



New Creation Teaching Ministry

PASTOR'S MONDAY STUDY GROUP NOTES

1989 Pastors Study Group Titles

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Enquiries:

P.O. Box 403, Blackwood, SA 5051

Ph. (08) 8270 1861 or (08) 8270 1497

Fax: (08) 8270 4003

Email: ministry@newcreation.org.au

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The Pastor and The Ministry of Mercy

Questions Regarding the Ministry of Mercy

The Pastor should ask himself, 'Am I a merciful man? Do I suffer fools gladly? Do I get angry easily with people in trouble? Do I think, sometimes, that people ought to stew in their own juice—that they deserve what they get, that they are 'chronics' and that nothing will change them, anyway? Do I see people in need and merely regret the fact without moving towards them in pity, compassion and mercy?'

If such questions are important then even more important are the questions that follows, 'Do I have compassion for men and women who are in sin, who are lost, who are bound for eternal punishment, who are without hope for the next world and without God in this one?' That is, having known God's mercy in salvation am I now dead to the need for salvation in others, or—knowing such need in a theological; way—am I heartless in that their plight moves me no more, or, anyway, very little?

God's Demands Upon His People Requiring Them to Have Mercy to Others

'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall find mercy', does not simply mean 'No mercy from God if we do not have mercy on others,' but rather, 'He upon whom God has had mercy will have mercy to others and so that experience of God's mercy will continue.' To refuse mercy under such conditions is to place us in the place of the merciless servant of Matthew 18:21ff. Mercy to others was required under the Covenant law of Israel, but the demand of mercy is based, surely, on the nature of man as the image of God. God is merciful so that man, too, must be merciful, reflecting the image of God.

The mercy required under God's covenant with Israel is made on the revelation of God's nature in Exodus 34:6–7, 'The Lord, the Lord, merciful . . .' Leviticus 19—amongst other exhortations—has simple and clear teaching on social and relational responsibilities. In Deuteronomy 25:4 and other places, kindness to animals is enjoined. In Micah 6:8 the prophet 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 ['mercy', A.V.],
and to walk humbly with your God?

Zechariah 7:9–10 enjoins, 'Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy each to his brother. Do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against your brother in his heart.'

The Mercy of God

We have not defined mercy as such but it is surely that pity of God which springs from His compassion and moves Him to do acts which deliver man from his misery. Archbishop Trench's famous definition says that God saves man from his guilt by grace, and saves him from the misery guilt brings by His mercy. God's mercy often delivers from the misery which does not spring from guilt but the selfish and unmerciful acts of others, but mercy can be defined as pity which acts. It is unfortunate that the NIV has often chosen to speak of God as compassionate rather than merciful (e.g. Exod. 34:6). One may have compassion or pity without doing anything for the object of that pity. The matter of God having compassion and pity and being moved to action is something for another paper than this. Sufficient to say that whilst God is impassable, He does have affections of which He is the subject and not their object.

The compassion of God is shown in the following two passages, one from Hosea 11:8f., and the other from Isaiah 54:8–10,

How can I give you up O Ephraim!
How can I hand you over, O Israel!...
My heart recoils within me,
my compassion grows warm and tender.
I will not execute my fierce anger,
I will not act again to destroy Ephraim;
for I am God and not man,
the Holy One in your midst,
and I will not come to destroy.
In overflowing wrath for a moment,
I hid my face from you,
but with everlasting love **I will have compassion on you**,
says the Lord, your Redeemer.
For the mountains may depart
and the hills be removed,
but my steadfast love shall not **depart from you**,
and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,
says the Lord who has compassion on you.

In the New Testament the mercy of God is primarily shown in the way He redeems man from the misery of sin and its guilt. The terrible passage of Romans 1:18–32 shows us the existential anguish and pain of the rebel human race. Other passages such as Ephesians 2:1–4; 2:11–12; 4:17–19 and Titus 3:1–3 when put together amplify our understanding of man's misery. Man is dead, under the power and lordship of Satan, by whom he is inwardly energised to do evil, is a creature of wrath—under the doom of God—ruthless in disobedience and rebellion, a stranger to grace, God's promises and covenants, is without hope, and without God in the world, a slave to various passions both of the mind and the body, and one who passes his days hating and being hated!

God's mercy is shown in that he brings this morally putrescent, suppurating dead thing to beautiful life, making him reign in life—by grace—as he is now seated with Christ in heavenly places. Peter said that God had born man anew to a living hope, and Paul said that God '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 [lavishly] through Christ Jesus our Saviour so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life.'

