man suppressing the truth:

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse; for though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools; and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles (Rom. 1:19–23).

To suppress the truth of God is to suppress the truth of the image of God, with the result that the moral structure of creation and thus of all relationships has been distorted. Indeed, it *must be* distorted, else the constant presence of the character of God would be seen and Man would be incapable of sustaining his assumed (and presumed) independence (so Gen. 3:10, ‘I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself’). Man is now in the absurd position of trying to be an image without the reality.

MAN OF DUST: MAN OF GLORY

Genesis 5:3 records:

When Adam had lived one hundred thirty years, he became the father of a son in his likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth.

Wenham comments that ‘This verse makes the point that the image and likeness of God which was given to Adam at creation was inherited by his sons. It was not obliterated by the fall’.² In contrast to this vague comment (he only tells us what did *not* happen to the image of God) is that of Keil and Delitzsch³:

As Adam was created in the image of God, so did he beget ‘*in his own likeness, after his image;*’ that is to say, he transmitted the image of God in which he was created, not in the purity in which it came from God, but in the form given to it by his own self-determination, modified and corrupted by sin.

When we compare I Corinthians 15:49:

Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven.

the context demands that we understand ‘the image of the man of dust’ to mean an image which carries corruption. With this in mind, we conclude that all humanity since the Fall knows only the defaced image. Our ‘Adam’, our ‘Man’, from whom we derive our identity is the fallen Adam whose corruption makes true conformity to God an horrific prospect.

It is in this context that we see Paul’s picture of Christ:

In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of *Christ, who is the image of God* (II Cor. 4:4).

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation (Col. 1:15).

To say that Christ is the image of God need not lead us to understand that somehow Adam was the image of the image of God. This is the position taken by Philip Hughes⁴ and Karl Barth.⁵ Hughes puts it that Man ‘is not *as* but *in* the divine image’.⁶ In this he *seems* to be consistent with the New Testament which, as has just been stated, identifies Christ with the divine image. But I suggest that the principle point in saying this of Christ is to refer to him as being ‘the second Man’, ‘the last Adam’. Christ is the image of God precisely because, in the incarnation, he is ‘the last Adam’. As ‘the last Adam’, the goal, Christ is the one whom ‘the first Adam’ both reflected and anticipated. (Barth, on the other hand, identifies ‘the first Adam’ with Jesus Christ, ‘the last Adam’.⁷)

² Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Bible Commentary, vol. 1, Word Publishing, Milton Keynes, 1991, p. 127.

³ C. F. Kiel and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*, vol. 1, The Pentateuch (three vols in one), Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Reprinted 1988, p. 126.

⁴ See *n.1* above.

⁵ See, for example, *Church Dogmatics*, III, 1, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1958, p. 197ff.

⁶ *The True Image*, p. 21, italics added.

⁷ See CD III, 1, 203; S. B. Ferguson, ‘Image of God’, in S. B. Ferguson and D. F. Wright, *New Dictionary of Theology*, Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, 1988, p. 329.

As ‘the second Man’, Christ comes as ‘the image of God’ over against all humanity which now only bears the image of the man of dust. He comes as the Man who creates ‘in himself one new humanity’ (Eph. 2:15; lit. ‘one new *man*’) in place of the fierce divisions and fractured relationships of the humanity which derives from the corrupted Adam.

RENEWAL IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

The total obedience of Christ to the Father is sometimes seen as something extraordinary, over and above what would be expected of a human being. But the fact that ‘Spotless was his submission to the sceptre of divine law’⁸ only means that he was true Man. And as true Man he was, of necessity, a man filled with and constantly led by the Spirit. These two things, his obedience to the law and his being filled with the Spirit, are what set his life and ministry apart and chart his course for the collision with the powers of darkness which, since the Fall, hold Adam’s race in bondage.

The work of Christ was the work of the new Man, in whom God has purposed not only to rectify the effects of the Fall but to bring a new creation into being. P. T. Forsyth has this to say:

Here, perhaps you want to ask me what I mean exactly by saying that the judgment-death of Christ set up a real and actual kingdom of holiness. It is a point which is easier for faith to realise than for theology to explain. But the answer would lie along this line: What Christ presented to God for his complete joy and satisfaction was a perfect racial obedience. It was not the perfect obedience of a saintly unit of the race. It was a racial holiness. God’s holiness found itself again in the humbled holiness of Christ’s ‘public person’. He presented before God a race he created for holiness. Remember that the very nature of our faith in Christ is union with him. The kingdom is set up by Christians being united with the work, the victory, the obedience, the holiness of the king.⁹

Passages such as Romans 6:3–6 bear this out:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin.

Justification is more than a judicial statement; it is the work of Christ by which our guilt is removed by his death and we are incorporated into Christ by being given the gift of justification and sanctification through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (Rom. 5:5; John 7:39; Acts 5:32). We are now ‘in him’; we are ‘in the Spirit’. The purpose of this is that all that was and is true of the image of God may be known in us. That is why ‘if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation’ (II Cor. 5:17).

This new creation is worked out now in terms of the new relationships we have with God and with men and women and much space is devoted to these in the New Testament. However, these relationships are not generated out of our own abilities.

⁸ G. C. Berkouwer, *The Person of Christ*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1954, p. 241.

⁹ *The Work of Christ*, Fontana, London, 1965, p. 118 (cf. NCTM edition, p. 129f.).

It is not that ‘now you are a believer, you can . . .’ It is, now that you are in Christ you must go on being filled with Christ. Thus, for example, Ephesians 4:20:17–25:

Now this I affirm and insist on in the Lord: you must no longer live as the Gentiles live, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance and hardness of heart. They have lost all sensitivity and have abandoned themselves to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. That is not the way you learned Christ! For surely you have heard about him and were taught in him, as *truth is in Jesus*. You were taught to put away your former way of life, your *old man*, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the *new man*, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. . .

The ‘so then’ of verse 25 is dependent on the preceding paragraph, namely that it is ‘the new man’ (Christ) who is to be put on and ‘the old man’ (Adam) who is to be put off. There can be no new relationships with God or Man which are not ‘in Christ’.

These new relationships can be seen as the fulfilment of the promise made through Jeremiah:

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more (Jer. 31:33–34).

The law is now written on the heart. This is the new creation, the old defaced image made new. What is required is that believers recognise that they have come through the crisis of conversion into the process of transformation into the likeness of Christ. Hence, Romans 8:28–29:

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to *his purpose*. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to *the image of his Son*, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family.

Believers have been liberated into goal-directed faith. The goal is conformity to Christ who stands as the head of the race, the elder brother. The pure intimacy with the Father which Christ knows is the intimacy to which we are moving. Of course, the Holy Spirit continually brings that intimacy to us. We cry ‘Abba, Father’ as the Spirit of the Son continually makes the goal, the inheritance, powerfully present and fresh to faith.

And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God (Gal. 4:6–7).

These are ‘the deep things of God’ revealed to us for our glory (cf. I Cor. 2:7–10). ‘The hope of righteousness’ and ‘the hope of glory’, with the love of Christ, are the powerful motivation to be continually transformed, since they are Christ presently in us and yet still standing before us as the goal, when we will be ‘participants of the divine nature’ (II Pet. 1:4). This will be our final and complete conformity to the divine image. In the meanwhile:

Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old [man] with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but *Christ is all and in all!* (Col. 3:9–11).

And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, *are being transformed into the same image* from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit (II Cor. 3:18).

study twelve

Reconciliation within the mystery of the Godhead

(by grant thorpe)

Reconciliation happens, first of all, as something wholly of God himself, but then as something which draws us to God to be one with him. As such, it is secure and entire.

The Father, the Son and the Spirit all act for our reconciliation; but then they act with, in and for one another for our reconciliation. As such, our reconciliation is necessarily a revelation of the personal love of the Trinity.

All this has occurred, not over our heads, but in our presence and because Christ has assumed our fallen humanity and recast it in his own image as Son.

We have now been admitted to the divine communion. Reconciliation is not something we know in principle. It can only be known in practice.

RECONCILIATION IS WHOLLY OF GOD

A simplistic view may suggest that reconciliation with God occurs when humanity lays down its arms and agrees with God being God. Israel's history requires a different view: in the face of sustained obstinacy, God says that he will renew Israel and bring her to peace with himself (e.g. Jer. 30–31). Note the repetition of 'I will . . .'

Israel's sacrificial system testified to this: God provided the offerings for atonement/reconciliation. From the beginning, where offering to God is in mind, 'God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering' (Gen. 22:8; cf. Lev. 17:11).

Many other prophecies showed that Messiah would be the one by whom God would come to Israel in peace and she would be presented to him in peace (e.g. Isa. 9:6–7; 52:7; 53:5; Ezek. 34:22–25; 37:25–26; Zech. 9:9–10).

Paul says that 'while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son' (Rom. 5:10). It is so much a work of God that it can be spoken of as occurring when we cherished enmity. It is the wholeness of its origins in God that brings us to joy and praise. When we beseech others to be reconciled to God, it is not so much in terms of making peace but proclaiming peace (II Cor. 5:18–21; Isa. 52:7).

FATHER , SON AND SPIRIT ARE REVEALED IN RECONCILIATION

The saving deeds of God have been presented to us in terms that put the Son together with the Father in a unique relationship of knowing and doing.

The parallel passages, Matthew 11:25–27 and Luke 10:22, were two key passages used by the Council of Nicaea in the early fourth century to understand the gospel and the divine relationships it assumed. Only the Father could understand the Son and only the Son the Father—but then, the Son would reveal the Father to all whom he chose. It is surely this fact that accounts for the ‘rest for your souls’ which Jesus proffered. The Father would reveal the Son (Matt. 16:17), and the Son the Father. This would be rest.

In Christ it is God with whom we have to do, not in detachment, but personally. The same is true of the Spirit. In the obedience of faith, we know the salvation of God but in a way that we have come to know the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (John 17:3; 14:17).

In the first instance, it is with the Son that the Father has to do—he loves him, reveals himself to him, entrusts everything to him, glorifies him, receives his obedience and grants his prayers. (The present tense is used here because of the continuation into Christ’s intercession of what has been revealed to us through the apostles.)

Christ is the Son of the Father’s love (Col. 1:13): the love of the Father is focussed on the Son eternally so that he alone knows the fullness of the Father’s love, he alone then is the revelation of that love in its action towards humanity. The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all—God so loved us that he sent him (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8).

For the Son’s part, it is with the Father that he had primarily to do—he came to do his will and to reveal him, the Father was in him and he in the Father. He went to his cross so the world would know he loved the Father. All his present ruling is with a view to presenting the kingdom to the Father.

These actions are revelations, not simply of the working plans of our salvation, but of the relation of the Father to the Son and of the Son to the Father—the relation into which we are now drawn. It is our salvation to know the Father and the Son (John 17:3).

