



New Creation Teaching Ministry

PASTOR'S MONDAY STUDY GROUP NOTES

Studies by Geoffrey Bingham unless otherwise stated

1988 Pastors Study Group Titles

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Evangelism and Worship

The Thesis

The thesis we seek to establish in this essay is that man-as created-was, and is primarily a worshipping creature. His loss of true worship through the Fall was such as to change the *object of his worship*, and bring him into God's judgement. Worship is man's primary purpose for living. In order to worship God truly he must be redeemed, for such worship is the true *telos* of redemption. Objectively the Gospel is required for his salvation, and subjectively he cannot exist as a true creature without the exercise of authentic worship. There is then a drive in every human creature to come to such worship, even though that drive may be contested by powers of evil both within and outside of man. Evangelism is that work of God which declares the liberation of man from his bondage to sin, evil powers and his own flesh, and which effects that emancipation. Only when emancipated may a human person come to true worship. There is no other way of coming to worship of 'the true and living God' (1 Thess. 1:9; John 17:3; John 4:23; Heb. 9:14). We further insist that worship presupposes salvation, especially if this is understood within the context of covenant, and particularly the covenant of grace. We thus conclude that salvation and worship are inseparable, and that the offer of true worship, i.e. the offer of coming to know the true God, is a fundamental part of true evangelism.

We will later look at the implications of our thesis for the practice of evangelism.

Man and Worship

We commence our examination of man as a worshipping creature at the point of his creation. To be created in the image and likeness of God meant that man had affinity with God in a manner and measure not known by other creatures. God blessed them and said, 'Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and have dominion over it.' *Service and worship* are virtually synonymous in both Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament the Hebrew verb *abad* means 'to serve' and is related to *abed*, i.e. 'servant'. The verb 'to worship' is *shacah* i.e. 'to bow down'. The verbs *abad* and *shacah* are often coupled as being parallel, e.g. Deuteronomy 11:16 and Jeremiah 22:9. 'Let my son go that he may serve me,' can mean nothing less than, 'that he may worship me,' (J.E.B has 'offer me worship'). When one serves the god and idols then one worships them and when one worships them then he serves them. Not to serve and worship God is unthinkable.

Similarly in the New Testament the Greek verb to 'serve' is *latreuo*, and 'to worship' is *proskuneo*-to bow the knee towards. Romans 12:1 uses *latreuo* which is variously translated 'reasonable service' or 'spiritual worship' (ten *logiken latreian*).

When, then, God gave the primal mandate to man he expected man to serve Him by what he did, and so to give Him worship, i.e. 'worthship'. In the light of God's creation of man this is 'reasonable worship'. Man's refusal to do this was wholly illogical. Paul's account in Romans 1: 18- 32 of man's rebellion against God shows the reversal of true worship, (i) they did not honour Him as God although they knew Him and His worth, and (ii) they were unthankful. True worship then is true knowledge of God, due honour of Him, and thanksgiving to Him. This refusal to worship- to serve-brought about radical changes in man's mind, and so much so that (i) he gave

the glory of the immortal God to idols, and (ii) he wholly exchanged the truth of God for a lie.

This does not mean that man ceased to worship, but that the *object* of his worship changed, and so the values he gave to God, man, and creation radically altered. 'The lie' was a newly-thought variously-rationalised theology, anthropology and cosmology*. Henceforth what man would do would be conditioned by this changed set of values. This change wrought by man brought him into incongruent living with God, man and creation. Man from that point onward lives under the tension of incongruence and personal dislocation. Nothing can be to him essentially what it was.

The thrice repeated 'God gave him up' of verses 24, 26 and 28 must be the explanation of God's wrath for 'the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth'. The giving of man up to his attitudes and acts wrought by his rejection of God is the nature of the wrath of God. Man's guilt is compounded dynamically as he seeks to suppress the truth. His alienation from God causes his existential aloneness and loneliness. He suffers because he is against God, and against the truth of God, of man, and of creation. In this state he is in deep need of pure worship of God, and true service to Him. Because he refuses to accept the nature of the 'true and living God', his idolatry becomes compulsive-for he must, somehow or another, worship. He must give value to the creation in which he lives and the creatures and objects within it. He must know how to relate to them. To function within a rational universe means he must understand it. The creation itself can give him no reason-of-itself-for the being of himself, man, and itself.

To know God is life (John 17:3; 1 John 5:20) and to refuse to know God is death (Gen. 2:17; 3: 1- 10: cf. Isa. 59:2; 11 Cor. 5:15). Life and the living of it is a relational matter. Death is the breaking of that true relationship. Man's misery arises from his existential situation-his self- alienation from God-and its consequent result-God's wrath upon man. Man must worship, but his worship will have to be of surrogate deities or inadequate spirits. He may even be reduced to total worship of himself-a form of closed circuit or autonomous adoration.

What concerns us in our essay is that this fearful existential living within human incongruency, dislocation of the true self, and the unsatisfying worship of idols, man will know misery of an order that we cannot compute. This sort of misery is constantly discussed by the psalmists. Not only will his idols from time to time prove fruitless and futile, but a satisfying rationale of himself as creature will be impossible to obtain, even whilst it is imperative that he achieve it. The strong drive to worship-by nature of the case-will not be satisfied by surrogate deities. Man must have God or nothing else, and that is his dilemma for he cannot and may not have Him for his true worship.

All Worship is by Faith

Cain was a worshipper without authentic faith, whilst Abel worshipped by faith. That seems evident from Genesis 4:4-5, 7; Hebrews 11:4; and I John 3: 10-11. This seems to be the import of I Samuel 15:22-23. Hebrews 11 indicates that faith and obedience are integrally the one. The patriarchs worshipped in faith (Gen. 48:1-22 ; Heb. 11:21). Whilst Abraham was firstly an idolator (Josh. 24:2) yet God revealed Himself to Abraham (Acts 7:2 Gen. 12:7: 17:1-3; 18:1- 2), and *gave him the gift of true worship and with it salvation* (Gen. 15:6; cf. Rom. 4:3, 6-8). Isaac and Jacob worshipped by faith, knowing the grace of covenant.

Israel as a nation came to receive the gifts of God (*charismata*: Rom. 9:4; cf. 11:28-29). The various elements of these *charismata* are worthy of study for there can be no true worship without them - Worship and salvation are inextricably linked.

This is borne out in the important passage of John 4:20-24. The woman at the well asked Christ whether Samaritan or Jewish worship is the correct worship. His answer was, 'You worship what you do not know. We worship what we know, for *salvation is of the Jews.*' She had not asked about salvation and this is the only place in John's Gospel that the word is used. Why then did he say it? Salvation must have been linked in her mind with worship. Is there always, then the link of worship and salvation in the minds of devotees. Her own countryman later said of Jesus, 'We know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world. In some way they, too, must have linked worship with salvation.

Here we pause to examine Jesus' statement, 'Salvation is of the Jews,' for this is certainly a claim in the Old Testament (cf. Psa 147:19-20, cf. Deut. 4:5-8; Amos 3:2; Isa. 27:1) Doubtless he is telling the woman that the Samaritans were deficient in their worship because they lacked the true centre and altar of worship, and because they had only the Pentateuch and lacked the holy and prophetic writings. He is really saying that only he truly worships who knows the true God, and to worship God in this way is to have-or be in the way of-salvation. Not to know God is not to have salvation, but to know God is to have salvation.

Jesus then goes on to show that a transition is taking place in the matter of worship, i.e. 'the hour is coming and now is' and this is in Messiah. True worshipping will come with him, and it will be worship of the Father, and will be in spirit and truth, and in it God will *take the initiative*, i.e. 'such the Father ever seeks to worship him.'

The New True Worship is in the Truth, and by the Spirit

As against worshipping gods *in the lie* the new worship must be *in the truth*. The worshipper must *know* 'the only true God'-as over and against the false idols -and this truth of God is revealed to him by Messiah the Son of the Father (Matt. 11:27; John 1:14, 18; 14:6; 18:37; cf. I John 5:2). The Holy Spirit brings the very truth to which Christ himself witnessed (John 15:25; 16:12-15, I John 5:7). Hence worship of God is 'in [man's] spirit' (Rom. 1:7) by the Holy Spirit (Note: Ephes. 5:18-20 where true worship is by the Spirit, and Acts 13:2 shows that in the context of worship the Holy Spirit was present) for he has revealed God as Father (Gal. 4:4-6; Rom. 8:14-17). Equally he has revealed the *Sonship* of the Son, and his Lordship over this age and the age to come (Gal. 4:4-6; 1 Cor. 12:3). This is also the truth revealed.

The prophetic element of the new worship has a vast apparatus in the Old Testament. It is linked with the eschaton, and can only be interpreted by that system which the scholar who it who views it. That is the new worship is millinarian or post-millinarian, involving as it does the nations who are drawn by Israel to learn worship from that nation. See Isaiah 2:1-4; Mic. 4:1-3; Isaiah 45:14, 22-25; 49:12; 55:5; 60:3-6; 66:18-23; Zechariah 8:20-23; Isaiah 51:4-5; Luke 24:47. Along with this new worship is the new temple which is implied in the references immediately given, and which we will examine in detail at a later point.

It is true then to say that the new worship announced by Jesus to the woman at the well has come historically in the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, at Samaria, and at Caesarea. That is why Paul can say, 'For we are the true circumcision, who worship God in spirit, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.' Whilst *functionally* their worship in their own spirits (Rom. 1:7; Phil 3:3) is by the Holy Spirit, yet *soteriologically* the centre of worship has changed from Israel to Messiah, or-if we will have it-to the new covenant. This can be seen in Ezekiel 36:24- 218 which corresponds with Jeremiah 31:31-34, and is evident in Ezekiel 37 where in verses 1 to 14 the nations comes to life by the Spirit (as by Pentecost: cf Ezek. 37:9-10 and Acts 2:2-4) and then, being unified, becomes the true sanctuary of God in the context of

‘a covenant of peace ... an everlasting covenant’.. Now it can be said that ‘salvation is of Messiah’ (Acts 4:12) and not *per se* ‘of the Jews’.

In conformity with all this the passage of John 4:20-24 (cf. Gal. 4:4-6; Rom. 8:14-17) reveals that to worship God the Father through Messiah the Son, and the Spirit is to have salvation, i.e. to have already received salvation. When the Spirit reveals the Father and the Son (John 16:12-15) God can no longer said to be ‘the unknown God’, i.e. one unknown (John 4:22) or worshipped in ignorance (Acts 17:23).

The Pauline View of Worship and Salvation

Paul’s message to the pagans at Lystra was that he and Barnabas were not gods. He said, ‘We bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things [pagan sacrifices, Acts 14:13] to a *living God* whom made the heaven and the sea and all that is in them.’ The term ‘living God’ always indicates ‘the God who acts’ and Paul is urging them to turn to the God who acts. In I Thessalonians 1:9 the Thessalonians had turned ‘from idols to serve (*douleuo*) a living and true God.’ His message to the Greeks in Athens is to proclaim to them the ‘unknown God’ (cf. John 4:22). He does this be an exposition of the nature of God as Creator, and moves to the fact that God is Father (‘we are his offspring’; cf. Jer. 2:26-27) so that to worship depictions of God is something of which man, universally, must repent (17:30; cf. 26:20). Paul’s first preaching at Athens had been of ‘Jesus and the resurrection’ (17:18). In 20:21 Paul sums up his ministry as ‘testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance to God (*eis theon*) and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ’ (*eis ton kurion Iesoun*). When Paul preaches the Gospel at Athens he is proclaiming the unknown God to them as now known. The call for repentance--because of their former wrong worship-- and the demand for faith in Christ (17:34) meant the message was soteriological, but the call is not merely to repent of sin but of wrong (false) worship. Wrong worship is the evil of man who has rejected God (cf. Rom. 1:19-25), so that salvation consists in moving from wrong worship to the true, i.e. from the false deity to the true God.

The Petrine View of Worship and Salvation

On the day of Pentecost Peter proclaimed the gospel to Jews only, and 3,000 responded and were baptized. Jesus was announced as ‘Lord and Christ’ (Acts 2:38). In the face of the centrality of Christ, and the Jews rejection of him Peter told the Jews (Acts 2:39-40) to ‘Save yourselves from, this crooked (perverse) generation,’ i.e. those Jewish worshippers who refused to see salvation in Jesus-as Messiah. Such Jews are not simply reluctant to try new worship, but in fact are rejecting the truth of Messiah (cf. Acts 4:11-12; 5:30-32) and so the new worship and the new age. Whilst this fact is more implied than explicit in the apostle’s utterances, it is worked out further by Paul in such passages as Romans 10: 1-3, Philippians 3:3, and in Romans chapters 9-11. Also the writer of Hebrews gives it great attention.

In the first letter of Peter the writer speaks to his readers as the elect people of God-‘But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were no people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy.’ ‘Mercy’ here undoubtedly refers to salvation, but the point is they are now the true worshipping people, and part of the expression of that priestly worship is ‘to declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light’. In fact *their priestly worship is declaration of the Gospel*.

The View of Worship of the Author of ‘Hebrews’

Resource materials for our thesis in this book are plentiful. The writer has a view of worship which both transcends and outmodes worship under the ‘first covenant’. His view of Christ as high priest and as victim certainly categorizes his worship as soteriological. This is seen clearly in the 9th. and 10th. chapters. The efficaciousness of his sacrifice is such that worshippers now have ‘confidence to enter into the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus’ (10: 19). The worship is of faith and a cleansed conscience, “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our heart sprinkled clean from an evil conscience’ (10:22).

One worships when one is saved, ‘the blood of Christ. . . purify your conscience from dead works to serve (*latreuein*) the living God’ (9:14). We note again that God becomes ‘the living God’ to the saved person (cf. I Thess. 1:9; Acts 14:15) so that He is dynamically the object of worship.

Worship in the Book of the Revelation

Much of the worship in this book is by celestial creatures, and so is no paradigm either for human or terrestrial worship. We might refer to it as ‘original worship’ i.e. that kind of worship accorded to God as Creator and as the Holy One (cf. Rev. 4:2-11). Yet, because of salvation, both God and the Lamb are worshipped, and their ultimate triumph is seen to be soteriological (e.g. 5:6-14; 11: 16-19; 12: 10; 19:11-20: 10).

What interests us is the worship, (i) of the 144:00 as seen in 7:4-8 and 14:1-5, and (ii) of the multitude which no man could number as seen in 7:9-17. The latter’s worship is soteriologically inspired, these are they who have come out of the great tribulation and made their robes white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God and serve (*latreuo*) him day and night within his temple.’

Church Worship as Proclamation in the New Testament

If, as we have claimed, worship is primal and central to true human living, then the Gospel brings sinful man to the point where he exchanges the lie for the truth (Rom. 1:25) because the truth is the Gospel of God (Rom. 1:1; Rom. 15:16) and the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Mark. 1:1) is ‘the word of truth) by which man is born anew (I Pet. 1:23) and becomes ‘a kind of first fruits of his creatures’ (James 1: 18). We mean that Gospel reveals God not only as Creator but as Redeemer and as Father so that the one believing is not only a saved person but becomes a true worshipper.

First it can be said that the worship of the Jews prior to the proclamation of the Christian Gospel was itself a witness to those who, seeing it, became ‘god-fearers’. The book of Acts shows us a group of Gentiles who gathered around Jewish centres of worship. It appears they had become disaffected of pagan worship, and were attracted by Jewish teaching and worship (cf. Acts 10: 1-2; 13: 43; 14:1). Some of these had become proselytes, i.e. had become Jews. At Caesarea Cornelius and his household would be included in the ‘devout’ persons (Acts 11:1-2), and whilst they had been deeply affected by Jewish worship had not as yet received salvation. An angel had said to him, ‘Send to Joppa, and bring Simon called Peter; he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household’ (Acts 11:13-14). Once this household believed (Acts 11:44-47) they immediately began worship by the coming upon them of the Holy Spirit. Worship *was the immediate fruit of the Gospel.*

Worship was by the Spirit and Held Elements of Proclamation

It would be interesting to examine the worship of the Old Testament to see what soteriological elements it contained. There can be no doubt about the case of Abel's worship. A good commentary on this could be Luke 18:9-14, where the taxgatherer in saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner' was really saying, 'God be propitious (*hilastheti*) to me, the sinner.' Paraphrased his utterance could have run something like this, Oh God I am a sinner, and as such I deserve death. Look at me, I am beating my breast as a sign of the death I deserve. I cannot offer to you-the Holy One-a pure sacrifice. My position as sinner-taxgatherer prohibits me-a Jew-from offering a bloody sacrifice, and that is why I stand in the court of sinners, where also stand the Gentiles. You require an propitiatory sacrifice from me but I am unable to give it. I know, however, that you offer such a sacrifice-though how I know not-but that you are the propitiation-making God I know. So do just that and free me from my guilt as a sinner. This is your innate mercy as the God of grace.' Of course we are reading more theology into the utterance than the taxgatherer may have consciously thought, but this idea certainly stand in the use of the imperative, 'be propitious'.

Jesus said the man went down to his justified, rather than the self-justifying Pharisee. Our whole point in using the incident is to say that man worshipped by faith-through the cultus of sacrifice- and Abel could have done no less. There must have been much that was salvific in the worship of Israel, especially as we understand the nature of the covenantal sacrifices that resulted in the forgiveness of sins. There is surely something of this in the Pauline passage of

I Corinthians 11:23-26

Here Paul is saying that every time we celebrate the Lord's Supper, especially in the manual acts of breaking bread and holding forth the cup, we 'declare' (*kattangellette*) or 'show forth' or 'proclaim' the Lord's death until he comes. Doing this it is most reprehensible to do so in an unworthy manner, whatever action that may be. We cannot escape the fact that participation in the Lord's Supper is also a form of proclamation, and a dynamic one at that. This 'holding forth' is a soteriological act, and is a proclamation of the Gospel.

I Corinthians 14:20-25

In this passage Paul has unbelievers in mind. The ministry of tongues will be misunderstood by unbelievers if all speak in tongues. Indeed unbelievers will think the assembly to be made. He then says, 'If all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outside enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so, falling on his face, he will worship (*proskunesei*) God and declare that God is really among you'.

This speaks of the dynamical nature of worship. It also informs us that the use of prophecy-the utterance of God's word directly from Himself-will bring conviction to the unbelievers heart and cause him to fall down on his face and worship God. Whilst it does not say salvation comes to the convicted worshipper it certainly says that he knows and acknowledges the presence and reality of God. In fact this passage may introduce us into the evangelistic importance of worship-something we rarely speak or even think about.

Galatians 4:4-7

This is not, primarily, a worship passage. However it does speak of the utterance, 'Abba! Father!' Doubtless this cry arises at the initial awareness of adoption or sonship of the Father. Even so the form of address to God will be 'Father!' as was the case

with our Lord. When he prayed to his Father the disciples asked him to teach them how to pray, and his answer was, 'When you pray, say, 'Our Father. - .' It may well be that just as in the Lord's Supper the manual acts can conduct one to the first Last Supper event and all that it meant, so to prophesy directly from God or to address him as 'Father!' may have vital, existential communication with the hearer, and form a mode of proclamation, especially on the principle of, 'It's better felt than telt.'

Eschatological Worship

We now come to the heart of contemporary worship, the presence of God's people as the new temple in the present world. We suggested above that our interpretation of the new temple may require-for some of us-rationalisation in the light of one or other *schema* of eschatology, i.e. the use of some millennial view. The way to avoid this is to grasp the *Sitz im Leben* of the apostolic church. Paul sees the new church as a dynamic and spiritual entity in the present time, as composed of living stones built together for a sanctuary (habitation) of God in the Spirit (I Cor. 3:18; Ephes. 2:19-22; cf. Ezek. 37:26-28; Rev. 20:1-3). Peter has a similar understanding as can be seen from I Peter 2:4-10, and when the writer of Hebrews uses the principle of 'the house (or household) of God' (Heb. 3:1-6), then his thinking is somewhat similar to that of the two apostles. The three writers also hold similar ideas of 'spiritual sacrifices' (Rom. 12:1; 1 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 13:15-16). We have seen-interestingly enough- that Peter sees part of the priestly ministry of the new spiritual priesthood 'telling the wonderful deeds of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light', and this must be soteriological.

The New Temple is Christ, and is the Church

The problem which plagued the leaders of the Jews during the ministry of Christ, and following Pentecost was that the new believers would reject the Mosaic system. In other words they would abrogate the temple and its worship and traditions. They suspected Christ's words about destroying the temple and he would raise it in three days. Whilst they may have misunderstood them literally, they nevertheless knew what he was about. His body which was 'razed' by the crucifixion and then entombment, rose to be the new temple, and to outmode the temple of the first covenant.

In the Acts and through the writings of the epistles we recognize the transition through which the church went as it knew itself to be the Body of Christ and yet the Bride, to be the new Temple of God yet under the headship of Christ. It was branches to Christ's vine, and sheep to his vocation as the Great Shepherd. So in the new-as the writer of Hebrews so brilliantly argues-there is continuity with the old, yet dynamic discontinuity also. The old-with its didactic ministry-gives way to the new, and the new is altogether new. There is a new temple in history and with it a new worship.

Universal Worship and the New Temple

Those Old Testament passages which indicated that a desire for a new law and a new worship would ultimately grip the nations now present us with the fact that as Jesus had contained all true worship-and salvation-within Jerusalem (i.e. Israel), so now this worship is to be available through the new temple. In one sense all worship is still to be contained within the new temple, but the new temple is able to embrace all who are prepared for the new worship. Just as there was no salvation outside the Jews, so there

is no salvation outside the new people of God. Israel itself will be part of this new people of God (cf. Rom. 11: 13-24), but in no way will transcend it, or be above and beyond it (Ephes. 3:1-6).

The passages we nominated above need to be closely examined in understanding the universality of the new worship. See Psa 147:19-20, cf. Deut. 4:5-8; Amos 3:2; Isa. 27:1 Isa. 2:1- 4; Mic. 4:1-3; Isa. 45:14, 22-25; 49:12; 55:5; 60:3-6; 66:18-23; Zech. 8:20-23; Isa 51:4-5; Luke 24:47. Perhaps more important than all the passages cited is Isaiah 56: 1-9, the essence of which is that the temple will not be exclusive to Israel, but inclusive of all who would genuinely worship God. We here examine verses 6 to 8.

‘And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant-these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. Thus says the Lord God who gathers the outcasts of Israel, I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered.

This passage holds deep significance since it was quoted by Jesus at the cleansing of the temple at the time of his triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matt. 21:12-13; Mark 11: 15-17; Luke 19:45-46). John places a purging of the temple at the commencement of Jesus’ ministry in Jerusalem (2:13- 17), and it Jesus said, ‘Take these things away; you shall not make my Father’s house a house of trade.’ This is linked in the memory of the disciples with Psalm 69:9, ‘Zeal for thy house will consume me.’ Matthew and Luke quote Isaiah 56:7 as saying, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ and mark only adds, ‘for all the nations’ in conformity with the Isaianic passage. In Luke 2:49 Jesus tells his parents who had sought him, ‘Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house’. We see then that Jesus saw the temple as

- (a) his Father’s house,
- (b) as the house of prayer for Israel, and
- (c) that it was to be the house of prayer for all nations.

The nature of the temple as the house of prayer is seen in II Chronicles 7:12-16, where-amongst a number of elements-God says, ‘Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place. For now I have chosen and consecrated this house that my name may be there for ever-, my ears and my heart will be there for all time.’ ‘There is no dichotomy between prayer and worship, for they are the one. God, then, is saying that Israel exclusively has the locale of true worship. This, of course, would be in face of the other-and false-gods.

When Isaiah universalizes the temple as the house of prayer for all nations it is indicated that the new (eschatological?) temple will be inclusive of all nations, but exclusive for the true worshippers, i.e. (i) those who worship the Father, and (ii) those who worship Him in spirit (the Spirit) and in truth. This must surely be ‘the new worship’ and its locale is ‘neither on this mountain (Samaria) nor in Jerusalem’ but is the new temple, the people of God.

Conclusion: The Implications of Christian Worship For True Evangelism

We come now to the crux of our study. If our thesis is tenable then we deduce that (i) ontologically all men (persons, humanity) have a drive for worship, (ii) that without pure fulfilment of that drive a person lives in existential deprivation, incongruency and so suffers untold misery and doom. The functional denial of man’s essential affinity with God comes from his refusal to worship God ‘in spirit and in truth’ in the context of the wrath and judgement of God which is upon him because he has refused to

acknowledge God, (iii) the opportunity for worship has been provided by God--even in the face of the fall of the human race--and such worship is based on God's grace and man's (responsive) faith, (iv) God, has provided covenantal worship to Israel in the context of the temple, providing for Israel to be the matrix of Messiah, and in Jesus--that Messiah--has redeemed man so that he may now worship Him as Father, and such worship has been ordained, and is assisted by the Holy Spirit in this present (church) era.

If then this thesis is tenable it must mean that the church is the locale for all true worship. In one sense, then, all true worship is evangelistic, if not wholly evangelism. If what man most needs is to worship God, and if the church--the new temple--is the place, context, and channel of that worship, then the appeal to man's ontological and existential drive is the most dynamic of all appeals.

The intention of this study is not to practicalise this principle of worship being inseparably linked to evangelism--as evangelism to it--but simply to point out that the history of the church--both in apostolic and post-apostolic times--has borne witness to this very principle. Doubtless we need to--indeed are driven to--examine the soteriological nature of the sacraments, the context of worship as the primary situation for Gospel-proclamation, especially as the apostles understood the nexus of 'old' Israel with the 'new'. We need also to explore the modes of current evangelism with its own practice of proclaiming the word of God within the context of worship, and to examine the widest expression of worship, i.e. true service to God. In a true sense the new temple is everywhere, for it is composed of 'living stones' organically bonded, and such 'stones' give expression to worship by the lives they live. The temple--to change the metaphor--laps up on the vast shores of humanity, and powerfully and livingly affects it, even to effecting salvation, and liberating that idolatrous humanity to the true worship of the Father.

The Principle of Accountability

The subject of accountability is a vexed one. It is the principle of being called to account for what one does. Most of us recognize accountability on the basis of the principle of responsibility, and responsibility has to do with authority, law and order. Paul recognized this when he said, '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 may be held accountable to God*' (Rom. 3:19). Romans 7:1 said, 'the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth' (AV). On this basis we take it that

- (i) every human being lives under the principle of law, and
- (ii) being under the law he is accountable for his actions.

That is, an account is made out to him for his actions-whether good or bad. Hence Jesus said, 'I tell you, on the day of judgement men will render account for every careless word they utter'. This points us to the principle that we will be held accountable for everything we do.

There have been those who do not believe this fact. In Psalm 10:13 the wicked renounces God and says in his heart, 'Thou wilt not call to account'. Against this Paul says (Rom. 14:12), 'Each of us shall give account of himself to God', and adds in Colossians 3:6, 'On account of these [evil things] the wrath of God is coming'. The writer of Hebrews urges his readers to obey those who have the rule over them 'as men who will have to give account'.

It seems reasonable, then, to say that universally Man has a sense of accountability, and accepts the fact of it, though he may fear what is coming to him. In Romans 1:24-31 Paul gives a long list of the sins that men do, and adds, 'Though they know God's decree that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them but approve those who practise them'. They may not care about accountability but they do not deny its fact and reality.

Who Are Accountable?

We have claimed that all persons are accountable for their acts, but there is a universal protest which says that only when a person comes to the age of accountability can he be held accountable for what he--or she--does. What then is that age of accountability? It is difficult to give an answer to this question.

In Genesis 25:22 it is said that Esau and Jacob 'struggled together' within their mother's womb. It appears that the two were struggling for supremacy, the one over the other. In other words they were aware of life, and each sought to establish his supremacy. There is much spoken in Isaiah about Jacob and his mother's womb, but in 48:8 it is said, 'from birth you were called a rebel'. This recalls Psalm 58:3, 'The wicked go astray from the womb, they err from their birth, speaking lies'.

On the positive side Jeremiah is told by God, 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations'. Paul claims that he was separated by God from his mother's womb to preach the Gospel to the nations. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit

‘even from his mother’s womb’ (Luke 1:15, 41). On account of both good and evil it appears that the child is conscious in the womb and makes decisions which affect its life. Recent research into the pre-natal activity of the foetus in the womb seems to be supportive of these Scriptural accounts.

The answer to the question heading this section seems to be, ‘All of us are accountable and from the womb if not within it’. Whilst many will debate such a statement, the truth is that we are often deceived by the smallness of a child, thinking its will is not developed, when in fact will is something which is asserted at all ages without variation in insistence. The further elements of Man being born in sin (Ps. 51:5), and being in Adam (Rom. 5:12ff.) have to be taken into consideration. Whilst we may argue for varying degrees of culpability we must recognize the accountability we demand of children, as well as of adults.

The Doctrine of Victimization

All human beings are prone to self-justification. When we fail we seek to rationalize away our failure. We are prone to blame four things-amongst many others-for what is our seeming failure, namely, parental upbringing, heredity, environment and circumstances. ‘These’, we say, ‘have conditioned me to be what I am’. In fact these four things, of themselves, have not conditioned us at all. It is our reactions and/or our responses to these four things which have brought us to our present frame of mind. We make our own decisions and choices, and must stand by them.