How Can We Become Hard, Having Received Mercy?

The subject of the hardness of the heart is a vast one in the Scriptures. The root of hardness is sin, especially sin's deceit. Many warnings are given against hardening one's heart. God has mercy 'on them that fear Him'. Israel was warned constantly against such heart-hardening, 'Today when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.' Hence the writer of Proverbs says 29:1), 'Blessed is the man who fears the Lord always; but he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity.' Jesus warned his disciples against hardness of heart because 'they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, and their heart were hardened' (Mark 8:14–21). Many other factors contribute to such hardening, especially the deceit of sin, the deceit of the lusts, of Satan and his powers.

The major factor for believers in hardening is 'forgetting that we were purged from our old sins' (cf. II Peter 1:3–10). The wonder of mercy is lost in a complacency that comes when we think we are now righteousness—not simply accounted righteous but actually righteous!

Living in Mercy

We are called to be merciful—'Blessed are the merciful for they shall find mercy'. In Luke 6: Jesus said, '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 need to be merciful to all in misery, but the thought of the ungrateful and selfish is a repugnant one.

James showed the need for mercy when he said, 'For judgement is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy; yet mercy triumphs over judgement (James 2:13). James is really saying that we cannot expect mercy if we are merciless. He is not saying that mercy is great than judgement. He is saying that if we are merciful then we need not fear judgement.

Two Kinds of Mercy

Often, today, mercy is looked upon as any aid we can give to people in distress, without even enquiring as to the origin of that distress. Humanism has so affected Christians that they believe we should fly to the aid of people in any form of misery. Since humanism makes nothing of the next life and the ultimate maturation of man it has little time for the principle of suffering. 'Just don't let anyone suffer!' it exclaims, 'That is mercy!' Because of this social and welfare service loom large. For purposes of definition we say, 'Let us have mercy in all things but not without thought or discernment.' Mercy can help a person in misery. The deepest expression of mercy is not humanistic but salvific. Mercy must be seen in the perspective of eternity. God help us if we are simply in the 'aid-trade' to pay off our guilt for being so prosperous, to prove or justify ourselves, or are simply soft-headed out of mawkish sentiment which prevents us seeing the real issues, and true ways of genuine mercy.

It is helpful to see the stages of God's mercy in which we live, for these encourage and constrain us to exercise mercy

(i) Knowing the mercy that redeemed us.

Three strong passages which tells us of this are Ephesians 2:1–10; Titus 3:1–7, and I Peter 1:3–5. It is this initial experience of mercy which ought to keep us warm with mercy towards others. Paul never took this salvation for granted. He is a good model for us. Let us look at I Timothy 1:12–17,

I thank him who has given me strength for this, Jesus Christ our Lord, because he judged me faithful by appointing me to his service, though I formerly blasphemed and persecuted and insulted him; but I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for with the faith and the love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And I am the foremost of sinners; but I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience, for an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

In this passage Paul is not saying that he received mercy because he was faithful but because he was ignorant, i.e. that he was not essentially impenitent as in Exodus 34:6–7 where God said, ‘I will be no means acquit the guilty’. Paul also said he received mercy so that he could be an example of those who would come to believe. Paul, then never forgot that he was saved as a sinner, and still regarded himself in that light—the greatest of sinners.

(ii) Knowing the mercy that gave us ministry.

In II Corinthians 4:1, Paul said, ‘Having received this ministry by the mercy of God we do not lose heart.’ Again, Paul never took his ministry for granted. Whilst he speaks of it elsewhere as the gift of grace, he is here saying it is of mercy. Galatians 1:15–16 gives us a window on his view, ‘But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me, in order that I might preach him amongst the Gentiles [nations] . . .’ Paul saw clearly that salvation was not an end in itself, but was with a view to the ministry, i.e. proclaiming the Gospel.

We might say, then, that the greatest gift of mercy that we receive is ministry. If we keep seeing it as the gift of mercy then we keep in mercy and so remain merciful.

(iii) Knowing the mercy that keeps coming to us.

In II Corinthians 1:3–11 Paul recounts the suffering he and his team had in Asia, ‘for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself.’ In this account Paul speaks of ‘the Father of mercies and God all comfort’, meaning that God’s mercies come to him—to us—in desperate situations. This reminds us of the classic passage on mercies in Lamentations 3:22–33, in which the prophet said,

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning;
great is thy faithfulness.