In all of this, the Spirit was present: Christ was anointed by the Spirit for his work, offered up his body by the Spirit to the Father (Heb. 9:14), and was raised by the Spirit (Rom. 8:11). It is the Spirit of the Son who is given to us whereby we cry ‘Abba Father’. He is the Spirit of love active in the relation of Father and Son—no less a Spirit is given to us (Rom. 5:5; 15:30). We know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit (II Cor. 13:14)—one knowing, in the actions of the Three.

CHRIST AND SINFUL MAN ARE UNITED IN HIS DEATH

If reconciliation is wholly of God, it is also certainly of flesh and blood—the flesh and blood of Christ. All the references to reconciliation with God affirm that it flows from the cross of Christ (Rom. 5:10f.; II Cor. 5:18; Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:20f.). Here is the ‘I will . . .’ of God, the provision of the Lamb of *God*.

Reconciliation and the work of the cross assume the coming of the Son of God in ‘the likeness of sinful flesh’ (Rom. 8:3; cf. Phil 2:7) and for sin (the word used suggests a sin offering); he was made sin—that in him we might be made the righteousness of God (II Cor. 5:21).

Thomas F. Torrance says: ‘In becoming one with us he laid hold upon our wayward human will, made it his very own, and bent it back into obedience to, and in oneness with, the holy will of God’ (*Theology in Reconstruction*, p. 157). In a number of passages, Torrance shows that Christ assumed our fallen humanity (*The Mediation of Christ*; pp. 31, 39–41, 79, 85). Note also, the thought of Tertullian that only what Christ assumes can be saved.

‘Jesus took upon himself all the elements that are the result of our sinfulness’ (G. Bingham). Historically, he arose from within sinful Israel (there is no need to ‘protect’ him with an immaculate conception). For sin to be condemned in the flesh of Christ—when he had no sins of his own, his flesh had to have continuity with our own. Thomas Torrance’s point seems valid—that God has not dealt with us by external judicial relations merely, but by personal relations.

Whatever this relation is, it is such that although Christ suffered in the flesh, he has transformed flesh rather than flesh transforming him; he has remained ‘holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners’, a designation which applies to him before his death as afterwards (Heb. 7:26–28). His being united with us was not his agreement with us in our hostility but his agreement with the Father in his love for us.

But his union with us must be such that there remains no area of our racial history or personal experience that remains unvisited, or unchanged. We can be sure that because Christ has come to stand in our place, there is nothing of our sinful humanity that has been overlooked or not taken to judgment, and that in the resurrection, there is nothing left in redeemed humanity of which to be ashamed or by which to be thwarted. Reconciliation is not only the ending of human hostility to God but the offering of an acceptable oblation to God.

RECONCILIATION IS WITH A VIEW TO COMMUNION

Reconciliation is knowing and being known—the opposite of estrangement. We know the mystery of the Godhead—though with dimness—and shall know fully.

Reconciliation is not a transaction, nor some kind of Hindu absorption, but God identifying with us (without ever ceasing to be what he is—he is not identical with us), leading to our being in communion with him. Reconciliation with God is described by James B. Torrance:

‘. . . to exchange friendship for enmity, love and peace for hatred. That says the Apostle, is what God has done for us in Christ. Jesus became our brother man, took the form of a servant, went all the way to the Cross. Why? That He might take our hatred and give us His love, take our sins that He might give us His righteousness, take our death that He might give us His eternal life, that we might humbly and joyfully receive Him, clothed with all His benefits. And why does He effect this wonderful exchange? To bring us into His wonderful communion with the Father’ (*Theological Foundations for Ministry*, p. 361).

Reconciliation has to do with our being taken into the personal relationships of the Trinity. Jesus prayed that ‘they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us’ (John 17:21). Also, ‘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’ (John 17:24).

The ‘threeness’ of the action of God has exposed the love of the Three in One, encompassing ourselves. This is received by faith and is potent in its action because

we have been taught to love rather than because we have knowledge or understanding.

Paul talked about the Church at Thessalonica being ‘in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ’ (I and II Thess. 1:1).

Reconciliation is mediated to us by the Holy Spirit opening to us ‘the depths of God’ (I Cor. 2:10–13), placing the Son’s cry of ‘Father’ in our innermost being (Rom. 8:14–16; Gal. 4:5–6), and effecting peace (Eph. 2:18; 4:3, 30).

Christ who is our life in the presence of the Father and in service of others, has provided the dynamic of peace and hope and joy—which otherwise must be insisted upon as an ethic, and which if it is performed is not convincing. Rather, Christ who has entered the shame and despair of fallen humanity and led us back to the Father in nobility, continually shows us the delight of gratefulness and service which is the communion of the reconciled.

This is the object of proclamation—fellowship with the Father and the Son (I John 1:3).

PARTICIPATORS IN THE DIVINE NATURE

Peter says that we are, or are to be made partakers of the divine nature (II Pet. 1:4). We are liberated from corruption and called to share God’s glory and excellence. If this involves our making every effort it is only because of the prior ‘divine power’ and ‘precious promises’, and this must relate to ‘the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord’ (II Pet. 1:2–8).

Theopoiesis or *theosis*, terms used by the early church Fathers, are defined by Thomas F. Torrance:

. . . men and women are savingly reconciled to God by being taken up in and through Christ to share in the inner relations of God’s own life and love. It means that the eternal communion of love in God overflows through Jesus Christ into our union with Christ and gathers us up to dwell with God and in God. This is another way of saying that the Incarnation, and the reconciliation that took place within it, fall within the life of God. That is what is implied in the Pauline teaching that Christ, in whom the complete Being of God dwells, dwells in us, so that through a relation of mutual indwelling between Christ and us, we are enfolded within the infinite dimensions of the love of God. The Greek Fathers used to speak of that experience as *theopoiesis* or *theosis* which does not mean ‘divinisation’, as is so often supposed, but refers to the utterly staggering act of God in which he gives *himself* to us and *adopts us* into the communion of his divine life and love through Jesus Christ and in his one Spirit, yet in such a way that we are not made divine but are preserved in our humanity’ (*The Mediation of Christ*, p. 64).

It is by such communion that our being as reconciled persons is secured. When we were apart from the personal relations of the Godhead, we had died. In being encompassed by them again, through the cross, our personhood has been established—a personhood not defined by self-awareness and self-determination (as presently defined by humanist thinking) but by mutual love and serving and reliance.

study thirteen

Man, The Law & Trinitarian Relationships

(BY DEANE MEATHERINGHAM)

Much of this paper is built upon studies already given. This is especially true of Study 2, ‘The Law of the Triune Godhead’, Study 7 ‘The Law & Gospel—Their Interrelationship’ and Study 10 ‘The Trinity in Justification & Sanctification’.

The new element that should be in this session is that as Man is drawn to participate in such a way in the divine communion of the Triune society, the Law of that society is implanted into the participants.

I will need to try and keep to the aspect of ‘Law’ in this paper and not develop the aspects of ‘being as a communion of persons’ in the Law of love. (These things will be covered later.) However, I shall not be able to speak of the Law of the Trinity of persons apart from seeing this as within the communion of persons—divine and human.

THE BEING OF GOD IS THE FOUNT OF TRUE LAW

To unpack this heading let us step back to Athanasius on the Triunity of God:

There is one eternal Godhead in Trinity, and there is one Glory of the holy Trinity . . . If theological truth is now perfect in Trinity, this is the true and only divine worship and this is its beauty and truth, it must have always been so . . . There is one Form of Godhead, which is also in the Word; and one God the Father, existing in himself as he transcends all things, and manifest in the Son as he pervades all things, and in the Spirit as in him he acts in all things through the Word. Thus we confess God to be one through the Trinity . . . (Quoted by T. F. Torrance, in *The Trinitarian Faith*, T & T Clark, 1988, p. 302).

There is a completely mutual indwelling of the distinctive properties of each Person of the Divine Trinity, yet this is while each remains what he is by himself as Father, Son or Holy Spirit. Each person honours, serves and gives to the other, each is other-person regarding, and each receives from the other in the *perichoresis* of love. Holy love is the way of being and acting within the Triune Godhead—this is the Law of the Trinity of God.

What is important to see is that there is the Law of the Father. As the Son is one in and with the Father, we can say the Law of the Father is the Law of the Son. As the Holy Spirit is one in and with the Father and the Son, we can say that Law of the Father and the Law of the Son is the Law of the Spirit.

Yet as an earlier Study has said, we are not saying this is to be thought of as the Law of each Person—three laws—combining to make one Law of the Godhead.

The Father has given everything to the Son (Matt. 11:27; Luke 10:22; John 3:35; 5:19ff.; 12:49f.). The Spirit knows and receives all that is in the Father and the Son (I Cor. 2:11; John 16:12–15).

He is the fount of the true Law—we mean the Law by which God himself by nature subsists, i.e. the Law of God (subjective genitive), and then the Law which God gives to his creation (objective genitive) (Ps. 19, etc.).

MAN HAS A FALSE IMAGE OF LAW

The Law of God matches the nature and personhood of Man as God created him in his own image. The Law of God is the law of Man's true nature. To be truly human is to manifest the image of God so that as God is a communion of persons inseparably related, then it is in our relatedness to others that our being human consists (Gen. 1:26f.).

The fall of Man radically alters his view of Law but it does not free him from the universal impact of Law (Rom. 1:18ff.; 2:12–16).

As made in the image of God no man can escape becoming the interpretive medium of God's general revelation both in his intellectual (Romans 1:20) and in his moral consciousness (Romans 2:14, 15). No matter which button of the radio he presses, he always hears the voice of God. Even when he presses the button of his own psychological self-conscious activity, through which as a last resort the sinner might hope to hear another voice, he still hears the voice of God (Cornelius Van Til, *Common Grace and the Gospel*, Presbyterian & Reformed, 1977, pp. 53–54).

But fallen man's image or icon of the Law is wrong. It is distorted by the liar who sows the thought of hardness in man's heart and evokes the desire for autonomy (Gen. 3:5; John 8:44). A totalitarian view of God's Law now justifies revolt. With the relationship between God and man ruptured, man's image of Law is further transmogrified. Guilt, fear and the experience of sin itself give to man a hostile attitude and view of Law, so that he becomes dominated by the false icon (Gen. 3:7ff.; Ps. 14; Titus 1:15; I John 4:18).

What has just been said should not be taken to mean fallen man lives without law. Rather he perverts the Law of God to his own ends, substituting as it were the law of man for the Law of God. In this state humankind multiplies laws, seeking to save the world and itself by laws. Man now becomes bound and gagged by laws and regulations, only intensifying his hostility and rebellion (I Tim. 1:8–11).

APART FROM CHRIST THERE IS NO TRUE VIEW OF LAW

In order to have the true view of God and his Law we have to come to the Son. The Epistle to the Hebrews says that the incarnate Son is the radiance of God's glory (Heb. 1:3). Our only true knowledge of the Father is through the Son (John 1:1–4; 14:6; etc.). Athanasius insisted that:

it is more godly and accurate to signify God from the Son and call him Father than to name him from his works and call him Unoriginate (T. F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, T & T Clark,

1988, p. 303).