It is often common practice these days to pity folk whose parental upbringing, heredity, environment and life circumstances have seemed heavily adverse to them. We tend to treat them as victims of life, and this is not in the long run truly helpful. It more or less indicates that we think them to be flotsam and jetsam tossed to and fro on adverse tides. James Denny, in speaking of heredity said, ‘Heredity fixes not our fate but our trial’. This would also apply to the other three elements we have mentioned. If we face the four things positively they may assist us in developing rich and strong characters. Joseph commented to his (formerly) persecuting brothers, ‘As for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good’.

If we persist in simply pitying people instead of encouraging them to face adverse elements and win through them, then we will be doing a great disservice to them. Probably it is because we would pity ourselves in similar situations that cause us to be this way. The example of the mute, blind and deaf Helen Keller should help us to see that a human being-if she wills-can be incredibly resilient, and can win through under even enormous odds. We should drop the ‘pity syndrome’ for one of tenacity and encouragement. ‘Hurt’, it has been said, ‘is a mixture of self-pity and anger’.

The Sins of the Fathers

In Jeremiah 31:29-30 and Ezekiel 19:1-32 we hear God telling Israel that the children cannot blame the parents for their present condition. Because God had said that He would ‘[visit] the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of *those who hate me*, but [show] steadfast love to *thousands* [of generations] of *those who love me and keep my commandments*’, His word has been misread. As is universal, children blame their parents for their problems and states of life. In both prophetic sections God stated the principle of accountability,

‘Only the person who sins will die. The child will not suffer because of the parents, nor the parents because of the children. The person who sins *he* shall die’.

It is to be noted that when a generation turns from hating God and loves Him, then the entail of sin ceases. Likewise when a generation turns from loving God to hating Him and worshipping idols, then ‘unto the third and fourth generation’ commences. In Deuteronomy 24:16 God stated, ‘The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor shall the children be put to death for the fathers; every man shall be put to death for his own sin’. The practice of this can be seen in 11 Kings 14:6 and II Chronicles 25:4, where the children of murderers were not killed for their fathers’ sins.

The Practice of Accountability in Human Living

John the Apostle once said, ‘If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness’. That is, if we will accept our accountability for all that we have done, then life will be richer for it. When we try to rationalize away authority and law, it is so that we will not be convicted as sinners, i.e. of having sinned. If we take responsibility for all we have ever done, then-in the light of God’s forgiveness-we can be free of it.

Again, if we abolish law, and refuse authority, then we are seeking to escape the need to fulfil the law of God. Micah said, ‘He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God. Moses (Deut. 10: 12-13) had talked with Israel, ‘And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God *require* of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I command you this day *for your good?*

No ‘Needs’ Therapy But a ‘Deeds Doing’ Way of Life

Much of our modern way of life relates to needs which are many in kind, such as emotional, relational, and material. We feel we should have our needs fulfilled, and that we should help to fulfil the needs of others. Whilst there must be some truth in this approach, yet it is God who requires us to be faithful, obedient, and those who fulfil His requirements. We are to ‘fulfil the just requirement of the law’ (Rom. 8:3-4) which approximates to what Micah told his people.

We must be requirement-fulfilling people, for as such we have moral being, true dignity, and can see ourselves as participating with God in His work and plan. We are not weak, lazy, lethargic and purposeless beings. Fulfilling ‘just requirement’ we are living properly the lives God has ordained for us, and doing the works He prepared for us to walk in and to do (Eph. 2:8-10). In fact we are growing into true human maturity. We are not victims of various adverse elements; we are not those caught in self pity; nor are we those who stretch out our hands for spiritual welfare ‘handouts’.

We are those who seek to fulfil God’s requirements of us.

The Value of Accountability

In the subject which is our main theme-God’s glory and Man’s sexuality-the matters of authority, law and accountability are all inseparably linked. If we are not morally accountable for every deed and action of our lives, then we are not truly in the

image of God. We therefore lack dignity, and as a result cannot dignify God, Man, and the creation. If we face our failure as moral creatures who have not fulfilled the law of God then we are admitting our accountability, and for this confession and repentance there is the gift of grace. Being liberated from past failures means being free to live in integrity.

It is this integrity which assists us to be true men and women, and to enjoy the vast network of relationships which is ours in this world, not only amongst Christ and his people, but in the whole race of humanity.

The Pastor and His Accountability

Paul's Pastoral Epistles are filled with injunctions, admonitions and warning, and are a great resource for checking out our pastoral accountability. Another special passage is Acts 20:17-35 when Paul addressed the elders of the church of Ephesus at Miletus. In fact this passage in Acts speaks of Paul fulfilling his accountability. Peter also gives us an outline of our responsibility as pastors in I Peter 5:1-4. 1 Thessalonians 5:12; Hebrews 13:7, 17; along with I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 2:7-9 cover much of the qualification for pastors, as well as pastoral care. Each element of qualification as well as each element of responsibility should be examined with great detail and scrupulously observed. There is always high accountability with high calling (cf. I Sam. 15:13- 29. 'Every one to whom much is given, of him will much be required' (Luke 12:48).

If we are interested in developing the archetype or paradigm of the true pastor, then we should study the elders in the book of the Revelation. If we see the elders as the pastor-teachers of Ephesians 4:11, then we will gather the nature of true elders from the book of Revelation. There the elders are given authority, are linked many times with the worship of God and the Lamb, are concerned with the prayers of the saints, are linked with the 144,000, are concerned for John and the prophecy God has given him, and describe themselves as servants.

The pastor is the shepherd of the flock (Acts 20:28-33; 1 Pet. 5:2-3; cf. John 10:1-18; cf. Ezek. 34). Note Ezekiel 3:16-21 (especially verse 18) and Acts 2:26, where the matter of accountability is of a most serious nature. A similar warning is in James 3: 1. In the light of the sevenfold 'I know your works' of Revelation chapters 2 and 3 (cf. 2:23) and II Corinthians 5:10 we ought to take the matter of pastoral leadership most seriously (cf. Hebrews 13:17)

Note: *This study is an expansion of one given to the Group on 21st November 1987.*

‘Beyond The Cross’ or ‘Always In The Cross’.

Is the Cross All?

Paul's insistence that he came to Corinth knowing 'nothing but Christ and him crucified', his insistence that the 'word of the Cross' was alone the power of God, and that his boasting was only in the Cross by which he had been 'crucified to the world and the world to him' all lead us to believe that Paul placed the fact and teaching of the Cross very high in his understanding and estimation. Was he misled, over-enthusiastic, and out of balance in this view? Did he later have reason to change his emphasis? What, then, was his emphasis on the Cross? Do we have teaching in the N.T. which goes beyond the Cross?

A statement sometimes heard these days is, 'The Cross is wonderful, and the means of our salvation. Nevertheless having been saved there is no need for to stay at the Cross. There is so much beyond it. There is the life of the Spirit, there is membership in the Body, there are victories to be won, gifts to be used, new truths (or truth) to be discovered-indeed a whole life of rich activity. In this sense we must go beyond the Cross.' At first sight this sounds convincing, and indeed good reasoning, but does it stand the test of New Testament teaching? We will see.

Two Questionable Principles of Operation

In I Corinthians 1:22-25 Paul shows that (i) Jews seek signs, and (ii) Greeks seek wisdom. Jesus had said that signseeking was itself a sign of an evil and adulterous generation, for Jews required God constantly to prove Himself by power, i.e. that action which was supernatural, whereas in fact, Israel has been born in action, saved by signs and wonders, and spoken to through the media of law, the Scriptures, theophanies and prophets, They had simply to obey that word, especially now that the word had come to Israel by Christ and the Spirit (Acts 10:36ff; Heb. 1:2; John 1: 18; Rom. 10:9-10). The Greeks sought the validity of human reasoning, i.e. subjecting what was taught to human scrutiny and wisdom, so called. These are the two methods still used by human beings, and they cannot succeed.

At the same time Paul said that is the *power of God* and the *wisdom of God*. Christ is the true power, and the true wisdom against human views of both power and wisdom. It is in this context that Paul said *the word of the Cross* was the power of God. No other power or wisdom was (is) required.

The Centrality of the Cross

We must understand that the Cross was planned prior to history (I Pet. 1:19-20; Rev. 13:8; cf. Acts 2:22-23), prophesied in history (I Pet. 1:10-12; cf. Luke 24:25-27, 44-47; cf. Isa. 53), was said by Christ himself to be indispensable (Mark. 8:3 1; 9:3 1; 10:32), happened in history, was preached as the message of the early church

(Rom.1:16-17; 1 Cor. 1:17-23; Gal. 6:14), and is still preached as its central truth. Entrance into life and salvation is only by the Cross. Revelation 5: 1 ff. shows that the one who rules over history is the Lamb who was slain, i.e. 'Christ crucified'. This means that the outworking of history is by the power of the Cross *and by no other power!* Historically then the Cross takes the central place.

Indifference to the Cross: Yet Its Unavoidability

Paul stated categorically that the Cross was a scandal to the Jews-the sign-seekers-, and to the Greeks-the intellectuals. When Christ spoke of taking up the Cross daily he meant we must be daily identified with a *thing of shame* and a *thing of foolishness*. It is noteworthy that no sooner are some people 'saved by the Cross' than they are away from it into some other thing. They skirt the Cross henceforth or confine it to a Good Friday remembrance. This must mean they have not faced its shame and foolishness. They do not take up the Cross. Since Paul said he would not glory in anything save the Cross, then it must be central-not to be avoided. Paul says 'the word of the Cross is the power of God'. To skirt the Cross is to seek power in some other area or means. Some place the resurrection as central, but Romans 4:25 makes the Cross and Resurrection the one atoning event since, 'He was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification'. The 'power of his resurrection' (Phil. 3: 10) and the power of 'the word of the Cross' are one. 'Christ crucified' and 'Christ risen' are the one.

All Must Go Through the Crucible of the Cross

Paul shows the following elements in regard to crucifixion:

- (i) The whole Adamic body of humanity has been crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6).
- (ii) Each believer has been crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20; cf. 6:14; Col. 3:3; 1 Tim.1:14).
- (iii) The flesh received its crucifixion on the Cross (Gal. 5:24).
- (iv) Satan received the destructive death blow upon the Cross (Heb. 2:14:15; cf. I John 3:8; John 3:14).
- (v) The world powers were defeated on the Cross (Col. 2:14-15).
- (v) The whole world system received its deathblow on the Cross (Gal. 1:4; 6: 10).
- (vi) All sin and sins were defeated at the Cross (I Pet. 2:24; 3: 18; II Cor. 5:21; Isa. ch. 53). Thus man was forgiven in and through the Cross (Ephes. 1:7; Col. 3:14; 1 Cor. 15:3; cf. Acts 13:38- 39).
- (vii) Man was purified from his sins at the Cross (Heb. 1:3; 9:14, 10:10, 12, 14:19-22; 1 Pet. 1:22; Rev. 7:14).
- (viii) Man was justified by grace through the Cross (Isa. 53:11; Rom. 3:24; 1 John 4: 10; Rom. 4:25; cf. Acts 13:38-39). This means that through the propitiatory sacrifice the wrath of God was expended and man need not fear punishment (Rom. 5: 10-11; 1 John 4:16-18).

The only conclusion that we can draw is that if a person is not 'crucified with Christ', then none of the above elements is of benefit to him, but-to the contrary-man is wholly lost through his neglect or rejection of the Gospel. He is continually under the wrath of God.

The *necessity* for co-crucifixion (crucifixion with Christ) is because nothing less than being taken up into Christ's Cross can free us from the terrible guilt, pollution and

bondage of sin. Christ has to crucify us with himself because there is no other way our sin can be destroyed. Every part of us must be crucified. Once done we are set free.

The Cross was a 'Once-for-all' Action

The following references-with their tenses-indicate the action of the Cross which accomplished that work which continually proceeds in its effects:

- (a) Romans 6:6: 'We know that our old self (old man, or humanity) *was crucified* with him'. The verb (*sunestaurōthe*) is an aorist indicative passive.
- (b) Galatians 5:24; 'And those who belong to Christ *have crucified* the flesh with its passions and desires'. The verb (*estaurōsan*) is an aorist indicative active.
- (c) 11 Timothy 2:11: '*if we have died* with him. The verb (*sunapethanomen*) is an aorist indicative.
- (d) Roman a 6: 10: 'the death *he died* to sin'. The verb (*apethanen*: twice in this one verse) is an aorist indicative.
- (e) Colossians 3:3: 'For you *died*'. The verb (*apethanete*) is an aorist indicative.
- (f) Galatians 6:20: 'I *have been crucified* with Christ'. The verb (*sunestaurantai*) is a perfect indicative passive.
- (g) Galatians 6:14: 'the cross *of* our Lord Jesus Christ by which the world *has been crucified* to me, and I to the world'. The verb (*estauratai*) is a perfect indicative passive.

The first 5 references are in the aorist which means the action was definite, completed, and not to be repeated. The last two are in the perfect meaning the action which happened in the past is still going on in its effects. We see then that we are wholly dependant for our death having *once* been completed so that we do not have to go on being Crucified. However the perfect indicates that we can never go beyond the Cross because its effects are *ever happening* to us.

The important question is, 'How do these things keep happening to us'. The answer must be, 'By the working *of* the Father in us (Phil. 2:12-13; Phil. 1:6; 1 Thess. 5:23-24), by Christ working in us (Phil. 1:21; Col. 1:27; Gal. 2:20), and by the Spirit working in us (see next section).

The Application of the Work of the Cross

The Holy Spirit the applicator of the Gospel

When we say, "There is nothing beyond the Cross' we mean, 'You cannot go beyond the work and effects *of* the Cross. We always stand in need of them, and they will always be there. "There must however be *an application* of the work of the Cross and its concomitant, the Resurrection. The question is, 'Who applies the work of the Cross' and the answer must be, 'The Holy Spirit.' He first brings conviction of sin, righteousness and judgement (John 16:7-11; **this** is often called 'the prevenient work of the Spirit'). He then reveals the work of Christ and the Father (John 16:12-15). His full revelation shows the need for a person to repent and have faith, and so receive the gifts of forgiveness, justification, purification, eternal life, sonship (adoption), the new birth (regeneration), the Spirit and the love of God.

From Romans 9: 1-3 and 11 Corinthians 3:17 we see that *the Holy Spirit applies 'the word of the Cross' in such power as to transform the person affected.* Thus a radical change is brought about by *the Spirit through the word of grace*, i.e. the Gospel or 'the word of the Cross' (Titus 3:4- 7; 1 Cor. 6:11).

The Holy Spirit continually dwells in the believer effecting his work

It is clear from Romans 6:9-11; 11 Corinthians 1:22; 11 Tim. 1: 14 (cf. Gal. 3:1-3; 5:16, 18, 22- 26; Rom. 12:11; Ephes. 1:13; 3:16; 5:18) that the Spirit dwells in every believer, and so works within them (cf. I Cor. 2:4-5; 1 Thess. 1:5; 1 Pet. 1: 12). It is He who continually applies the work of the Cross.

What of the human element in application?

In the body of Christ (the church) with its interrelated membership, with the gifts of ministry and the other gifts (i.e. the charismata) there is no doubt that the Gospel is preached, men and women are redeemed and that they grow in the community of the believers, but although apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher proclaim the word of life by the Spirit, yet it is the word of the Gospel which works-by the Spirit-so that no one person or thing can be a substitute for the Spirit, however much that person may be an instrument of the Spirit. The Spirit and the word communicate the power of the Gospel, thus bringing about the radical change of mind of the new person. *If ever we get between the word and the Spirit we do harm, becoming ourselves as the Spirit and the word, but being without authentic power to effect true change or give genuine aid.* The so-called aid that we will give will draw human beings to us and not to God, will place us in some measure in the place of God, and will cause a (so called) work to happen which is of man or even occultic powers which will be glad to assist.

There is, of course, a human element in all teaching and pastoral ministry, but it must be Spirit- given and the word proclaimed must be God's word taught-through us-by the Spirit. Any attempt by us *to use* the word or the Spirit or *to replace* the word or the Spirit will be wrong (cf. Matt. 7:21-22; Acts 8:19; 11 Cor. 2:17; 4:2; 1 Pet. 4:11; 11 Tim. 2:15-19; 11 Pet. 2:19; Jude 4, 16).

Time and again in the N.T. Epistles the use of false teaching and false practice is mentioned. Often it has the elements of signseeking and human wisdom (I Cor. 1:22-24). Men can be deceitful (11 Cor. 11:1-15; Gal. 1:6-9), and some can 'take their stand on visions' (Col. 2:18) thinking these are as true as the word of God. Everything must be tested (I Cor. 14:29-32; 1 John 2:18-27; 4:1-3; cf. Matt. 24: 24; Rev. 16:13-14).

Some Substitutes for the Continuing Work of the Cross

(i) Reasons why we do not see radical change in hearers

Note: If a person has not been radically changed by the work of the Cross and Resurrection then it will be for one or more of the following reasons:

- (i) *The true word of the Cross has not been preached, or has been preached but not truly heard.* In these cases human persuasion may cause a decision, but the radical acts of repentance and faith have not been truly evoked by the Cross and the Spirit.
- (ii) *The total nature of grace has not been proclaimed or heard so that salvation appears to be of both man and God instead of only of God.* The person believing will always be uncertain and unsure of his (her) salvation because one cannot place any trust in human effort.
- (iii) *There has been the idea that the word of God needs to be aided by the wisdom of man, and even by human persuasion.* This is akin to saying that God is absent from His word.

(iv) *There has been the idea that the Spirit of God is not present until we encourage him to be so, or that he is apart from the word of God, or that he does not work unaided by us. This means that God is not sovereign, is not active, and is dependent upon our working with Him.*

Note: We Ought not say that God chooses to work apart from us, and solely through His word and Spirit, but that God *gives us grace to be His servants* at any given time in proclamation and ministry. This is vastly different from claiming that God needs LIS, is dependent in any sense upon us, and that we can work in such a way that we add to His word, or are in any form a substitute for, or an aide to, His Spirit.

Note: We ought to keep in mind the fact that all humans hunger for power. Wherever we seek to have power over humans or for the aid of humans, then we are not working under grace. We are usurping the personal action of God, i.e. doing something for Him and in His place. We may unconsciously be keeping persons under our power by offering a priestly aid, when the truth itself can make them free.

(ii) The growth of support and aide ministries

If we think that the word of the Cross is simply the word initiating salvation and not attending it in all its phases until the ultimate redemption of the body, then we will have ignored the accomplished work of the Cross. We will also have ignored the continuing presence and action of the Father, Son and Spirit in the lives of God's people who are His children. We will think that the action of the word of the Cross is unintelligible without our aide ministry. Whilst it is true that God generally mediates His word through His servants, He does not require those servants to dole out homeopathic doses of 'truth' in the hope that ultimately they will be impregnated with truth!

Note: Some Christian workers feel that a gradual (i.e. graduated) unveiling of truth will be a kind way of helping people. They feel that people need to be helped step by step, and so they give a diluted form of the word, trusting that gradually the listeners will come to full truth. This assumes that truth is too powerful to be received on its own level.

The Continuing Work of the Cross

The following points show us that we draw continually from, the work of the Cross in living Our lives as believers, especially as believers beset by Satan, the world powers, the wisdom of the world', the flesh, sin, and the disabling fear of death and judgement. Simply put we say, 'Every day we are dependent upon the Cross for a life of holiness, of growing maturity, and hope of our ultimate inheritance.'

- (i) Every day we need to draw on the forgiveness of the Cross.
- (ii) Every day we need to live in the cleansing of the Cross.
- (iii) Every day we need to live as those who have victory over sin because sin's power has been broken by the removal of our guilt.
- (iv) Every day we need to live in the dynamic of God's unfailing justification given by grace.
- (v) Every day we need to live in the love of God portrayed in the Cross and given to us therefore through the Holy Spirit.
- (vi) Every day we need the sanctifying power of the Cross in (a) putting off the things of the flesh, (b) Putting on the things of true living. We need the effective work of the Cross to effect these things in us-every day.

- (vii) Every day we need to follow the principle of the Cross which is 'death to se living to God', which is the principle of fruitfulness as the seed goes into darkness but brings forth great fruit, i.e. 'He shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and he satisfied.'
- (viii) Every day we need to live in the powerful grace of the Cross so that we know the sufferings of Christ have 'borne our griefs and carried our sorrows', so that none of these remain. We also need to know that 'by his wounds our wounds are healed'.
- (ix) Every day we need to know that our past is purified, no guilt remains, and no penalty threatens. This helps us (a) to live in peace, and (b) to proclaim what is real to us-the amazing grace of God towards sinners, i.e. grace which redeems them.
- (x) Every day we need to realise that in proclaiming this grace we will meet tile fierce opposition of proud man who seeks to achieve salvation by his own efforts. This will involve us every day in the principle of the Cross, 'always carrying in the body death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our bodies . . . death at work in is, but life in you'. (Note '(vii)', above).
- (xi) Every day we will need to remember that Christ is outworking his victory of tile Cross by using its resources to bring 'the kingdom of this world to become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ'. This will mean we realize the principle of victory over evil by the Cross of Christ, knowing that Cross to work effectively in the midst of history.

Nothing Beyond the Cross

Let us go back to the statement made by some of a beyond-the-Cross situation, '*The Cross is wonderful, and the means of our salvation. Nevertheless having been saved there is no need for to stay at the Cross. There is so much beyond it. There is the life of the Spirit, there is membership in the Body, there are victories to be won, gifts to be used, new truths (or truth) to be discovered; indeed a whole life of rich activity. In this sense we must go beyond the Cross.*' In truth all the things mentioned here are fruits of the Cross, not additions to it. They are concerned with the life of the Cross and Resurrection.

Where there are signs and wonders they simply attest to the word of grace, the word of the Gospel. The church has been 'born crucified' (cf. Rom. 6: 1-10), and owes every element of its life to that crucifixion. The power of tile Spirit is really the power of the word of the Cross (I Cor.1:17-19). The Spirit does not have a 'Cross-power' and a 'post-Cross power' for they are the one. The gifts of the Spirit minister to the body which issued from his death and resurrection and which remains dependent upon it. Their great victories over evil stem from the victory of tile Cross and Resurrection. Hope is based on tile effective work of the death and tile resurrection and that hope is to see Christ crucified and to share in the spoils of his victory.

The Living Word-Today

Introduction: What of the Word of God-Today?

There are those who find the Scriptures somewhat dull and static. In a world which is constantly full of action a book such as the Bible seems unreal. Doubtless Karl Marx's 'Das Capital' was similarly just a book, yet the fruits of that book have changed modern history. Some of our distaste for the Scriptures may have arisen because of the non-dynamic background and context in which we have heard the Bible read or expounded. If we have not had Christian regeneration it would be natural for the Bible to be unappealing. First let us look at the nature and effects of the Word of God in its various aspects.

The Power of the Word in Its Many Aspects

What we will now treat is the word of God in its various aspects. God's word is simply His speaking, but it relates to many things-as we would expect. We look then at the following aspects:

- (i) **The Word of God.** The Scriptures tell us God's word is truth (Psalm 119:160; John 17:17; 11 Sam. 7:28); 11 Cor. 6:7; James 1:18), that it is eternal as the living (Heb. 4:12) and abiding word (1 Pet. 1: 23, 25) and is never ineffectual (Isa. 55:11). In fact God's word is as God Himself, inseparable from Him. It is the word of His counsel which means His wisdom and plan will be fulfilled in the ultimate. We can say that God's word relates to the ontological, and man's word cannot be such, seeing he is fallen. We see that the forces of evil (including fallen man) steal God's word because it is innately dynamic, e.g. Jeremiah 23:23-32.
- (ii) **The Creative Word.** see Gen. 1:1f; Psalms 33:6-9; 148:5-6; John 1:1-3; Hebrews 1:1-3, 113; and Colossians 1:15-17. God's word dynamically creates so that its enormous power is incalculable (Eccles. 3:11). Creation alone should be sufficient to make man worship and be grateful (Rom. 1:19Q, and if man were not fallen he would be immensely awed by seeing and hearing the word of creation.
- (iii) **The Continuing Creative Word.** see (a) the word which sustains, i.e. upholds, and by which there is continuity in creation, Col. 1: 17. (This creation can be called 'a fixed order', Psalm 89:36- 37; Psalm 148:5-6; Jeremiah 31:36-37) and such a 'fixed order' brings security to man. It is really affirmed in the Noahic covenant as promised in Genesis 8:20-9:7. (b) the new acts of creation on the principle of Romans 4:15. See Isaiah 44:26; 45:23; 46:10; 55:10-11; 59:21. God can and will do works which seem to be against the normative principle of the initial and sustaining word of creation.
- (iv) **The Prophetic Word.** This word is continuous in both Old and New Testaments referring to every aspect of God's will and counsel, namely creation, covenant, law, salvation, holy living, judgements, the day of the Lord, and all things eschatological. Two classic passages are (a) Deuteronomy 18:9-32 and (b) Jeremiah 23:23-32. 'Is not my word like fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer which breaks the rock in pieces.'

In prophecy God speaks through man (cf. Exod. 7:1-2; Num. 12:6-7; Amos 3:7-8; Acts 2:17ff; cf. Rev. 1:3, 22:18-19). This word comes by God speaking face to face (Num.12:6-7), (b) through dreams and visions (Num, 12:6; Isa.1:1,2:1; Jer. 28:31; 23:15f; Acts 2:17f). Later we will see that prophetic word is often related to the Spirit.

- (v) **The Enacted Word.** By this we mean God is the living God, i.e. 'the God who acts'. His acts reveal Him, portraying His nature. The kind of things He does show Who He is. See Psalms 105- 107, especially 105:8ff., 107:1 ff. In the N.T. the enacted word is the word of the Kingdom (Matt 12:28; cf. Acts 8:5-8,14). The enacted word is also seen in the judgements of the book of Revelation. In fact all history is the enacted word, e.g. 'he commanded and they were created.'
- (vi) **The Word of the Law.** See Deuteronomy 33:1-5, Exodus 24:1-8; Acts 7:38; Gal. 3:19. We must warn ourselves against detaching the law of God from God. No one can create true law: no one dare initiate torah which in fact means 'instruction' and as such shows 'the way' of God. There is only one way. See Exodus 34:28f. with Deuteronomy 4:13, 30:11 and 14. Psalm 119 has the terms, way, word, truth, precepts, ordinances, testimonies, works, statutes as virtually synonymous. The law must not be subverted on pain of death (cf. Gal. 3: 10), but obedience to it is 'sweeter than honey' for it is a delight to meditate on His law (Ps. 19:7-11; 1:3).
- (vii) **The Word of Redemption-O.T.** This begins with Genesis 3:15 (cf. Gen. 49:10) and comes in Covenant to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3; Gen. ch. 15; Gen. 17:1-14). In the midst of the revelation of fallen man's sinfulness and guilt, the redemptive word blazes with the revelation of God's grace. -
- (viii) **The Word of Redemption-N.T.** This is the Word of grace (John 1:14; Matt. 1:21; Titus 2:11). See also Acts 4:33; 11: 13; 13:43; 14:26; 15:40; 20:32. This word of grace is also the word of faith (cf. Deut. 30:14f; Rom. 10:8f; Rom. 1:16-17; 1 Cor. 1:18). This salvific word contains in itself the regenerating word as seen in John 6:63; 1 Peter 1: 3, 22-23; James 1: 18; cf. I John 3:9.
- (ix) **The Sanctifying Word.** See John 15:3; 17:17; cf. Ephes. 5:25-26; Heb. 1:3; 9:14, etc. The redemptive word is also the word of judgement. Guilt and pollution are the two things which keep man in bondage when they beset him in the light of the holiness and wrath of God. His judgments set His people free, although they destroy the obdurate impenitent. Often in Isaiah God said 'I am the Holy One of Israel-thy Redeemer.' His holiness is always dynamic-opposing and destroying the evil that would destroy His people.

What is God's Word For Today?

(i) The Word of Christ as It Was His Word and the word of the Father

Romans 10:8-17 Paul makes it clear that the apostolic word was present in the world, among men, and to be heard by them. This apostolic word was known as 'the word of Christ', at which we will look. What we need to see is what Christ thought of his own word.

- (a) 'I do nothing on my own authority but speak thus as my Father taught me.' (John 8:28; 5:19; 14: 10; 17:14; cf. John 17:17 'thy word is truth').
- (b) The word is the truth the Father has shown him (John 3:34; 5:19; 8:40).
- (c) Jesus lived only by the word of God (Matt. 4:4; cf. Deut. 8:3).

- (d) The word of Moses was one with his-Jesus'-word (John 5:45-47; Luke 16:29).
- (e) His own words were eternal (Matt. 24:35).
- (f) His word was life-giving, and life-changing (John 5:24; 6:63; 6:68.)
- (g) Christ brought the word of God to Israel (Acts 10:36f; cf. Isa. 52:7, 53:1).
- (h) The word of God-which he preached--cannot be broken (John 10:35).