That is, believers have God’s mercies coming to them every day. The day of Jeremiah’s ‘Lamentations’ was a fearfully sad one, one wrought with horrors and terrors, yet the prophet saw God visiting with constant fresh mercies—daily, and always. Like Paul and Jeremiah we have to recognise the constant mercies of God so that we live in the warmth of mercy, and keep being merciful.

(iv) Knowing the mercy that is ultimately coming to us—i.e. eschatological mercy.

Peter (I Pet.1:3–5) said that God—out of His great mercy— had begotten us anew to a living hope, i.e. an inheritance which is imperishable. Jude enjoins his readers to ‘wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.’ Whilst eternal life is our present possession (John 5:24), yet we look to pass through the transition point of bodily death. If realise that we have not received all mercies yet we will still be mercy—dependent, and so keep ourselves in His mercy—always looking to His, as yet, coming mercy—and so, in this state of mind be merciful to others.

Setting Up Ourselves to Be Merciful

Jude has a fine passage which gives us the background to living in mercy. In verse 17–23 he writes,

But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; they said to you, ‘In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.’ It is these who set up divisions, worldly people devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God; wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And convince some who doubt; same some by snatching them out of the fire; on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

These are the last days; this is the last time. These things predicted by the apostles are happening. In the midst of these things believers are to build themselves up on their most holy faith. This is a deliberate and continuous exercise dependent upon the teaching word , the word of grace which is able to build them up. They are to keep themselves in the love of God. This could mean—middle voice—that they are to be being kept in that love, i.e. by God. It could also mean they should be keeping one another—mutually—in the love of God. In any case they are to live in the love of God, and this is a dynamic experience, covering all facets of life. We cannot stress too highly the necessity of living just as Jude bids us if we are to exercise mercy towards others.

Then they are to live in constant anticipation of the ‘mercy unto eternal life’, i.e. ‘the grace that is coming (to them) at the revelation of Jesus Christ’. They will then see what now no eyes have seen, will hear what never has previously entered their ears, and will behold what the richest imagination could never have conceived. Living in anticipation of this mercy one would surely be merciful!

Then it is that Jude sets out three injunctions,

- (i) convince some who doubt,
- (ii) save some by snatching them out of the fire, and
- (iii) on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

There can be no doubt about it, these three actions are the actions of true mercy. For this reason we will look at them quite closely.

(i) Convince some who doubt.

Who are the doubters? We could say that with the confusion of the last time, the presence of the scoffers, the divisions they bring, and the clever worldliness of those who follow their own passions, even believers could become confused, and could begin to question the faith. Among the rabble of the day were those (Jude 16) who were ‘grumblers, malcontents, following their own passions, loud–mouthed boasters, flattering people to gain an advantage.’ The passage seems to indicate that in fact some of the doubters are also those who have disputed the faith and need to be convinced

since they are in doubt. If they are weak in the faith then they need mercy, i.e. tenderness, gentleness and understanding. If however they be another kind of doubter, i.e. those who have been attracted by those who follow heresy (cf. verse 4) then they need to be overcome by the Gospel in their wrong contention. All of this is mercy.

(ii) Save some by snatching them out of the fire.

It is clear that we cannot save people, of ourselves, for that is the work of God, but then God chooses to use us. If we saw a person in a fire we would instinctively try to save that one. If, remembering the mercy God had on us, we see those who are under the wrath of God, then we must snatch them away from danger. If we think God delights in men being burned up with fire then we are mistaken. 'He does not willingly afflict the children of men'. 'His wrath is but for a moment'. He has sent His Son that men 'should not perish'. The Gospel is 'the power of God unto salvation', for it is 'the word of the Cross'. In Amos 4:11 Israel is 'as a brand plucking out of the burning', and in Zechariah 3:2 Joshua the high-priest is 'a brand plucked from the fire.' John Wesley, saved from the rectory fire when a boy always saw himself as a brand plucked from the burning.

At the same time 'God is angry with the sinner every day', and 'the wrath of God is revealed from heaven upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in (acts of) unrighteousness'. He is the one Who has power to cast into Hell, the place where the merciless and rich Dives pleaded for respite to be mercifully given to him via the Lazarus to whom he had not showed mercy. It is the situation 'where the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched.' Revelation 21:7 calls this lake of fire the second death and says those who will be cast into it are 'the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, the murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolators and liars'.

Jude does not tell us who these are who need to be saved, but they may be the doubters, those misled by the apostates, they may even be believers but who are in moral danger through the deceit of sin and the deceitful lusts of the flesh, or simply those who waver concerning the grace of the Gospel. In our day and age we are apt to think all respectable people are untouched by the flames of hell when—as Manton puts it—they are in the very suburbs of hell'. Saving is by proclaiming the saving work of Christ, telling the Gospel of forgiveness, cleansing, justification, regeneration and love.