All that is to be seen of the Father is seen in the Son. All that is the Son's is the Father's since the whole Son dwells in the Father. The Son, then, is as it were the form and face of the knowledge of the Father.

Christ is 'the image of the invisible God' (Col. 1:15; cf. II Cor. 4:4). The incarnate Son is the head of all humanity (Col 1:18), the one in whom the fullness of the deity dwells bodily (Col. 2:9). *As a man Jesus is the exemplar of the Law*, he is the true image of God incarnate—the Law incarnate—who is in communion with God. He reflects the Law in his relatedness to his brethren. Jesus is the man who lives and does the will of God.

Our true view of Law is found in the man Jesus but only as he delivers us from the bondage of our revolt and its damning penalty. The Study on 'The Trinity in Justification & Sanctification' has dealt with this matter. What needs to be emphasised now is that the human consciousness of guilt which is the penalty of law breaking can only be resolved as we know that God has exercised the necessary judgment (e.g. Gal. 2:19f.). So the conscience is relieved through justification (Rom. 6:7), but the conscience is only renewed in Jesus Christ as we receive the sonship (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6).

In Christ the sons of God are restored to the true image of God. Colossians 3:10 says that we 'have put on the new humanity, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator' (cf. II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15). We can say that in Jesus Christ we are now in communion with God. In this communion we receive more and more knowledge of God, i.e. we know his Law. Now the image of God will come through as we live in obedience to the Law.

THE RENEWED FOUNTAIN OF LAW IN MAN

We commenced by saying that the fount of all true Law is God. That the Law of the Father is the Law of the Son and the Law of the Spirit. There is a certain hierarchical passing of the Law of love from the Father to the Son and to the Holy Spirit which takes place within a 'chain' of dependence.

The Law of Christ is neighbour love (Rom. 13:8ff.; Gal. 5:13f.; 6:2; Matt. 22:37–40). The Law of love is the Law of Christ, and this harks back to what we said earlier that the Law of God is the way God is within his being and is the Law which he gives to us in his commandments. This is the Law of life which stands in sharp contrast to the humanistic law of Narcissus.

The neighbour in the parable of the Good Samaritan was the man who was other-person regarding (Luke 10:25–37). Neighbour love is the way the Father's love is perfected in us (Matt. 5:43–48; I John 4:12).

In particular for Pastors and Christian workers, the Law of Christ has to do with our relationships with our wives, or husbands, they being our neighbour (Eph. 5:21ff.; Mal. 2:13–16). The family must not be moulded to fit in with religious careerism (I Tim. 5:8). Pastors are to be friends with their congregations or parishioners, working with the church God has given them, rather than praying for the one they wish they had (I Pet. 5:1–5). Remember Moses' anger and that we can be the more dangerous when we are right (Num. 20:10–13; James 1:19–21; 4:11–12).

Romans 8:1–4 is the extraordinary announcement of God's decision concerning us.

We have been apprehended by a God who faces us in the new Man. Our present significance and existence is transfigured in the Man, Jesus Christ, because in Christ God's decision is that we have passed from death to life. The Spirit is the new existential 'once for all' law of life which has been revealed in Christ. In Christ we have encountered our utter sinfulness to see it has been transformed. Through the Law of the Spirit sin has been negated and we have passed from the frontier of the old city with its false icon of law into the City of God where we know the Law of God. We have entered the Jerusalem from above, the fountain of true Law. Encompassed as we are with the law of sin and death, the Spirit makes us free, righteous and alive to a new understanding. What is this understanding? Luther says: 'He writes the Law of God with living fire in our hearts', and consequently the Law is 'not doctrine but Life, not word but Existence, not a sign but very Fullness'.

We can say that the Law of the Father, which the Son has received from the Father, which the Spirit receives from the Father and the Son, has been passed on to us and is interpreted for us through the Spirit (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:26–27; Heb. 8:1–13; 10:11–25). By the Spirit the love of God has been poured into our hearts, we are baptised into Christ's body and are brought into the communion of the Holy One (Rom. 5:5; Col. 1:8; Gal. 4:6; I Cor. 12:13; John 14:23).

The Law of the Spirit constrains us to obey the Law of God, written in the commandments, but now written in our hearts (Rom. 8:4). Those who live and walk according to the Spirit do submit to God's Law (Rom. 8:7). From this vantage point we may best understand Paul's words that 'we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit', and 'the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life' (Rom. 7:6; II Cor. 3:6).

The fruit of the Spirit is really the Law of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16–26). The Law of the Spirit is really the Law of the Triune Love. Through the Spirit the other-person centred love is the fountain which flows in neighbour love within the communion of saints and in love to the world. Galatians 5:23 says 'against such there is no law', because such doing is the Law.

For the love of God in Christ Jesus is the oneness of the love of God towards men and the love of men towards God. In His love our love celebrates its victory. In it the point has been reached where the unattainable identity has been attained. But when this is said, we turn ourselves about, knowing that we are in no sense competent to attain this identity or even to conceive of its attainment. It sufficeth us to know that thence we came and thither we go (K. Barth, *Romans*, Oxford, 1968, p. 329).

Study fourteen

TRUE BEING IS COMMUNION— DIVINE & HUMAN

(BY MARTIN BLEBY)

ALL LOVE IS FROM THE FATHER

Since the Father is the one from whom all relationships are derived (Eph. 3:14–15), we do well to look to God for the nature of true communion:

God (i.e. the Father) is love (I John 4:8, 16).

The Son is the Son of his love (Col. 1:13, *tou huiou tes agapes autou*).

The Spirit is the Spirit of this love (Rom. 5:5–6).

This love is for us as the children of the Father in the Son by the Spirit (I John 3:1; 5:11; 4:13; Rom. 8:14).

In the eternal action of this love, the Father, the Son and the Spirit are one (John 10:27–29; 16:13–16).

(See also *Supplement to New Creation Hymn Book*, 21, 41.)

GODLY COMMUNION, GOD ONLY ONE

Words fail us, mainly because we are sinners and our thought-forms are perverted (not necessarily because God is beyond words—the pure and holy heavenly hosts seem to have no trouble putting their praises into words [Rev. 4:8, 11; 5:9–10, 12, 13] and God delights to express himself in words). We must somehow get away from the notion that ‘love’ is a kind of fluid or separate substance from the Lover and the Beloved that binds them together (a ‘fourth entity’ in the Trinity!). Augustine’s notion of the Father, Son and Spirit as Lover, Beloved, and Love (embraced by Luther), where the Spirit is the ‘bond of love’ between the Father and the Son, does not help us here. (Are not these all notions devised by sinners to cushion or avert direct face-to-face relationships?) Rather, there is a direct interface here, unmediated by any binding substance (see John 5:17–20; 3:34–35; 14:9–11; 10:17; 14:31). Here is no underlying substratum of God’s being, as the philosophers and metaphysicians would imply. God

is *actus purus* (Aquinas), ‘The Father, the Son and the Spirit all *love*, and together in love they are one’. This loving, in God and for us, has been since before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4–5; John 17:5, 24–26). Made in God’s image for participation in the very life of the Trinity (Gen. 1:27; Rom. 8:29; II Peter 1:4; I John 1:3; 4:13; Rev. 21:22; cf I Cor. 3:16, *plural*), our love and communion with God and each other is to be of the same order.

WHERE ARE YOU?

Ah, for communion Primal Man knew! Ah, for the wonder of union true! We hear an echo of it as God comes ‘walking in the garden in the cool of the evening’ (Gen. 3:8). But man and woman have become self-obsessed sinners, pathetically trying, in guilt and shame, in pride and division, to shield and hide themselves from him who is holy love. God asks the man, ‘Where are you?’, and the man cannot answer, because he doesn’t know any more. He has tried to ‘save’ his life, and he has lost it (Mark 8:35). He spends a fruitless search trying to find it again. Descartes, philosophical father of modern individualism, sits alone in a room saying ‘I think, therefore I am,’ with all the uncertainties that arise from that. Marx characterises isolation and alienation as the fundamental malaise. No longer parts of a functioning body or branches inhering in the vine (I Cor. 12; John 15), we are like billiard balls knocking against each other, or pebbles on the beach driven by the surf. Loss of identity plagues modern man and drives him to suicide. If only he knew about the white stone (Rev. 2:17), and the time when he will know as he is known and love as he is loved, face to face (I Cor. 13:12)! God in mercy gives us in human life, and especially in Christ and his communion of saints, tantalising foretastes of this to keep this reality before us and to put us in its way.

THE RECOVERY OF PERSONS-IN-RELATIONSHIP

The development of the word *persona* from meaning simply a mask used in a play into the rich connotations of the word ‘persons’ today, mirrors our own capture by grace. This development came about in the explication of the realities of Trinitarian theology. Only the truth of the Persons of the Trinity and their relationships can fittingly describe what we truly are and what we are made to be, for we are formed in the image of God, to be partakers of the divine nature. How direct, straightforward and ‘unmasked’ are our relationships with each other now (I Tim. 5:1–3)?

COMMUNION IS KNOWN IN PRAISE AND ADORATION

John Kleinig’s fine statement is a helpful pointer:

Since God’s holiness has to do with the mystery of his being it cannot be understood and defined abstractly [e.g. as ‘sinlessness’, ‘moral perfection’, ‘separation’ or ‘sovereignty’] but can only be adequately expressed and proclaimed in praise (Isa. 6:3; Ps. 99; Rev. 4:9) (NCTM Monday Pastors’ Study Group, 6 June, 1994).

I was reminded of those great saints who wrote their finest theology in the vocative:

Too late I loved You, O Beauty of ancient days, yet ever new! Too late I loved You! And behold, You were within, and I abroad, and there I searched for You; deformed I, plunging amid those fair forms which You had made, You were with me, but I was not with You. Things held me far from You, which, unless they were in You, were not at all. You called, and shouted and burst my deafness. You flashed, shone and scattered my blindness . . . You touched me, and I burned for Your peace (Augustine, *Confessions*).

It struck me that in a similar way I only truly know my wife for who she really is when I am praising or appreciating her in like manner.

I realised that God is also known in the Scriptures in confession (Ezra 9; Daniel 9), thanksgiving (I Chron. 29:10–19), and supplication or asking (I Kings 8:22–53), indeed in all the so-called ‘parts’ of prayer. In these ways also we truly relate to and know each other.

These correspond to nothing less than the great and wonderful honouring, serving, asking, receiving, giving and thanksgiving that flows in the eternal *perichoresis* and mutual *circumincessio* of the holy blessed and glorious Trinity, in whose image and for whose glory we are formed.