(ii) The Word Christ Gave to the Apostles as His Word for the Church and the World

- (a) The Gospel of the Kingdom (Isa. 57:2; Mark 1:14-15) was the Gospel to be believed when Christ preached it.
- (b) This Gospel the apostles were to preach (Matt. 28:20; Mark 16:16; Luke 24:46-49; cf. Acts 10:35-43, espec. verse 42).
- (c) The sermons in the Acts give the content of the word of Christ, i.e. *kerugma* and *evangel*- virtually the one.
- (d) Paul is a good paradigm of one commissioned by Christ with the word of the Gospel (Gal. 1: 11-16; Acts 26:16-20).
- (e) Paul-as the other apostles-had the apostolic word (Rom. 1:1-3; 1:16-17; Acts 20:20-27). As set out in Acts 20:20-27 we have the content of the Word.
- (f) This word is virtually a command (*kerugma*) as is seen in Acts 6:7; Acts 5:32; Rom. 10: 16; 11Thess. 1:7Q. See 'obedience of faith' in Romans 1:5; 15:18-19; 16:26, and compare with John 3:36.

(iii) The Apostolic Word, the Word Given by Christ

The apostolic word-the given 'word of Christ' (see Rom. 10:8-17)-was *the events of Christ interpreted in the light of the O.T, and the O.T. interpreted in the light of the events of Christ-a third thing embracing both*. What they preached as been called 'the gospel of the grace of God', 'the gospel of our Lord', 'the gospel of God', 'the gospel of His Son', 'the gospel of peace', 'the gospel of Christ', 'the gospel of your salvation', 'the word of truth, the gospel', 'the glorious gospel of the blessed God'.

In the book of the Acts 'the gospel of grace' (20:24) and 'the word of his grace' (20:32) are equivalents, i.e. this Gospel is powerful to redeem and also to keep i.e. feed and maintain a believer, as it does all the church. This was why people (newly converted, and Christian workers) were commended to the 'grace of God' and 'to the word of his grace; Acts 13:43; 14:26; 15:40; 20:32. Likewise 'great grace' was upon the church (Acts 4:33; 11:23) and the Lord witnessed 'to the word of His grace', as Stephen full of grace and power' did great signs and wonders, and spoke to the Sanhedrin.

At this point we should note that 'grace', 'great grace', 'the word of grace', and 'the gospel of the grace of God' are all one and personal, i.e. Christ working in his grace in, to, and by means of his body to his people and to the world.

(iv) The Word of Christ Which We Preach Today

What is the word we preach today? It can be none other than the word nominated above. It must, of course, be preached in purity and by the Holy Spirit.

The word of God is powerful

Anyone acquainted with the Scriptures knows that they claim that the Word of God is innately powerful. God cannot speak and His intention not be effected (Isa. 55:11).

When we preach or proclaim we are often disappointed because we are not wholly effective, or even partly effective. We think, 'If the word of God is powerful, how come we do not see the results which ought to follow. It may be because we are not truly proclaiming the Word, and it may be that sowing and husbandry are lacking. It may be that when we are seemingly-not being heard that the word of God is being rejected. Being accepted or rejected is not the point (cf. Isa. 6:9-13; Jer. 2:3 1; Matt. 13:14-15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:39-41; Acts 28:6-7; Rom. 11:8; Acts 13:40-41; Rom. 10:16; 11:7ff, Rev. 2:7,11,17, 29; 3:6,13, 22).

It may be that when the word does not seem powerful that it is not, in fact, the true word of Christ. It may even be the false word

The False Word

In 11 Corinthians 2:17 Paul claims, 'For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word; but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.' In 11 Corinthians 4:2 he says, 'We have renounced disgraceful underhanded ways; we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.' In I Corinthians 1: 17 he had said, 'For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with eloquent words of man's wisdom lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.' To this he added (I Cor. 2:3-5), 'And I was with you in weakness and in much fear and trembling; and my speech and my message were in plausible words of wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of man but in the power of God.'

These statements are of immense importance. He is saying that we can peddle God's word, that we can practice disgraceful and underhand ways in the proclamation of the Gospel, and that we can use cunning, and we can tamper with God's word. We can also use eloquence and plausible words of a wisdom which is not God's wisdom and we can even make men to stand in such false wisdom, rather in the power of God. All of this should cause us much heart-searching.

The Old Testament prophets had stolen the dreams, visions and words of the true prophets. As we have suggested, they recognised in some measure the ontological way, the way of truth and hence of authentic power, and they wanted to use the true things in order to gain credibility and power. Everything false is only an imitation of the true, but by nature of the case it cannot genuinely succeed. As Jeremiah states it will be burned in the fire of the true word, and smashed by the hammer of the same word. Moreover God is against those who steal His word. He will by no means allow them to get away with it. Judgement is inevitable.

In II Timothy 4:3 Paul says that 'the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own liking, and will turn away from listening to the truth, and wander into myths.' He tells Titus (2:9) that an elder 'must hold firm to the sure word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it. Without doubt the early church was beset about with many who did not know the apostolic truth. Galatians, Colossians and the Pastoral Epistles refer to such happenings. John's Epistles warn against current heresies, and Jude (3-4) says, 'I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For admission has been secretly gained by some who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly persons who pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.'

Christ and the Proclaimed Word Today

We now have to see what is the action of Christ in the world today, especially in regard to where he will be in that proclamation. It has been suggested that he will be *where he was* in the days of his flesh, and doing what he then proclaimed he would do, i.e. as in

Luke 4:18-19 (cf. Isa. 6 1: 1). It is even said that 'He is out there when human beings are hurting, where their condition is pitiful, where men and women are victimized, and are being done injustices.' Whilst this may be true (or not true) the Gospel is primarily a Gospel for sinners, structured to save them and not simply to pacify them in their various suffering states. We need to see,

1. *To whom were the apostles (and so the church) sent?*

Answer: Into all the world, to all nations, to make nations into disciples, to preach the Gospel to every creature.

2. *What was the message they were to preach?*

Answer: The Gospel of salvation, demanding repentance, faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, and obedience to the Gospel and him.

3. *What did a believing person receive as a result of the Gospel proclamation?*

Answer: The gifts first of repentance and faith, then the gifts of forgiveness, cleansing, justification, purification, regeneration, adoption, the love of God and the Holy Spirit. This he meant-in effect-the saving and healing of the person. It touched every part of him, and where doubt remained as to the renewing of the whole person, then it called for further revelation, continued teaching of the word. Nothing ought to be done which is not of the word of God.

4. *What happened consequent to such believing?*

Answer: Those responding were incorporated into Christ's church, becoming members of Christ-in his body- and being invested with gifts, began the corporate life of the church. In this corporate life there was further proclamation of the Gospel, and also prayer, praise, mutual acts of love and fellowship, and participation in Christ's plan-the fulfilling of the Father's will.

5. *Where is all of this is Christ today?*

Answer: *He is present in and with his church* as they proclaim the Gospel throughout all the world in accordance with Matt. 28:19-20. *He is present in and by the person of the Holy Spirit* (John 14:16; 16:7; cf. Ephes. 4:16). He is *absent from his church* as was shown in Acts 1: 11 (cf. John 14: 1-10), even though he may appear in visions to his servants.

6. *What is Christ doing today?*

Answer: All that we are told in I Corinthians 15:24-28 and Revelation chapters 5 to 22, i.e. putting all enemies under his feet, subduing the kingdoms of this world until they become the Kingdom he hands to the Father that God may be all in all. He is involved in the judgements against evil powers and finally impenitent sinners.

7. *How- i.e. by what means-is Christ doing His work today?*

Answer: (i) He is the head of his body the church, the members of which are his disciples, his servants, his friends and his brethren. They are working with him to bring the nations to 'the obedience of faith' (Rom. 1:5; 15:18; 16:25-26), (ii) He is doing this work by means of the word of the Gospel (of the Cross, of grace), for this is the word that smites the nations (Rev. 1:16; 19:15). This word is likened to fire which destroys evil (Rev. 11:5; 20:9; cf. Jer. 23:29; Ephes. 6:17; Heb. 4:112-13).

The Effective Proclamatory and Pastoral Word

The immediate pastoral concern we have is considered in the following. Is the proclamation of the word in itself effective? Do we not have to follow this up, counsel, assist people at the point where they are, and help them with what wisdom we have?

This question may have dubious origins, and so be difficult to answer. The fact is that we must examine (as we have partly done so, above) whether what we proclaim and preach is indeed the word of God. We must seek to know whether we are one with Christ *when* we preach for *what* we preach is really *who* we preach, i.e. Christ Jesus as Lord.

If ministry *arises from the preached word* (cf. Acts 13:43) then it must be followed by further utterance of the word of God, remembering that Christ is present in his

word-there is no word of God apart from God! Whilst it is true that often signs and wonders accompanied the word and attested the word (Acts 14:3), they were not *per se* the word. It is true that events happen from the word and are part of that word, but the mere happening of events- however remarkable they may be-are not necessarily the word or its fruits. Rejecting as we must a merely informational, repetitive, and academic word (none of which is truly the word), we must not make the mistake of trying to support the word, substantiate the word, justify the word, or infuse elements of persuasion, relevance and acceptability which we believe will help hearers with the word. The word is not magical, alchemical, and does not produce fruits just because we quote it, or pontificate it. Knowledge of the word may not mean knowledge of Christ the Lord, and brilliant preaching may not be the word at all. What has been called 'bibliolatry'-a non-existential preaching of the word-must be avoided, but then so must a critical human analysis of it, and certainly any attempt to work it out humanistically or politically in contemporary society. We have seen above how we can peddle the word' We need to recognise when it is we are utilising it, and trying to get certain fruits, increase in church numbers, or seeking to justify ourselves by what we can accomplish-using *the word!*

The way in which we must proclaim the word-whether kerugmatically or pastorally-is by being one with Christ, so that lie is proclaiming through us. In this respect 11 Corinthians 4:7-15 is a key passage. We carry about in our bodies the killing of the Lord Jesus, the result of which is 'death in us and life in you'. In the light of this we append other statements which pertain to true preaching of the word. These speak of the union of the preacher with his Lord, and his reverence for that word.

The Living Proclamation of the Word

'Divine revelation is more than the disclosure of supranatural knowledge concerning the nature and purposes of God'. R.H. Mounce ('The Essential Nature of True Preaching', p.151).

'Revelation is the self-bestowal of the living God ... God in the act of imparting Himself. (P.T. Forsyth, 'Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind', p.10).

we are now more aware that it is God Himself who speaks in the proclamation. Preaching is not talking about God. It is allowing God to talk. The words of the preacher are simply the medium through which the Divine Word comes. It is God who speaks.' (Mounce, op. cit. p.154).

'Preaching is the immediate powerful , personal self-communication of the eternal Word to men'. ('C.K. Barrett, Biblical Preaching and Biblical Scholarship' , p.4).

'Preaching has a single purpose, that Christ might come to those who are assembled to listen'. (Gustaf Wingren, Prediken; en principiell studie p.296, quoted by Mounce).

'As the preacher proclaims the divine act of redemption the barriers of time are somewhat transcended and that supreme event of the past is again taking place. God's historic self- disclosure has become a present reality'. (Mounce, op.cit, p. 153).

'Preaching does more than recount and explain the ancient event. The Spirit makes the ancient event in a very real sense an event now transpiring, and the preaching is a medium of the Spirit's action in doing so. In the preaching, when it is truly itself, the event is conti'. (John Knox, 'The Integrity of Preaching', p.92).

'Preaching is the Gospel prolonging and declaring itself' (P.T. Forsyth, op.cit.p. 3).

'Only authentically biblical preaching can be really relevant; only vitally relevant preaching can be really biblical'. (John Knox, op.cit. p.27).

'There is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot'. Jeremiah (20:9).

...,You accepted it not at the word of men but as what it really is, file word of God which is at work in you believers'. Paul (I Thess. 2:13).

The Pastor Preaching The Word

1. The Principle of the Word

We know *logos* means *word*, but then so does *rhema* (cf. Acts 2:14 and 2:22), although *rhema* is generally taken as an utterance or saying, even as in Acts 10:37 'the things that have happened'.

What is the Word? Probably we do not need to think 'the word' is something quite mysterious meaning one thing in one place and another in another context. Paul speaks of 'The word of faith which we preach,' (Rom. 10:8 RSV). The J.B. has 'the word, that is the faith we proclaim'. This must mean 'the Gospel, as commissioned by God and which was communicated through messengers by the Holy Spirit' (I Cor. 2:4-5; 1 Thess. 1:15; 1 Pet. 1:10).

Paul tells Timothy, 'Preach the word (*logos*),' (11 Tim. 4:2). This is the only word he has known (cf. 11 Tim. 3:14-17). i.e. the Scriptures, but then as they pertain to the Gospel, the word in which he was nurtured by Paul.

In Romans 10: 17 we read of *rhemos Christou*, i.e. the 'word of Christ' (NEB, JB. NIV) or, 'the preaching of Christ' (RSV) which must mean,

- (a) the word Christ has given to be preached,
- (b) the word which brought into being the Gospel by his incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension and heavenly session, (although Galatians 3:8 can say 'the scripture preached the gospel *beforehand* to Abraham') and,
- (c) the word Christ preached by his messengers.

Peter speaks (Acts 10:36-38) of, 'the word (*logos*) which he (God) sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all) the word (*rhema*, i.e. In 'the things which had taken place') which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, etc.' This all must mean,

- (i) the Gospel, and
- (ii) the word of Christ, i.e. what he did then in Palestine and which now saves the hearer (Rom. 10:8-9), often called the *kerugma* (proclamation).. Thus we conclude that 'the word' and 'the Gospel' are the same.

2. The Preached Word in 'The Acts of the Apostles'

This should be of great value to us. If we trace the preaching and effects of the word, then that should be of value to us in proclamation and pastoral use of the word.

2:14, Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem ... give ear to my words (*ta rhemata*). Peter speaks of the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel 2:28.

2:22, Men of Israel hear these words (*logous*). Peter speaks of the events of Christ, so that when they heard this word (2:37) they asked how they could escape judgement, Peter added other words (2:40). The word was effective for salvation.

4:4. Many of those who heard the word believed. The word was effective.

4:29 grant to thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness. This prayer of the church was answered, they spoke the word of God with all boldness.

6:2 It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables ... we shall devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry (*diakona*) of the word. The result of this was,

6:7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priest were obedient to the faith. Not the phrase the word of God increased (cf. 12:24; 19:20; cf. 13:49), i.e. it is a living thing growing-reaching in the hearts of many-, or the seed bringing forth a harvest.

8:4 Now those who were scattered abroad went about preaching the word, cf. 11: 19 those who were scattered ... speaking (telling) the word. The effects of the word are seen, (i) in the Samaritans coming to Christ (cf.8:14 Samaria had received the word) and (ii) in the new church formed at Antioch in Syria.

8:25 Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans. Here is the effective preaching the word of God.

10:36. You know the word that he sent. The word which was proclaimed. See '5. 1st. Section' (above).

10:44 The Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. The word was what Peter had preached, including the promise of forgiveness of sins. This was acceptance of the Gentiles by God (cf. Acts 15:8-9)= the Gentiles had received the word of God. (11: 1).

12:24 But the word of God grew and multiplied, i.e. in spite of Herod's persecution and because of his death. The dynamic of the word knew no restriction by anything else.

13:4, At Salimas they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogue of the Jews. 13:7 Sergius Paulus sought to hear the word of God. Elymas the sorcerer was withstanding the word of God-unsuccessfully.

13:15. if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it. This exhortation was requested in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia. The exhortation becomes Paul's long sermon. So much so that the next sabbath almost all the city gathered to hear the word of God, (13:44), but some jealous Jews opposed it so that Paul said, It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you. The Gentiles heard that the Gospel was for them also and they were glad and glorified the word of God ... and believed. (13:46, 48). To glorify the word of God is simply to recognise and confess its innate glory: it is God's word-to be identified with Him.

14:3 the Lord bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands, i.e. signs and wonders were not the word but attested the word, and God desired to do this. It is here called 'the word of his grace' (cf. 13:43,'the grace of God', 20:24, 'the gospel of the grace of God', 20:32 'the word of his grace').

14:25 when they had spoken the word in Perga, i.e. preached the Gospel.

15:7 by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. Self explanatory.

15:35 Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also. The word was not confined to initial proclamation but was also to the congregation.

16:6 forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. The word must only be spoken by God's guidance in the place God has for it at any point in time.

16:32 And they spoke the word of God to him [the gaoler] and all that were in his house. The situation had been prepared by God. The word was the Gospel.

17:2 he argued with them from the Scriptures. The word is not mentioned as such, but it was the word he expounded, i.e. the Scriptures (cf. 18:4, 5).

17: 11 they received the word with all eagerness, examining the scriptures daily. The same word Paul had preached at Thessalonica-the Gospel, so 17:13, learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul.

18:11 And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them i.e. using the apostolic Gospel in conjunction with the Scriptures.

19: 10 all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, i.e. heard the gospel.

19:20 so the word of the Lord grew and prevailed mightily, i.e. was growing more and more and prevailing more and more, for it was capturing hearts, and defeating evil, especially the powers of the occult. See 6:7; 12:24; 13:49.

20:32 I commend you to God and the word of his grace (cf.4:33; 20:24; 13:43; 14:26) i.e. the Gospel of the grace of God.

Some observations on the preached word in 'Acts'

(1) Mode of Preaching

- (i) It was the apostolic word, i.e. the gospel as formed by Christ, and brought to the apostles' understanding by the Holy Spirit (John 16:12-15). It was powerfully linked with the Hebrew Scriptures and the ministry of Christ.
- (ii) It was preached with exhortation to believe it.
- (iii) It was preached where the apostles were sent, i.e. guided to preach it.
- (iv) Although on a few occasions sign and wonders are spoken of attending it (2:43-, 3: 1 ff.; 4:30 cf. 5:12; 6:8; 8:7; 14:3; 19:11; 20:3ff; cf. Rom. 15:18-19) yet the major preaching is not said to be attended with signs and wonders.
- (v) The Gospel is preached in all sorts of situations and the word takes effect.

(2) Reaction and Response to Preaching

- (i) The Jews who refused to acknowledge Jesus as Messiah rejected it. Their rejection was often accompanied by attempts to persecute the apostolic band.
- (ii) The Jews who recognised Jesus as Messiah believed, received salvation, and espoused the faith.
- (iii) Gentiles who rejected the word did not greatly persecute the apostolic preachers, unless it affected their religion or trade.
- (iv) Gentiles who accepted the Gospel and believed were strong in faith and proclamation of the same Gospel (cf. I Thess. 1:5-10).

Calvin's Commentary on Acts 4:1-4 furnishes a principle of acceptance -rejection that follows the preaching of the word,

There things are to be noted in this narration. First, as soon as the truth of the Gospel comes to light, Satan sets himself in opposition to it, by every means in his power, and uses every endeavour to crush it in its earliest beginnings. Secondly, that God furnishes His children with unconquerable fortitude, that they may stand firm and unmoved against all the devices of Satan and may not yield to the violence of the wicked. Finally, we must note the outcome, that however completely the enemy may seem to be dominant and in control of events, leaving no stone unturned to blot out the Name of Christ, and however much on the other hand the ministers of sound doctrine be as sheep in the mouths of the wolves, God none the less spreads abroad the Kingdom of His Son, keeps alive the light of the Gospel, and looks to the safety of His children.

3. The Use of 'the Word' in the Epistles

Romans 9:6, the word of God cannot fail. 10:8 it is the word of faith, is immediately present, not having to be sought after. 10:17 (*rhema*) brings faith to birth and action. 15:18 along with deeds and attested by signs and wonders the Gospel is effective.

In **I Corinthians** 1:18 the word of the Cross is God's power. In 14:36 it does not originate with (from) the Corinthians.

In **11 Corinthiana 1: 18** the word of God is not vascillation but definitive. In 2:17 it is spoken in plain truth and not peddled (cf. I Cor. 4: If.; 11 Cor 4: If.). In 4:2 the word is not tampered with by St. Paul.

In **Galatians 6:6** those who hear the word should support those who teach it.

In **E11thesians 1:13** it is the word of truth, converting men as the Gospel of God (cf. James 1: 18). In 5:26 the baptismal word (the Gospel) purifies the Bride of Christ. In 6:17 it is the sword of the Spirit (cf. Rev. 1: 16; 2:12; 19:15; Heb. 4:12-13).

In **Philippians 1:14** the word of God is not restricted to Paul's imprisonment which itself is an incentive for others to be bold in proclaiming it. In 2:16 believers are to 'hold fast the word of life', i.e. hold to it, and hold it forth-proclaiming it.

In **Colossians 1:5** it is 'the word of truth' and equal to the Gospel and it is growing and bearing fruit in all the world. In 1:25 proclamation makes the word of God fully known but involves suffering in the process. In 3:16 the 'word of Christ' must dwell in the heart. For 'word of Christ' note Rom. 10:17. In 4:3 the word equals 'the mystery of Christ'.

In **I Thessalonians 1:5** the Gospel is simply 'word' but is accompanied with power, and by the Spirit, and this word was received by the Thessalonians with dynamic results. In 2:13 the word is the Gospel, and was received as the word of God and no as though it were from men. In 4:15 the 'eschatological word' had been previously taught, thus showing Christ's appearing is part of the word.

In **11 Thessalonians 3:1** the word in which they were established (2:17) is to be prayed for that it may 'speed on and triumph'.

In **I Timothy 4:5** God's gifts are made holy by the word of God and prayer. The word of God declares all things pure, and prayer is an invocation on this basis.

In **11 Timothy 12** the Gospel and the word of God are the same, and Paul's being imprisoned does not put fetters on God's word. It is free, even in a prisoner, to do its own work. The word of God is the word of truth needing to be rightly handled, i.e. proclaimed according to its true nature. In 4:2 this word of God must be preached on every occasion even when it seems 'not in season'.

In **Titus 1:1-3** the word is the truth which includes the hope of eternal life-all things promised from eternity and lately shown forth in this word. This in 1:9 is 'the sure word as taught'. In 2:5 the word of God is discredited when wives do not act in conformity with it.

In **Hebrews 1:3** the word God speaks through His Son is both creative and sustaining for it is 'the powerful word'. In 4:12-13 the word is alive (cf. 'living oracles'; Acts 7:38), i.e. what was said in the past-in our reckoning-is as alive and dynamic as ever. It is sharper *than* any two edged sword. The word is penetrative, discerning, unmasking man, so that he is seen as he really is. In 5:12 it is said that there are first principles formed from the word. In 6:5 hearers are said to have 'tasted of the word of God', i.e. begun to hear and feel it. In 11:3 the creative power of God's word is stated-as seen in the O.T. In 13:7 the leaders are said to be those who first spoke the word of God to the church.

In **James 1:18** the word of truth causes new birth to happen (cf. I Pet. 1:23). In 1:21 things which are weeds should be put away whilst the 'implanted word' should be cultivated, allowed to take root and grow for it is 'the saving word'. In 1:23 it is shown that the person obeying (doing) the word will be blessed, and hearing without doing results in self-deception.

In **I Peter 1:22-25** the word of God is 'the truth', and 'the good news', brings new birth, and itself is living and 'abides for ever', (as the O.T. often says) . In 2:8 men stumble because they disobey the word, i.e. the word concerning the true foundation stone-Messiah. In 3:1 though certain husbands do not obey the word of God they can be won to it by the behaviour of the wives.

In **11 Peter** 1: 19 Peter says that the prophetic word (both of the O.T. and Jesus) was reinforced by God's speaking at the Transfiguration. The prophetic word is most significant. In 2:3 and 5 it is the word which has created, and the word which will come with dynamic judgement on the present heavens and earth.

In **1 John** 1:1 Jesus is 'the word of life' (cf. John 1:1-3, 14). In 1:8-10 the word is equated with truth---the truth. In 2:5, keeping (obeying) the word is the way of fulfilling- love. In 2:7 the word is the word of commandment. In 2:14 the young men are strong because the word of God is in them, and so they overcome the devil.

4. The Use of 'the Word' in the Revelation

In **Revelation** 1:2, 9; 3:8, 10; 6:9; 12:11; and 20:4 the term 'word of God' is used in all cases where it has been kept or held or witnessed to by those 'who hold (keep, observe, proclaim) the word of God and the testimony of Jesus'. This entails suffering, but the "lord is primary. In 19:15 Jesus is called 'The Word of God' (cf. John 1: 1f; 1 John 1:1f.).

5. A Conclusion Regarding the Word of God

If we look at the word of God in the O.T. and in the N.T. then we conclude that it is God's own word, identifiable only with Himself, dynamic in its utterance and surely accomplishing what He speaks. It is clear that there has always been 'the word', and although in some sense God's revelation has ever been an unfolding one, it is also clear that it is has not been contingent upon the things happening in time, but rather what happens in time is contingent upon what has been planned in eternity (cf. Isa. 40:1.8 13-- 48:3-8; Eph. 1:3-14; 3:11). Even so God foretells what will happen, though generally this is by way of warning, exhortation, encouragement, and making things clear (Amos 3:7-8).

Those then, who are called upon to proclaim the word of God (e.g. 'the word of the Lord Came to ... ; cf. Rom. 10: 14) must first know God, hear His word, and then proclaim it under His Kingship, under the Lordship of Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 2:4- 5; 1 Thess. 1:5; 1 Pet. 1:10). The word of God--as we have said---is effective of itself, but God chooses to utter it through human beings.

6. The Dynamics of Preparation For Proclaiming the Word of God

- (i) We must be those who tremble at God's word (Isa. 66:2; Phil. 2:12-13). That means we do not use our critical faculties as though our reasoning were the true assessor and monitor of the word of God. We are subject to the word, and not the word to us,
- (ii) We must not think we can utilize the word of God, i.e. to better our situations, fulfil our ambitions, manipulate or indoctrinate our people, exalt our preaching, or substantiate the word of God. For this reason we must not alter or rationalize that word by the use of eloquence, by importing other elements to the text of Scripture which do not belong to it, or even by importing substantiating elements from other parts of Scripture without acknowledging their true context. Whilst the Reformed hermeneutic is not popular today yet the principle of Scripture interpreting Scripture is really a fine one.

- (iii) We must be one with the word, i.e. one with God. Just as there is no grace apart from God and Christ, so there is no word that is apart from God. Grace cannot be said to *fail*, for it would mean, then, that God and Christ fail! Likewise the word of God cannot fail because God would then have failed. We may fail to tremble at the word, and fall to live under the word, but the word itself is powerful. To live *under* the word, is to live in God.
- (iv) We must recognise the power of the word to effect what God says (e.g. Isa. 55: 10-11: cf. Heb. 1:2; 11:3; Psa. 33:6-9; 148:5-6) and what the word obtains for (11 Tim 3:15-17). Since the written and spoken word are never apart from the living God, then we Must realise our need to abide in God, abide in Christ, and live in His Spirit.
- (v) **11 Corinthians chapter 4** is a good passage for seeing what we ought to be in proclamation,
- (a) refusing to tamper with God's word (cf. 'peddle God's word' in 11 Cor. 2:17) making it evident to any man's conscience that it is the truth,
 - (b) having the truth of 'the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ'--i.e. the Gospel in earthen vessels,
 - (c) suffering for the proclamation because (as) we 'carry about in our bodies the killing of Jesus' (cf. Phil. 3: 10; Col. 1:24), knowing that when the death is shown the life will be manifest and available to hearers,
 - (d) being strengthened in faith by the suffering that come through being identified with Christ, we proclaim grace which results in 'thanksgiving to the glory of God',
 - (e) not fainting because of the cost of identification but seeing what is unseen, i.e. that in *which* lies our hope, and *which is* our hope (cf. I Cor. 2:6-10; 11 Cor. 3:18; Heb. 12:2; Phil. 3:12-14, 21; Heb. 11:1, 3, 8-10, 24-27; cf. Eph. 1:17-19; Heb. 6:1 S_20, 10:23; Col. 1:27). Sustained by this hope we keep proclaiming the word knowing- that it will bring peace and joy (Rom. 15:13).
- (vi) The principle of 'eating the word of God' is seen in the eating of the scrolls as in Ezekiel 2:83:11; Rev. 10:8-11; cf. Jeremiah 15:16, so that having digested the word we can utter it. In this sense it is 'the word made [our] flesh'.
- (vii) Facing the truth that word of God is-and will be-an offence to many, we must not rationalize it (see '(ii)' above), making it palatable to others. Nor should we use it as loaded against and directed towards those we wish to affect for our own purposes.

The Word and The Worship

Worship and the Will of God

The will of God and worship are closely linked. When Paul said, 'For this is the will of God, your sanctification,' we might say he was speaking of God's particular will as it related to the holiness of a believer. This will is seen in passages such as Ephesians 1:3-4; 1 Peter 1:2 and II Thessalonians 2:13. God particularly wills His people to be pure. There are many other particular things that God wills (cf. Rom. 1: 10; 1 Cor. 1: 1; 4:19) but what is primary is God's will for His creation, a matter we will examine in our next section. Two passages directly link worship and God's will namely Romans 12:1-2, and Ephesians 5:17-21. In the first Paul says that as we worship we are transformed and test out the will of God, and in the second that we should be wise, knowing the will of God, and then being filled with the Holy Spirit we will truly worship. At this point we will not examine these two references. We will proceed to looking at the will of God for His creation.

God's Will for Creation

The celestial creatures and elders worship God, saying, 'Worthy art thou, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for thou didst create all things, and by thy will they existed and were created.' It was God's will to bring all creation into being. However, before He created God had planned that all things would happen according to His will. This planning or wisdom is called 'the counsel of his will' (Eph. 1: 11) or 'the eternal purpose' (Eph. 3: 11). It is linked with a passage such as Isaiah 46:8-13, and in particular with verse 11, 'I have purposed and I will do it'. In Isaiah 48:3-the same principle is stated.