Manton cries to the Pastors, '*Minister! Art thou sensible of the danger of souls? Are thy words as burning coals? Do they fret through the heart of a sinner? Christian! art thou sensible of the danger of thy carnal neighbours? they are burning in their beds, and thou wilt not cry, Fire! Fire! they are besotted with lust and error, and wilt thou let them alone? Oh, unkind!*' (Manton on Jude, Klock and Klock, 1983 Reprint, pp 361–362).

We had better ask ourselves whether or not we believe in God's wrath, hell, eternal punishment, lostness, perishing, eternal darkness, the lake of fire, the second death. If we do not then the question of mercy does not authentically arise.

(iii) On some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

It may well be that the doubters, the burning brands, and the others who need 'mercy with fear' are all the one. We do not know. What we do know is that we must have mercy, but have it with fear. These last persons mentioned by Jude seem to be caught in moral pollution, and this could be as unsaved persons, or as those who claim

to have faith. However it may not be limited to them, for there can be great contamination within the fold of the church. 'With fear' reminds us of Philippians 2:12-13 where we are to work out (not at) our salvation with fear and trembling. In Isaiah 66:1 the Lord says, 'But this is the man to whom I will look, he that is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.' Galatians 6:1 says, 'Brethren, if a man be overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Look to yourself, let you too, be tempted.' Rescue work can be most dangerous. There should be a healthy fear of contamination or contagion.

Paul assures us there are forms of evil which can be dangerous when we associate with the evildoers (I Cor. 5:9-11; II Thess. 3:14). II Timothy 3:5 says, 'From such turn away.' Yet all of these need mercy. In I Corinthians 5 Paul spoke of delivering the incestuous man over to Satan 'for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus'. Probably his reference is to the same person in II Corinthians 2:5-11 where he counsels not being over-severe but bringing forgiveness to the person.

The question is 'How truly can we have mercy when 'the garment spotted by the flesh' refers to ugly—and perhaps contagious—evil. The undergarment, close to the flesh would be soiled. For example the leper's garment would be unwholesome to a healthy person.

'The perfect passive participle *espilomenon* denotes the past corruption that has defiled their garments, a defiling the effects of which abide and continue up to the present time,' (G.L.Lawlor, Jude Commentary, Pres. and Reformed, 1972, p. 136).

Conclusion

Paul counted it a high calling to proclaim the Gospel and so to share the mercy of God. For him it was not only a matter of indebtedness but of great joy. It was his life. So has it always been to those who have 'fire in the belly'. Love for God compels us all when 'we see any man have need' to seek to supply that need. We must keep warm in human feeling, sympathy, compassion, and pity. God's richest expression is 'the riches of His mercy, out of the great love wherewith He loved us', for mercy out of love equals grace—'by grace you are saved'—and in the end it will be seen that all is of grace.

The Pastoral Power of Christ's Substitutionary Atonement

Part One: The Matter of the Atonement

A number of factors have drawn our attention away from what was once central to the Christian faith, namely the atonement of Christ. By atonement we mean that act of God whereby he set forth Christ as a propitiation for the sins of mankind, thus acquitting from the guilt of sin those who have faith in this act of grace, thereby effecting reconciliation of believing man with God. The word 'atonement' is used considerably in the Pentateuch, and about 8 times in the rest of the O.T. It is not used in the N.T. in many modern versions, but was used in the A.V. in Romans 5:11, the word being translated 'reconciliation' (*katalagge*) in most versions.

The word 'atonement' has been used by theologians for many years to cover the act we have described above, which primarily is the saving work of Christ in his Cross and Resurrection. Undoubtedly the incarnation, obedience and ministry of Christ relate to the Atonement, as do his ascension, session and parousia, but they are not central to it. It may almost be said that the Atonement is central to them!

The Atonement in Historical Theology

We cannot possibly cover the history of this doctrine—it is so vast. It has had a central position in Western and Latin theology, but Eastern (Orthodox) theology has laid major emphasis on his incarnation and resurrection and present Lordship. What immediately concerns us are the theories of the Atonement which have developed, and with which most of us are familiar. Again, we will not detail them (see *The Things We Firmly Believe* pp. 103–105). The main theories are entitled Ransom, Victory, Satisfaction, Moral, Rectoral or Governmental, Example, Mystical, Vicarious Repentance, Substitutionary, Representative, and Vicarious. Any they may contain elements of other theories.