Study fifteen

Marriage—‘the Profound Mystery’

(BY GEOFFREY BINGHAM)

INTRODUCTION: THE MATTER OF ‘MYSTERY’

In Ephesians 5:21–33 Paul expounds the relationships of husband and wife. His conclusions from verses 31–33 bring him to speak of the ‘one-flesh’ relationship between the two, and in quoting Genesis 2:24 he says, ‘This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.’ Paul has spoken already in this Letter of ‘mysteries’, and whilst they are undoubtedly related to this one of marriage—the key word being ‘unity’—yet it is this particular one he calls ‘profound’ and he claims to use the word advisedly. A mystery (*mysterion*) is an undisclosed secret which when disclosed is no longer a secret to the one understanding it. In that sense the secret is not esoteric or mystical knowledge, or some special form of *gnosis*. Jesus had told his disciples that it was given to them to know the mystery (or mysteries) of the Kingdom of heaven, and that this was not the case for some others. Paul once said that Christ’s ministers are ‘stewards of the mysteries of God’. The range of these mysteries in the New Testament is quite large.

Helmut Thielecke in referring to Paul’s words says:

On the basis of the ‘symbolic’ character of marriage, Ephesians 5:32 speaks of a ‘mystery’ . . . In the New Testament the term ‘mystery’ is always used in the sense that a visible, earthly reality or process becomes a similitude of the transcendent sphere of salvation, that ‘nature’ thus points to the ‘supernatural’ . . . This kind of pointing or reference is called a ‘mystery’ because it cloaks and reveals at the same time: the mystery reveals itself to faith, whereas belief cannot understand it; ‘to him who has, more will more be given . . . but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away’ . . . Because marriage points to the order of creation and redemption it is a similitude of this kind and it also exhibits the same double meaning; for those who stand in faith within the order of redemption it *has* this symbolic character, whereas for others it can be merely a contract, a biological phenomenon, or at most a human bond. This is why the letter to the Ephesians calls it a ‘mystery’.¹

It is not the marriage² nor even the man and the woman becoming one flesh which is a mystery—though these are mysteries in another sense—but the point that Paul is making, is that Genesis 2:24 refers to Christ and his church. That is, the mystery is Christ and the church being ‘one flesh’. Until this saying of Paul we would have assumed that marriage was a creation ordinance—which of course it was and is, and as such, no ‘mystery’ in the Pauline use of the term *mysterion*. If Genesis 2:24 is

¹ Helmut Thielicke, *Theological Ethics*, ‘Sex’, vol. II, Eerdmans, 1964, pp. 125–126.

² In one sense of course marriage is a mystery, but not in this New Testament use of the word ‘mystery’.

primarily pointing to Christ and the church then it is prophetic and so protological.

Andrew T. Lincoln speaking of 'the mystery' says:

'Mystery,' therefore, is not *any* deeper meaning of an OT text but precisely *this* meaning of Christ and the Church posited by this writer. Similarly, the mystery is not any marriage or marriage itself, but the special marriage relationship of Christ and the Church. This is not a denial of the straightforward reference to Gen 2:24 by any means. Indeed, as we have seen, that interpretation of Gen 2:24 underlies the exhortation to husbands in vv 28–30. But even that use of Gen 2:24 depended for its force on the ultimate reference the writer believed it had to the archetypal union between Christ and the Church . . . It was because the Church was Christ's body which was at one with him, a relationship which was the model for human marriage, that wives could be seen in terms as their husbands' bodies.

The emphatic *ego* and the particle *de* in v 32b make clear that the writer is stressing that this particular interpretation of Gen 2:24 as a reference to the profound mystery of the union between Christ and the Church is his own. If, in fact, it also originated with him, then presumably he reached it through a typological exegesis, resting on a correspondence between creation (Gen 2:24) and redemption (Christ and the Church). Christ has already been seen in Adamic terms in Eph 1:22 (the Church is his body), and so a text that refers to Adam's bodily union can now be claimed for Christ's union with the Church, *ego de lego*, 'but I am speaking', occurs also in the antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, where it serves to introduce an interpretation contrary to the generally accepted interpretation of the Scripture passages in view.³

THE VARIOUS ELEMENTS REGARDING THE MEANING OF MARRIAGE

Geoffrey W. Bromily, in speaking of marriage says:

In creating man—male and female—in his own image, and joining them together so that they become one flesh, God makes us copies of himself in his trinitarian unity and distinction as one God and three persons and of himself in relation to the people of his gracious election. Analogically, what is between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and what ought to be and is and shall be between God and Israel and Christ and the church, is what also is meant to be in the relation of man and woman and more specifically of husband and wife. Neither the intratrinitarian relationship nor the union between the heavenly bridegroom and the bride is a good copy of a bad original. Earthly marriage is now lived out as a bad copy of a good original . . . It is simpler, however, because God himself took the initiative at the level of both original and copy. At the level of the original the deserted husband went to look for the erring bride and brought her back. He did this by offering himself, in the person of the divine Son, as the price of redemption.⁴

In saying this, Bromily is really leading us to certain conclusions. He is showing, along with others quoted above (Thielicke, Barth, Lincoln):

- (a) that the creation ordinance of marriage is ontological;
- (b) that it is typological—or protological of Christ and his church;
- (c) that it is eschatological in that it portrays the end-marriage of the Bride and the Lamb;
- (d) that it is trinitarian in relational essence and structure, by which we mean the relationships the Three Persons have between Themselves in their *ad intra* and *ad extra* actions;
- (e) that it is soteriological in that the Husband (the Lamb) gives himself for his bride

³ Andrew Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary 42*, Ephesians, Word Books, 1990, pp. 381–82.

⁴ *God and Marriage*, T & T Clark, 1980, pp. 77–78.

to redeem, sanctify and glorify her.

We will now seek to amplify these 5 points along the following lines:

The Creation Ordinance of Marriage is Ontological

We scarcely need to develop this. The creation accounts of Genesis 1 and 2 make this evident. Jesus' reference in Matthew 19:4–6 confirm this. Marriage is a one-flesh arrangement, causing a man to choose between the woman and his parents, to leave them and to become one flesh with his spouse. Divorce is not envisaged in this ordinance. Ontological ordinances are functional: marriage is functional. In saying marriage is ontological we keep in mind the *archetypal* marriage of Christ and the church, of which human marriage is the *ectype*.

Marriage is Typological or Protological of Christ and His Church

Paul claims this is a profound mystery. The context of Ephesians 5:21–33 shows Paul does not ignore the ontological but emphasises that the primary thrust is the union of Christ and his church.

In respect to this Markus Barth observes:

Rather Christ's union with the church has effected an unprecedented situation: the new creation leaves no room for a dialectic tension or wavering between creation and redemption. Marriage is no longer explained as a 'creation order,' but as an expression of renewal of all things through Jesus Christ. Indeed, according to Paul, the supreme love and the first work and effect of Christ were announced, promised, and guaranteed as early as the creation story. But creation itself, viz. the creaturely existence which God gave to man in the beginning, was only an intimation of marriage, not its ontological and ethical ground. Only Jesus Christ's coming, his love, his death, his dominion are the final, solid basis and model.⁵

In regard to Genesis 2:24 Barth comments⁶: '[after saying that things of the "Law"] that had evoked legal, legalistic, and at times casuistic debates and interpretations (the so-called *halacha*) were in actuality Prophetic in nature: "A man will leave . . . will be joined . . . the two will become one . . ."'. Barth then concludes in regard to the prophetic, 'The substance of this promise according to Paul is not only marital bliss; it is Christ's love for the church. Therefore what Gen 2:24 says about union in "one flesh" is for Paul a prophecy more than anything else. Marriage stands under the sign of God's promise; it is not at the mercy of human traditions, laws, and their interpretation'.

It is Eschatological in That it Portrays the End-marriage of the Bride and the Lamb.

In the Ephesian text Paul does not say that marriage is eschatological, for indeed the Husband–Wife relationship is presently proceeding, otherwise his paranetics would be pointless, but that it is eschatological is brought out in the last chapters of the Book of the Revelation.

⁵ Markus Barth, *Ephesians 4–6*, Doubleday Anchor Bible, 1981, p. 731.

⁶ *op. cit.*, p. 732.

Marriage is in Essence Relational in the Trinitarian Sense

Bromily points out that:

analogically, what is between Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and what ought to be and is and shall be between God and Israel and Christ and the church is what also is meant to be in the relation of man and woman and more specifically of husband and wife.

This is what he means by saying:

In creating man—male and female—in his own image, and joining them together, so that they become one flesh, God makes us copies of himself in his trinitarian unity and distinction as one God and three persons and of himself in relation to the people of his gracious election.

Departing for a moment from Bromily's exposition regarding the relational nature of human marriage, we need to see that the Three Persons are involved in bringing about the marriage of the Bride and the Lamb, that the Marriage is a Trinitarian action *ad extra*. This we will examine below under 'Marriage: The Trinitarian Goal of History'.

Marriage is Soteriological in That the Husband (the Lamb) Gives Himself for his Bride to Redeem, Sanctify and Glorify Her

Bromily observed:

God himself took the initiative at the level of both original and copy. At the level of the original the deserted husband went to look for the erring bride and brought her back. He did this by offering himself in the person of the divine Son, as the price of redemption.

This reference is first to God as Israel's Husband, and then of Christ as the Husband of his spouse the Church, and of course, is caught up in Ephesians 5:25–27:

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

All marriage, and so all marriages—at least since the Fall—are involved in the soteriological. Practically we see the enormous difficulties under which marriages obtain without living in the mystery of God and within the gospel. Couples who are married, as also those who are in *de facto* situations, need the insights we have discussed above. Those insights are of immense value to pastoral, theological and so relational, ministry.

MARRIAGE: THE TRINITARIAN GOAL OF HISTORY

We are now at the heart of the 'profound mystery' which is not simply that Genesis 2:24 is prophetic, typological and protological of the marriage of Ephesians 5:31–32, but that what is ultimately in mind is the eschatological which flows from and with these nominated elements. God, in history, is about the marriage of the Bride and the Lamb. Nothing will quite reveal the mystery of God, of Christ and so of the church, as

will—as does—this Marriage.

Robert Jenson in his brilliant book on Jonathan Edwards⁷ has mined precious mineral out of Edwards' *Miscellanies*⁸:

Edwards' answer takes us finally to the centre of his systematic reflection, to—"as it were"—his notation of the universal melody's fugal structure: "To this I say, that the Son is the adequate communication of the Father's goodness . . . But yet the Son has also an inclination to communicate *himself*, in an image of his person that may partake of his happiness: and this was the end of the creation, even the communication of the happiness of the Son of God . . . Therefore the church is said to be the completeness of Christ." It is as and only as a factor in the plot of the triune God's inner life, that God has a need to overflow. In the *Miscellanies*, Edwards is beautifully simple: "The end of the creation of God was to provide a spouse for his Son Jesus Christ, that might enjoy him and on whom he might pour forth his love . . ." "[H]eaven and earth were created that the Son of God might be complete in a spouse." The church is, with Christ the object of the triune love and so the purpose of creation.