In the Ephesian letter Paul speaks 'the mystery of his will'. This will is 'his purpose which he has set forth in Christ,' namely to head up all things in Christ (6:9-10). This will is also that both Jews and Gentiles should be to the praise of his glory (1: 11-14). In 3: 1-11 God's will is 'the mystery of Christ'. Thus Paul can speak of 'the plan of the mystery'. All of these statements bring us to see that from creation onwards God has been working out His plan, i.e. 'the counsel of his will'. In other words all history is moving towards that climax which God has planned for it. This is clearly seen in Revelation 10: 1-7 where the mighty angel announces that 'in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, *the mystery of God*, as he announced to his servants the prophets, should be fulfilled.' We conclude then that the plan of God-'the mystery', 'the mystery of his will', 'the mystery of Christ', 'the counsel of his will', 'the eternal purpose'-is that purpose God has ever had for His creation, namely (i) its **creation**, (ii) its **redemption**, and (iii) its ultimate **glorification**.

The Revelation of God's Will in History

Revelation 10:7 speaks of 'the mystery of God as he announced to his servants the prophets'. Daniel 9:6 and 10 are Daniel's confession that Israel had not listened' to thy

servants the prophets'. Amos 3:7 stated plainly that 'Surely the Lord does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets,' and of course the prophet⁹ told it to the people. Indeed, 'Where this no prophecy the people perish ('cast off restraint')'. In Zechariah 1:6 God says, 'But my words and my statutes, which t commanded my servants the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers' Paul averred that the 'mystery of Christ was not made known in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.' All this mystery is to be fulfilled at the blowing of the seventh trumpet, and certainly, in Revelation 11: 15 this is what happens, Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ, and he shall reign forever.' And the twenty four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshipped God, saying,

'We give thanks to thee, Lord God Almighty,
 who art and who wast,
 that thou hast taken thy great power
 and begun to reign.
 The nations raged, but thy wrath came,
 and the time for the dead to be judged,
 for rewarding thy servants, the prophets and saints,
 and those who fear thy name, both small and great,
 and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.'

All of this tells us that God's plan for the ages issues in the triumph of Christ, and the defeat of the kingdoms of this world. It results in the defeat of God's enemies, and the enthronement of Messiah. Creation is saved from destruction. God's holiness is vindicated. As Paul points to the will of God it comports with the book of the Revelation. Indeed I Corinthians 15:24-28 is really a précis of the book of the Revelation. In Ephesians and Colossians Paul shows the mystery of Christ-the plan of God-is to head up (sum up, unify) all things in Christ, to fill up all things, and to reconcile all things. What God did at creation by the word, and through the Word (the Logos), i.e. the Son, he now recapitulates through the Son. This has always been His plan.

Within that primary will of God are all the things that He has willed. For example He has willed the prophets to reveal his plan; He has willed the coming of the Son, the passion, death, resurrection and ascension. He has willed the birth of the church. Paul speaks of being an apostle by the will of God; and so on. He--God-has willed the eschatological (ultimate) things such as the glorification of man and the creation.

We saw at the end of our last chapter that worship takes place where the action of God obtains. It is in this action that we see the true nature of worship.

All History is Salvation History

'Salvation History' (*Heilsgeschichte*) is a term used by theologians to assert that God's work in salvation is that which happens-i.e. is rooted-in the events and course of history, and when seen from the biblical point of view of faith then all history is in some sense or another 'salvation history'¹ i.e. all history is God's process of effecting salvation. If this is so then it is simply another way of saying all history is the

¹ There is another use of the word as it is used by Karl Barth and his followers, who see the salvation events such as incarnation, and redemption 'as taking place in a supra-historical sphere, inaccessible to secular historical reasearch and only known to faith.' (Article *heilsgeschichte* in 'A Dictionary of Christian Theology' by A Richardson, SCM, 1969).

outworking of the will of God. Non-biblical presentations and interpretations of history differ greatly from the *Heilsgeschichte** view or system.

When, then, we say that all history is salvation history we mean that all history is action. It is moving as Tennyson's describes it, in

One God, one law, one clement,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.

If history is forward moving it is also fulfilled in 'the far-off divine event', i.e. in the *eschaton*. This means that God is 'the living God', i.e. the God who is always acting. For Him to be the One 'Who was, and is, and is to come' He must be the one who always acts. His people, then, act with Him. Their very reason for being is that action. As they worship they thus 'give worth' to Him as the God Who is always acting, and acting purposively. No moment of time is outside of Him, His will, His purpose and His goal. That is why His people are always purposeful. No action of theirs is pointless. *Their worship of God is always in the action: the action is the reason for worship, and the worship is also with a view to the action!*

Worship and Action in History

Primal and antediluvian worship

Whatever was worship in the primal Eden must have arisen from creation. In Revelation 4: 11 this fact of creation motivates the celestials to worship. Man's action was to be fruitful, multiply and replenish the earth, having dominion over it. Worship vanished with a refusal to fulfil this action. Man became the centre of his own worship. Cain could not really worship God, but Abel could. He was a prophet, in the action of God. His offering 'by faith' was an act of witness. Many of the antediluvians worshipped by faith 'calling on the name of the Lord', but others did not. Their worship was doubtless directed to gods and idols, and so was undoubtedly, therefore, dynamic. 'The worship of *Noah and his family* was given in the constant of action by the living God-preparation of the ark, descent from the ark into a new life, and this with thankfulness (Gen. 8:20-21) and this very worship led to the covenant promise that God would restore for always the rhythm of 'seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night'.

Covenantal worship

When we come to *Abraham* then the note on which our book began is again sounded, i.e. that God has encounters with man. Yet as we saw then, such encounters were-and are-not merely so that man might have pure worship, so much as God meets with His people with a view to further action. Abraham certainly responded in

action. He left familiar surroundings and his known way of life to seek ‘a city having foundations whose builder and maker is God’. His was the action of covenant, and ‘as he grew strong he gave glory to God’. Worship event succeeded worship event, and all in the context of covenant. So also with Isaac and even more so with Jacob.

Exodus 4:22 and kindred references show us that God desired the worship (service) of Israel. It was in regard to this worship that God did signs and wonders and eventually freed Israel from Egypt. They worshipped him in the Passover, and when He freed them they worshipped Him perpetually in that feast. Indeed the great acts of God-acts generally linked with the reality of creation-called forth further feasts so that Israel became a nation of worship-‘a kingdom of priests’.

Israel, worship and acts

The history of Israel is the heart of salvation history. Israel-the nation of worship-was the matrix of world salvation. All its acts in history were significant for the nation. Its worship of God made it strong; its idolatry almost destroyed it. As the nations were and are judged by their relationship to Abraham, so the nations of the world are seen biblically in the light of their attitude to Israel. The idolatrous nations fall under God’s judgement-He demands true worship. Everything, then pivoted around worship, that is both acts and worship were inseparably interrelated.

The living Tabernacle

The Tabernacle in Israel signified that the living God dwelled with them, but then He dwelled dynamically. ‘The Tabernacle was also designed for movement, for journeying, for pilgrimage. It was the Tent of His Presence, and the Tent of Testimony. We miss this significance if we read back into Israel’s history a regular, traditional worship, much the same as we may have on any or every Sunday morning! In this later worship our acts may be by rote, be a ritual, be a prepared and planned programme, and so be static for the most part, not anticipating dynamic action in the time of worship, or as preparation for dynamic action beyond it.

Not so with Israel. The Feasts were acts of memory and rituals of faith-anticipation. They remembered with realist-dynamic memory the great acts God had done. They composed many a hymn and psalm around such acts. They vivified their living by the assurance that He was-and is- ‘the God Who acts’. The Passover was not a dead event to their memory. Pentecost was linked with the harvest but not prosaically. The Feast of Booths-Tabernacles-had the history of action behind it. Indeed no sacrifice was merely a ritual, merely prosaic. All worship was linked with action.

The dynamics of memory and hope.

Even in the Exile Israelites could live again in dream-memory the great days of the Exodus, the memorable days of Israel under its judges and kings-the glorious kingdom of David and of Solomon. Yet such were not mere memories. They linked with the great prophetic promises when the Davidic kingdom would be restored, when it would have a splendour not hitherto known. Just as the law came with splendour (Deut. 33:1-5; cf. Heb. 12:18-21), so the new and eschatological worship would come with even more brilliant splendour. Israel was always between dynamic memory and powerful hope based on the promises of God.

Christ, the Kingdom, and the new worship

Just as God appeared to His servants the prophets, priests and kings, giving them visions of Himself, but commanding them to actions, so in the N.T. worship and action were joined together. It was so in the birth narratives relating to Mary and Joseph, Zechariah, Elizabeth and John, Simeon and Anna, to the worship of the shepherds and the Magi, the baptism brought first by John and then by Jesus. If the worship in Temple and Synagogue lacked the dynamic it ought to have had, this staid equanimity was disturbed by the ministry of Christ. His worship to his Father in secret brought its powerful fruits before the people in the proclamation of the word, in loving healings, strong exorcisms, and denunciation of false worship and service. Symbolically he cleansed the temple at the initiation and completion of his ministry. He had no worship apart from action, and no action apart from worship.

The Church, its worship and action

We have said much about the new worship of the Spirit brought about by redemption through Christ. We see the worship of the new people of God break out at Pentecost and begin the action of God. Nothing remains static. Whilst they worship at the Temple they are proclaiming the word, disturbing the status quo with their gospel of grace, their proclamation of Messiah and his Kingdom. They do not deliberately incite their enemies to action, but it is an instinctive knee-jerk reaction. Persecution sends many off to preach the gospel in other places. Prayer and worship ensue, and action issues from them. We have traced this worship and its outcome. We can also see that worship never becomes a merely static operation. It issues in service, as service itself is always linked with worship.

A feature of the worship in heaven is that it is never revealed as being an end in itself. As we have seen worship is initiated by seeing the very nature of God, by His acts of creation, redemption, by His justice in history-vindicating His Being by the judgements he brings, by his defeat of Satan and all evil powers, and by avenging the blood of the martyrs and the saints. If we can talk about 'the liturgy of marriage' then that celebration is one of the most powerful acts of history, and it in turn leads on to the opening of the Holy City to all the nations. In this City God and the Lamb constitute the Temple, as they also constitute the Throne-the place of all action and authority. Attending them are not only the worshipping celestial creatures but also the new 'kingdom of priests', i.e. the royal priests who are a kingdom of priests unto their God. It would seem then that eternity is all worship and service, that there is nothing that is merely repetitive in it. The whole creation-now regenerated and glorified-worships the living God.

The quiet worship

It seems undeniable that worship is not present without action, as action ought not to be without worship. What then of what we call 'quiet worship'? Is it not without action? First let us define 'quiet worship'. By this we do not mean dull, traditional, prosaic, and desultory any more than we would applaud worship which is not quiet but pitched high, is strained, loud, noisy, raucous, demonstrative, triumphalist, blatant and aggressive. By 'quiet' we mean calm, simple, and unmanipulated. We mean that

it may be so 'quiet' as to seem harmless and -ineffective. This need not necessarily be the case. Such quietness may speak of genuine peace, love and faith. It may be a time when worshippers can contemplate God and His word. It may be a time of teaching, of spiritual feeding upon the truth, of inner transformation by reason of the Spirit's working. All kinds of things can happen.

This being the case the worship will have come out of an experience-or experiences-of God. The worship will certainly lead to action, if indeed it is not happening within such action. The sacrament of Baptism will be a strong reminder-an *anamnesis-of the* mighty event of the Cross and Resurrection, and will minister powerfully to faith. Likewise the Lord's Supper will be a present proclamation of the death of Christ, and of his coming again. Both sacraments may be conducted quietly yet they will speak powerfully. The grace of God will grip and effect the worshippers. Likewise the proclamation of the word will be as bread to the hungry, as water to the thirsty. By such worship the spirits of mortal beings grow strong.

Christ is in the midst of worshippers of the Father-whatever. He said he would be where two or three are gathered together in his name. The church is said always to be 'in the Father'. It is the present Holy Spirit who powerfully effects the *anamnesis-*'he will bring all things into your remembrance'. The gratitude and praise in the hearts of the devotees will well up in singing, however quiet or traditional it may be. It may sound strange to those of happy, hearty and hasty spirit. It may, even sound dull, yet it may be the expression of truly mature devotion to God. It may be a witness to the steady faithfulness of God, and of a quiet heart in His people.

Doubtless we all have certain predilections when it comes to the matter of worship, certain understandings which we would make out to be ontological. We must admit other understandings into the range of true worship. Whether quiet or hearty, whether liturgical or non-liturgical, whether simple or whether highly adorned, we must allow that others who worship in different ways may be as sincere as we are. We must however see that true worship issues from the word of God, and is linked with the action of God-His acts in this world.

The Place of the Word in Worship

'the rediscovery of the book of the law in the time of Josiah-whatever 'the book' may have been- caused a radical reform to be carried out by the king. Not only had Israel departed into grievous idolatry, but the true worship of the temple had been missing. The book of the law spoke afresh to the people of Josiah's time, i.e. the people of the covenant, and it spoke of the holiness of covenant, and of its true worship. At a later time Hosea (5:1-6) spoke of there being no knowledge of God in the land and that with terrible consequences. He stated, 'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.' Lack of knowledge can come from not having God's word or law in possession-or-having it- from rejecting the word of God as it has been spoken, and of course, written. Life, worship and service are dependent upon true knowledge and true knowledge can come only from the word of God.

In the New Covenant knowledge of God comes through His love and forgiveness, 'They will know me-from the least of them to the greatest-for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sins I will remember no more'. Call it the word of the Cross, the word of forgiveness or the word of love, it is still *the word*, and it brings true knowledge to man, i.e. knowledge of God.

Worship-we observe again-was, born afresh by the Spirit at Pentecost, but it was worship which came with the word. Firstly it was the 120 on whom the Spirit came who spoke and worshipped, telling 'the wonderful works of God', and then it was Peter who gave the Pentecostal discourse. It was so when the man was healed at the Gate Beautiful, and then when the apostles were brought before the Sanhedrin. When the apostles were put in prison the angel released them saying, 'Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people *all the words of this life*.' The apostles recognised their call to give themselves 'to prayer and to the ministry of the word', and Stephen also addressed the Sanhedrin with a long sermon.

In reporting the above comments on the word we are not making out a case for the use of the word in worship for either it is the case or it is not. What we are saying is that worship was born of the word, and the word was an integral part of the worship for the reasons stated above, i.e. knowledge of God came through the word, and only those who have this knowledge can give 'reasonable worship' (Rom. 12:1, *logiken latreian*).

Just as Jesus was asked to read the lection in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:16-30) and so to give his commentary upon the set passage, so Paul-by invitation-followed the lections of law and prophecy with the word of teaching (Acts 13:13-4 1). We have good reasons to believe the early church would have used the Scriptures in this way. Even *so the use of God's word was a charismatic one*.

When we say that the use of God's word was a charismatic one we mean that there was no utterance of the word-whether kerugmatic (proclamatory), didactic (teaching), paraenetic (hortatory, i.e. exhortation) or worshipful which was not given by the Spirit. Paul's statement of I Thessalonians 1:5, 'For our gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction,' does not imply that the gospel can be delivered without power, the Spirit and full conviction. Paul would say that if ever such a thing happened then it would not be the gospel. There is not a gospel that is true without the Spirit, In fact in Paul's reckoning nothing is authentic without the Spirit. He tells the Thessalonians, 'You received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as what it really is, the word of God which is at work in you believers.' This true word of God is dynamic--it is 'at work in you believers'. Thus in Acts the word grows, increases, multiplies and expands. In Colossians 3:16 the worshippers are urged, 'Let the word of God dwell in you richly, as you admonish one another in all wisdom and as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in you heart to God.' In Ephesians 5:18-20 we have the same sequence of worship, but in this latter case the heart is filled with the Spirit. Thus the heart filled with 'the word' and the heart filled with 'the Holy Spirit' are equivalents. In I Corinthians 2:1-5 the kerugmatic word is delivered only through the Holy Spirit, and in I Peter 1:12 the kerugmatic word is preached 'through the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven'.

We are driven to conclude that no authentic act or word of the apostolic church was apart from the Holy Spirit, any more than it was apart from the word of God. Surely, then, all this summed up as being the new worship in the Spirit (John 4:20f.; Phil. 3:3). This, however, is not say that such worship was absent from Israel. The psalms and songs in Israel's history were the source of teaching and learning, of worship and praise and undoubtedly arose from the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit.

According to chapters 12 and 14 of I Corinthians, the word of God came through in 'a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation'. In Ephesians 5:18-20 psalms and hymns and spiritual songs were addressed to one another, so that they too were *the word of teaching*. Note also that the ministries of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher-all of which were delivered during worship-were 'word' ministries. It seems it was impossible for worship to be without the word. As we have seen in our rubric above, Paul advised, 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to the Lord' (Col. 3:16).

If to the above we add all the occasions when teaching took place then we have a considerable use of the word. In his letters Paul often refers to what he has already taught his readers. We know he taught at great length in Ephesus and Corinth. We know that Timothy and Silas taught the Thessalonians, as Epaphras did the Colossians. For the most part the Epistles were read in the churches (e.g. Col. 4:16), and Revelation chapters 2 and 3 surely endorse this custom. The book of the Revelation was to be read aloud (1:3), and the very reading would be a source of blessing to the reader, let alone to the hearers. In the pastoral Epistles Paul exhorts both Timothy and Titus to constantly teach the word of God. We know, too, that the elders were to be 'apt to teach', and the deacons to 'hold the mystery of faith with a clear conscience'. Holy the mystery, then, they could scarcely refrain from teaching it!

We must, of course, understand the 'apt to teach' does not necessarily mean what we would today think it meant. It would not be just theological reasoning, the impartation of dogmatics, or even exposition of portions of Scripture. The rabbinic commentaries on the lections were intended to be practical, related to the lives of the hearers and good instruction in the way of living. So, too, the elders would have followed the apostles in showing the word of God to be His message for them for the moment. As Paul put it, this word was 'profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work' (11 Tim. 3:16-17). Paul's purpose is stated in 'preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths' (see 11 Tim. 4:1-5; 1 Tim. 2:1-2).

The Renewal or Revival of Worship

Vitalizing attempts to renew the church

Much has been researched, written and practiced in regard to worship over these past few decades. Some have thought that a revival of the church might come through renewed or revised liturgies. It is certain that liturgies teach as they are used, but the question is one of the source and origin of such formulated worship. Doubtless liturgies have grown out of spiritual fulness, out of the word of God, and out of the fellowship and the proclamatory action of Christ's people. In some cases they are used too formally, and in others too haphazardly and even with the unfortunate fraction of their complete form. It is doubtful whether liturgies, of themselves, could effect a revival of faith.

Others see a renewal in worship by the use of 'body-worship', i.e. involving all members in some form of worship participation. From having only one leader in all things there are often many leaders in many things. The service is often parcelled out in a democratic distribution. Some congregations have a sharing form of service, either in a typical 'encounter' format, or in more intimate 'house church' gatherings. The present charismatic forms that worship takes-and they are many-encourage the use of the gifts of the Spirit, and provided these are genuine and the use of them does not become an end in itself, this form of worship can be quite stimulating. Again it will not necessarily lead to a revival of the church although it is often claimed that this is the

revival of the church. Leaders of this kind of worship know how much it can be done by skilful leadership rather than be--of itself-spontaneous.

Authentic renewal or revival of the church

In the light of what we have discovered, i.e. that worship springs from and leads to God's action in history, then the church must be in the stream of such to be vital and alive. The question is, 'How many congregations understand the nature of salvation history? How many comprehend the action of God in

- (i) election,
- (ii) 'the plan of the mystery', 'the mystery of his will', 'the counsel of his will', 'the mystery of Christ', 'the eternal purpose', 'the mystery of God', and
- (iii) the glorification of man and creation'?

Should they not, then, be tutored in these things, since the writers of Scripture, certainly had this view of Him 'who was, and is, and is to come', i.e. the God Who controls all history and shapes it up to it-, destined end. If congregations do not know the destiny of creation, then from what source can authentic hope spring?

The first step must be to teach along such lines. The Thessalonian church began with such teaching (I Thess. 1:10). It would seem that all churches were so tutored. They were given the, biblical; world-view and time-view, and worked within that framework of Divine thinking. They had some comprehension of apocalyptic. Even with such comprehension there must be the understanding that proclaiming the gospel is the life and purpose of the church, that it is the witness to Christ, and the fulfilling of the plan of God. The mere *rationale* of proclamation will not be enough to move the church to action. It will take more than that. Redeemed men will want to redeem men. The miracle of salvation will bring its own constraint to save others.

All truth comes to us today from the word of the Scriptures, opened to us by the Spirit (cf. Luke 24:44; John 16:12-15), and comprehended in the historic stream of the life of the church. Therefore a revival of the church-the worship- and-action, the action-and-worship dialectic-will not obtain without a reformation of biblical teaching, the personal experience of repentance and faith, the revelation of the immense grace of God, and the sense of need of that grace, as well as the appropriation of it.

The word of God in The revival of the church

In practice what is the preaching of the word of God? Harmless homilies? Topical tidbits? Communication of information which is biblical, moral, social, and spiritual? Exhortation to good living, social justice and social action-including the present ethical issues'? Or is it the teaching of the eternities-the proclamation of Christ, his redemptive and reigning Lordship, the great issues of righteousness, truth, holiness, goodness and love? Does it embrace the state of man and the need for repentance and faith'? Does it speak of the new birth, of the new creation, of participation in God's redemptive plan for the world? Does it portray the plan of God for history, the *schema* of God for winning the nations and defeating the massive evil which confronts us in our own generation? Does it envisage the triumphant telos-the victory of God at the culmination of the age? Is the great power of the Cross, Resurrection and Ascension so presented that men and women tremble before God and become regenerated in His sight?

Without these striking verities our worship will always be dull, and prosaic. It will be horizontal in its dimension, cut off from the vertical. When our worship is in the midst of these verities, the action of the living God, and when it is given to the redemption of man and the sharing of spiritual power with the nations, then the church will be revived. Then its worship will be on the truly grand scale. In times of revival a fresh flood of the Spirit and the Gospel breaks forth, and cities, towns, districts, villages and hamlets are inundated. Worship is at last a reality. It is the source and cause of action, as action is also the source and cause of true worship. All God's acts-past, present and future; actual and sacramental-are vividly alive to the spirits of men and women. They are caught in a joyous and true worship of the living God.

The Church in Worship and Service

Reverend Dean J. Carter

"Ascribe to the LORD the glory of His name;
worship the LORD in holy array."

Psalm 29:2

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to
receive power and wealth and wisdom and
might and honor and glory and blessing!"

Revelation 5:12

INTRODUCTION

The Church is ever engaged in worship and service. While commissions seriously seek to reform and renew that worship, other church members display a mentality akin to ceremonial sightseers and liturgical tourists, indulging in self-expression (and self satisfaction) and displaying their *penchant* for the fascinating and sensational. Others still are content to investigate the spiritual phenomenon common to man, under the umbrella of comparative religion.

This study, however, seeks to clarify the *Biblical* witness to the nature and praxis of worship and service. To determine the Church's worship and service, we must commence our investigation with a review of *Biblical terminology*, and the *divine and human action* in worship. That will provide the basis for our consideration of the Church.

To begin with, we offer a working definition: the *essence of worship* is "the descent to man of the Father's love in the Word, and the ascent to the Father, in the power of the Holy Spirit, of the filial response to that love, fulfilled by the Incarnate Word in the humanity which He took, which is also our humanity, so that the response is ours as well as His".¹

PART ONE: THE ESSENCE OF WORSHIP

I. Terminology

The Old Testament makes use of two words to denote worship. The Hebrew verb *histahawllh* means bowing down or the prostration of the body in homage. [For its uses (i) before superiors-Gen. 27:9; 1 Sam. 25:23; II Sam. 14:33; 24:20, and (ii) before God—Gen. 22:5; 24:26; Exod. 4:31; 24:1; Deut. 26:10.] Another Hebrew verb *abad*

¹W. Nicolls, *Jacob's Ladder: The Meaning of Worship (John Knox: 1958), page 66.*

(the noun is *'abodáh*) means service [cf. the word *'ebed* for servant], and can be used either for daily work or Temple worship. It is significant that the Septuagint (LXX) introduced an unwarranted distinction between these usages: it used *douleuein* and *poiein* to denote daily work, and *latreuein* to signify worship (Exod. 3:12; 4:23).

The New Testament makes use of four terms. The Greek word *proskunein* denotes bowing down, and apart from its use in the Synoptics, John 4:20-24 and I Corinthians 14:25, signifies the homage of Christians in Jesus' resurrection appearances and in the Revelation to John (i.e. 4:10; 5:14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4). A related term *latreuein*, is used more widely for worship (Rom. 1:25; 12:2; Heb. 9:14; 12:28). Further, a priestly or cultic term, *leitourgein*, (which is restricted in the LXX to priestly ministry) is not widely used for Christian worship (Acts 13:2; c.f. Luke 1:23; Rom. 13:6; 15:16; 15:27; Phil. 2:25; Heb. 1:7; 1:14; 8:2, 6; 9:21; 10:11). Fourthly, the term for service is *diakonos*, signifying one given particular tasks, such as "waiting on tables" (cf. *doulos* which is the term for a slave, highlighting the status of being totally under the authority of his master).

Whereas there is a distinction in the Old Testament, between priestly and cultic, and worship generally, this is discarded by the writers of the New Testament. We shall see the implications of this when we come to consider the action of the Church.

Finally, the English word "worship" is derived from "worth-ship". "It is the ascribing of 'worth-ship' to God, with the corollary that the worshipper takes his proper place as a creature over against the Creator"²

II. The seeking Father

Man was created for worship, to join in concert with the angels and creation at large in joyful service to the Creator-Father, the Living God. This worship is seen in Isaiah 6, Revelation 4 (in glad response and acknowledgement of His will), and acknowledged in Romans 1. However, man rebelled, refused to give thanks and honour, and exchanged the truth of God for falsity. From being "theocentric", man becomes "theofugal". The immediate sequel to this was idolatry (Rom. 1:21-25): this perverted cult perpetuated itself in pervasive repercussions (Rom. 1:26-32).

A further conflict is noted in the Scriptures with respect to worship: antagonism between worshippers (see Cain and Abel in Gen. 3), and the intrusive demand of Satan³ for worship (Matt. 4:9-10). Of particular note is the response of Jesus to Satan's offer. He affirms that God "alone" is to be worshipped and served (Jesus inserts the "alone" into the citation from Deut. 6:13), and that He will guard this right, even to the Cross.

Jesus also affirms that God has continued to seek man, for worship and service (John 4:20-24). While none seek Him out (Rom. 3:11; 1 Cor. 1:22), the Father "seeks" (desires and requires): in fact, this is the only place in the Scriptures which show God "seeking" anything from His people—His will is for His people to worship. Acceptable worship will be familial (Eph. 3:14), corporate and "in spirit and in truth", in response to divine apostolic (Jesus, the Twelve, and the Church) action. (For God seeking [by means of "calling"] out worshippers see Adam-Gen. 3; Abram-Gen. 12; Acts 7:2; Jacob-Gen. 28:10-22; 32:24-31; Moses-Exod. 3:4; Acts 7:30-33; Israel-Exod. 4:22; Hosea 11:1; Samuel-I Sam. 3:4-10; Isaiah-Isa. 6. The same is observed in the New Testament, where Joseph seeks his son—Luke 2:48ff. and Paul is

² L. L. Morris, *Liturgiology* (Ridley College Unpublished Classroom Syllabus, n.d.), page 1.

³ Satan is opposed to the ontological thrust of creation to worship God, with and under man. He sets up a "pantomime", to sabotage the true by anti- and ante-ontological activities.

sought out-Gal. 1:15-16.) The implications of “in spirit and in truth” will be considered in sections “IV. The Servant of the Lord”, and “V. Worship by the Spirit of God”.

III. Redeemed to Worship

The call of God to man for worship was met by man’s calling upon the name of the Lord (Gen. 4:26). God called the patriarchs, with a view to Israel becoming a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exod. 19:6). Following the Exodus from Egypt, Israel’s worship was covenantal (Exod. 19:5), charismatic (Rom. 11:28-29), and a gift (Rom. 9:4).

A survey of the elements of the Old Testament covenant cultus (such as the Name, the Spirit, the glory, the Tabernacle and Temple, the sacrifices, etc.) is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is imperative to note three related aspects: these are *protocol*, the *regulative principle*, and *covenantal reprisals*. Torrance gives the thrust of these when he says that God “provided them with a covenanted way of responding to him, a vicarious way in which the covenant might be fulfilled in their midst and on their behalf.⁴ He continues, “thus no unprescribed oblation, no uncovenanted offering, no strange fire, no incense of their own recipe, and no ritual of their own inventing, were to be intruded into their worship of God”.⁵

By protocol we mean the manner of approach, or the way in which God’s people were to enter His presence. This protocol is determined by the regulative principle, which states that only what God appoints and gives (or requires and provides), are allowable.⁶ Where there are breaches of the covenant, reprisals are enacted. (For examples of reprisals see Nadab and Abihu-Lev. 10:1-3; Num. 3:4 [for improper incense = prayer], Uzzah-II Sam. 6-8 [for forbidden handling of the Covenant Ark], Saul-I Sam. 13 [forbidden sacrifices, and refusal to ban the devoted objects, forfeiting the Spirit], Uzziah-II Chron. 26:16-21, and the exile imposed on the nation itself-I Kings 12:25ff. There are warnings against all of these actions [i.e. Num. 18:1, 5, 7]. These all follow the initial reprisals against Adam, and his son, Cain. Such covenantal action is also seen in the New Testament.)⁷

For Israel to worship then, involved the prior initiative of God, providing and evoking the appropriate response.⁸ It was orderly, paedagogical, and expressed thankful obedience: it correlated to the past (memory) as well as the future (hope), as they lived in the present (the obedience of faith). Under Moses, who was faithful in all the household of God (Num. 12:7), worship was comprehensive, that is, “according to

⁴ T. F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ* (Paternoster Press, 1983), page 84.