It must be understood that 'theories' of the Atonement do not of themselves save those who hold them. Christ saves, through his Atonement, by the Holy Spirit, but having a theory is almost inescapable. We are limiting ourselves to the Substitutionary Theory which has long been held by Evangelicals and many others.

The Substitutionary Theory holds that Christ died in the stead of man who deserved to receive God's wrath and eternal punishment for the sins he has committed which include his rebellion against God, and his enmity towards Him. This substitutionary principle is seen in the Pentateuch, primarily in the Levitical sacrifices, which themselves need to be studied in order to understand the ancient principle of atonement.

Objections to the Substitutionary Atonement

When we view the number of theories of the Atonement, and the various elements they contain we can understand why substitution is objected to, since this particular theory seems to neglect so many elements propounded outside it. The primary objection is that it is immoral, i.e. that one person should be made to suffer for the sins of others. This is held to be immoral in society and no law is based on such a principle. Other objections are that it is a forensic manipulation, an unreal transaction in the mind of God, that it is mechanical, and by nature of the case impossible, i.e. one man cannot

- (a) take on him the sins of any other, and
- (b) cannot take upon himself all the sins of all mankind for all time.

Nearly all of these objections may arise from inadequately examining the theory.

There is another consideration, however. It is the subjective approach of a person to the theory. All human beings seek to justify themselves in life and the Substitutionary Theory leaves no grounds for that. Thus human pride is affronted. The idea of Christ doing 'an alien work'—i.e. a work separate from us, for us—is not easily accepted. It is possible, if not probable, that many of the objections to the Theory arise from a discernment—whether conscious or unconscious—that human effort can have no part in its salvation. Salvation would have to be entirely of grace. Some forms of evangelism present the Substitutionary Theory of the Atonement as monergistic but make the act of salvation itself synergistic, i.e. make repentance and faith virtually to be works, speak of commitment—a human act—and so lessen the grace of the Atonement. Sooner or later this concession to human pride brings consequent results—a dimming of the brilliance of grace, some uncertainty in the believer as to his part in salvation, and application to secondary aid in the processes of Christian living. We will return later to these factors.

What we need to touch on briefly here is the so-called immoral element of the Substitutionary Theory. Since God initiates the act, and His Son is voluntarily one with him in it, it means that the plan of substitution takes place within the Godhead, and Christ as the Son implements it within his humanity. No innocent person is forced to bear the sins of the world. We cannot call God immoral if He designs, within Himself to bear the wrath which is upon sin. Such an act is true love, and the most moral thing of all.

The Biblical Principle of the Substitutionary Atonement

(i) The Centrality of the Cross and Resurrection in the N.T.

It is patently clear that the New Testament, as it has come down to us, is occupied with the centrality of Christ's death and his resurrection. The following points indicate this,

- (a) Jesus himself was most conscious of the Cross and spoke the **dei** of its necessity three times in the one Gospel, i.e. Mark 8:31; 9:31, and 10:31. Matthew and Luke also speak of its indispensability.
- (b) The temptations of Satan in the wilderness and Peter at Caesarea Philippi were meant to draw away Jesus from the Cross, but he rejected them.

(c) The testimony of John to Jesus being the Lamb of God, and taking away the sin of the world has reference to death. Jesus refers to this death many times in John's Gospel, e.g. 3:14; 6:51–57; 10:11–18; 12:31–32; 14:30–31; 15:13.

(e) Jesus' statement of Matthew 26:28 links his death with effective blood-shedding and with Jeremiah 31:31–34 (cf. Ezek. 36:24–28). The important anamnesis of I Corinthians 11:23–34 (including the solemn warning to eat and drink worthily: cf. I Cor. 10:14–22) underlines the importance of the saving death to the early church.

(f) Approximately one third of the text of the Synoptic Gospels is taken up in regard to the Crucifixion and Resurrection. The anointing of Jesus by Mary of Bethany gives prominence to the death. Whilst explicit references to the death in Acts may be said to be less than to the Resurrection, yet both events are inextricably linked. The Epistles are greatly occupied with the death and resurrection, and it is significant in the Revelation (cf. 1:5; 7:14) especially as Christ is 'the slain Lamb'.

(g) The facts of forgiveness of sins, purification from sin's pollution, the justification of the believer and his liberation from the power of Satan, the world-system and its powers, sin, death, God's wrath and the law are all linked with the Atonement, particularly as they are set out in the N.T. Epistles.

(h) Both N.T. ordinances or sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper are inexplicable without the death and resurrection of Jesus. Their institution by Christ shows his intention that the Atonement should be remembered and made prominent in the life and thinking of the church.