Jenson comments, carrying Edwards' thoughts further:

Christ is the agent and beneficiary of all events from creation to fulfilment; "as Mediator [Christ] rules all events . . . so as to conduce the good of his church, and to bring to pass the ends of his mediation," for since "God created the world to provide a spouse . . . for his Son," so the spiritual marriage of the spouse to him, is what the whole creation labors . . . to bring to pass." And Edwards does mean "the whole creation", for the material universe is, we must remember, but the intersubjective field of the community of spirits that make history. Thus he can, with supreme sophistication and naivete, say, "the whole course of nature . . . [is] subservient to the affair of redemption," or again, "every atom of the universe is managed by Christ so as to be most to the advantage of the Christian . . . It emerges in the discovery not of God's good in ours but of our good in God's. And that is to say, the God the soul enters is the triune God, so that the soul can be one with God while yet God works his own will that is not necessarily ours; and the universality the soul appropriates is the encompassing fact of Christ's history rather than the soul's own religious aspiration. I must quote one more piece of Edwards' beloved spouse-mysticism, of a drastic Christianity I am not sure is elsewhere found: "There was, [as] it were, an eternal society or family in the Godhead, in the Trinity of persons. *It seems to be* God's design to admit the church into the divine family as his son's wife." (Last emphasis mine).

THE TRIUNE GOD WORKING FOR THE MARRIAGE

If we do not have this *schema* of Edwards which Jenson outlines, and if we do not grasp Paul's 'profound mystery' as integral to God's plan and history⁹ then the use of God's marriage with Israel, and the references in the Gospels, Paul's Epistles and the Book of the Revelation will seem to be a forced jig-zaw puzzle, the pieces of which do not fit, or perhaps fit too well!

⁷ *America's Theologian: A Recommendation of Jonathan Edwards*, by Robert W. Jenson, Oxford, 1988, p. 42–43.

⁸ I have not given the reference to Edwards's *Miscellanies*. These are so many, and at the moment I am unable to verify these references and so just rest upon those given in Jenson's book. The reader must check them in that book, but the only *text* of them is what I have given above.

⁹ I am not saying that Edwards's *schema* as Jenson outlines it is all of Edwards's *A History of the Work of the Redemption*, Banner of Truth, vol. I, Reprint 1974, pp. 532–615, for Edwards went on from this survey to the richer elements contained in the *Miscellanies*, but that Marriage is so significant that an understanding of it could greatly enrich our theology that has lived without it as a major element.

References to Christ as Bridegroom in the Gospels

John the Baptist referred to Christ as the Bridegroom and himself as 'the friend of the bridegroom' (John 3:28–30). In Matthew 9:15 (cf. Mark 2:19) Jesus certainly referred to himself—even if only figuratively—as the bridegroom who was present. The rejoicing of Matthew's friends at the feast were likened to a marriage celebration. Two parables of the Kingdom are used in Matthew 22:1–15 and 25:1–13. The first is almost fierce in its insistence that guests come and when they come that they appropriately present themselves. The father-king gives a marriage feast for his son. His 'Everything is made ready' is echoed in Revelation 19:6–10 where 'his Bride has made herself ready' and 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb'. Without elaborating, the Matthew 22 parable tells of the Father preparing the Bride, and it appears that the Messianic feast Jesus speaks of is one with the Wedding feast.¹⁰ The Matthew 25 story of the wise and foolish virgins again needs no elaboration. It is eschatological with the warning of preparing for the joy.

The Triune God Working Towards the Wedding Feast and Its Outcome

If the parables speak of the Father's work for His Son, then in John's Gospel (6:44–45; 6:65; cf. Matt. 11:25–27) it is the Father who reveals His Son and draws men and women (the Church, the Bride) to Christ. The Holy Spirit is the Revelator of both Father and Son (John 16:12–15), and he brings the saving gospel to the elect people of God, the true Bride. Through the power of the Cross the same Spirit sanctifies the Bride (cf. II Thess. 2:13–14; I Pet. 1:2; I Cor. 6:11), but then it is Christ who is called the Saviour of the Bride (Eph. 5:23; cf. I John 4:14). In whatever condition he finds her¹¹ he gives himself for her and so works that he sanctifies her, 'having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word'. She is made splendid ('glorious'; cf. Rev. 21:11ff.) and fit for her spouse. In the metonymy of Ephesians 5:21–33 the spouse has reverence for her husband, and the fear which is at the same time respect, obviously for what he has done for her. Bit by bit we are being admitted into the ontology of marriage, into a relational praxis that is so valuable for paranetics and pastoral help.

To continue: it is God the Father in Revelation 19 and 21 who prepares the ultimate Marriage feast of the Bride and the Lamb. The Warrior Bridegroom returns from his victory over all evil powers to usher his Bride into the fit home he has been preparing for her (cf. John 14:1–10), but then the Bride must go through certain preparatory rituals¹², 'make her self ready', 'clothed with fine linen, bright and pure', 'prepared as a bride adorned for her husband' so that she now has 'the glory of God'. In all this the Holy Spirit has been working as one with her until the point when 'The Spirit and the Bride say "Come" ', and all the elect, hearing this also say 'Come', for that has been the church's cry through the preparatory ages, 'Maran-atha: Lord, Come'. It seems God's design to admit the church into the divine family as his son's wife', is now to take place. Had the Son not become incarnate he could not have had a human Bride, and he could not have conducted her to the Godhead, and so inducted

¹⁰ The explanation here is perhaps a little too complicated for us to undertake in so short a paper. We need to view all references to the wedding feasts, and the messianic victory feasts. They seem to be the one.

¹¹ Do we here think of God as Husband to Israel and of Hosea's prophecy and that of Ezekiel 16 and 23 in regard to the church?

¹² These rituals are seen in the Old Testament, especially in the *Book of Esther*, and in *The Song of Songs*, but they happen in all thoughtful contemporary wedding preparations.

her into the mystery of that same Godhead. Now humanity is joined to marvellous Deity and the plan for history has reached its *telos*.

A BRIEF APPLICATION—PASTORAL AND THEOLOGICAL

This paper is all too short. It does not take up the passages which deal with possible divorce and possible remarriage. These require a treatment of their own, but the exegesis and interpretations of them must not be entered into outside the hermeneutic we have set out above. They must be set in juxtaposition to the ontological, typical, protological, soteriological and eschatological Marriage. Outside of this juxtaposition their exegesis will be sterile and false.¹³ Though without present 'proof' it must be said that God knows no divorce. Even if He uses the word 'divorce' or 'separation' with Israel He will admit to no divorcing of her. He radicalises the law of concession (Deut. 24:1f.; cf. Jer. 3:1–14; Isa. 50:1–3; 54:1–10; Hosea chs 1–3; Ezek. chs 16 & 23; Mal. 2:10–16) until it is no concession.¹⁴ We must take up the 'profound mystery' for pastoral and theological purposes and we must not rest until the meaning of the mystery dawns on us and that will only be when we live in it, with integrity, which in turn will mean we live in the whole mystery of the Triune God.

¹³ Marcus Barth observes (op. cit., p. 732), 'When the rabbis used Gen 2:24 to declare marriage a Jew's sacred duty and to prescribe the right mode of sexual intercourse, they did not mention the Messiah and love. While they did not forget either in discussing marriage, their interest was concentrated upon other matters. In his allusions to the same Genesis text in I Cor 6–7, Paul mentions the Messiah, but not love'. We are saying that Rabbinic Judaism missed the point of 'Messiah and love' and so the importance of the Marriage Feast. In this brief study we have omitted to incorporate the Love dynamics of The Song of Songs because that would lead us beyond our brief survey of 'the profound mystery' although it very much belongs to it.

¹⁴ In the light of much present excellent exegesis it could be claimed that the 16th century 'Erasmian' view—also called 'the Evangelical Consensus'—is hard put to hold valid ground.

study sixteen

The Law of Love— Now & Forever

(BY GRANT THORPE)

God is love (I John 4:8, 16) and so love abides (I Cor. 33:8), as God does, forever. Moreover, his love is covenanted to his people forever (Ps. 103:17; Isa. 54:8; 55:3; Jer. 31:3). This love of God is the sole reason for the perpetuity of the people of God (Deut. 4:37; 10:15; Rom. 8:39).

The well known song, *I have made a covenant with my chosen* (Karen Barrie, in *Songs of the Kingdom*, no. 102) has these lines:

I will celebrate your love forever, Yahweh.
Age on age, my words proclaim your love.
For I claim that love is built to last forever
Founded firm, your faithfulness.

In our ears, the claim that love is built to last forever may have a hollow ring or legalistic clang, but properly understood the words are first the words of Christ to the Father (they are taken from the Messianic Ps. 89). He who knows the Father and is the revelation of the Father stands among us, as one of us, to proclaim that the love of Yahweh is forever.

He is the ‘Yes’ to all the promises of God (II Cor. 1:20) and the ‘Amen’ of man (Rev. 3:14; also Christ’s often used ‘Truly, truly’) to that covenanted love, so securing the eternal covenant (Ezek. 37:24–36). The promise of God to Messiah has become ‘the charter by which humanity will be directed’—the sense of II Samuel 7:19 preferred by W. C. Kaiser (quoted in *Creation and Covenant* by W. J. Dumbrell, p. 151f.).

In concert with this, Jesus said that his people are to be ‘perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect’ (Matt. 5:48), meaning that they were to show practical love as God continued to do in a rebel world. Love remains the way of life for us who are made in his image and this is the fulfilling of the law (Matt. 22:37–40; Gal. 5:14):

Man is the living personal image of God; the law is the written preceptual image of God (J. A. Motyer).

First, we need to see the way of love in God—for it is of him and not of us. *Then* we need to see the way of love in us, from God—for his love is perfected in us, or comes to its goal in us.

THE WAY OF LOVE IN GOD—FOR US

With the coming of Jesus, we know love as the way of the Father, Son and Spirit. Love is of God as in the Old Testament, but the extent and nature of the love of God is now revealed in his giving of his Son (John 3:16); his love is without measure, and is familial. God commends his love to us as undeserved and complete, but again as familial—in the giving up of his Son to death (Rom. 5:8).

This love is also known to us by the coming of the other Comforter (John 14:16), the pouring out of God's Spirit so that we may know the things freely given to us by God (I Cor. 2:10).

The Father is the Fountainhead of Godhead and of Love

Israel's confession is still true: 'The Lord our God, the Lord is one' (Mark 12:29). When the term God is used by the apostles, it is evident that they generally refer to the Father, and the love of God is the love of the Father in sending the Son (e.g. Rom. 5:8; I John 4:9). With the Son and the Spirit, it is clear that we still have to do with God, but not with God as apart from the Father.

We must speak of the Son as eternally begotten of the Father (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18). That is, his being and actions flow from the Father. The Son is the Son of the Father's love (Col. 1:13): he received the love of the Father from eternity and knows it fully, therefore he alone is the Revealer and Agent of that love to the world (John 17:24–26). The love of the Son is the love of God (Rom. 8:35, 39). Jesus said: 'Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me' (John 14:10–11). Their union is love and love in action to the world.