⁵ Torrance, *ibid.* The important issue to remember here is that since the cultus was to be fulfilled in and by Christ, and that He would only do that which was commanded by the Father, Israel was to remain faithful to the “gift of worship.”

⁶ The question of the “regulative principle” has been hotly debated throughout Church history. Some argue that “only that which is prescribed is allowed”, while others have affirmed the more liberal position that “only that which is proscribed is forbidden”. For a recent discussion, see Norman Shepherd’s “The Biblical Basis for the Regulative Principle in Worship” in the symposium *The Biblical Doctrine of Worship* (Reformed Pres. Church of North America: 1974) pages 42-56.

⁷ See, for example, the death of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11), the apostolic handing over to judgement of the fornicator (I Cor. 5:3-5), the warning against sabotaging the Church (I Cor. 3:16-17), sickness and death as sequels to unworthy participation in the Lord’s Supper (I Cor. 11:17-34), and the reprisals against the Church by her Lord (Rev. 2:5, 2:16, 2:21-23).

⁸ As Cranfield correctly notes, “in each particular act of worship the chief actor is not man but God”. See C. E. B. Cranfield, “Divine and Human Action: The Biblical Concept of Worship” *Interpretation* 12 (1958), page 389.

the pattern” disclosed to him (Exod. 25:9).⁹ Israel was warned against the snare of pagan worship (Deut. 12:30-32), yet continually flirted with, and was seduced by, such worship. Where Israel failed to remain faithful to the covenant, the promise of a new worshipper, servant, priest, was heralded. He was called the “servant of the Lord”.

IV. The Servant of the Lord

With the advent of Christ, the promised actualisation of the divinely provided and required covenantal response was embodied, in human form (Luke 1:73-75). Jesus fulfilled the worship of Adam (Rom. 6), Israel (John 4:22) and the nations (Ps. 18:49; Rom. 15:8-10), so that after the resurrection, His apostles were authorised to take the gospel of grace to all the nations (Isa. 56:7; Acts 1:8; Matt. 28:19). He is the paradigm for worship and service: He was both constrained by, and commanded to love-God whole-heartedly, and his neighbour as himself. His attitudes to, and activities within the context of Temple, synagogue, the Sabbath and the Festivals stands in stark contrast to worshipping Israel.¹⁰

Jesus is portrayed as the “minister-High Priest”, “servant”, and the focus, locus and *nexus of* all worship-service. Let us consider each of these. Firstly, Jesus is the “minister-High Priest” (Heb. 8:2; 3:2). As such, He was, divinely appointed to represent God to man, and man to God. On the Day *of* Atonement, He fulfilled what was required *of* both Offerer and Victim: propitiation was effected, intercession made, reconciliation purchased, and so peace declared. Here alone is acceptable worship, here alone God accepted man in Christ, and here alone we have entered into the sanctuary *of* God, in Him. He continues to gather up all worship, having fulfilled, justified, purified and replaced all worship and service, once for all (Heb. 10:14).

Next, He is the “servant” (Luke 22:27; Isa. 42:lff., and the “songs of the Suffering Servant of the Lord”). His service is characterised by a rejection of autodoxology, as opposed to the praise *of* God. He became the source and norm *of* service, in His obedience to the Father, and unreserved compassion to all; He enjoyed true freedom under the Father’s authority (John 8:28-29); He was unconcerned about the results *of* His work (Phil. 2:6-8); He was faithful in suffering in the face of ruthless and incorrigible hostility; He lived under the Word of God, in the weakness of grace (Matt. 4:4; II Cor. 12:4).

As focus *of* worship we observe that He has become the concentration of all the elements of worship. Whatever relates to worship is fulfilled in, and replaced by Him. This reaffirms, and completes the meaning of the *regulative principle*, as noted above. True worship is then, Christological: He is the way, truth and life of the Father; He is the “governor” of all worship. He is worthy of, and receives, the worship of the Church and the creation (Phil. 2:9-11; John 20:28; Heb. 1:6; Rev. 5:12).

Christ is the locus of worship. The Tabernacle and Temple, both “made by human hands”, are now outmoded. (The barriers of both the veil [separating the Holies *of* Holies from the Holy place] and the wall [separating Jews from the Gentiles and excommunicate] were torn down by the action *of* the Cross.) They are replaced by

⁹ When compared to Moses, Jesus is “faithful over all the house of God” (Heb. 3:5-6). Note too the textual correspondence of Exod. 25:9 LXX, with John 5:19: Moses *makes* = the Son does; God *shows* = the Father *shows*; *all the pattern* = all He does.

¹⁰ Jesus’ attitudes to the cultus, the observance of the Sabbath, the frequency of signs and miracles being worked on the Sabbath, and at synagogues and Temple, together with His regular attendance at the Festivals is readily traced through all four Gospels.

Christ Himself (John 2:13-22), and His Body. Hence true worship is not dependent on the geographical location of the place of meeting (John 4:20ff.).¹¹

Jesus is the nexus or mediator of worship. He alone is this (I Tim. 2:5; John 1:51), both with respect to God, and man. Through Him God chooses to reveal Himself (Matt. 11:25ff.; Luke 10:21-22; John 1:17-18), and has done so. Through His vicarious humanity, Christ has been accountable to God, for all; that is, both revelation and reconciliation are effected in and by Him, for God and man. Again, God has spoken from on high, been heard in the depths of human experience-man has called from the depths and been heard in the highest, “in Christ”. The Word incarnate is the means for God’s call, and for man’s response (Isa. 55:11; Heb. 4:12-13); the holy God demands and provides the holy man (I Peter 1:16); the loving mercy of God requires and donates the propitiating Lamb (John 1:29; I John 4:10). Through the events of Christ on the Cross, man assents and consents to the just judgment of God, repents and trusts God to justify, sanctify and glorify.

Hence, at the Cross His representation and substitution (in His vicarious humanity), were effective in incorporating humanity: we were crucified in and with Him, and so were raised to live to God (II Cor. 5:14-15). In His humanity acceptable worship and service were offered and received, and reconciliation (or “exchange”) has taken place, thus remedying the radical reversal of the Fall (II Cor. 5:18-21; Rom. 1:25). Hence, as true man, Christ is the mediator of the Spirit, faith, worship, the gifts-in fact, the new creation.

The seeking Father sent the suffering Servant-Son. As the true man, He fulfilled “once for all” the covenantal stipulations, bore the full burden for covenantal breaches, and exercises authority over the Church, to fill creation. All worship and service is Christological: He provides the pattern in Himself. For this to be experienced requires the ministry of the Spirit. In response to His prayer, Christ dispenses the gift of the promised Holy Spirit (Jer. 31; Ezek. 36-37).

V. Worship by the Spirit of God

The coming of the Spirit at Pentecost ushered in a new worship-the spontaneous and glad response to the Gospel of Christ. Hand in hand with this worship was the service of the Church (Acts 2). This inseparable link is observed all through Acts, -as the “Worded Spirit” creates a new people with the “Spirited Word”¹²-the community of faith, of grace, of Christ, worship and serve in one continuous and indistinguishable action.

Paul affirmed that the Church worships God in the Spirit (John 4:23-24; Phil. 3:3). His ministry is comprehensive: He effects a “faith hearing” for the Gospel (Gal. 3:1-5; Acts 10:33ff.; Heb. 4:2); He brings the word of Christ to the Church (Rev. 2:7; etc.); He gives knowledge of God (I Cor. 2:9-16; cf. the ignorance of John 4:22); He bears witness to Christ (John 15:26; 16:13-15).

All of this activity is to replicate in us the humanity of Christ, and the work of the Cross. He comes as child trainer (Rom. 8:14-17), having effectively led the Son in worship through suffering to glory (Heb. 9:14). Fresh from the offering of Christ to

¹¹ For a thorough treatment of the relation of the Tabernacle and Temple to Christ, see Edmund P. Clowney “The Final Temple” in *Studying the New Testament Today Vol. 1*, ed. John H. Skilton (Presbyterian and Reformed: 1974), pages 97-132. See also M. C. Kline *Images of the Spirit* (Baker: 1980) for the correlations between the fabric of the Tabernacle, the priestly robes of Aaron, the royal adorning of Israel (Ezek. 16), and the investing of the Church by the glorified Christ.

¹² These terms were used by Johnathan Edwards to show how closely the operations of the Spirit were linked to the Word, whether in its incarnate, written, or spoken forms.

God, fresh from having empowered the holiness of Christ's humanity, He comes to renew pure worship; that is, the experienced Spirit of Christ applies the fruit of the Cross and the Resurrection to the Church, so making our worship Christological (incorporated in the very offering of Christ). The Spirit echoes the intercession of the heavenly Advocate in the Church. Renewal then, must be Christological, and productive of holy love.

Since He comes in the name of Christ, and is self-effacing, the Spirit points us to Christ, and empowers us to witness to Christ as saving Lord. This leads us to consider the charismata, and the Spirit's creativity: each of these is significant for worship and service. However, we will leave the treatment of the charismata until "II: The Charismatic Church", in Part Two of this study. The Spirit's creativity guards the Church from seeking to intrude foreign elements into true worship, and setting up a new programme of service. Perceiving this ever-present danger, Torrance warns that "there lies deep down a confusion between the Creator Spirit of Holy God and the creative spirituality of Christian man".¹³ This ought not surprise us, since we all bring a "carry over" of idolatrous inventiveness into the Church (Eccles. 7:29; Rom. 1:30; I Kings 12:33), and none are immune to the temptation to stifle and sabotage the Spirit (Heb. 10:29; I Thess. 5:19; Eph. 4:30).

We commenced with a working definition of worship. Our survey of the Biblical materials has confirmed its validity. We must now apply it to the Church at its Worship and Service.

PART TWO: THE CHURCH AT WORSHIP AND SERVICE

We have noted that God seeks worshippers and that man is structured to respond with glad adoration and obedience. God's seeking, and man's response, are effected in Christ: revelation and reconciliation take place in Christ, at the Cross. The new man—"in Christ"—now lives to God: he worships and serves, by grace.

In Part Two of our study we shall see how this worship and service takes place. Firstly, we will consider the Apostle Paul's *ministry* as an example of our previous findings. Secondly, we will seek to clarify the nature and function of the *charismata* within the life of the Church. Next, the *worship* of the Church will be covered, and finally, we will examine the *service* of the Church.

I. The Ministry of Paul

Paul was sought out by God, to give true worship and service (Acts 9; cf. Acts 26:13-23; Gal. 1:15-16; Eph. 3:14; Phil. 3:3). While called an apostle, he also designated himself as a "priest" (*leiturgos*) in Romans 15:16 (cf. Heb. 8:2). His admitted responsibility to Christ was to effect a proper (acceptable and sanctified) Gentile "offering". The cult (or "priestly service") in which he operated was the "gospel of God" (cf. Rom. 1:1, 9). The offering was personal and practical: personal in that now the Gentiles are offered to, and accepted by God (Col. 1:28; Rom. 12:1), and practical, since the Gentiles glorify and obey God (Rom. 15:9, 18). The means used to

¹³ T. F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (SCM: 1965), page 244. That this has been a constant threat to the Church has been documented in Torrance's *The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers* (Eerdmans: 1960), pages 133-141.

effect this was the full proclamation of the gospel (Rom. 15:19): here illustrated by the Epistle itself.

The climax for the Epistle is seen in 15:8 9, 13, where the Gentiles come to hope, with Israel, in Jesus as the Messiah. Paul's unique ministry to the Gentiles, even as a Jew, has issued out of God keeping and fulfilling His covenant with Israel. God's will to bring the nations to worship and service, is effected through the apostles, and the apostolic church. Through the one seed of Abraham, all the families of the earth are blessed, all flesh receive the gift of the Spirit, all are made one in the Body of Christ, all unite in thanks and praise (Rom. 15:5-13).

II. The Charismatic Church

The fundamental or fontal gift to the people of God is life itself (John. 17:3; Rom. 6:23). It is not surprising that Paul sees this life as issuing out of the Cross, for there Christ conquered death, and brought humanity to live to God (II Cor. 5:14-15; cf. being "dead in trespasses and sins", Eph. 2:1-10). This gift of life is "in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23-it is the *charisma* of God, of grace, of the Kingdom, of the reigning Lord. It is the long awaited eschatological endowment, from which all other gifts derive; it is this that discloses the authority of Christ as Lord.

Christ has richly equipped His Church: in fact, we have received gifts that correlate to, and express His fulness. As John affirms "from his fulness have we all received, grace upon (for ?) grace" (John 1:16). Paul enumerates these gifts in his letters to the Ephesians, to the Romans and to the Corinthians (Eph. 4:7-11: here the gifts are the servants of Christ themselves; Rom. 12:4-8; I Cor. 12:4-11: here the gifts are joined with the "services" and "workings"; cf. I Cor. 7:7). Peter likewise lists the gifts which glorify God, as the Church lives under the Lordship of Christ (I Peter 4:10-11). In each of the Apostolic witnesses, we note the Lordship of Christ, and the sovereignty of the divine distribution.

Just as Christ is not at the disposal of the Church, neither are His gifts (this also holds true for the Spirit). They are dispensed for the filling up of the created order, for its participating in the glad worship and obedient service of the Body of Christ: that is, they are given for action, for the dynamic operation of Christ's holy love and rule. For, as Kasemann observes, the very gifts themselves as expressions of grace do "not encourage sleeping partners or uninvested capital".¹⁴ On the contrary, they apprehend and constrain us, for "service is not merely the consequence but the outward form and the realization of grace".¹⁵

The charismata of the Church are not given to encourage and satisfy the human fascination with the "spiritual", which may have been occurring in Corinth (I Con 14:12), but the building up of the Church. The *test of the gifts* is not that something happens, or is observed, but what use is made of the gift: that is, the gifts are only validated by the service which they render to others. Grace creates responsible and response-able obedience.

The gifts promote and express the *unity* of the Church, since they are the means whereby Christ exercises His Lordship, to fill all in all. This unity is not to be confused with either uniformity or equality, as the Church knows its identity as the Body of

¹⁴ E. Kasemann, "Ministry and Community in the New Testament" in *Essays on New Testament Themes* (SCM: 1971), page 65. Hereafter cited as "Ministry." (We readily acknowledge our debt to this particular article, and to the background it has provided to this section of our paper.) We note further Jesus' use of parables to underline this same point.

¹⁵ Kasemann, "Ministry," loc. cit.

Christ by the continued action of love and service. The unity of the gifts to the Giver must also be safeguarded. Any mere utilitarian recognition of gifts, apart from the sovereignty of Christ, is out of place. The dangers of gifts in isolation may be seen in anarchy, conceit and factionalism.

These gifts are also *comprehensive*. They equip the Church for its total mission, as Christ is acknowledged as universal Lord: the separation of sacred and secular is dissolved, the Church presses forward its attack by grace on every area of life. The lists of gifts also stand over against the catalogues of vice, showing that a reconstructed order of life is established.

The operation of the gifts is *revelatory*. The Church witnesses to the world: that is, Jews and Gentiles, male and female, slaves and freemen all work together as one. It is this revelation that prompts the cry of I Corinthians 14:25.

One last matter should be mentioned before we turn to the application of the gifts in worship and service. It is *order*. This means that *distribution*, *direction*, and *disposition* are important. By distribution we mean that God has chosen to give to His people, as He generously determines. There is then, a divinely apportioned differentiation amongst the Church. Its total life is charismatic, but is not egalitarian (Rom. 12:3; I Cor. 3:5; 7:7; 12:7; Eph. 4:7). Secondly, the gifts are to be directed towards others, either the Church, or the world (I Cor. 12:25). No one lives to or for himself. He is also now free from the anxieties of the world, and self-interest. Under the Lordship of Christ, he knows the freedom of service. Finally, the disposition created by grace is that of honouring others (Rom. 12:10; Phil. 2:3; I Pet. 5:5; Eph. 5:21). The operation of the gifts will coincide with genuine humility, as all recognise their proper place within the Body of Christ.

We are now ready to examine the worship and service of the Church, with particular notice being given to the charismata.

III. The Worshipping Church

With the emergence of the charismatic movement, congregational worship underwent radical changes. While others focused on the hearing of the Gospel (by preaching and teaching) or the proper reception of the Sacraments (by participation in the liturgy of the Church), the “new issue” became the reception of the Spirit (and the gift ministries). These groups have been broadly called the Protestant, the Catholic and the Pentecostal (whether these are correct categories is another matter!). What is correct is that the dialogue of worship, in its fulness and richness, will give ample opportunity for the Church to hear the Word with faith and to respond with thanks in the sacraments, under the guidance of the Spirit.

1. *Key Texts on the Church at Worship*

(i) **I Cor. 12-14**

Although there are other liturgical concerns in I Corinthians (such as Baptism in chapter 1, prayer in chapter 11, and the Lord’s Supper in chapters 10 and 11), we shall concentrate on chapters 12-14. Paul is concerned to caution and control the enthusiasts: he does so by continuing to write under his initial rubric—“the word of the cross” and by balancing his teaching on the diamond pivot of love (I Cor. 13).

Chapter 12 elaborates the scope and function of the gifts, services and workings, stresses the functional unity of the Body of Christ, and the appointment of all under divine discretion and distribution. The “way” of such Body operation is love. Chapter 14

gives the apostolic directives for application in the local setting, with respect to worship.

I Corinthians 14:26 outlines the conduct of the service, as members contribute *hymns* (fresh psalms: Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), *a lesson* (practical teaching: cf. Rom. 12:7; Gal. 6:6), *a revelation* (such as the Gospel: Rom. 16:25; truths: II Cor. 12:1, 7; and personal duty: Gal. 2:2), *tongues* and their *interpretation*. The purpose for these contributions is “edification” (see below for a development of this criterion for ministry).

Furthermore, cautions are given. Firstly, God is the God of peace and order, not confusion. Secondly, the gifts that are mentioned are all related to the “word”. This does not necessarily imply that “healings” did not occur within the Corinthian worship, but that the unambiguous focus of worship, for both God and man, is the Word.

With these brief comments, we turn to the Epistle to the Hebrews.

(ii) Heb. 10:19-25, 12:18-13:21

The Epistle to the Hebrews provides the most thorough treatment of the implications for worship of the coming of the Son as the incarnate Word, the great High Priest, and Author and Pioneer of our faith. Memory and hope are stressed as the means of relating to the past and the future, as the people of God have been given a new, a better, a perfect covenant. Christ is the human leader of worship, who has entered the heavenly sanctuary, once for all. The writer has two particular sections which relate to worship -chapter 10:19-25 and chapter 12:18-13:21.

Hebrews 10:19-25 speaks of the new access to God, effected by the Cross. It is couched in Old Testament cultic terms, but stresses the better hope and the sanctification gained by Christ. The members of the church, here called “brethren”, are urged to love and engage in good (cf. the “dead works” of 9:14) works. Further, they are expected to continue to meet together, for exhortation. This “exhortation” guards the congregation against the deceit of sin (Heb. 3:12ff), as well as provoking to renewed service in Christ’s name. To neglect or fail to meet together means that on the one hand the individual is exposed to sin’s deceit and apostasy, while on the other, that those who do attend are responsible to engage in ministry.

Hebrews 12:18-13:21 is an extended section which affirms the contrast that now obtains for worship: Christians have access to Mt. Zion and the heavenly sanctuary, rather than the Wilderness approach to Mt. Sinai. This prompts and evokes gratitude for a new and secure kingdom (12:28), and the offering of acceptable worship. Coupled with the worship are the “ethical directives” to love and good works (cf. 10:24). The section continues with the call to join with Jesus, and through Him to make a threefold sacrifice-of praise to God (13:15), of doing good (13:16a) and sharing (13:16b). Finally, the church is urged to honour its leaders, to pray, and is granted a covenantal blessing.

Common to these texts are the rich eschatological thrust, as opposed to mere enthusiasm, the rejection of previous cultic forms (whether Jewish, or pagan; whether in terms of places, times and settings), and the corporate responsibility to engage in the action of love, under the guidance of the Lord and His Spirit. Bornkamm summarises these elements thus: “this eschatological consciousness is announced in the spiritual character of the proclamation of the word, of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, of

confession, hymns and prayers, and in the ways in which the congregation expresses in life its relationship to the exalted, present and coming Lord.¹⁶

For the outworking of this “eschatological consciousness” we need to identify the criterion for charismatic life, the participants in this action, the elements and character of the worship, and the Lordship of Christ. To these we now turn.

2. *The Criterion for the Gift operation-Edification*

Paul asserts that there is one over-riding criterion for the operation of the gifts within the Body of Christ. It is “edification”. We will investigate the meaning and use of the term, its application to the gift of tongues, and the apostolic expectation of charismatic action.

Paul used the term edification in a way which contradicted the Corinthian enthusiasts. They were concerned to promote *individual* subjective religious experience: he, ironically, only recognizes the edification of the Church. He uses the noun “edification” and the verbal form “to edify” some seven times in 1 Corinthians 14 (3-5, 12, 26; 4, 17). He wishes to highlight the action of the Church as self-surrender and service, under the Cross.

An examination of the uses provides these points:

- (i) Paul rejects proud self-expression and indulgence, together with the fascination with spiritual phenomenon.
- (ii) The test for action is to help others, as members of the Church (14:3, 4).
- (iii) He shows concern for the “outsiders”, who are uninstructed in the truth of God (14:16, 23 ff.)
- (iv) Edification has a mission function, since the term “to build” is employed with regard to both missionary activity as well as the teaching care of the congregation (I Cor. 3:5ff.; II Cor. 10:8; 12:19; 13:10).
- (v) This highlights the debt we owe to others (I Thess. 5:11; I Cor. 8:11-23; cf. Rom. 14:12).
- (vi) Edification applies to what is subject to scrutiny on the day of judgment (I Cor. 3:10-15).

Hence the function of the charismata is governed by the criterion of edification—the action, of love, which builds the Body of Christ (I Cor. 13; cf. 8:1). This may be applied to the gift of tongues. Paul asserts that the proper use of this gift is contingent upon four rubrics: that it is translated (interpreted), it is intelligible (especially in regard to prayer), it edifies the gathered church, and it is limited to two or three speakers. Of special concern is the presence of outsiders. For such to affirm the Gospel, to be constrained to confess “God is here” requires them to understand, to be convicted, and to have their innermost secrets exposed (I Cor. 14:23-25). The indiscriminate use of the gift of tongues would not effect such evangelism!

As Borkham pertinently notes: “adoration” and acclamation apply to the epiphany of God in the congregation, not only to the confirmation of the inspiration of the speaker”.¹⁷ We would also warn against the further dangers of a “parsonical”, esoteric, or “jargon” language for worship (does this also mean that there can be no set liturgical language, such as Latin, or the language of angels?).

¹⁶ G. Bornkamm, “On the Understanding of Worship” in *Early Christian Experience* (SCM: 1969). page 162.

¹⁷ Bornkamm, *art. cit.* page 177. Much of the substance of this section on edification has been drawn from Bornkamm’s fine treatment.

Finally, we note that all of the gifts contribute to edification-none is exempt from exercising their entrusted charismatic function. As Kasemann states, "I Cor. 14 teaches that everybody may not begin operations just when he feels like it and that the Holy Spirit does not pass lightly over matters of organization and external order . . . no Christian can exempt himself or be exempted by others from service in word or deed as an office-bearer of Christ and his body. Ever since his baptism, grace has been equipping him for this very thing".¹⁸

3. *The Participants in the Worship*

(i) **God**

God, in His fulness, is actively present to those at worship. The assembling for worship anticipates God's presence, as promised by Jesus (Matt. 18:20, 28:20; cf. the apostolic parousia in I Cor. 5:4). Further, God actively seeks true worshippers (**John 4:20-24**). This assures those gathering that their focus is not merely a subjective longing and desire.

(ii) **The Church**

All the members of the Church are expected to meet in the name of Christ, to call upon the Lord. They assemble for responsible ministry: that is, they are present, as full participators. They are neither absent, nor abdicating their obligations to be active.

That worship is dynamic is stressed by the activities involved-hearing, praising, praying, confessing and receiving. Since this is so, what are the implications for "ethnic" congregations, the separation of the congregation by means of Sunday School (and the inability of teachers to share in combined worship), and services which cater for special interest groups within the Parish?

(iii) **Angels**

The angelic beings worship the Creator for His creation and redemption (Isa. 6:3; Rev. 5:11-14). They pay due homage to Christ (Heb. 1:6; cf. Luke 2:13-14), delight to see the effects of the gospel of grace in repentance (Luke 15:7, 10), observe the Church at worship (I Cor. 11:10; Eph. 3:10; I Pet. 1:12). Further, they act as messengers and agents of God and His Christ (Heb. 1:14; John 1:51), and assist the Church in prayer (Rev. 5:8; 8:3).

Whereas the Church receives the ministry of angels (Heb. 13:2), the Church is not free to give undue honour to such angels (Col. 2:18; cf. Rev. 19:10). Just as Paul urges the Corinthian church to beware of being exposed to demonic activity (I Cor. 10:20), he warns against the unwarranted zeal for knowledge of the powers ("spirits") behind the manifestations occurring in their church (I Cor. 14:12).

Again, it has been argued (by Earl Ellis)¹⁹ that the "spirits of the prophets" (I Cor. 14:32) refers not to the personal spirit (or psyche) of any prophet, but to the ministering angels who disclose heavenly truth (Rev. 22:6). Paul urges (along with John in I John 4:1-3) that the Church must be safe-guarded against improper intrusions, and that even the message of angels must be examined (Gal. 1:8). He even warns against false apostles, who claim to have such revelations to validate their ministry (II Cor. 11:3-4, 14). Whether we concur with all of Ellis' thesis, we may affirm that the Church, even in its worship, is participating in a cosmic conflict, that the Church must be submissive

¹⁸ Kasemann, "Ministry" page 81.

¹⁹ E. E. Ellis "'Spiritual Gifts' in the Pauline Community" in *Prophecy and Hermeneutics in Early Christianity* (Eerdmans: 1978), pages 23-44.

to the Holy Spirit, and that nothing may displace the crucified Christ (I Cor. 2:2; Gal. 6:14; II Tim. 2:8).

(iv) The World

The Church gathers the worship of the whole creation (Ps. 148:14), as the creation anticipates its own liberation. The Church welcomes the outsiders to hear the Word of God. Again, the world provides the space and time for worship; it provides the elements for the sacraments; it furnishes the materials for the place of worship.

4. The Elements of the Worship

In terms of the elements of the meeting for worship, the New Testament is generally silent. Such itemizing appears to be somewhat incidental, for no form can ever guarantee the presence of God, neither the acceptability of the worship. However, the Church has acknowledged, and generally employed, certain elements as basic to its worship. These have provided for the memory (the recital of the acts of God), the hope (the coming judgment and renewal of creation) and the faith (the current revelation of God to and through His people) of the Church.

(i) Word

The Word determines all that occurs in worship. It is consonant with the declaration of Isaiah 55:11 that God's word is creative, purposive, fruitful, and teleological. Hence the sacraments, and even the prayers and praises are conditioned and evoked by the Word.

The Word is *read*. The documents of the Old Covenant were recorded, and read to the people (Luke 4:16; Acts 13:15, 27; II Cor. 3:14-15). In the same way, the documents of the New Covenant are read (Rev. 2:7, etc.; Col. 4:16; I Thess. 5:27; I Tim. 4:13).

The Word is *declared*. The greeting, invocation, the absolution, and the blessing either reflect or cite the Biblical text.

The Word is *proclaimed*. Preaching is the word of Christ to His people, mediated through the Spirit and His called witness. A new feature of the word for the Church, in contrast with Israel, is exhortation (rarely used in the Old Testament, except -in the Wisdom literature).

(ii) Sacraments

Just as the Old Testament cult was divinely appointed and provided, so the Church's sacraments are dominically appointed and provided. They are the means of response and obedience, of a vicarious kind. They direct us to God in Christ and inform us of what Christ has done in our place. Baptism speaks of our incorporation and substitution into and by Christ, it proclaims that we have been proclaimed. The Lord's Supper speaks of our continued participation in what Christ has done, and continues to do, by grace: we remain in the faith by perseverance in His obedience.

The elements of water, bread and wine appear to be the prophetic first-fruits of the new creation, presently claimed and used by the Lord of creation.