At this point we can say that although some may not see the death as substitutionary they would have to agree that the death itself was of great significance in the N.T.

(ii) References to Christ's Death for Us, Pertaining to Sins and Salvation

This is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins. Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures and rose again in accordance with the scriptures. God made him to be sin for us. Who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us. He was delivered for our offences and raised for our justification. Sending his Son in the likeness of sin flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh. Whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood. The Son of God whom loved me and gave himself for me. He has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself . . . Christ having been offered to bear the sins of many. Christ offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins . . . for by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. The blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified. He himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree. For Christ also died for sins, once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous. He is the propitiation for our sins. He loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Has freed us from our sins by his blood.

These statements stand self evident, but others, seen in the light of them underline the efficacy of the bloody death.

Through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is justified. It was necessary for Christ to suffer and rise from the dead. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of his grace. Having forgiven all our trespasses, having cancelled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside nailing it to the cross. He disarmed principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in him. We have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus. The blood of Christ, who . . . offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works. May the God of peace . . . by the blood of the everlasting covenant equip you. You were ransomed . . . with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. By his wounds you have been healed. The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Linked with these are other statements which relate the fruits of redemption as linked with the saving work of Christ,

Repent and be baptised everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. Repent, therefore that your sins may be blotted out. Everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name. They are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness [shall] reign in life. By one man's obedience many shall be made righteous. Our old humanity was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and that we might no longer be enslaved to sin Who is to condemn? Is it Christ Jesus who died. You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. His beloved Son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Christ gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. The grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men. Our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity. He saved us by the washing of regeneration which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life. The Lamb that was slain.

The above scriptures make clear to us the centrality of the Atonement in the N.T. for salvation, sanctification, and ultimate glorification.

(iii) The Model of Substitutionary Sacrifice in the O.T.

It is clear that the N.T. understanding of sacrifice is modelled on the O.T. principle, especially in regard to substitutionary sacrifice. The references to Christ being the Lamb of God (John 1:29; Rev. 5:6; 13:8; 6:16; 14:4; 19:7; 21:22), along with the references to his blood-shedding and its substitutionary nature—for us, for sins, concerning sins,—lead us to believe his sacrifice was substitutionary. Whilst theologians may argue as to the specific meanings of *peri*, *huper* and *anti* yet there is a general thrust of substitution. In this regard we need to look closely at the propitiatory and vicarious nature of his death. First, then, we should look at the O.T. model of substitutionary sacrifice.

If we look at the ancient sacrifices such as that of Cain and Abel, of Noah, of the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—then we may well discover that the worshippers thought in terms of their sacrifice being a substitute. Abel offered 'through faith', but what was his faith? Was it that God would accept his sacrifice as satisfactory? See Luke 18:9–14 where the tax gather requests God to 'be propitious', i.e. make propitiation for him, and so justify him—by faith. When Abraham offered up Isaac the ram caught in the thicket was definitely a substitute. Apart from Cain's sacrifice an animal was used as a victim. Why? However we may develop the thought of substitution from sacrifices by

humans—i.e. pagans use propitiation as a bribe to their gods—yet Leviticus chapters 1–7 certainly sets out substitutionary sacrifice. In each case the victim was a substitute for the worshipper. The worshipper identified with the victim by laying his hand upon his head. He then slew the victim himself i.e. slew the animal, washed its dirty parts of the animal, and chopped it up to be burned. The priest collected the blood and splashed it against the side of the altar. The offered identified with the victim as though it were himself.

All of this was said 'to make atonement for him'. In a number of cases it was said—following that atonement—'his sin shall be forgiven' (Lev. 4:26; 4:31; 5:35; 5:10; 5:13; 5:16; 5:18; 6:7). The atonement was made by the priest and not the worshipper, although his identification with the victim and its death led to that atonement.

In Isaiah 53 the substitution becomes very clear. 'The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all', so that the prophet can say,

Surely he has borne our griefs,
and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.
But he was wounded for our transgression,
he was bruised for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement
that made us whole,
and with his stripes we are healed.

What needs to be seen is that the atonement is prescribed, must be meticulously followed to the last detail, for there is no other way for atonement, or for the forgiveness of sins. We are not told a lot as to why the sacrifice should be offered or how the sacrifice atones. It is simply said that sacrifice is for sin, and that God has given the principle of sacrifice as set out in Leviticus 17:11, 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement by reason of the life.' That is we need atonement when we sin, and atonement is effected by the death of the victim, God having given this authentic prescription. The victim must die by the shedding of its own blood, the death having been occasioned by the worshipper and formalised as atonement by the priest. Note that Isaiah 53 gives us a developed rationale of the substitutionary atonement.