Christ's purpose was that we should know his Father. He did the will of his Father and did everything that the Scriptures might be fulfilled—which was his Father's will. Jesus called his Father 'my God' (Mark 15:34; John 20:17). He was sent as a servant is sent (John 13:16) and said 'the Father is greater than I' (John 14:28)—though also one (John 10:30). While these things were said in his created manhood, it remains that the Son of God derived his Sonship from the Father and that his words arise from his eternal relation to the Father rather than from the contingency of his humanity. At the end of history, Christ will present the kingdom to the Father and himself be subject to the Father 'that God may be everything to ever yone' (I Cor. 15:28)—as he is everything to the Son.

The Spirit also proceeds from the Father—meaning that he is sent, as was Jesus, to bring aid to the disciples (John 14:16, 26; 15:26). This suggests the eternal contingency of the Spirit on the Father. His revelations are of God (I Cor. 2:10–11) and the love he reveals is the love of God (Rom. 5:5).

Clearly, the Son and the Spirit are with the Father in being everything to every one (e.g. Rev. 21:22–23), but there is a priority of the Father. The revelation of God—in Christ and by the Spirit—has revealed to us a community of love which is eternal.

The Nature of Love

Paul said 'Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others' (Phil. 2:4, *NRSV*). He knew this was the mind of Christ, and of course the mind of the Father. The Father and Son are other-person regarding and other-person centred. The Father's being in the Son and the Son in the Father is to be regarded as

the action of self-giving love. Personhood consists in being other-person regarding—not as defined by self-awareness and self-determination (as presently defined by humanist thinking) but by mutual love and serving and reliance. Apart from Christ, we who are made in the image of God change our persons back into masks (original meaning of *persona*). See T. F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*; p. 68.

THE WAY OF LOVE IN US—FROM GOD

When the Scripture says that love is of God, it has in mind that God ‘sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him’ (I John 4:7, 9). As love is the operation of the divine relationships, so it is the way of life for ourselves as revealed in Christ.

The love of the Father and the Son by the Spirit is not inaccessible, but rather the whole environment for our living. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ (Rom. 8:35, 39). We have been transferred to the kingdom or rule of the Son of God’s love (Col. 1:13).

This is secured for us in practice through the fear of judgment being destroyed (I John 4:16–19).

All of these provisions are with a view to our being brought to love. ‘Let us love one another; for love is of God’ (I John 4:7, also 11, 21). Love for us begins as love for Christ who brought love to us. Even though this love was still partial in the apostles, Jesus was sure of the continuum of love in them—they would keep his word, receive the Spirit and Christ, be loved by the Father and Son, and be indwelt by them (John 15:15–24). When Jesus said ‘If you love me . . .’, he did not make the kingdom subject to a humanistic good intention or feeling. He who knew all things knew that his disciples would love him—forever (John 21:17–19). His cross would come in the interim.

Eternal love is the law for man, as it is of God—not legalistically, or with a view to fellowship with God, but communally, in the sense that it arises from relationship with God—communion of the Holy Spirit in fact (II Cor. 13:14).

As Jesus gave himself up to his passion by the Spirit (Heb. 9:14), so we offer our prayers and obedience to the Father by the same Spirit: by the love of the Spirit prayers are to be addressed to God and for the effecting of the will of God (Rom. 15:30–32). Love in us is not simply a response—though it is that—but a ‘completing’ of God’s love in us (I John 2:5). Love in us is fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), that is to say, of God.

If love is humanly conceived it must be moderated, conditioned and perhaps be abandoned in any real sense. But love has been secured by the true light shining (I John 2:8). The command as a call and requirement is also prophetic—it is being accomplished—in Christ who fulfilled it, and in us in whom it comes to its goal (I John 2:5; 4:12), because the true light is shining. This light is God himself, and the God specifically who relates to us through the blood of his Son (I John 1:5–7).

Love, then, is eternal—in God, and in us. Paul said: ‘Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love undying’ (Eph. 6:24). J. Armitage Robinson says that ‘undying’ signifies:

that imperishableness which is an attribute of God Himself, and which belongs to the unchanging order of the eternal world. Imperishableness is the characteristic of our new life in Christ and of our love to Him. That life and that love are in truth immortal; they belong to a

region which is beyond the touch of decay and death.

So the epistle which opened with a bold glance into the eternal past closes with the outlook of an immortal hope (Commentary on Ephesians, p. 138).

Study seventeen

The Kingdom of God— Relationships Divine & Human

(BY GEOFFREY BINGHAM)

When we talk of the Kingdom of God we are talking of a Kingdom which is called ‘the kingdom of the Son of his love’, the Father’s Kingdom, for it is to the Father we pray, ‘Thy Kingdom come’. It is the Kingdom of the Spirit because ‘the kingdom of God is . . . righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit’. It is the Kingdom which is the reign and rule of holy Love. Whilst that Love must banish all evil from the world, it defeats it not by some supernatural, metaphysical, absolute power, but by the power of the Lamb once slain and who is the Warrior Bridegroom who brings the Bride—for whom he died—to her glorious Wedding Feast, and to the Father who designed these nuptials for the climax of history and designed this Kingdom so that it should be one of royal priests.

THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

When we speak of ‘the Kingdom of God’ the term is heard in various ways by those listening. If we define the general idea of the Kingdom as ‘the reign and rule of God’ then that comprehends the Kingdom in its creational compass. If we think of the Kingdom being that of the Father then we think of ‘every family [the whole family] in heaven and on earth’ (Eph. 3:15). If we think of Israel as God’s ‘kingdom of priests and a holy nation’ (Exod. 19:6) then we narrow it down—if only temporally—to that covenant people. If we think of the Kingdom as John the Baptist and Jesus viewed it then it was ‘coming’, and came in the Person of Jesus and was confirmed at his baptism. If we think of it as ‘the Kingdom of Christ and of God’ (Eph. 5:5; cf. Rev. 11:15), then it is because through the Atonement Jesus ‘secured the Kingdom’ so that ‘the gospel of the Kingdom’ whilst remaining that has thus become ‘the gospel of salvation’ (Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31). If we think in terms of ‘the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ’ (Rev. 11:15), then we are thinking of the eschatological denouement or *telos*, but in between Pentecost and the Parousia there is the action of defeating the kingdom of Satan (I Cor. 15:24–28). It is this Kingdom that the elect finally ‘enter’ and ‘inherit’. None of this need confuse us if we think of the Father and the Son in terms of ‘who was, and is, and is to come’, that is, ‘the Alpha and the Omega’—titles given to them both.

We summarise the Kingdom in its various aspects by seeing it as militant against the kingdom of darkness (Col. 1:13; Luke 11:14–23), but then as the habitat, territory

and polity in which the elect live in this world and its time in faith, and in the age to come under the realised aegis of the King.

The Kingdom and the Law

As we have said, the Kingdom of God is simply His rule and reign over all things He has created. He has sovereignty over all time and eternity. Whilst celestial and terrestrial creatures have rebelled against this authority they cannot defeat it. God's Law—the *torah* of Himself—is the Law of the Kingdom, and men and angels obey it to their profit and disobey it to their judgment. The Law which is meant for life and delight turns to a terrifying action upon the rebellious—both celestial and terrestrial creatures. Even so, the Law of the Kingdom is Love and whilst that Love is redemptive for the repentant, it is implacable in its judgment of evil. We remind ourselves that there is no Law of God or His Kingdom which is apart from Him, for the Law is personal, the very Law of God. When we do this we are reminding ourselves that the Law of the Kingdom is not primarily for us in its judicial aspects so much as it is the wonderful way of life of the Kingdom of holy Love, and that it shows us how God is in this His Kingdom, and how we be, may be, and should be, when living in that Law. Because the Kingdom is eternal, out of God's eternity, it is at once prior to our history, is for our history and then ultimately is for the New Creation when the Kingdom will be said to have come into its immutable own.

We can see that any infringement of this Law along the line and way of history, whose judgment must be feared with deep apprehension, must be culpable.

THE KINGDOM AND ITS LAW: THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT, THE NEW [ESCHATOLOGICAL] LAW AND THE COMMUNITY OF THE KINGDOM

To quote P. T. Forsyth again:

But God's holy law is His own holy nature, the principle of His own holy heart, the life action and norm of His moral personality, with no source or authority outside Himself, and no claim He could even wish to ignore or evade. To tamper with it would have been to deny His own soul. He loves it as He must love Himself, or His other self, His very Son, His Holy One, dearer to him than all men and all prodigals. A wound to that holy law of His Being is a stab to His own heart at least as keen and urgent as any love or pity He might feel to men.¹

The Primal Law given by God we have said to be the Law's 'soft copy' known by innocent Man because of his relationship with God. Because it is the Law of the Triune Community it is necessarily the Law of Love, the Law of the Divine relationships. The transcript of this Divine Law is placed in Man's heart, but it is against this Law he rebels and which he seeks to counter. There is always ontological pressure upon him to go the true way of nature so he must devise the law which he would call 'natural' and then distribute that in his ways of culture, religion, ethics and so on, believing he is keeping what is authentic law.

Israel is given no other Law at Sinai but the Law of God (the Law of the Divine Community transcribed for the covenant people) and it is given directly by God out of Himself (Deut. 4:12–14; 5:6–21; 10:12–13). Realising that many of the ordinances related to Israel being and living in the Promised Land, they can only be understood

¹ The Preaching of Jesus and the Gospel of Christ, NCPI, Blackwood, S.A., 1987, p. 109.

when properly contextualised, yet ‘the Ten Words’ captured the way of the Triune Community, translating it into practice on the human plane. What Israel did with that Law in its rebellion against God, its idolatry and its legal formulations with the ‘letter’, called for the radicalisation of the Law by Christ. ‘Radicalisation’ does not mean he went beyond the Law for he came to ‘confirm and establish the law and the prophets’ (Matt. 5:17-18), and his five stated antitheses (Matt. 5:21–48) cleared the false rationalisations of the Law and showed its essence to be as Christ put it succinctly, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.’ The Sermon on the Mount is therefore a true presentation of ‘the law and the prophets’ for the Law and the prophets make one *corpus* of relational laws of the Law of the Triune Family.

The ‘Old’ Law is the ‘New’ Law

This Law is the new covenantal law of the heart (Jer. 31:31–34; cf. Heb. 8:8–12; 10:16–18; Rom. 7:6) known as the Law of Love (Rom. 13:8–10; Gal. 5:13–14; cf. James 1:22–25; 2:8–13), and as ‘the law of Christ’ (I Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2). It is ‘the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus’ (Rom. 8:2, *passim*) for the Community of Christ—the Community of Love—serves in the newness of the Spirit (Rom. 7:6). The Father, the Son and the Spirit had radicalised the ‘law of the letter’ (back) into its Primal ethos and form, which in the Epistles seems to be composed of *paraneses* and *paracleses* rather than appear as ‘the Ten Words’, but it is the same.² Whilst it is the Law *for* the church it is the Law *of* the Kingdom (Gal. 5:22; Rom. 14:17, etc.). Those who do ‘the works of the flesh’ never enter the Kingdom, and the Law is against such works. Those who produce the fruit of the Spirit are in the Kingdom and living by its Law, which in one sense, is composed of relational laws. We say this because Paul says there is no law against the fruit of the Spirit, meaning the fruit of the Spirit is the *way* of the Law: it *is* the Law, the Triune Law of the Kingdom, the Law of the Triune Community.