(iii) Prayers

Jesus commanded His disciples, and provided the model prayer (Matt. 6:7ff.; Luke 11:1-4). The Church also used the "Abba" prayer (Acts 2:42, 4:27ff.; Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:15). Prayer is for communal understanding and assent (I Cor. 14:16). It should

include intercessions for the Church, the world and its leaders, and those with particular troubles. Both Christ and His Spirit are engaged in our prayers (Heb. 7:25; Rom. 8:26-27). As Denney says, “when we present our prayers in His name, He presents them again in our name”.²⁰

(iv) Praise

The Early Church was noted for its joy and thanksgiving. In fact, as Nicholls states, “when we cease to be thankful, we assert either our independence of God, or the inadequacy of the bounty of God, and usually both at once”.²¹

Christ constantly gave thanks (Luke 10:21ff.; cf. I Tim. 4:4). He gave thanks not only for the bread and wine at the Last Supper, but also for His body and blood as offerable to God in worship-service. Hence the Lord’s Supper has the note of thanks and joy.

The praise is the great cry from the heart, prompted by the Spirit. The scope of singing is shown by the Old Testament psalms, the hymns of the Epistles and Revelation, and the testimony of hymn writers through the history of the Church. Not only is this praise to God, but edification to the Body of Christ (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19ff.).

(v) Offerings

The Offerings include not only the collections for the ministry of the Church, but the elements for the Sacraments. ‘they are gladly and thankfully received, and given.

5. *The Governing Principles*

The liturgical forms of the Early Church, although not explicitly recorded in the New Testament, appear to have been governed by certain considerations. We affirm that the Gospel forms, and reforms the liturgy of the Church. Again, it should coincide with divine revelation (not human imagination)-the form that the Word assumed in holiness and humanity (John 1:14; Col. 1:15; II Cor. 4:4). Hence, God’s language to man, is man’s to God. This is Christ Himself, and what He has authoritatively instituted.

Other elements which come under the governance of Christ are the place of worship (i.e. architecture), human obtrusions, and covenantal reprisals. In terms of architecture, although we may be able to comfortably worship in any setting, the building ought be functional for worship and service, as well as being a sign to the world. Aesthetics are a secondary concern (cf. I Pet. 3:3ff. and par.). Whether the building should convey the idea of a temple (the dwelling place of God) or a meeting house (the dwelling place of God’s people) has been disputed through Church History. Whatever the building, it must also decently house the furniture employed in the worship of God-the pulpit and/or lectern, table, font, etc.

Just as Israel was not to tamper with the Covenantal Word, and the prescribed and provided worship, so the Church is not free to obtrude and impose its word or worship. The apostles were servants, not inventors or creative innovators (II Cor. 4:2-5). The *kerygma* and *didache*, together with the significant sacraments, were handed on as “received”, as “given” by the Lord of the Church. There is therefore no place for pastoral obtrusions to undermine the authority of our Lord, for priestly displacements of the one High Priest, for psychological cults short-circuiting Him who

²⁰ James Denney, *Studies in Theology* (Hodder and Stoughton: 1910), page 168.

²¹ Nicholls, *op. cit.*, page 46.

is the Truth and Wisdom of God, and prejudiced justice programmes obscuring the judgments of the Holy Prophet of the Most High.

For the freedom of Christ to discipline His Church (Heb. 12:5ff.; I Pet. 4:17-19), see footnote 7 (above). For the discipline of the Corinthian church, with respect to practices at the Lord's Supper, I refer the reader to the article by Millard.²²

With such governing principles we are able to mention a number of dangers to our worship.

6. *Dangers*

The Church is not immune from being deceived concerning its worship. In fact, it is constantly threatened by siege and seduction. We must therefore beware of confusing certain responses and actions as true worship. Emotionalism, what is aesthetically pleasing, what is of the flesh, what is "human" over against what is Christian (especially in phenomenological studies), and what is utilitarian are not the same as true worship.

IV. The Servant Church

The service of the Church is prompted by both the *constraint of love*, and the *command to love*. Such service is the complementary action of the Church in its worship: they are the "two sides of the one coin". While we have tended to see liturgical expressions as the primary action of the Church at worship, the Biblical witness asserts that worship and service are inseparable. This section will consider this witness, by looking at the Pauline exhortation of Romans 12:1-2 about "reasonable worship" and the implications for the exercise of the charismata under the Lordship of Christ. This will also entail a brief survey of the new eschatological order established by Christ, the question of authority, and some of the dangers that confront the Church.

1. *Reasonable worship-logical service*

Paul's apostolic admonition in Romans 12:1-2 provides the introduction for his "ethical teaching" of chapters 12-14. It calls for the believers to present their bodies as living sacrifices, in reasonable worship, as the only possible response to knowing the mercies of God. The links with the Old Testament cultus are obvious, but there are other links within the Pauline writings.

Firstly, Paul's *appeal* to the Church is the divine exhortation. Just as God made His appeal through Paul for the Gentiles to know reconciliation (II Cor. 5:20), so here again God speaks through His apostle. This is confirmed by Paul's reference to his commission, his *grace* (v. 3). Since this is so, we ought acknowledge the apostolic brief, given in Acts 26:18 (cf. Col. 1:12-14), as the background for the present appeal.

Secondly, *the mercies of God* are both objective and subjective: Jesus Christ has died for sinners, and the love of God is manifest by the Spirit. The expression here takes up the previous material from Romans 5:5-10, and is paralleled in 15:30 (where it also involves an appeal).

Next, to *present your bodies* relates back to the instruction in chapter 6, where Paul calls for the presentation of the believer's *members* to God and righteousness for sanctification, rather than to sin (6:13ff.). In practical terms, it here means the

²² A. R. Millard "Covenant and Communion in First Corinthians" in *Apostolic History and the Gospel*, W. Ward Gasque and R. P. Martin, eds., Essays presented to F. F. Bruce (Paternoster Press: 1970), pages 242-248.

avoidance of worldly conformity, on-going transformation and the deliberate seeking out of God's good²³ will.

Hence, God's *good will* must be known by fully seeking and living out its implications. Over against the Jews in Romans 2:18, the brethren are to know this within the Body of Christ. This means that this will is not known by ecclesiastical regulations, private spirituality or independent morality, but in the Body of Christ, under the Spirit who leads, disciplines and teaches by the Word. To emphasize this Paul lists the gift of prophecy first (v. 6), as he affirms that the Spirit speaks to the Church by the Gospel, the Apostolic teaching, and gifted members. (This issue is repeated in I Corinthians, where Paul insists that the governing principle for christian behaviour is not "all things are lawful" but what profits or helps and what edifies the Church as the Body of Christ: compare 6:12 with 12:7; and 10:23 with 14:3, 26.)

Before we turn to comment on the new situation of the gifted Church, and its service, we ought note two passages which contain essential subject matter in common with Romans 12:1-2. These are Romans 1:21-32 and II Corinthians 8-9. In the two passages in *Romans*, we are struck by the common vocabulary and concerns, although the latter passage gives the opposite to the early one. Whereas in 1:24 there is the "dishonouring of bodies", in 12:1 the believers' bodies are presented to God: in 1:22 man has a "blind and foolish mind", the believer has a "renewed mind" in 12:2: again, in 1:25 man worships the lie by means of idolatry, but the believer now offers "reasonable worship", as in 12:1: and finally, after man had been given up to a "base mind and improper conduct" in 1:28, the new man is now expected to do God's will, as Paul notes in 12:2.

II Corinthians gives us a parallel to this practical directive. The Macedonian churches received the *mercies of God*, in terms of the grace of Christ, and of God (8:9; cf. 8:1). They *presented* themselves to the Lord (8:5), which ought prompt others in their *service of ministry* (9:12; cf. Phil. 2:17). Again, they were *transformed*, here from being poor to rich (8:9; 9:7), and knew the will of *God* (8:5). This example is raised by Paul to provoke and evoke a similar response to God's grace by the Corinthian church, and so promote proper worship and service.

2. *Christ's new order*

A new order has been established. Jesus is the Lord over the living and the dead. In Him the new creation has been inaugurated. To live under His authority means then that time and space, sacred and secular are all defined in reference to Him. Paul's concern here is to affirm that over against ever other form of religion (whether Judaism, folk religions, and gnostic and mystic variations), true worship and service are determined by life in Christ. Through Him, God has reclaimed and reconciled His creation: an objectively transformed existence is now experienced within the Body of Christ, in its full life.

It is appropriate then, that Paul deliberately employed cultic language to impress on his readers the sanctification of everyday life. The Church confesses Christ's Lordship in all of life: "cultic language" is used to denote "secular activity", and "secular terms" are adopted for Christian "worship and service". Here the worship and

²³ Good is used in Rom. 12:2, 9, 17, 21; 13:3, 4. It highlights Paul's concern for the Church to prove experimentally God's will, as well as uniting this block of material (12:1-13:7).

service of the Church puts an end to every other form of cultus, for at this point “the doctrines of worship and Christian ‘ethics’ converge”.²⁴

Romans 12:1-2 introduce us then, to perceive worship (or service) in the eschatological age as the action of those constrained by covenant mercies and with minds continually transformed. This action is effected by the exercise of the gifts in the service of the fellowship, with love conditioning all the relationships.²⁵

3. *The Charismata and Service*

The operation of the charismata listed in Romans 12:6ff. are conditioned by an acknowledgement of membership within the Body of Christ, the faith that has been assigned to him by God, and the functional nature of the gifts. These are all related to the renewed mind-in stark contrast to the “high minded”-which issues in sober judgment (12:3).

Being sober-minded (cf. II Tim. 1:7) teaches the brethren that the charismata are not inalienable possessions, nor acquisitions to foster a private inner life, but that gift and task, call and commission, are never isolated, never separable. In fact, to be “highminded” here discloses the failure to have a renewed mind, and the consequent knowing of God’s will. Rather, this rebellion and reversion is the mind of the flesh (Rom. 1:28 for a base or “unapproving” mind; cf. 12:2 for the “proving” of God’s will).

All activity of the Body of Christ is therefore charismatic, is public, and corporate: it manifests the reconciling love of God in Christ. Here Paul enumerates the gifts which disclose the Lordship of Christ. Like Peter, he shows that they build up the community (I Peter 2:5-10; 5:7-11). (We further note that in the letters to the Ephesians, Colossians, and in I Peter, the gift or worship sections are almost immediately followed by what are termed the “household codes”: that is, the liberating truth of grace which prompts worship issues in apostolic directives for familial-social, economic and political relationships. The Church is therefore under Lordship, and this authority order is worked out in daily relations.) The seven gifts are here prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, distributing to the needy (without any ulterior motive!), administration of charity, and bringing practical mercy to the needy. It is of particular note that four of these charismata relate to the practical *diakonia* of the Church. Since this is typical of the life of the early Church, in its general poverty, our present churches could well emulate this diaconial work.

4. *The Question of Authority*

The context for exercising authority within the Church must give due prominence to the Lordship of Christ, and the operation of His charismata. Hence, authority is inseparable from concrete acts of ministry, disclosing Christ’s Lordship. It is no mere static “office” but the orderly control of actions which serve those over (and to) whom the gifts minister in love.

²⁴ Kasemann, “Worship and Everyday Life: a note on Romans 12” in *New Testament Questions for Today* (Fortress: 1969), page 191. In private correspondence Dr. Michael Aune, of the Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, has indicated that the course FTI199 - WORSHIP AND WITNESS is an introduction to both basic worship and preaching, and ethics!

²⁵ Peterson reminds us that “this important perspective was soon obscured or lost in early Christianity and is often missing from contemporary liturgical studies”. See Peterson “Further reflections on Worship in the New Testament” in *The Reformed Theological Review* Vol. XLIV, May-August 1985, No. 2, page 35.

Paul asserts that certain criteria govern this authority. They are (i) the “advantage” of others (I Cor. 10:33; cf. Barrett’s translation: “*what is profitable to the majority*”), (ii) what is “proper” or “fitting” (I Cor. 11:13) and (iii) whatever is “natural” (I Cor. 11:14; cf. Barrett’s comment that this conveys “correspondence with things as they are found truly to be, without artificial change”).²⁶ Each of these governing criteria is practical, and necessitates the consideration of the community of faith.

Coupled with these criteria is the danger of overestimating or abusing the gift of authority. (This same danger confronts all, since grace has made each member of the Body of Christ a bearer of charismata.) Paul warns against the confusing of personal or ecclesiastical authority with that of Christ, who unceasingly exercises His proper authority over all His servants and their entrusted gifts. To put it another way, Paul does not allow for the exercise of the gifts, in whatever form, apart from *grace*. And not only are there dangers for the members of the Church, there are others from which the Church itself is not immune. We shall now briefly consider these.

5. *Dangers*

The Church must beware of the temptations to seek to secure success by the world’s means (I Cor. 1:22-25; by signs and wisdom). Again, the Church may offer a truncated or reductionist Gospel to the world, coupled with a retreatist and ghetto mentality. Finally, the Church may refuse (out of fear: John 15:18-21) to follow her Lord, and know suffering for the sake of the Gospel.

In Part One we defined the essence of worship. We considered the Biblical terminology, and the testimony to the Living God as the seeking Father. Further, we noted the ontological necessity of man to worship, and the provision of the divine requirements given to redeemed Israel. Then we observed the fulfilment of God’s provision in the “servant of the Lord”: the vicarious humanity of Christ as Incarnate Word is God’s address to man as revelation, and man’s acceptable response to God, concentrated at the Cross, where reconciliation was effected. Finally, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as the sanctifier of the Church was seen to be determined by Christ.

Part Two has investigated Paul’s ministry as the apostle to the Gentiles, in the service of the Gospel of grace and the gifts of the Spirit as derived from the gift of life in Christ. The charismata (as expressions of grace) were seen to be validated by ordered and comprehensive ministry. This evidenced itself in communal worship and dynamic service-inseparable in operation, governed by Christ’s holy humanity, buoyed up with joyful thanks, and offered to the Father in the name of Christ.

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²⁶ C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (A. & C. Black: 1971), page 256.

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True Worship and The Eschaton

Worship and the Will of God

We have seen that God is the living God-the One Who acts. Prayer and worship are fellowship with God in His action-the fulfilling of His plan in history. Thus worship is God in action, and we for our part fellowship with Him in that action. Action leads to worship, worship is action and worship leads to action. To refuse to worship God is to be in some *other* action for our worship will surely be directed somewhere, and it will be somewhere other than to God. To be bent upon worship of God will take us on in maturity as we 'press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus'. In one way the prize is to 'see Him face to face', in another it is to be 'mature in Christ'. It is to be finally-and utterly-released into pure worship, full fellowship with the living God.

No Ultimate Terminus

Eschatology is the study or doctrine of 'the last things', i.e. of the close of this age which is brought about by the appearing of Christ, at which point in history there will be the final judgements, 'the regeneration' (Matt. 19:28) or forming of the new heavens and the new earth (Rev. 21:1-5; Isa. 65:17-25). This time will be linked with the resurrection from the dead of the people of God, the punishment of evil powers and the finally impenitent of humanity. Heaven will reign supreme in the affairs of creation, and hell will be the lot of all things evil-a situation known as 'the second death'. The saints of God-the church-will be glorified, and will constitute forever 'a kingdom of priests', i.e. royal priesthood which will serve God and creation in true worship and service. .

All this will not constitute a terminus, i.e. a climax which sets things forever in a rigid pattern so what we now call 'the future' will simply be a matter of repetitive action. To the Greek the idea of 'eternal's (*aionos*) was 'the ages upon the ages', that is 'aeon upon aeon'. Each age or aeon is seen as dynamic. The symbol pictures in the book of the Revelation are the throne, the temple, the holy city and such like. Whilst God is immutable He is not static. The throne, temple and holy city are dynamic. We can, then, expect constant action, a flow of perpetual worship having equally unceasing action of the purest kind. If we may speak of eternity being a terminus then it is only in the sense that when we alight at a terminus we have reached our destination. Having alighted we then go about the business that occupies in and at that terminus. It is the entrance into even richer and more purposive action.

Worshipping in the Eschaton

Abel-and with him all the men and women of faith-looked to 'a better country, that is an heavenly one'. Their thinking was always eschatological. In one sense man has

always lived in an eschaton, has always anticipated the ultimate. His age has always been the penultimate aeon, the age before the ultimate aeon. Because of this history has been open-ended to him, or-better still-the end is in the hand of God. People of faith have always been the people of hope. Whilst love works through faith, yet faith and love exist in hope and are powerful by means of it.

Two things face the believing man in the eschaton in which he lives. The first is that he knows that 'the fashion of this world is passing away', and the second is that the powers of evil are using their massive powers to change the curve of time, seeking to make it swerve away from its *telos* or goal. Tennyson's beautiful statement of

One God, one law, one element,
And one far off divine event
To which the whole creation moves,

is not quite the biblical view. Predestination certainly sets the destination, but the movement towards that destination i.e. the history of the human race (salvation history) is not so much teleological as it is eschatological. It is not the fact of the *telos* achieved that is significant so much as

- (i) the manner in which it is achieved, and
- (ii) the dynamic nature of the *telos* itself.

The *telos* is not merely achieved by the *fiat* of God, or the dogged persistence of God so much as it comes to fulfilment by that action of God which is through Christ the Messiah with his people, along with the obedient celestial creatures who assist in the struggle. It is in the face of opposing evil powers that the Kingdom of God comes to its irreversible victory. History then is the conflict of personal evil forces against the forces of God. The *telos* is not so much the desirable goal, as it is the purpose of God through the moral and spiritual workout of history. It is the vindication, the theodicy of God, but a working out which utterly establishes the character of the redeemed, the nature of His Kingdom, and the verity and dynamic of the future.

This being the case eschatological worship can be seen to have two phases,

- (i) the present phase in which worship is always in the context of moral conflict, and
- (ii) the worship beyond this worship, the full eschatological worship in the presence of God and the exclusion of defeated evil. In one sense we can talk of the present eschaton, and the eschaton beyond this eschaton.

The worship of faith

To speak of 'the worship of faith' is to say two things, (i) we walk by faith and not by sight. That is, hope gives us a sight of things to come, and so we are drawn on in faithfulness to move towards that end and presently to work with that goal in sight, (ii) faith is the constant battle we fight against the insinuating accusations of evil powers i.e. doubts which would destroy our faith, weaken our worship, and paralyze our true endeavours. Worship, then, is carried on only in faith, and in the face of the unceasing struggle with evil powers. We can rightly call this worship the *action of faith*.

The Conflict of Eschatological Worship

By 'conflict' we mean that Satan is seeking to attain to the highest place of worship-to be worshipped as God in the Temple of God. His 'hope' is that he will succeed. He

has sought to shape history after his compulsive passion to be admired in and by the saints-an event reserved exclusively for Christ (II Thess. 1:10). His strategy for this achievement is worked through the beast, the second beast, and the false prophet. He creates and utilizes the 'mother of harlots'-the unholy city of Babylon. Whatever we understand by this unholy trinity of dragon, beast and unholy spirit, and whatever the nature of the unholy city we see the delusive nature of this ante-ontological system. In the light-or darkness-of this evil system worship is always against this evil as it is for God. Worship must be from God so as to be against evil. Worship must always be operative in the presence of evil. It must always be in the ethos of conflict.

When we translate this theological understanding into praxis-the practice of true life-then we see that our eschatological living is always in the form of battle. Doubtless the fruit of the Spirit is the means by which we can live and operate, for without love, peace and joy-along with their concomitants-we would be overcome with dread, despair, and hopelessness. In practice we face the rivalry of Satan as he seeks to undo God and establish his own righteousness in history. The vital question is, 'Do we do good that evil may be vanquished?' Our reply to this question determines the modes of our operations.

Worship and Works

In agreeing that worship and works are in the one bundle we need to see firstly the emphasize upon works in the apostolic teaching, and then something of its outworking. To do good works would then be to worship in truth. We must, of course, beware of seeing such works as a separate entity. Only those works done within-and as part-of-the will of God are of real value. Works, worship and the will of God are the one entity.

The doing of good works is a basic-if not major-teaching of the New Testament. Jesus told us to let our light so shine before men that they would see out good works and glorify our Father Who is in heaven. Paul told us that God had beforehand prepared the works we are to walk in, and had prepared us to be able to walk in them. Christ told each of the seven churches, 'I know your works.' He had told his apostles that they would do greater works than he had done. Such works would not be confined to signs and wonders. All signs and wonders are works, but not all works are signs and wonders. The doing of such works will be an offence to the system of the dragon, the beast and the unholy woman-Babylon.

The Nature of the Works-I

The works we are to do are of various kinds. The works that Christ did-and which he continues to do through us-include preaching the gospel to the poor, proclaiming release to the captive, recovery of sight to the blind, setting at liberty the oppressed, and proclaiming the year of liberation by the Lord (Luke 4:18-19). Peter affirmed this in Acts 10:38, 'doing good and healing (curing) all those who were oppressed of the devil'. In the Gospels he exorcises demons, heals the sick, cleanses the lepers, and brings relief of forgiveness to people troubled by their sins. He also gives teaching which corrects wrong thinking and wrong practices. He proclaims the Kingdom of God by these works and words (cf. Matt. 4:23-25; 11:28), and then goes to the Cross where he effects the Atonement and thus makes open the way for his followers to do 'greater works'. The apostles followed on doing the things he had done, but having the

gospel of salvation to proclaim by which people could enter into eternal life. This proclamation was sometimes attended by signs and wonders and the use of the gifts of Christ and the Spirit.

Works within the life of the church were those we have just mentioned, and also works of compassion and care. True religion was to visit the orphans and widows, to remember the poor, to effect distribution of goods to these who did not have them, to pastor the flock of God, feeding, tending and guarding it. From the book of the Revelation we gather that works were holding to pure doctrine, rejecting heresies, testing out false apostles and prophets, rebuking evil, facing persecution, and doing all these things in love--Christ's love. The doing of such things constituted direct opposition to evil powers--the dragon, the beasts, the false prophet and Babylon. In this way work and worship were the one. To refuse to worship the beast was a good work. To refuse to have his mark was a good work. To proclaim the truth in the face of such evil was also a true work. All of these works can be summed up by, 'bearing witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ', 'keeping the commandments of God and bearing testimony to Jesus'. Because of the anger and persecution aroused by such, witness Christians were martyred, but the word of encouragement was, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth . . . that they may rest from their labours, for their deeds (works) follow them'.

The works then are not lost, but accrue to the faithful as rewards on (the day of Christ. The faithful have both worshipped and served.

The Nature of the Works--II

A most difficult of questions to solve presents itself. 'In the light of the suffering of this world is the church committed to bring relief to persons families and nations, and of so what kind of relief and help is appropriate to the Christ Gospel?' In other words are social action, social welfare, and social justice the direct responsibility of the church of Christ? We need to address ourselves most thoughtfully to this question. Most find the direct solution through the parable of the sheep and goats in Matthew 25:31-46. It would seem that whatever we do for another human being in the way of pity, compassion and help we are really doing to Christ. Such an interpretation knows no bounds in its outworking. *The church is bound to do all things for all men.*

There is, however, another interpretation, namely that Jesus, here, is confining the doing of works to the brethren who are proclaiming the Gospel. They are 'the least of these my brethren'. When Jesus told Mary Magdalene to report to his *brethren* (John 20:17) it was the first time he had called the apostles his brethren. In 1 John 3:10-22 John is speaking of brethren, i.e. those who are believers and says that if a person sees his *brother* has need and that person closes his heart of compassion when he could help, then he is wholly unloving. In Matthew 23:8-10 Jesus applied the term *brethren* to the covenant community, 'You are all brethren', i.e. 'No one is your teacher but God, no one is your master but Christ, no one your Father but God, and that makes *you brethren.*' It may sound like special pleading to limit this term to the faithful, but to do so is surely biblical. If this claim is true then Jesus in the parable of the sheep and goats was speaking about doing good to the proclaimers of the Gospel. In any case it is clear that the sheep and the goats were not brethren! *Brethren is*, of course, a term for the members of the church both in the Acts and the Epistles.

There can be no question about it. In the New Testament the church is hard put to look after its own, let alone others. It was a poor community, composed of many

slaves and there were not many wise, powerful, or of noble birth (I Cor. 1:26--28). Indeed there were many who were weak and despised and of no reputation. Paul advised, 'Do good to all men and especially to those who are of the household of faith.' This does not mean there is partiality exercised but recognition that the Christian community was generally rejected by the world and had to make its own way. There can be no doubt that Christians were to love all men (I Thess. 3:12), and to pray for theirs all (I Tim. 2:1-5; 1 Pet. 2:16-17). Even so there is no general direction to undertake universal social welfare, social service, social action and social justice. It does not even seem to be implied.

The Nature of the Works-111

The truth of the Scriptures is that all men are to do good to all men. This is implicit in the mandate that God gave to man to be fruitful, multiply, replenish the earth and have dominion over it. Insofar as members of Christ's community are human beings they have a responsibility to all human beings. Those outside of Christ's community have the same responsibility. For Israel the principle of care for others-e.g. the poor, the handicapped and the strangers-is set out in Leviticus 19 and other places. It is confined to the perimeter in which the nation lived.

If we establish the fact that insofar as is possible we ought to help others, then we do not reject responsibility for the human race. Just what we ought to do, and how and when we ought to do it is a most complex matter. Our motives for what we do need to be looked at, i.e. whether we are simply active in 'do-gooding', are justifying ourselves, are seeking fame, are seeking to make a guilt pay-off, and other similar things. If we wait for our motives to be pure we shall probably never do anything, so let us do what seems to be good. We need, however, to take certain factors into consideration.

What do we understand in this last age by the wrath and judgements of God? In Romans 1:18-32 man lies under the active wrath of God. Whilst it is his own rebellion and evil which brings him to misery yet God is active in giving man up to his own evil, and this is **Isis** active wrath (Rom. 1:14, 26, 28). The book of the Revelation shows us three sets of judgements under the headings of 'the seven seals', 'the seven trumpets', and 'the seven bowls'. Is it possible that in this aeon we are simply seeing the wretched condition of men and women through the eyes of human compassion and not alert to the judgements with which God may be visiting the world? What ought we to do in the face of these judgements?

Again is it possible that much of our passion for social justice has its roots in our own indignation with man, and even with God?" Is it also possible that we do not trust God's sovereignty in the world, and we are seeking to do what we think He ought to do, but is failing to accomplish? Are we even attempting to 'play God', being judges, passing sentence, and seeking to rectify what God seems impotent or reluctant to do? These are certainly not easy questions to answer, but the problem is compounded by our insistence that we know what is needed, and what we ought to do.

The need, then, of true worship and genuine prayer is very evident. Our so-called 'good works' may turn out to be hasty and premature works, they may be ill-advised in the light of God's plan. They may cause more harm than the relative good they may do. Christians may embark on certain centuries of good works, and become so absorbed in them that the major good work-that of redeeming men and women from their moral, spiritual, emotional and mental agony-may be neglected. So then, to pray and

worship is to keep ourselves in the mind of Christ and the will of God and despite all criticism to do only His will. If this involves us in social concern, social welfare, social action and social justice, then we will know it is no fad, of course, but a work of God.

Doing; Good, Serving God and All Men in This Eschaton

The elements by which we work in this age are faith, hope, and love. We need not expand on the nature of these things. We simply need to see that in worshipping, doing good works, and fighting the spiritual warfare we must never depart from them. The weapons we use are spiritual, i.e. are not political or carnal (II Cor. 10:3-4). Likewise we must not use the resources God has given us in an unspiritual manner. In I Corinthians 13:1-3 Paul speaks of the use of spiritual gifts without love, and concludes that they are nothing, and accomplish nothing. In Romans 12:14-21 Paul sets out a way of thinking and living which defeats the evil which attacks us, but does it by love, and not by attempting to get justice* ,

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly; never be conceited. Repay to no one evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." No, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.'

Here we are to extend our love to all men by good works though not in the role of a reformer or one seeking to obtain justice. It is important that we know this, otherwise our reactions to persecutors and the forces of evil will cause us to use their methods against them. In worship and service we are to submit to evil rather than fight it with such weapons. In relation to this principle we should look at Daniel chapter seven where the beasts-as in the Revelation-seek to subdue the saints. In 7:21 a horn of the fourth beast 'made war with the saints and prevailed over them, until the Ancient of Days came, and judgement was given to the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints received the kingdom'. In 7:25 the fourth beast 'shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High . . . and they shall be given into his hand for a time, two times, and a half a time'. Ultimately the saints shall be given the kingdom of the Most High, prevailing over the fourth beast.

There is a parallel to this in the book of the Revelation. In 13:5-10 the beast is given authority for 42 months, i.e. three and a half years, or 'a time, times, and half a time'. It was allowed to make war on the saints and conquer them. Then, 'If one is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if any one is slain with the sword, with the sword he must be slain', which appears to mean that the saints must submit to prison and not retaliate, even if it means their death. To use the sword is to die by it. The exhortation is then given, 'Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.' In other words, the saints must accept their temporary defeat at the hands of the beast but maintain their integrity. Ultimately they will inherit the Kingdom of God.

This, then, is the context of worship and service in the present aeon, the eschaton that is upon us. We must worship whilst we battle, battle whilst we worship. Our battle is one of faith, and it is a spiritual and moral one, in which we serve the creation, and refuse allegiance to the dark powers. No wonder, then, that every day we face terrors

* See my 'The Justice Men and the Great Rage' (NCPI-an essay in 'God and the Ghostown', 1984).

and can easily be confused. On the one hand we see the needs of world which we pity, and on the other hand its terrible cruelties and evil. We understand prophetically the judgements of God and the Lamb, and the need for these in righteous history; yet we are tempted to intervene and help those under judgement. It is no small wonder that we need the Father exonerating us, the Son-at the right hand of God-intervening for us against evil powers, and the Spirit interceding within us. We can see afresh the process of worship and action. We come from action to worship; we worship; we go from worship to action. That is the continuing course of our operations. That is what the counsel of God-His will and purpose-is all about.