The notable fact is that there is no other way of atonement, and no other method by which sin can be forgiven. Since God has prescribed the ritual, and since its format is His prescription, then the worshipper can be sure his sin is forgiven.

Substitutionary Atonement is Required For Propitiation

If at this point we accept the fact of the prescribed atonement, then we may ask, 'What is meant by propitiation'? Dr. Leon Morris's book, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Tyndale, 1965, pp.144–213) is probably the most exhaustive treatment of the subject. In the O.T. the word kipper is used to indicate propitiation, and in the N.T. the hilaskomai word group covers this idea. Dr. Morris distinguishes between the ideas of expiation and propitiation, and insists that the N.T. word group (hilaskomai) does not involve expiation. Expiation is the working out of one's sin or debt, whereas propitiation is linked with the wrath of God, and no human

can propitiate. Dr. Morris says that propitiation is that which averts the wrath of God from the sinner.

God's Wrath and Propitiation

The doctrine of the wrath of God for various reasons is not popular with human beings. The idea of wrath—with its connotation of irrationality, untrammelled emotion, violence, and punishment—is objectionable. Ideas of God are often more placid and pacific. At depth the sinner protests that what he does not deserve wrath. This mistake arises from a misunderstanding of God's holiness. God's wrath is revealed from heaven upon all ungodliness and sin (Rom. 1:18; cf. Psalm 7:11; Ezek. 7:8; I Thess. 1:10). Habakkuk 1:13 means that God cannot look on sin without punishing it.

Since wrath arises from the violation of God's holiness by man, there is nothing man can do to appease that wrath, i.e. by human expiation. If God does not propitiate His own wrath, then man is wholly doomed. Leviticus 17:11—amongst other scriptures—shows us that God does propitiate, i.e. provide atonement. This is the thrust of the kippur references in the O.T. and the *hilaskomai* group of words in the N.T.

Propitiation is Through the Shedding of Blood

Hebrews 9:22 states simply that 'without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins'. A. M. Stibbs in his monograph *The Meaning of the word 'Blood' in Scripture* (Tyndale Press, 1958) has shown conclusively that the shedding of blood is the taking of life, and where propitiation is concerned it is the taking of life in sacrifice. The following references in which the word blood is contained all show that it signifies 'sacrificial death', or just 'death'. Acts 20:28; Rom. 3:25; 5:9; Ephesians 1:7; 2:13; Colossians 1:19,20; Hebrews 9:7; 11-14; 15-20; 22; 29; 10:25; 19,22; 12:24; 13:21; I Peter 1:18,19.

The need for such a death tells of the enormity of man's sin as it violates God's holiness. We have seen the indispensability of Christ's death, and its effectiveness. In I Corinthians 1:17-31 we are shown the fact that it is the power of God—over and above human wisdom, especially as Jews seek power in signs and wonders, and Greek in—so-called—wisdom.

Part Two: The Pastoral Outworking of the Substitutionary Atonement

The Personal Problems of Sinful Man

Sinful man has multitudinous problems such as his sin, its guilt, coming judgement, the fear of death, the power of various enemies over him, his existential awryness, dislocation and displacement in the true (ontological) creation. He is all that is described in such passages as Genesis 6:5; 8:21; Jeremiah. 17:9; Mark 7:21-23; John 8:34; Romans 1:18-32; 3:9-18; Ephesians 2:1-3; 2:11-13; 4:17-19.

It is required of us to see man's problems as we proclaim to him the Gospel of the Substitutionary Atonement. We need to see how a clear understanding of this propitiation will deliver a person from the many fears, torments, and problems that dog many Christians.

Note 1. One of the reasons for this study is that it is an observable fact that many Christians do not live in a clear understanding of the forgiveness of sins, the radical and total purification of those sins, complete reconciliation with God, access to His presence, the abolition of judicial death, the gift of love and sanctification, the assurance of eternal life, resurrection from the dead and total glorification of the person. The pastor must see the root of these misunderstandings of the total nature of grace, so that the believer may—and shall—live freely.