The Law is Trinitarian

The Law of the Kingdom is the Law of the Father

Jesus showed he was out to do what the Father told him (John 5:17f.; 10:18; 14:30–31; cf. Heb. 10:7). His Kingdom parables show the necessity for doing the will of the Father. The church is in the Father (I Thess. 1:1) and the sons of God are led by the Spirit (Rom. 8:14; cf. Gal. 5:18). When the church prays ‘Thy will be done,’ it is praying about its obedience to the Law of God as it operates in the Divine Community.

The Law of the Kingdom is the Law of Christ, the Son

The Son came to do the will of the Father, but as Lord of the redeemed Community

² Some theologians would avoid the word ‘law’ if possible, preferring the word ‘commands’ because such are given directly and personally, and not via some block of legislation known now as ‘hard copy’. The reasoning is wrong, since God gave the Law out of His own nature and to His covenant people. It is true that John in his Epistles used the terms ‘commands’ or ‘commandments’, but he says ‘they are not burdensome’. For him sin is ‘transgression of the law’ but it is doubtful he had a reaction against the word: such reactions may reveal vestiges of our fallen ‘anti-law’ attitudes.

his servants and brethren obey ‘the law of Christ’ (I Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2). As we have seen, this is the ‘the law of love’ and its powerful exposition is the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus came to confirm and establish ‘the law and the prophets’ as the way of the Kingdom (Matt. 5:17–19), and he claimed he did so with God’s full authority (cf. Matt. 7:21–28), showing afresh its immutable nature.

The Law of the Kingdom is the Law of the Spirit

The ‘law of Christ’ and ‘the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus’ (Rom. 8:2–8) are the same Law and are the Law of God. In Romans 14:17 Paul says that ‘the kingdom of God is not [debating about matters of] food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit’. Now this ‘righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit’ sound similar to ‘the fruit of the Spirit’ in Galatians 5:22–23. If we take the passage of Galatians 5:13–26 we note that to be under the law—that is the law as letter and as a means of self-justification—brings one to the works of the flesh, and these are not according to the Law: the Law is against them (cf. I Tim. 1:8–11). To be led by, and to walk in the Spirit, is to produce the fruit of the Spirit, ‘love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control’. These remind us of Romans 14:17—the way of the Kingdom—and also of the Sermon on the Mount.

THE LAW OF THE KINGDOM IS ESCHATOLOGICAL

In I Corinthians 15:24–28 (cf. Rev. 11:15; 12:10; 19:1–5), Christ is putting down the kingdom of darkness and will complete this and so usher in the new aeon, ‘the regeneration’ (*en te paliggnesia*). Between the Ascension and the Parousia this struggle is going on. Moreover—as Paul shows us in Romans 8—the whole creation is groaning convulsively, and even those who have ‘the first fruits of the Spirit’ have these groanings within. The Sermon on the Mount makes it clear that the members of the Kingdom face persecution and conflict. The Law is the Law of Love operating in ‘this present evil age’ (Gal. 1:4–5), and not in that form when all evil shall be removed and the new heaven and the new earth appear with all ‘the great eternities’ accompanying them. Matthew 5:43–48 is a good example of how those in the Kingdom should live in the Law of Love in the face of this conflict.

THE DIVINE-HUMAN PERICHORESIS WHICH BRINGS THE KINGDOM RELATIONSHIPS

Even so, there is more to living the Law—to living out its relationships and ethics in the redeemed Community—for it is the Law of God, the Law of the Triune Community of Love and God is always outgoing. He created the world and loves it. He so loved that He gave His only begotten Son. He sent His Son into the world to reveal the mystery of godliness by being its Saviour (John 3:16; I John 4:14). This one *is* the propitiation for the sins of the world (I John 2:2). Within the Triune Community the Members are ‘other-persons regarding’. The *perichoresis-circumincessio* means the interpenetration of the Persons, the coinherence and intrasubjectivity which means they are One. Their Law of Love means that all give to and receive from one another; all honour one another, and all serve one another. Whilst all of this issues from the Father who is *fons divinitatis*, yet all do all. Whilst theologians speak of the Triune works and acts as being *ad intra* and *ad extra*, yet they are the one. The ontological

and economic Trinity are One. They are—so to speak—turned out to the creation they brought into being, and will redeem the elect, ensuring that history will come to its designed eschatological end, the *telos* of the plan.

In order to fulfil that plan Christ the Son gives his fullness to his church (Eph. 1:22–23), and in this Paul prays that the church ‘may be filled unto all the fullness of God’. The church is not only expected to live the Law of Love in its relational and ethical actions but also—and perhaps primarily—in its proclamation of the Gospel. If the church is not ‘other-persons centred’ then its motivations for what it calls ‘proclamation’ will be deficient and fail to witness to the Divine Community and the salvation bought at great cost to the Godhead. The church, as the proclaimer of the Kingdom, cannot proclaim authentically when it is not living out the Law of Love towards all, for its fullness of love comes from the Godhead in which all indwell, and the Godhead which indwells them.

ALL RELATIONSHIPS SPRING FROM UNION AND COMMUNION WITH GOD

At the end, we must now take up the fact that the Divine *perichoresis–circumincessio* flows from the Triune Community into the church, the new community of Love, and so out to the world. Jesus told his disciples to abide in him (John 15) for there was no other way to fullness and fruitfulness. In John 14:15–23 he spoke of the Spirit coming to dwell in them, and also of the Father and himself taking up their dwelling place in them. Jesus final prayer was:

I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me.

John in his Epistles makes much of this interdwelling of the Father and his people:

No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Saviour of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we know and believe the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

The intimacy of union and communion is shown in that ‘our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ’, and ‘we have been called into the fellowship of his Son’, and that ‘our lives are hid with Christ in God’. This communion is very ‘down to earth’ whilst it is ‘up to heaven’. Paul’s letters abound in being ‘in the Father’, ‘in Christ’, and ‘in the Spirit’, as also that God is in us. II Peter 1:4 tells us that we have—and will have in full measure—‘participation in the divine nature’, which some call *theopoiosis* or *theosis*, ‘the divinisation of Man’. It does not mean Man will attain deity, but that he will be drawn up into the Godhead, into communion with the Divine Family. It is sometimes called ‘the glory of the liberty of the children of God’. This induction into the mystery of the Triune Family will take place in ways

perhaps not now known to us, but certainly will be when the Bride is wedded to the Son of Man who is the Son of God. That glorious communion will be utterly full ‘in that day’ but meanwhile it is the richest relationship we presently know. The *perichoresis* of the Triune Godhead flows into the Community of Christ, and it is this which sets our faces to the world with the compassion and love of God. Said in another way, it is the Primal Law—the Law *of* God—in which the Trinity subsists, now being the way of life of God and His Community.

It is in this sense we speak of ‘divine and human relationships’, and understand them to be the relationships of the Kingdom of God.³

FINAL PASTORAL COMMENT

As I have come to see something of this ‘mystery of God’, and ‘the mystery of Christ’ and ‘the mystery of godliness’, I have realised what God is about in creation, redemption and the *telos*. It has brought a certain amount of shame to me, who realise I may have been single-eyed in ministry, but have much lacked that ‘other-person-centredness’ in the ministry of the gospel. A whole new view of the Law of God has heightened my understanding of God as Love, as holy Love. I trust we will be filled with God and so know and express this Love that turns outward to others as we proclaim the Triune God and the Love of the Three Persons-in-unity.

This other-person-centredness not only requires us to go to those outside the church, but to recognise that with the many differences we have of faith and practice, that we must not merely tolerate the differences, but come to love one another within those differences. It is in communion we find personal being, and it is in that communion that we discover ourselves as members of Christ’s body, and as such discover communion with one another.

³ Some theologians develop a *praxis* from the hope of the eschatological denouement, reasoning that if it will come to pass then we must share in the outworking of it by the use of a *praxis*. Belief in God’s sovereignty is not an excuse for doing nothing, but formulations of *praxis* carry the danger of ideology and even the tyranny of theologically devised law. It is better to be obedient within the Kingdom to the Law and the will of God as He leads through His Son, His Spirit and His word.

Christianity Rediscovered

(BY GEOFFREY BINGHAM)

AN EXAMINATION OF VINCENT J. DONOVAN'S BOOK

Publishing details: This book was first published in 1978 (Notre Dame, Ind. Fides/Claretian) and its 11th printing was in 1993 by Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York. SCM have also published some printings.

WHY THE BOOK SHOULD BE STUDIED

This is probably one of the most startling of books¹ to do with Christian Mission since the books by Roland Allen, Donald McGavran and Harry Boer earlier in the century.² Allen's books treat mission under the titles given, that Paul went on the tide of the Spirit to the countries he visited, in which he founded churches according to certain principles by which he worked. McGavran's book really followed Allen's and spoke of evangelising clans, tribes and peoples, rather than seeking to win single members of those groups to conversion. Boer takes up the theme of the missionary movement from Pentecost not being primarily based on 'the great commission', but on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. With this both Allen and McGavran would concur. Donovan's book is better understood if we read these other authors. He certainly imbibed Allen and McGavran.

I believe Donovan's book is one every pastor should read for the issues it raises and the pattern of proclamation it pursues, especially in the face of the present patterns of church growth and megachurch building.³

¹ I am aware that there is a whole body of missiological literature, and keen assessments of how to go about the task of what we call 'missionary work', but it seems to me in reading much of it that it is speaking of missionary strategy, of utilising principles of church-founding and church growth and management which are suspiciously like a reproduction of Western ecclesiastical life and politics. In the case of the book under discussion we are confronted by a direct proclamation to a people within the context of their culture, and this is precisely how we should be operating today, even though our situations may prove to be more complicated because of certain historical factors, namely mistakes we have made in our largely unthought through ecclesiologies.

² Roland Allen's books are *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Christian Church; Paul's Missionary Methods or Ours?*, Fleming Revell, 1913; and *The Ministry of the Spirit*: McGavran's is *The Bridges of God*, Friendship Pr., 1955. I would recommend Harry Boer's *Pentecost and Mission*. Donovan quotes from J. C. Hoekendijk's *The Church Inside Out*, Westminster Pr., 1964; Paul Tillich's *Theology of Culture*, Oxford, 1964; and Hans Kung's *The Church*, Sheed and Ward, 1967. He highly recommends Eugene Hillman's *The Church as Mission*, Herder and Herder, 1965.

³ I think all pastors should read Os. Guinness's *Dining With The Devil*, Baker, 1993, in regard to the present drive for church growth and the mega-church building.