It is in this context we worship and serve the Most High. By doing the deeds He has appointed for us we shall prevail.

Worship in the Ultimate Eschaton

We have said that there is an eschaton beyond the eschaton. Of course history is a whole, and there are not eschatons, but there is the eternal telos beyond the last days which is the fruit of the past and present epochs. We have seen a number of times in our book that the end is the substance of our hope. We shall see Him face to face, i.e. God and the Lamb. We will have seen the defeat of Satan and his powers, the judgements on such powers and evil men. We will have seen history sealed off from further rebellion and insurrection. Peace will reign. The glorious pictures of the Old Testament when men,

shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war anymore

for at this time,

The wolf shay dwell with die lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
and the calf and the lion and the falling together,
and a little child shall lead them.
The cow and the bear shall feed:
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
The sucking child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.
They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain;
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.

The redeemed saints shall be decked out as is the Son himself, for all shall be like him. They will have glory like his, and their resurrected bodies will be of the same glory, and they shall be pure and substantial. The Day of the Marriage will send its glory down through eternity for the glorious Bride and the noble Warrior-King-the Bridegroom-will come to inseparable union and marvellous fruitage. The Father King and the Son-King shall inhabit the drone of grace and love. The Holy City will open its

gates to His elect-the true citizens of eternity, and there they shall worship for God and the Lamb will be the Temple. All will be light. The nations shall surge forwards into the City and the Kingdom. The River of Life will flow incessantly and the Tree of Life yield its fruit regularly to satisfy the nations, whilst the leaves of the tree will be for the healing of the nations.

There shall be no night there, for God and the Lamb are the light of the City.

All creation shall bow in wonder, in trembling joy and in irrepressible adoration. There-and forever-our worship will be perfected. From it shall proceed the glorious action of eternity.

No wonder the Spirit and the Bride say,

'Come!', and no wonder, too, that we cry, 'Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly!'

The Biblical Idea of Blessing

Introduction

The topic of blessing has been one surprisingly neglected in Biblical studies. This may be for a variety of reasons. We tend to take for granted familiar words and phrases without questioning their meaning. It may also be that we have seen salvation and blessing as virtually interchangeable terms. There may be some justification in the Scriptures for this, but there is not complete identification of the one with the other, however great the overlap may be.¹ Certainly the topic raises some interesting questions for our daily ministry and for our understanding of issues such as our authority in the Word, the place of blessing in the life of the Church, the pastoral dynamic of hope and the sovereignty of God's grace, to name but a few. This paper is introductory to the theme, and may open up further possibilities. It does not profess to be a scholarly work on the subject!

In the Scriptures there are four word families 'translated as 'blessing'. In the Old Testament the word group built on the *brk* stem is translated 'to bless', 'blessed', 'blessing' etc., is the most significant though *ashere is* frequently used in the Psalms in such expressions as 'Blessed (happy) is the man . . .' In the New Testament and the *LXX eulgeo* and its derivatives are primarily used. A smaller instance has *makarios* translated as blessing, used in a similar way to *ashere* in the Old Testament, notably in the Sermon on the Mount. Besides the actual occurrences of the words themselves, there is also a language of blessing that clusters around the concept. This includes concepts such as peace, well being, fertility and fruitfulness, prosperity and wisdom.

Typical Instances of Blessing in the Old Testament

The etymology of the *brk* word group is far from clear. While it is probable that the oldest form of the word related to fertility² we can really only determine its meaning from its usage for it is clear that the Biblical usage greatly transcends this fundamental meaning, though without totally ignoring it. Thus while there are instances where blessing is clearly linked to fertility and prosperity (e.g. Abraham in Gen. 24:35; Isaac in Gen. 26:12ff.; Joseph in Gen. 49:25f.; Job. 1:10; 42:12; etc.), affliction can also be seen as a blessing (cf. Ps. 94:12; Prov. 3:11f.; Deut. 8:5; Ps. 119:71; etc.). Indeed the false counsel given by Job's comforters indicates that the latter was not always

¹ C. Westermann in *Elements of OT Theology* p. 103 says:

'Blessing is a working of God which is different from saving insofar as it is not experienced as the latter in individual events or in a sequence of events. It is a quiet, continuous, flowing and unnoticed working of God which cannot be captured in moments or dates. Blessing is realized in a gradual process, as in the process of growing, maturing, and fading. The Old Testament does not just report a series of events which consists of the great acts of God. The intervals are also part of it . . . One receives from God's hand one's whole life, especially in its daily unobtrusiveness in which nothing in particular happens. The blessing is a matter not of extraordinary times when, e.g., one experiences deliverance, but rather of the daily flow of daily life.'

² See, for example, Simon Mein's article on blessing in Richardson's *A Dictionary of Christian Theology*, J. Scharbert's work in the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* Vol. 11 pp. 279-308, but especially section 1, 2, etc.

recognized in **Israel, for they** all clearly hold what one commentator has called a ‘terrestrial eschatology’.³

B. F. Westcott, in his commentary on Hebrews, has an additional note on ‘The Biblical Idea of Blessing’ (pp. 205-212). He points out that in the Old Testament there are a number of ways in which the word is used, or rather a number of different relationships in which the word is placed. He notes that blessing is pronounced from God to man, man to God, man to man, or God or man to impersonal objects.

If God blesses man (e.g. Gen. 1:28; 5:2; 9:1; 12:2f.; 17:16; 25:11; 26:2ff.; 35:9ff.; II Sam. 7:27ff.; etc.) He reveals to him His divine will and purpose. By nature of the case this revelation must be effectual. The revelation of His will is at once the promise to fulfill it. We will look at some of these passages in more detail below. The blessing of God may lead to envy from those outside (e.g. Gen. 26:12ff.; cf. Gen. 37:11; 1 Sam. 18:9), but should lead to generosity of those who are blessed (Dent. 16:10). There is also a link between those who are the inheritors of the blessing and those who are blessed because of them (Gen. 12:2; 30:27; 39:5).

Where man blesses God (e.g. Deut. 8:10; Judg. 5:2, 9; I Kings 10:9; Nell. 9:5; I Chron. 29:10; II Chron. 31:8; Ps. 16:7; 26:12; 66:8; 96:2; 100:4; etc.) he responds to the God who blesses by praising Him. To bless God is thus to praise Him for who He is and for what He has done. False worship thus involves false blessing (cf. Isa. 66:3), i.e. wrong and rebellious thanksgiving (cf. Rom. 1:21 a).

Where man blesses man (e.g. Gen. 27:4ff.; 47:7; 49:28; Lev. 9:23; Num. 6:23; Deut. 10:8; 21:5) he speaks as the representative of the Divine Voice, declaring His message in the form of prayer or interpretation. There is a sense in which there is a general patriarchal blessing that is passed on from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob etc. that is covenantal, but also there are specific and appropriate blessings for individual members of the patriarchal tree (see Gen. 49:28). The uttering of the blessing in such circumstances is prophetic in its thrust both in its covenantal message and its predictive import. The word of God through the patriarch carries (is) its own power, for, as we have seen on other occasions, there is no dichotomy between God and His word.

There is also a common use of the language of blessing in greeting man to man. In the common *shalom* the language of blessing is reflected, being virtually an abbreviated form of prayer. While blessing often involves some sense of being in authority over the one being blessed (the ‘lesser is blessed by the greater’, Heb. 7:7; parallels Gen. 14:17ff.; and also cf. Joshua’s blessing of Caleb and the giving of Horeb to him as an inheritance, Josh. 14:13) the tables can sometimes be reversed in something more than a formal sense of greeting (e.g. Gen. 47:8, 10). In the latter example there is a position of political superiority (Pharaoh) blessed by the lowly nomadic Israel, but the same Israel who is the recipient of all the Divine promises. To the eyes of sight the question is easily answered, but in the realm of faith and covenant, who is really the greater?⁴

Where God blesses an impersonal object (e.g. Gen. 1:22; 2:3; Exod. 23:25; Ps. 132:13f.). He reveals His purpose to make known through it something of Himself. The Sabbath day was blessed by God so that Israel would know Him as both

³ Their basic thrust is that righteousness brings prosperity in this life while wickedness brings misfortune. The corollary of this position is that happiness, health and prosperity are proof of Divine favour, while suffering and misfortune are proof of His disfavour. To them, therefore. Job must have sinned greatly to earn such punishment.

⁴ Having said this, however, Westermann is right in asserting that blessing and *shalom* are not identical. He suggests that ‘Blessing . . . is the power of God vertically, from generation to generation . . . *shalom* is the well being of the community horizontally’. *Blessing in (he Bible and the Life of the Church* p.29. Naturally, though, the latter cannot be known apart from the former.

Creator and Redeemer.⁵ In its being blessed by Him it is also released to fulfil its proper function under His hand. Creation must be blessed by Him, or there is no fecundity or vocation.

Where man blesses an impersonal object (a unique use in the O. T. in I Sam. 9:13) lie recognizes the working of God. The full phrase is really 'to bless God for the thing'. It may involve asking God's blessing to rest on the hearers and participants in the sacrificial meal or it may involve formal thanksgiving to God for it.⁶

Blessing, Creation and the History of Covenant/Promise

Creation is not left in an 'unblessed' state. The creation account in Genesis 1:28 ends 'and God blessed them . . .' This is also mentioned earlier (Gen. 1:22) and correlates with the phrase, 'he saw that it was good'. The blessing of God is not the 'icing on the cake' of creation, but the very dynamic by which the creation fills out its purpose, and by which man fills out his vocation. If creation is not blessed to fulfil its purpose, there is no fulfillment. We can speak, therefore, of the ontological nature of blessing. The ontological nature of blessing means, however, that even in doing evil man must be 'blessed' to do it by those above him. Blessing thus relates to the issue of headship and authority (cf. Matt. 8:9). The greatest need of man is to be mastered, as Forsyth has reminded us, and even in doing evil there must be a *kingdom*.

Instances such as Genesis 12:3 indicate that there is a close relationship between blessing and election (also see Isa. 51:2). Abraham is blessed and chosen at once. If blessing is to be seen in ontological terms, then this correlation is necessary. Abraham's being blessed must be directly linked to his being chosen by God to fulfil His purpose. No blessing, no fulfillment (cf. Deut. 7:13f.).⁷

The covenant itself, moreover, is a covenant of blessing. While there is a temporal element to the blessing, the core of the covenant consists of the promise of a 'seed'. In this sense the covenant of blessing differs from the general blessing of creation. In the covenant promise, the blessing is not simply of fertility or multiplication, but these to a specific (redemptive) end (cf Gal. 3:16).

The creational blessing remains, but in a mitigated way due to the judgement of the curse (Gal. 3:17ff.). The covenant initiated with Abraham and expounded in the Law and the Prophets looks forward to deliverance from all negative elements in the creation. In the incident of the blessing of Jacob (not Esau) in Genesis 27 and the further incident of Jacob's blessing of Ephraim rather than Manasseh in Genesis 48:8-22, the blessing of God is passed on to another on grounds other than normal human choice. What is being handed on at these times is the divine promise, not natural rights⁸ (cf. Gen. 28:3ff.) and the whole saga of the patriarchal narratives emphasizes that it is God's sovereign will at work, not simply, or even, the establishment of a natural dynasty. Says Westcott, '[The Patriarch becomes the interpreter of the](#)

⁵ In Ex. 20:8-11 the principle of the Sabbath is related directly to God's own creation rest (Gen. 2:1-3). In Deut. 5:12-15 the Sabbath is related directly to the nation's deliverance from Egypt. Thus it was to besign to the nation of their dependence upon God in both aspects (cf. Exod 31:12-17).

⁶ See J. Scharbert, *op. cit.* p. 293.

⁷ This principle make more sensible Jacob's struggle with the Lord in Gen. 32 and Jacob's insistence on being blessed by Him (Gen. 32:26). Jacob could not proceed to meet with Esau (who had sworn to kill him) lest he be blessed.

⁸ Mein in Richardson as above, p. 32.

divine counsel to him through whom it is going to be fulfilled. His own natural purpose is subordinated to the expression of the spiritual message which he delivers'.⁹

For this reason salvation history and the theme of blessing are inextricably bound together. Each unfolding stage of God's purpose is marked by specific reference to blessing. Noah is blessed by God (Gen. 9:1f) in terms that are directly paralleled in Genesis 1:26. Abraham is blessed in order that he might be a blessing (Gen. 12:1-3; cf. 14:18-20); while each of the Patriarchal stories follow the thread of the blessing. Isaac is blessed by God (Gen. 25:11; cf. 26:2-5; 26:24) following the death of his father. Jacob receives the blessing of Isaac (Gen. 27:27ff.) and this is confirmed by the Lord in Genesis 28:10-17; 32:22-32; and 35:9ff. Joseph is the recipient of God's blessing (Gen. 39:1-6) in a way that specifically enables the preservation of the covenant line (Gen. 45:5; cf. 46:2-4). Joseph himself understands the hope of the blessing given to his father (cf. Gen. 50:24f.) while his own sons are blessed by Jacob in a manner that directly relates to the Abrahamic blessing (Gen. 48:14-22). Interestingly enough, in the blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh, Joseph himself is said to be blessed (Gen. 48:15). Moses is recognized as a 'beautiful' (i.e. blessed) child (Exod. 2:1ff.; cf. Heb. 11:23ff.) and with the blessing of God upon him leads the people out of the slavery of Egypt to the edge of the promised land where he pronounces the blessing on them before they enter it (Exod. 39:43). The importance of blessing is seen in the nation's entry into and life in the promised land itself (Deut. 15:4, 6, 10, 14, 18; 27:11ff.; cf. Josh. 8:30-35; and the consecration of the Tabernacle in Lev. 9:22f). In a very real way the Saul/David saga is an exposition of the theme. Examples could be expanded, but the thought is clear and is reflected in Psalm 127:1f, though in different terms.

Blessing is also linked to the true worship of the covenant people (cf. Exod. 20:24; 23:24f.; Deut. 12:6ff.) If worship, service and love are related and virtually interchangeable terms the 'blessing' of God rests upon those who function according to His will, according to that which is ontological (cf. Deut. 23:20; 24:19; 30:16; 'so that the Lord may bless you').

The Benedictions and the Curses

In Deuteronomy the exposition of the Law is given in terms of blessing, and this against a firm background of God's historical deliverance. The Decalogue is prefaced by a recounting of Israel's history after the Exodus (Deut. 5:1-5)¹⁰ and by the summary statement 'I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery' (Deut. 5:6). Obedience to the commandments given from His hand is the prerequisite for the fulness of God's temporal blessing (Deut. 6:1-3, 24; 7:12-16; 11:8-12, 26-32; etc.).

The dynamics of obedience have always been forgiveness and grace (Deut. 29:18f.; cf. Jer. 2:35; 3:23f.; Isa. 1:18f.; etc.). To heed His word is to be blessed, and this in the constant knowledge of His gracious forgiveness (cf. Ps. 32; 51; etc.). To rebel against it is to be cursed. The passage in Deuteronomy 11:26-32 is expanded in Deuteronomy 27 and 28 (cf. Josh. 8:30-35). The curses are negative correlates to the blessings. The Divine protection against enemy nations is removed, the prophylactic

⁹ Westcott, p. 206.

¹⁰ It is interesting to note that even in the wilderness wanderings, i.e. even in judgement. God's blessing preserved them (Deut. 2:7).

healing is removed so that the diseases of Egypt abound, fertility is removed through drought, fire and locust etc., and the gathering together in the new land will be reversed to scattered captivity. The eventual exile saw the removal of the covenant signs of land, kingship and temple. The temporal aspects of the blessing are removed so that the true **nature of the covenant** may be preserved.

The following ‘historical books’ from Joshua to Chronicles, together with the relevant prophetic books from each era including the restoration, chronicle the outworking of the blessings and the curses through the rise of false worship, the prophetic messengers and the eventual judgement of captivity and return. The constant battle with the idols relates to the theme ‘Who is it that blesses and how is that blessing secured?’ (e.g. Hosea 2:8; Hag. 2:18; cf. Deut. 8:16f.). The temple was the central and proper place of worship, but the idols of the high places related to the fertility cults that had gone before. To be sure, the false and debased worship carried out in these places was a cleverly rationalized form of sin, but the issue of unbelief in the true Lord’s preserving power and His willingness to do so is fundamental.

The contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel is significant in this regard. The false prophets, bound to their idols, could only seek an answer from them through works of the most debased kind (I Kings 18:25ff.) whereas Elijah’s simple prayer is one that is a matter of grace from beginning to end (I Kings 18:36-37). Just as the deliverance of God in the Exodus had come by grace so did the blessing of the rain upon the land.

According to Deuteronomy 21:5 the Levitical priesthood was established ‘to serve God and to bless in His name’. The worship of Israel was, however, markedly different from the nations round about. The distinctiveness of Israel’s worship was its basis in a deliverance, and this in the historical arena. As Westermann says:

The centre of Israel’s worship was not some form of fertility cult that directly bestowed blessing; it was rather God’s activity in history, the covenant, the commandments that grew out of the covenant, and the promises given with the covenant.¹¹

The blessings that the priests were to pronounce, therefore, were given in the midst of a cultus that proclaimed the Lord as Redeemer/Provider, not simply one or the other. The Passover on the one hand and the Festival of the First-fruits on the other, are both alike recognitions of the nation’s dependence on the Lord.

The Aaronic benediction in Numbers 6:24ff. reflects these elements. In the pronouncement:

The LORD bless you and keep you:

The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you:

The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.

both gracious acceptance with God and the abiding presence of His blessing (in all that shalom means), are evident. The benediction itself is preceded by the statement, ‘Thus you shall bless the sons of Israel’ and it is followed by the statement, ‘So they (i.e. the priests) shall invoke My name on the sons of Israel, and I will then bless them’. The Old Testament priesthood, then, had a prophetic function in that the very pronouncement of the blessing told forth the works of God toward His people. In hearing the blessing the people were blessed, for it was intended to secure them in their covenant relationship to their God.

¹¹ Blessing, p. 36.

The thread of blessing is also followed through in the Messianic line. David's act of blessing the people and his household in II Samuel 6:18ff. and I Chronicles 23:13 is also seen in 'great David's greater Son', Jesus (Luke 24:50). We will see more in this regard below, but here it is sufficient to say that if the bestowal of blessing is an integral part of the priestly function, then the Great High Priest Himself cannot fill out His office without bestowing His blessing. In His case, however, there is no mediated blessing. He bestows Himself to His people, and this is their blessing.

One other comment could be made under the heading of this section. The Balaam story (Num. 22-24) is illustrative of an important principle viz. one is only able to pronounce the blessing of God at God's behest. In other words, there is no magical element in the act of giving the benediction (or cursing for that matter). The blessing pronounced by the prophet or the priest only has its dynamic power because there is no division between God and His word. Balaam could not curse the nation because God had not given a curse but a blessing. He could only utter that which the Lord had given him to utter.

Instances of Blessing in the New Testament

In the New Testament, blessing is again expressed in a number of relationships. As in the Old Testament, God blesses man (Matt. 25:34; Acts. 3:25-26; Rom. 15:29; Gal. 3:8-9; 3:14; Heb. 6:6-7; 6:14; 12:17; Eph. 1:3; I Pet. 3:9), but naturally, however, the Messiah Himself also blesses (Mark 10:16 and parallels; Luke 9:16; 24:30; 24:50-51; Heb. 7:1-7). People bless other people (Heb. 11:20-21; 7:1-7; Luke 6:28; I Cor. 4:12; Rom. 12:14; I Pet. 3:9; Matt. 10:12-13; Luke 10:5-6) and there are also passages where people, or heavenly beings, bless God (II Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3; Rev. 5:9f.).

All of these aspects take on a new significance, however, with the coming of Christ. All that was looked forward to in the earlier covenant of blessing is fulfilled in Him. This is the import of Paul's statement in II Corinthians 1:20. All of the promises of God find 'their amen in Him'. The covenant of blessing reaches its fulfillment in Him, and with it all the covenant promises are fulfilled. The various elements mentioned in Romans 9:4ff. are consummated in Christ, and that to which the temple, the kingship and the land pointed (being constituent elements of the old covenant) is all consummated in Christ.

This is why Paul is able to take the Genesis accounts of the blessing of Abraham and shows how they have been definitively fulfilled in Christ (Rom. 4; Gal. 3). In Him the essential nature of the covenant blessing is at once exposed and bestowed. Thus Paul is able to say (Eph. 1:3):

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

The characteristic phrase 'in Christ' (e.g. I Cor. 15:22; II Cor. 5:17) or 'with Christ' (e.g. Rom. 6:3ff.; Gal. 2:19; Col. 2:12-13; 2:20; 3:1, 3; Eph. 2:6; etc.) emphasizes the great new work of God that has taken place. The 'seed' has been revealed, and those who have been predestined by the Father from before the foundation of the world to be the recipients of the full blessing of God do so by virtue of being 'adopted as sons through Jesus Christ' (Eph. 1:5). The significant point for us is that all the blessings that we know and receive are only in Him. We are blessed because we are in Him, and

in being in Him we are blessed (cf. Rom. 15:29). Here is the closest link between salvation and blessing and it is given clear expression in Acts 3:25f. where Peter says:

It is you who are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed'.
For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways.

All this relates to something we have seen in passing above. The temporal elements of the blessings seen in the Old Testament were never ends in themselves. They only found their true place under the cover of the richer one. Indeed, as the stories of Saul and Solomon, the sorry advice of Job's comforters and the whole process of national decay that eventuated in the exile and removal of the external marks of the covenant (i.e. the land, the temple and the kingship) makes clear, the neglect of the essential nature of the blessing leads to judgement.

In the light of this the great men and women of faith as discussed in Hebrews 11 are significant. Here those who died in faith 'did not receive that which was promised', i.e. they perceived that the nature of the blessing was greater than temporal benefits and they longed to see the essential nature of the blessing made manifest. They knew that man does not live by bread alone (cf. Deut. 8:4) Likewise Paul, for his part, had learned the secret that contentment was not related to circumstances (Phil. 4:11ff.; cf. Rom. 8:31ff.) which is in fact what Jesus had given testimony to in places such as Matthew 6:19-34 and Luke 12:15. The fact there may be great adversity in Him (cf. John 16:33; I Cor. 4:6-13; II Cor. 11:16-33; John 15:18ff.) does not negate the blessing of our Father upon us, but indeed validates His approval (cf. Heb. 12:7-13).

The blessing of being blessed in Christ is thus wholly a matter of faith (cf. Rom. 4:21; Gal. 3:9). Jesus in His own teaching indicated that those who are the children of Abraham do the works of their father in believing God for righteousness (John 8:31ff.). Axiomatically the grace of God must precede faith and participating in the blessing of the Son must be likewise so (cf. Rom. 3:21ff.). Thus by grace we are incorporated into the Son, the Seed of the covenant of blessing, and there we live by faith (cf. Gal. 2:20f.). 'The cup of blessing which we bless' (I Cor. 10:16) is the sign and seal of faith, given by God as a means of grace to constantly propel the believer forward in the way of faith.

The action of grace in this way immediately leads on to another related consideration. The promise of Genesis 12 is that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through the Divine Seed. We are incorporated in the Son. In this sense the church has become identified with the blessed seed, and through Him, it is a blessing. It is salt and light that is blessed through its affliction (Matt. 5:10-16; cf. I Pet. 4:12-19). The blessing given to the world is primarily in its Word, which is at once the Word of God and the Word of the promised seed Himself (Rom. 10:14; cf. I Thess. 2:13f.). The charismata in the New Testament are elements of God's blessing that are to further its proclamation and confirm it in His grace. This is why the arrogance of the Corinthian Christians in the matter of spiritual gifts is so strongly dealt with by Paul, for, as with the temporal blessings of the Old Testament, they are not an end in themselves nor should they be so regarded.

Blessing and the Eschaton

All that has been said above by nature of the case looks for its consummation. After the Fall the free flow of God's blessing has been, at His command, stopped, and creation is subjected to futility (Gen. 3:13-21; cf. Rom. 8:18-22). His blessing still rests upon the earth (cf. Matt. 5:45), but in a mitigated way. In the new creation all futility will be removed and creation will be fully fruitful again. Until that day there is still mourning and crying and pain (Rev. 21:3), but to the man in Christ these things are a continual spur to hope rather than cynicism.

There are various elements in the Scriptures that describe this final fulness of blessing, but the one that catches it up most fully is that which relates to the marriage feast. The earthly marriages of the Bible had a special time of blessing attached to them (cf. Gen. 24:60; Ruth 4:11) and such events are not simply quaint cultural customs. Everything in this current creation can only point to that which is ontological, and with weddings this is no less so. Therefore it is no surprise to see the end time, the time of the fulness of God's blessing, described in such terms as those seen in Revelation 19:7; 21:2, 9; 22:17; cf. Isaiah 61:10; 62:5; Matthew 22:1-14; 25:1-10; 11 Corinthians 11:2; etc. Every marriage is prophetic of the great and glorious marriage of the Lamb and His Bride. Jesus' presence at the marriage feast in Cana and His actions on that occasion only confirm this. In that great day all that is held now by faith will be seen by sight, and all that will be seen by sight is the fulness of God's blessing. On that great day we will see His face (Rev. 22:4) having all elements of the curse removed and creation's full fruitfulness forever established

In Conclusion

The overview that we have conducted has not uncovered every aspect of the topic at hand. However, even with what we have seen, there is rich benefit to be derived personally and thus pastorally. We are able to understand the need for approval that drives us and our people, for we know that the need for blessing is not an optional pursuit. Likewise we are able to see how the various temporal elements of God's blessing are never of themselves fulfilling. If they are divorced from the spiritual reality to which they point they may become a snare to us, whose blessing is in Christ, not in that which He gives. Moreover we should not underestimate the incredible dynamic of hope that the above survey reveals and we should avoid the promulgation of any 'false hope' based on sight action rather than faith action. We should be constantly instructing our folk in the completed work of the Cross and the consummation to which it points. From another angle there should be constant instruction in the sovereign grace of God who has worked all things together according to the counsel of His will in the matter of the preservation of the covenant and all that this means for the subject of blessing. We are secured in Him and by Him to come to His final glory, which is the fulness of our blessing. And above all we should be bold in proclaiming the gospel of Christ for in this the hearers will be blessed by being turned from their wicked ways to serve Christ who is 'over all, God blessed forever. Amen'.

The Magnificence of Mercy

The Intention of Our Study

As a group of pastors we are dedicated to the principle of vivification Of Christ's church through the Gospel of God, the present Lordship of Christ over his church and this age, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit in bringing the action of the living God-as both Father and Son-to its intended eschatological climax or goal (*telos*). The powerful presence of humanism within the church directs us towards another ethos or system—one which is man-centred, and which constantly reflects, utilises and depends upon current anthropological, sociological, and religious insights. We are not hostile to, or critical of, such insights, for they may well be valuable, but failure to subject them critically to biblical criteria may direct us away the Scriptures, and the traditional confessions of the historic church-confessions which have purported to be biblical.

The biblical matter of God's mercy has received little attention in our age, and I suggest it both deserves and requires our study, not only as an antidote to present humanistic mercy-so called-but as a confronting of ourselves with the truth. We can scarcely be merciful to others in an authentic way unless we have come under-and continue to live under-the mercy of God.

The Linguistic Meaning of Mercy

The word for mercy (Heb: *rachamim*) is not used greatly in regard to God's covenant dealings with Israel, but *chesed* is used prolifically, and whilst in the A.V. it is often translated 'mercy', this not so in the R.S.V. (with the exception of Psa. 23:6) where it is always translated 'steadfast love'. God's steadfast love has a wide range of references, but is mainly linked with God's gracious dealings with Israel as the weaker covenant partner, no 'matter what she did. God's mercy is His compassionate deliverance of a person or people who are in misery. This does not mean God is automatically moved to mercy by the sight of misery, for such misery can eventuate from His wrath upon a person or people. A study of Exodus 34:6-7 shows that whilst God is merciful and exercises steadfast love yet He 'will by no means acquit the guilty' (cf. Numb. 14:18; Nah. 1:3; cf. Job 10:14). His steadfast love does not override deliberate sin, sin with a high hand, or apostasy. Ezekiel 16 makes profitable reading as to the lengths God will go in judgement before He will rehabilitate His covenant people. His steadfast love will ensure this, but the N.T. use of mercy-and perhaps something of its O.T. use also-links mercy almost always with His wrath, and in His wrath He remembers mercy (cf. Hab. 3:2). It seems mercy in this case is somewhat other than *chesed* (O.T.) and even *charis*, i.e. grace (N.T.). It might almost be said to be stronger than both. Certainly *chesed* has a predictable element, as does also grace, but mercy (Heb. *rachamim*; Greek *eleos*) is an action of God which springs out of His love in a wholly gratuitous manner.

For this reason 'I will by no means acquit the guilty' needs serious consideration. It gives a dimension to God's action in grace which requires us to study afresh the nature of God, especially in regard to His holiness, and-so-His wrath. In Isaiah God often says, 'I am the Holy One-your Redeemer.' Today we have moved away from the dynamics of holiness, wrath and mercy, and have all but lost the theological and soteriological dimensions of the Cross. This is why our concepts of mercy have no depth, and why we are easily a prey to much current humanistic thinking. In applying

our contemporary anthropological and sociological criteria to our showing of a ‘mercy’ we may well miss the true mercy of God and so cheat man-under-guilt of ‘the everlasting mercy’.

God’s Self-Revelation as Merciful

‘The Lord passed before him, and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity upon the children and the children’s children, to the fourth generation.” And Moses made haste to bow his head toward the earth and worshipped.’

This self-revelation of God-whose theme is repeated time and again in Scripture (e.g. Nell. 9:15)-was being given to Moses in the context of covenant, i.e. the covenant as given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and which was then being resolved with Israel by the acts of the living God-the acts which were bringing Israel out of Egypt, and placing her in the promised land. The questions we ask are, ‘Was this revelation of God purely covenantal, i.e. was God disclosing His nature as it pertained primarily-and perhaps only-to Israel? Was God disclosing His nature as He deals with all the nations and history, or only as He was dealing with Israel? Given in that God’s nature as disclosed is immutable, do the attributes such as mercy, graciousness, slowness to anger, steadfast love and faithfulness pertain only to Israel, or are they operative towards all men?’

It is clear that God’s self-disclosure to Moses was a revelation primarily for the covenant, and so for God’s dealings with Israel. The universal nature of His covenant He had made clear to Abraham, a fact which Paul, later, was to take up, i.e. ‘In you [Abraham] shall all the nations be blessed,’ (Gal. 3:9-8, 16, 26). Mary’s Song (the Magnificat) certainly transcends the immediate covenant with Israel (Luke 1:46-55), and whilst Zechariah’s prophecy (the Benedictus: Luke 1:68- 79) points back to the covenant with Abraham-rather than with Moses-yet it includes the Gentiles (vs. 79). In any case the O.T. shows God as always having the Gentiles in mind.

We do not have time here to detail all the elements of God’s nature in His covenant with Israel, since our subject is particularly His mercy. We simply note that the matter of His *mercy* was disclosed in a covenantal situation, and that it was linked with His longsuffering, steadfast love and faithfulness. Indeed mercy can only be understood in context with all these elements. We will need to return to discuss these associated elements, and the outworking of mercy with both Israel and the nations as described in the Old Testament. (See the final footnote on the last page of this paper).

God’s Mercy in the New Testament

This section of our paper requires an exhaustive treatment to do it justice, but we will be unable to cover it adequately. We will take some passages dealing with mercy and examine them in order to adduce the nature or principles of mercy;

(i) **Ephesians 2:1-5.** In this passage we see the dreadful state of humanity. By his use of ‘you’ (the Gentiles) and ‘we’ (the Jews) Paul; shows this state to be universal. It consists of man being morally and spiritually dead-inert to God, but dynamically active in sin-energised by ‘the prince of the power of the air’, an inseparable part of his aeon (system), and *under the wrath of God*. From none of these elements can man extricate himself-if lie indeed lie wished to do so. The horror of this death is relieved

only by 'God who is rich in mercy'. His mercy and His 'great love' act together to bring life-resurrection-to the humanity which is under the judgement of death. How fearful, dreadful and horrific this death is, none can measure. It requires 'the riches of mercy', and 'great love' to redeem man. At this point we need to ask ourselves whether this is the message we proclaim. Certainly we are reluctant to speak on wrath, so that we need to consider God's wrath as a subject since mercy has no point apart from it (cf. I lab. 3:2, 'in wrath remember mercy').

Note on God's wrath: The Pauline *locus classicus* of wrath is Romans 1:18-2:5. In this passage God's wrath is His giving man up to his sin (vss. 24, 26, 28). Of this act Ernst Kasemann says, 'Moral perversion is the result of God's wrath, not the reason for it ... The Creator divests himself of his directly perceptible sovereign right and becomes a hidden judge, striking with corruption those who can live neither without him or against him . . . men have to endure what they wanted to attain-they are themselves its guilt and cost. Despisers of God bring down God's curse on themselves. In this judgement one may plainly see what the reality of mankind and the world is when it breaks free from God and is given up to immanence.' C.K. Barret observes, 'God's judgement has already broken forth; only he has consigned sinners not to hell but to sin-if indeed these be the alternatives.' C.E.B. Cranfield comments, ' . . . this delivering them up was a deliberate act of judgement and mercy on the part of God who smites in order to heal (Isa. 19:22) and that throughout the time of their God forsakenness God is still concerned with them and dealing with them.'

Some commentators-like Cranfield-see wrath as a means to bring sinners to God's mercy (Isa. 19:22). Hence the use of Isaiah 54:7-8, i.e. that God's wrath is only temporary. Whilst *in covenant* this may well obtain, the question is whether it is valid to apply this to all mankind as a principle in the light of Romans 9:15, 19-24 and Romans 11:28-32, where God's wrath always remains on some. Certainly in Romans 1: 18-3:26 Paul is showing that whilst God's wrath is upon sinners, yet-through propitiation-lie justifies sinners by grace.

We do not here enter into the wider question of God's wrath which is linked with His holiness- the infringement of which engenders wrath (Rom. 1:18; Hab. 1:13). His wrath-which is not human, and must not be compared with human anger-is His implacable opposition to evil, and His unswerving intention and action to destroy it from His creation.

(iii) Romans 9:6-24; 11:13-32. In Romans 9:6-24 Paul is speaking of two types of vessels, one being 'vessels of wrath made for destruction', and the other 'Vessels of mercy which he had prepared beforehand for glory'. The first vessels are those made for destruction. They deserve wrath, and that is where the matter ends. The second set of vessels are 'vessels of mercy', i.e. (a) vessels on whom God has mercy, (and so (b) vessels who need mercy. We see both sets of vessels *need* mercy but only one set *receives* mercy which underlines the fact that mercy is a matter for God's (predestinating) decision since God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. God can be called merciful when He has mercy but may not be called 'unmerciful' if He does not have mercy. It ought to be noted that God desires to show *both His* wrath in regard to vessels 'made for destruction', *and* His mercy in regard to the vessels (prepared beforehand for glory'. His wrath and His mercy are legitimate and ought not to be questioned.

Romans 11:13-32: Paul is explaining how it was that Israel was rejected by God and the Gentiles accepted. Israel was punished because of its unbelief and so met the severity of God', whilst the, Gentiles were grafted in to the olive tree because of 'the kindness (goodness) of God'. If we link the two passages together-Romans 9:6-24

and 11:13-32-we see that ‘the vessels of wrath’ are those of both Israel and the Gentiles who deserve wrath, and will meet wrath, whereas ‘the vessels of mercy’ are both the true remnant of Israel, and the elect of the Gentiles. When it is said that ‘God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all,’ the ‘all men’ and ‘all’ obviously means ‘all who are His elect, upon whom He has mercy’, for by nature of the case the statement-in the context of Romans chapters 9-11 cannot be universalistic or the whole argument loses its point. The view that God ought to have mercy upon all men, i.e. universally, destroys the whole concept of mercy.

For our present purposes all that we need to see is that both the elect remnant of Israel, and those who are elect amongst the Gentiles are under terrible misery until God has mercy on them. They are exactly in the state of the persons described in Ephesians 2:1-3 and Romans 1:18-2:6. If their state were not horrific, then mercy were no mercy!

Note on ‘Mercy’ in Romans: We have concluded that Romans 1:18-3:31 is an account of the mercy of God. 2:4-5 does not mention mercy-anymore than it mentions grace-but it does point to mercy which has refrained from destroying both the sinful Gentiles and the disobedient Jews who refuse to be led to repentance by the riches of God’s ‘kindness and forbearance and patience’. It then goes on to show God’s mercy in propitiation, since propitiation always relates to the wrath of God on sinners. Chapters 4-8 outline God’s mercies (cf. 12: 1) in justification, sanctification and hope. The exposition of mercy in chapters 9-11 fits with ‘the view that mercy rescues the covenant people out of a disastrous situation from which the Jewish (elect) remnant and the elect Gentiles could not extricate themselves. 15:9 states that ‘Christ became a servant to the circumcised, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy’, and this accords with chapters 9-11 where there are ‘vessels of wrath’, and ‘vessels [destined] for mercy’. In 12:1 Paul calls for the brethren to offer up their bodies as a living sacrifice, and bases his appeal on ‘the mercies of God’, i.e. *the mercies which he has expounded from 1:16 to 11:36*.

(iv) I Peter 2:9-10; 1:3-5: In 2:1-10 Peter shows the community of Christ-the ‘spiritual house’- that they are the [new] true Israel, and what was pronounced upon Israel in Exodus 19:5-6 now applies to them, i.e. those of the church who once were mainly Gentiles. The ‘wonderful deeds’ God has done in redeeming them are His mercies-‘you have received mercy’. He has taken them from their lost Gentile state and made them His people. Again we see that they were delivered from an horrific state (‘out of darkness’) to one of God’s ‘marvellous light’. Mercy indeed!

The other statement-that of 1:3-5-is God’s act of ‘*great mercy*’ (cf. Ephes. 2:4 ‘*rich in mercy*’) is to bring men to be ‘born to a living hope’-a hope of life- through Christ’s resurrection, along with the hope of ‘an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven’ for the elect. This really parallels the passage of Ephesians 2:1-5, for in both men are dead until ‘born anew’, and life comes through Christ’s resurrection. To survey ‘the charnel house of the dead’, and see its dead members come to life indicates ‘great mercy’ indeed.

(v) Titus 3:3-7: Here Paul describes what we were as we lived in a state of sin (cf. Romans 1:18- 32 and Ephesians 2:1-3), and contrasts this with the state into which mercy brought us-‘saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Christ Jesus so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life.’ In this case we note that the mercy is shown in (a) retrieving us from our last state by ‘the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit’, and (b) that it was *with a view to our*

being justified by his grace and becoming heirs in hope of eternal life. Again, God's action of mercy has taken us out of a terrible state, and brought us into the rich state of grace.

There are many other references to mercy in the N.T. such as in Matthew 5:7; 17: 15; Luke 6:35-36; 10:37; 16:24; 17:13; Philippians 2:27; 1 Timothy 1: 13, 16; Hebrews 2:17; 4:16 and Jude 23. These, too, deserve our closest attention.

Conclusion in Regard to Mercy in the New Testament

R.C.H. Lenski in commenting on Ephesians 2:1-10 says, "“Grace” is this love which is extended to us sinners in our *guilt* and unworthiness and pardons the guilt for Christ's sake in spite of our unworthiness. “Mercy” goes out to the *wretched* and miserable. Grace deals with the cause, the guilt; mercy with the consequences, the wretched death in which we lie. . . . Having described us in our pitiful deadness, mercy is applied in order to remove this consequence of guilt; it is the mercy of love with its full knowledge and blessed purpose.’ On the same passage Markus Barth comments, ‘Mercy (*eleos*) is the LXX and NT translation of the OT term *chesed*. The RSV rendering of this noun is “steadfast love” and suggests that *chesed* is the stable and loyal way in which God keeps the covenant. The KJ Version “loving kindness” may still be preferable because it conveys the meaning “undeserved mercy” or “prevenient grace”’. Barth does not here deal with the O.T. word for mercy (*rachamim*) but gives *chesed* something of the meaning of mercy, thus retaining something of its gratuitous element.

Doubtless we need an understanding of mercy in the O.T. in order to fill out our understanding of it in the N.T. and doubtless, too, we need to understand the meanings of such O.T. words as ‘steadfast love’ (*chesed*: loving kindness), ‘goodness’, ‘love’, and ‘faithfulness’ since all are words pertaining to God's covenant dealings with His people, and as such are linked with ‘mercy’. At the same time we need to see and understand the existential state of man's misery-both in the O.T. and N.T.-in order to understand the action of God's mercy.

Man Under God's Wrath: Human Existential Anguish

Again, the subject widens here beyond human comprehension. We cannot assess the nature of sin, the nature of holiness, the anguish that comes to man when he violates God's holiness and seeks to be free of Him. Ultimately it requires grace to understand the misery of man alienated from God and living under judgement. The passages we have briefly noted above come together to make a frightening account of primary human suffering. By ‘primary human suffering’ we mean the existential anguish man knows through his own rebellion against God, i.e. his denial of himself as a true existent, a basic creature, a created son and subject of God who is awry from himself, dislocated, dysfunctional and distorted as unontological and anti-ontological. Whilst he suffers from being abandoned to [his own] sin, yet the personal nature of the Divine wrath upon him, and judgement of death which has come to him from sin-‘Man fears death not so much because he *has* to die, but because he *deserves* to die’ (Paul Tillich)-is what keeps man in constant pain and *angst*.

The Place and Action of Mercy in the Face of Divine Wrath

The place of mercy is significant to the highest degree because man is unable to extricate himself from his sin and guilt-let alone give himself relief from his selfwrought suffering. He has certainly tried to deal with his own case-hence his

multitudinous religions, and many self-justifying techniques-but he is shown, biblically, to be impotent in this respect (e.g. Rom. 5:6; Jer. 10:23), so that his attempts are mainly cosmetic, taking him to even deeper despair. His refusal to acknowledge his guilt, his pride-even in alienation-makes his suffering yet more terrible. This is man under wrath.

Far from being inordinately angry with man God exercises great forbearance, longsuffering and patience-whether he be in covenant, or 'alienated from the commonwealth of Israel'. Grace and mercy are no 'right' of man, nor is God prompted to such. The marvel of His mercy is that in the incarnation, life, ministry and atonement of Christ, God moves to have mercy on the human race. The redemptive suffering of Christ cannot be computed, and has very little to do with his physical pain on the Cross. It is the deep moral, mental and spiritual suffering he experienced- especially at the point of his being abandoned by God-that is the evidence of, and the key to, the Divine mercy.

If man does not understand the dynamics of this mercy, and if he refuses his moral responsibility in regard to sin, then *mercy will not appear as mercy*. If man upbraids God for his state of suffering, or sees himself to be victimised by God or the sins of others (cf. Ezekiel chapter 18 and every man's moral responsibility for his own choices), then he will not know the transformation that mercy brings. The passages above showed us man as hating and hateful, under the tyranny of objective evil (i.e. Satanic), the slave of his own lust and passions, and caught under terrible guilt and wrath. They showed him as dead and without hope of resurrection, glorification and the inheritance of a holy and free eternity. The man who refuses the proclamation of grace puts himself away from the Divine mercy. He violates the compassion and pity of God. If God does not come to him intentionally with overwhelming mercy, then his end is terrible.

The Magnificence of the Ministry of Mercy

Paul says that he has the ministry of mercy, by mercy, 'Having this ministry by the mercy of God,' (11 Cor. 4: 1). Usually Paul speaks of having ministry by the *grace* of God (cf. Ephes. 3: 1-11). Here, it seems he means that he would have no ministry had God not had mercy on him. Indeed he would have no salvation without that mercy, but the mercy is heightened by giving him ministry. Elsewhere he speaks of God making him trustworthy by His mercy. (I Cor. 7:25). Having known God's mercy (cf. I Tim. 1: 13-16) in salvation, Paul cannot but declare God's mercy to the nations. As he said, 'I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.' In this reference (Rom. 15:8-12) Paul shows that this mercy was intended for the nations, i.e. the Gentiles, an intention which is stated as early on as in Deuteronomy, and is greatly amplified in the prophets, especially in the latter held of Isaiah (cf. 11 Sam. 22:50; Deut. 22:43; Psa. 117: 1; Isa. 11: 10).

It is fascinating to note in Galatians 1: 11-16 that Paul sees his conversion not as a thing in itself, but as the springboard to the ministry of proclamation-'He who called me through his grace was pleased to reveal his Son in me, *that I might preach him among the Gentiles.*' The intention of this paper is that we, too, should retrace our steps, and be constrained afresh to proclaim mercy.

Mercy Received is Mercy Given

If God's mercy seems to us to be an outdated biblical concept, or a vestige of Pauline, Augustinian, Reformed, Puritan and Wesleyan Evangelical doctrine then we will not

have, or espouse the ministry of mercy. Without doubt such ministry of proclamation involves mercy in its many forms, i.e. compassion towards all the human race, sympathy in its various forms of suffering, and pity that is practical where human need presents itself. However this latter ministry of mercy must be at one with the prior ministry of mercy, i.e. deliverance of men and women by the Gospel of Christ—deliverance, from existential anguish known in the midst of human sinfulness and the wrath of God, and deliverance into the peace of God and the love of Christ. ‘The mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ’ as mentioned in Jude 21 is ‘unto eternal life’. Christ as ‘the merciful high priest’ (Heb. 2:17) is primarily concerned with the matter of our sinfulness and God’s salvation. This does not mean the mercy of the Father and the Son is limited to things salvific. It covers all life in the all-embracing wisdom of God. Hence the apostolic prayers for ‘grace, mercy, and peace’ for their brethren, and the practical outworking of loving concern where needs were material, relational, and emotional.

The Mercy of The Merciful

The beatitude ‘Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy,’ raises the question, ‘Who will be merciful?’ to which the answer must be, ‘He to whom mercy has been shown.’ This is the message of Matthew 18:21ff. He who is forgiven much should forgive. Mercy is deliverance out of misery and distress. We can speak of a natural mercy, and a mercy which comes out of grace received. Luther said that in all the beatitudes faith is presupposed as the tree on which all the fruit of blessedness grows. When one has been in the misery of sin, one seeks to extend mercy to others in the same state. The nature and extent of this mercy is set out in Luke 6:35, ‘But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.’ We do not *become* ‘sons of the Most High’ by showing mercy, but we show mercy *because* we are sons of the Most High. We are being consistent as sons of the merciful Father, by being merciful. Paul calls God, ‘the Father of mercies’ (11 Cor. 4: 1).

We show mercy to our enemies to ‘the ungrateful and selfish’. The ‘merciful high priest’ of Hebrews 2:17 and 5:2 ‘can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward’. How far this was from the self-righteous legalism of the scribes and Pharisees who tithed meticulously but ‘neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith’ (Matt. 23:23)! They had passed over the latter in favour of the former.

Jesus pointed out the mercy of the Samaritan who helped the Jew who had been molested by robbers. The true neighbour was ‘the one who showed mercy on him’. The wounded Jew was in a state of great misery and the Samaritan was moved with compassion and so had mercy.

Jesus twice quotes Hosea 6:6 (cf. I Sam. 15:22, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’) On the first occasion (Matt. 9:13) it was when he ate with Matthew’s friends. They were sick ones who needed the physician. It is clear they were in the misery of sin and needed mercy. On the second occasion (Matt. 12:7) Jesus chided the severe Pharisees for their extreme legalism. James said, ‘Judgement is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy; yet mercy triumphs over judgement.’ This surely means that the merciful need never fear judgement, seeing they have been merciful. The merciless must always fear judgement.

A Famine of Mercy

It appears that never in the history of the world has there been such a time of mercy as seems to be before it now. Never have so many been helped so much by so many. In times of fire, drought, famine, earthquake and floods—to say nothing of the daily mental and physical suffering within society-nations give help to nations, and persons to persons. In such cases cynicism seems to be inappropriate yet critical realism might sift out much that springs from the pity of guilt, from mere ‘do-gooding’ and so distinguish what is genuine. This-however-would be a difficult task.

One thing confronts us—do we understand the mercy of God towards sinful mankind, and His great act of mercy in Christ? Is this proclaimed, and is it the soil and root of all true compassion and genuine mercy? If we view the biblical mercy of God as an outmoded Jewish and Christian concept and seek to establish mercy as a precept and practice of the new ‘Christian’ humanism, we may find that posterity will brand our last hundred years of advanced liberalism as an age of cruelty and not of mercy. The rage of ‘the justice men’ who seek to establish ‘mercy’ at the end of an automatic weapon may be seen as the most merciless of all in history. If we lack the dynamics of Calvary we may finish up with a Crossless Christ, and an effete mercy.

As for Jesus, his practical mercy was shown to the Canaanite woman whose daughter was demon- possessed, to the father of the epileptic boy, to the blind men who cried for mercy and received sight, and his compassion was towards the crowd who were as sheep without a shepherd. He had compassion on Jerusalem as he saw its time of judgement, but supremely in his hours on Calvary he established mercy for the generations to follow. We do not compare his personal ministerial mercy with his great high-priestly ministry at the altar of the Cross, but we are sure it is the latter- for us-which gives birth to the former, so that without the Cross our mercy is never wholly true. The source of our mercy is His mercy-His salvific mercy-obtained for us by a Saviour who took our misery into himself upon Calvary, encapsulated it within his holy suffering, and bore it to painful extinction.

Receiving this mercy we shall be merciful.

The Pastoral Application of the Principle of Mercy

What, then is the pastoral application of mercy? We should note the following:

- (i) The pastor must have received mercy, and see its wonderful gratuitous nature. He must also recognise that the mercy which once for all redeemed him, is the mercy which is upon him every day. *Note:* Lamentations 3:22-23 is a statement made in the midst of misery and was not a calm statement about the believer’s every day experience of settled life. Here the mercies are still linked with the godly man’s miseries and deliverance from them by the God of mercy. The pastor then must know daily the greatness of mercy.
- (ii) The pastor must preach tip the mercy of God. If he diminishes his awareness of the misery of the lost human spirit, or fails to recognise the dire need of mercy, then he will fail in urgency in proclaiming the Gospel. Equally he must teach God’s continuing mercies.
- (iii) The true pastor will be a merciful man, i.e. He will do acts of mercy towards his people as God continually does acts of mercy towards us. He will thus be the true vehicle of God’s mercy. Having received mercy he will give mercy. This means identification with the misery of others and the use of the truth-the word of God-to deliver them.

The Magnificent Mercy

Outline of the Book

PREFACE TO THE PLAN

It is 'the everlasting mercy'. We must see it (i) in the perspective of all time, i.e. His mercy on the human race in bringing it from darkness to light (etc. cf. I Pet 2:9-10; Acts 26:18ff.) and to the final telos as redeemed, sanctified, glorified, and (ii) we must see mercy in the light of God's other elements such as goodness, kindness, compassion, steadfast love, love, faithfulness, along with His holiness, righteousness, and truth. We must see wrath from holiness and yet 'in wrath remembering mercy'. The book must not inflate mercy at the expense of- and apart from-God's total nature and character. At the same time mercy shines and sparkles as a special jewel in the cluster of the living loving God.

1. Introduction.

- * Masefield's quote.
- * Shakespeare's quote. Other quotes?
- * Minimal use of the word today. Mercy a bland thing-a 'deserved' thing. Humanistic 'mercy'. Reason for this study is to see the great dimensions of mercy, receive mercy, and so to-have mercy,
- * The cry of the centuries. Kyrie eleison. (Its weaknesses liturgically).
- * (Note its place in liturgies-a witness to *need* for mercy)
- * 'Men of misery' (cf. quotes book) in history.
- * Thus relevance of mercy.
- * David.
- * The blind ones in Gospels.
- * Others.

2. Mercy in the O.T.

Linguistically. (So a description of mercy in Old Covenant). (NB. Lam.3:22) his mercies never come to and end.

Link of *steadfast love* and mercy. (see Existentially (Fall, misery, etc.)

Covenant and Mercy. Exod 34:6-7 (et al). Associated steadfast love, faithfulness, kindness etc. Note the 'sting' in the glory-'I will by no means acquit the guilty'.

In this regard see Ezekiel 16 and parallel passages. See God's wrath and *holiness* (*Hab.* 1: 13; *Hab.* 3:2). See 11 Chron. 36:15*, Rom 2:4-5 cf. Isa. 54:8; 19:22. Lam 3:22,31-32; 11 Chron. 36:15-17.cf. Ezekiel ch. 16.

God is merciful. (See in N.T. 'the Father of mercies'. (11 Cor. 1:3; cf. Rom. 15:9; cf. 'The Lord is compassionate and merciful' (*oiktirmon*), *James* 5:11). For O.T. see Deut. 4:31; 1 Chron. 21:13; 11 Chron. 30:9; 11 Chron. 36:15 (compassion=mercy) Neh. 9:17, 31. passim; Psa. 57:1; 86:15; 103:8; IIIA; 112:4; 116:5; 14:5; Isa. 55:6-7; Jer. 3:12; 63:7; Jonah 4:2; Joel 2:13 (cf. Lam 3:22-23, 31-33). Note Dan. 2:17ff

Mercy/Compassion. Same word in O.T. Psa. 145:8, "The Lord is good to all, and his compassion (rachum-mercy) is over all that he has made. Same in Psa. 78:38; cf. Deut 13:17 (mercy and compassion), Deut. 30:3 (compassion, i.e. mercy).

Man is merciful. Gen. 2:7-Pharaoh's daughter. I Sam 23:21 Ziphites on Saul.

The receiving of mercy-'His mercy is on them that fear Him' (Luke 1:50; cf. Psa. 103:13, 17, 18; Psa. 31:19; Psa. 85:9; 112:4-5; Psa. 145:8, 17-18; Psa. 147:11; 78:38) NB. There are conditions in the OT for receiving of mercy., (11 Chron 30:8-9-'return to him', Psa. 25:6-7; 5 1: 1; 57: 1; 86:15; 1 Kings 8:50; Dan. 2:17f.; 9:17-19-by praying for mercy; by seeking, calling, forsaking, returning as in Isa. 55:6-7; repenting

as in Jonah 4:2; Lam. 3:22-33 et al).

Lamentations 3:22-35 is a good principle, i.e. God is merciful and faithful in mercy (v.23). Vss. 25-33 show waiting, seeking sitting, being humbled-mercies will come! We need to note that these mercies are alive in the whole context of the book of Lamentations-what terrible suffering!

Covenant and mercy, especially *wrath* and *mercy* (cf. Hab 3:2)

Mercy not confined to Israel-universal idea. Jonah and Nineveh.

The prophetic intimations of mercy (Note here the reading back of Mary's and Zecharias' songs, etc.). Note quotes of mercy.

A **study on the Mercy Seat** (linguistically, functionally). Man's mercy in the O.T. Micah 6:8; 7:18 (steadfast love).

3. God Visits Man With Mercy-in Christ. Mercy in the N.T.

Check out linguistic meaning and use of words. *Chesed*, *chen* and *rachamim*. Meanings in context. Note Heb. 4:16 and the link of *grace* and *mercy*. Note also Heb. 8:12, 'I will be merciful towards their iniquities (*hileos*).

Christ and his acts of mercy in Palestine. Healing of blind. (How is this *mercy*?). (Note in mercy-so called-in Luke 18:9-14).

The Cross, Resurrection and mercy.

(i) Ephes. 2:1-5. Riches of His mercy.(Note link, *wrath*, source of mercy out of love). Also see Rom. 1: 18-3:31 (*wrath* and mercy).

(ii) I Pet. 1:3-5. His great mercy.

(iii) I Pet. 2:9-10. Nature of same. Gentiles and Exod. 19:5--6.

(iv) Titus 3:5. He saved us in virtue of his mercy.

Christ 'the merciful high priest' etc. Heb 2:17 et al. Check out 'mercy' in Hebrews. Check him as merciful in the Gospels, in redemption, and as 'the great high priest'.

God is merciful. See 'the Father of mercies'. (11 Cor. 1:3; cf. Rom. 15:9). Note link with comfort'. The Lord is compassionate and merciful (*oiktirmon*), James 5:11, cf. Deut. 4:31 1 Chron. 21:13; 11 Chron. 30:9 Neh. 9:17 passim; Psa. 86:15; 116:5; Isa. 55:6-7; 63:7; Jonah 4:2). See Luke 1:58.

The receiving of mercy-'His mercy is on them that fear Him' (Luke 1:50; cf. Psa. 103:13, 17, 18; Psa. 31:19; Psa. 85:9; Psa.145 . 8,17-18; Psa. 147:11; 78:38) NB. What are conditions in (a) OT, (11 Chron 30:9- 'return to him', Psa. 25:6-7; 51:1; 86:15; Dan. 9:17-19-by praying for mercy; seeking, calling, forsaking ,returning as in Isa. 55:6-7; repenting as in Jonah 4:2 et al) and (b) NT? ('His mercy is on them that fear Him' (Luke 1:50). Praying for mercy; Matt. 9:27; 15:22; 20:3 1).

God's mercy in history-Romans chs. 9 and 11 Jews and Gentiles). Note link with wrath. Note Romans 15:9 and the *universal* nature of mercy (cf. I Pet. 2:9-10)

Note: Mercy will be no less in the New Covenant than the Old!

Mercy in Paul's case-I Tim. 1:12-16. Cf. Case of Onesiphorus Phil. 2:27. Use of the word *mercy* in salutations, and linkage with other words.

Mercy for ministry (11 Cor. 4:1; 'one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy', cf. Jude 23: 1 Pet, 2:9-10-mercy in incorporation, but also in being able to 'ten out', etc.).

Mercy *For Worship* (Rom. 12:1-2, et al).

Human mercy. He who tastes mercy gives mercy. See Matt. 5:7; Luke 6:35-36 (*oiktirmon*); James 2:13. See Matt. 9:13; 12:7;23:23. (I desire mercy etc.). Also in regard to the good Samaritan 'he showed mercy'.

Story of Dives and Lazarus.

Story of the 'unmerciful servant' Matt. 18:21ff.

Note doing mercy with cheerfulness (Rom. 12:8). Eschatological mercy. Jude 21 (cf. Jude 2).