DONOVAN AND MISSION

We gather Donovan's approach to mission from his preface to the Second Edition of the book, as also his 'Introduction' and chapter 2—'Letter to a Bishop'. In his Preface to the Second Edition he says, 'The premise of this book is that every theology or theory must be based on previous missionary experience, and that any theory or theology which is not based on previous missionary experience is empty words, and of use to no one. The conviction of the book is the belief that the gospel itself, untied to any social service or other inducement, is a message filled with power and fertility and creativity and freedom. The main thrust of the book describes an attempt to empower a particular people with the freedom and total responsibility of that gospel. This experience, lived out in the lonely pastoral setting of the Masai steppes of East Africa, is far removed from the spreading urban-technological society in which we live. Can the experience of the one world be of any value to the other? I do not know. I can only say the cry of hopelessness I heard then in that desert setting is not much different from the cry I hear today in the wasteland of our cities' (p. viii).

Donovan spent 17 years in East Africa and in May 1966 wrote to his bishop to have permission to go to the Masai people in Tanzania and simply preach the gospel to them. The Catholic Church had been 'on mission' to this people for 100 years, and when Donovan approached the leaders of the Masai tribes they were puzzled as to what he wanted to do, and then why after 100 years Donovan should be about this venture.

DONOVAN AND THE MASAI

I hope you will get the book and read it through, then go back and study it as I think it has immense significance for present proclamation of the gospel and pastoral ministry anywhere. Allen and others who have written on mission in the New Testament have not themselves had the opportunity or occasion to put into practice what they have adduced from the New Testament. Donovan went straight to it.

Donovan had to speak to the tribespeople in their own culture. They had passed 100 years receiving help and education from the Mission, but no person had ever been converted. His listeners tested everything he said along the way. They were hearing him with their own beliefs in God, Man and the creation. Donovan realised God has always worked among all tribes, everywhere, and though culture may offer resistance to the Gospel⁴ it is not to be attacked, and in fact the proclaimer can learn from the culture into which he is trying to speak.

Donovan was a bit stunned to learn that there were many equivalent symbols and figures for God in the Masai culture which were near parallels to Israelite usages. He used the historical person of Abraham and God's call to him to leave his family's place of living and to go out to another land. Donovan said that a tribe can—so to speak—trap their God into being a tribal deity and deny Him his true universality. Abraham had to go outside his tribal perimeters to be the servant of the God of all peoples and bring this news of God to all. Africans generally have a monotheistic

⁴ See H. Richard Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture*, Harper & Row, 1951, for the whole matter of Christ's attitude to culture, culture's attitude to Christ, and Christ as the transformer of culture. Much has been written in Missiology on culture and we need to know how to approach it, evaluate it, and speak to it, without ourselves imposing our own culture—which we often think to be Christian! This need to comprehend culture and what it is about is presently necessary in our growing multi-cultural society.

understanding of God but marginalise him to their particular tribe. This idea has not been absent in so-called Christian nations! In a way the proclaimer was taking them on a journey with himself and both were living in the story of Abraham and his God. The evangelist was living in it with those who were being evangelised.

God is a Lion

One of the gems of the book is the story called ‘The Lion is God’. Donovan found, as he looked at the early messengers, that they did not talk about sin. Maybe sin was something they would come to know when the miracle of conversion would take place. Meanwhile he told stories, the parables, and—so to speak—indigenised them. They were of the stuff of their background of life. Unconsciously he was pursuing them with everything. One day it seemed to him that he had a crisis of faith, in fact a loss of faith. He was drained of his old way of believing—with the head. They told him the story of the lion, that it pursued its prey. Donovan, they said, was like that, pursuing them. They had not pursued God: God was the lion pursuing them until he pounced on his prey and defeated them. Faith was not a mental believing but a deadly pursuit. The way the story is told is that God is ever after us and once defeated we believe in Him. This is a powerful concept. Donovan revived in his faith and his telling.

JESUS NOT A DEITY BUT A MAN

Donovan faithfully presented Jesus as in the Gospels, a man, born of a woman, living in a village, commencing his ministry, telling stories, doing acts, being God’s revelation to all, without necessarily revealing at that point that he was a God; just revealing God. They relished his humanity, his being one of us/them, one in the great story of God going out to be the God of the nations, through this Son.

In all of this no mention was made of the church. The missionary did not preach the church. He preached forgiveness, but not before he had preached the Cross. When they heard the message of the crucifixion they first laughed in disbelief ‘as pagans do’. ‘Then they were scandalised by it as religious people must’. Not thinking in terms of the future they had no hope of resurrection. This had to come through by the message of Jesus’ rising again.

THE CRISIS OF RESPONSE

Donovan had told them that all he could do was deliver the message: it was up to them as to what they would do. He was, however, speaking to a group, to a tribe, to clans and not to individuals. All were persons within a close-knit group. Even to approach the leader (*legwanan*, chief) and the elders he was not really approaching them but the whole tribe. The response would be tribal.⁵ The missionary left them for some days and they pondered the matter, the immediate tribe to whom he was speaking eventually responding to and receiving the gospel. Certain stories in the book tell us that the people did know something of sin and sins. They knew the fierce killings of inter-clan fightings—baptising their spears with blood, so to speak—were

⁵ This is the emphasis McGavran makes in his *Bridges of God*.

to be deplored. Breaking the tribal law put a man outside the law and an excommunicated person lived a life of misery. A person sinned against had to work up and work out—a ritual of spittle whereby he could forgive the offender: it was a demanding, painful, yet commendable task.

BAPTISM AND THE RENEWED COMMUNITY

When Donovan thought some of the listeners were not yet ready personally for baptism he thought he should weed such out. The community would not have that. Whatever their weaknesses the community had decided as one for Christ: they would look after the weak ones within that communal faith. ‘Communal faith’ was a concept Donovan had not met. Now he had met it. All were baptised. When he wanted to get some name for this new community they replied, ‘When we are baptised, we will be become the *Orporor L’Engai*, the age group brotherhood of God.’ This concept related to their most sacred understanding of a grouping, ‘the age group brotherhood of God’. One fascinating detail is that the people wished to have Christian names and the leader chose that of ‘Abraham’: the story needs to be read to gather the significance of name-changing.

Donovan then describes the ritual that emerged for the baptism, included in which were meaningful rituals that engaged both the word of God and the Masai culture. Some might think this to be syncretism, but careful examination shows that it is not. In all of this the new community was born without a wrenching away from an old culture, yet that culture was transformed, for the people were transformed. It was a culture captured by Christ. Incredibly but wonderfully the principles of their living flowered out into this new but true, believing community.

Non-Acceptance

Not all communities of the Masai people accepted the gospel. As some groups had totally accepted it, at least one group wholly declined to accept it. They had thought it over carefully after having listened carefully. Donovan was shocked by the rejection but came to terms with it. We might note that Paul had this experience of rejection, but some in the community, as a group, had believed even at Athens. I am reminded of John 20:19–23 where Jesus spoke of sins being forgiven and sins being retained. The Jewish Sanhedrin would have to come into this category by contrast to those who received the message on the Day of Pentecost.

THE EUCHARISTIC COMMUNITY

In Donovan’s book we do not find everything neatly parcelled and finally tied off. He has many questions to ponder, answers that are required to be given. Being a Roman Catholic he seeks to find the place for ministry which would be that of a priest. If I read him correctly he believes in the priesthood of all believers, but does not find a place for a sacerdotal priest nor does he seem to accept apostolic succession of a priesthood. Like Allen he certainly rejects the age-old missionary thrust by means of mission-compounds, protection for new converts within the missionary compound perimeters, and fostering of churches, as well as the importing of pastors and clergy from outside the culture of the new community.

He describes the ‘eucharistic community’, showing how the people viewed the Eucharist, came to it as a community and celebrated it in ways which naturally sprang from their ancient culture. This section is very moving. It will not be moving for those who hold traditional ‘missionary’ ideas: it will even seem like syncretism, which it is not. At the very end Donovan was seeking to know how the community could proceed without a priest such as he was, though in fact he was really a teacher–evangelist, a proclaimer, yet one who was with them in the life of the new community in which the tribal *legwanan* and the elders still led their people, though not in the way we might understand to be strictly biblical eldership. Donovan’s approach would be seen by his peers as most radical, but many of us might see it as simply biblical, especially if we are discerning readers of Acts and the Epistles, and realise the nature of teaching given to new converts from pagan situations.

In chapters 8 and 9 Donovan takes up many of the issues that Allen outlines in his books and this is one of the great values of the book we are now examining. It should be closely studied. Under the heading ‘A Pauline and a Vatican View’ he is at variance with the latter, but his reasoning is valuable. Supporting him is what he calls ‘the eucharistic community with a mission’. In other words this gospel has firmly taken root in the new community and is spreading to other communities. Donovan’s work of bringing ‘indigenous churches’ into being is still proceeding, but other missions have sought to ‘indigenise’ the churches they brought into being, so that African bishops and African clergy are the order of the day, but for the great part they are proceeding along the old lines of compounds, large buildings, clerical patterns the missionaries had brought from the West—and so on. It can be questioned whether, in fact, these are truly indigenous communities. Donovan leaves us with this picture.

AN EVALUATION OF THE BOOK *CHRISTIANITY REDISCOVERED*

This short time of presentation and discussion can only be a brief introduction to the book. I believe we should read it time and again, and go over it carefully, seeking to grasp the author’s mind. Some have said he is a universalist, some that he espouses syncretism and others are uneasy about his Catholic ethos, his dogmatic understanding of Christianity, and the church and of the sacraments, to say nothing of missionary ministry. I would question these evaluations as simplistic. I have an admiration for the way he has broken out of his former ways of seeing things, his acceptance and use of non-Catholic writers—missionary and otherwise. He has a genuine humility regarding his own ministry and achievements.

We need to see that there is a good missionary history as well as traditional patterns which tended to reproduce the church systems, politics and Western cultures which missionaries tended to think were Christian when they were not necessarily so. Many Bible and Missionary Training Colleges and Seminaries have studied the books we have mentioned in our paper. Many missionary societies have either espoused indigenous principles, or have partly absorbed them into their practice. Donovan is not the first and only missionary to do what he has done: it is simply that others have not written books. The fact that this book has been written and is before us is important. He is claiming, in fact, that no one should *carte blanche* be a missiologist who has not been a missionary, and then that that one should have practiced the proclamation and church founding after the manner in which he was involved.

His book by no means tells the whole story, but it confronts us with immediacy. What are we doing in our churches? What cultures do we have in our denominations?

For example, how much do we think Western democracy to be Christian? What of the incredible ‘mix’ we have these days in historical and textual criticism, changing hermeneutics, proclamation, teaching, worship, politics, promotion, managerial skills, social activism, psychological and therapeutic clinical treatments—and so on? How do we approach our churches which are in this ‘mix’ with the same gospel Donovan brought to the Masai? The most powerful of all questions which needs to be answered is, ‘What is the gospel?’ With it is the other question, ‘How does Christ come to the cultures and what does he do in, with and through them, and what is the ultimate outcome of his Lordship in history in regard to them?’ These are questions to which we must address ourselves.