Note 2. Many pastors believe in the total efficacy of the Cross but believe the reality and action of the Atonement does not come immediately to the believer, so that it must be mediated by teaching, and its full effect must come through by degrees. Often this impression arises when the pastor believes he has taught well concerning the Atonement but sees little response to that teaching. He thus believes he must gradually mediate its reality. A pastor in this frame of mind must ask himself whether he finds this model in the N.T., and consider the possibility that he had not preached dynamically, i.e. has had more of the form of the word than its transforming content. For example Paul knew

(a) that by a certain kind of preaching he could rob the Cross of its power' (I Cor. 1:17–18; 2:1–15), and

(b) that the Cross is preached effectively in the context of great suffering (II Cor. 4:7–15).

The pastor will need to ask himself whether he is indeed himself a rich fruit of the Cross and therefore a true witness and—so—an effective preacher.

The Effective Power of the Atonement

We can first say that the work of the Cross and resurrection brings justification from the guilt of sins, forgiveness and purification of sins, freedom from law as a way of self-justification, freedom from law as a judgement-threatening system, freedom from the fear of death, freedom from Satan, his world-system and his principalities and powers, freedom from the dead works of conscience, and freedom within the liberating Lordship of Christ, and the love of the Father as displayed in the Atonement. All of these elements are valuable pastorally when they are pressed on people who are to a great degree ignorant of their accomplishment, and so do not live by faith in the Atonement.

Some Scriptures Which Show the Initial and Continuing Dynamic of the Atonement for Christian Living

I Peter 2:24 says Christ bore our sins, 'that we being dead to sin, might live unto righteousness.' Death to sin (cf. Rom. 6:16) means we are enabled to 'live unto righteousness'. What does this mean? II Cor. 5:14–5 shows that the believer knows he has already died, and so he now lives unto God. What does this mean? II Corinthians 5:21 shows that when God made Christ 'to be sin for us', then the goal of the death was 'that we might become the righteousness of God in him'. Explore this.

Is it the same as in Romans 8:1–4 where the work of the Cross is effected so that we might fulfil the just requirements of the law, or as in Romans 14:7–9 that Christ—by his death and resurrection—might be Lord of the dead and the living. In Galatians 1:4 Christ gave himself for our sins to deliver us from this present evil age (aeon) Is this the same as being liberated from the fear of death (Heb. 2:14–15: cf. I John 2:16–18) which Satan exercised over us, and from the domination of principalities and powers (Col. 2:14–15). Does the salvation of mercy, love and grace as in Ephesians 2:4–10, and Titus 3:4–7, i.e. the fruits of the Cross powerfully effect the believer in the forms set out? Does the grace as in Titus 2:11–14 result in a reversal of man as seen in Titus 3:1–3? What of the matter of sanctification as set out in

(a) Romans 6:1–23, and

(b) Colossians 3:1–17 and explained in Ephesians 4:17–32?

Does 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 adequately set out the radical transformation of people who have been under the degradation of sin?

The Intimacy of the Substitutionary Atonement

We have not dealt with the how of the Atonement, i.e. how does Jesus become our substitute? We not have space and time here to go into that intimately, however scriptures such as Isaiah 53:6(b) Romans 6:6; II Corinthians 5:14; II Peter 3:18; John 12:31–32, Ephesians 5:2 and Galatians 2:20 establish the fact that God laid the sins of mankind on Christ, that all died when he died, and that it was for us it all happened. If he died for us, then in some way he must have become one with us, and doubtless this was by the Holy Spirit (Heb. 9:14) as God 'set him forth as a propitiation' (Rom. 3:25: cf. I John 4:10). The pastor should spend time in showing this to his flock, and especially to those who waver.

However our main point is pastoral ministering of the Atonement is to take the listener to the Atonement, help him to understand the total nature of substitution. What he could never do, Christ did in his stead, but in his stead means he is accounted as having done that for himself, by himself. In the Levitical atonement the worshipper had to lay his hand on the victim and by faith believe he was the efficacious sacrifice. It would be profitable to ascertain whether the person has done this—i.e. deliberately identified with Christ—and seen that his own sins have really crucified Christ.

If the person is still endeavouring to come to, or is trying to effect salvation, justification, forgiveness and cleansing of sin, then he has yet to understand grace. If the pastor believes this can only be effected in dribs and drabs, then he must ask himself whether he is really preaching 'the word of the Cross which is the power of God', or really believes the Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation. He must ask himself whether he is not encouraging human 'expiation' (self-atonement) or a synergistic Gospel in which repentance and faith are works rather than gifts of grace.. He must also ask himself whether he has a split Gospel, i.e. believes God has done much for the repentant man, but believes the Holy Spirit does his own work of power and sanctification, i.e. that the Atonement is one work—a saving work— and the work of the Spirit is not connected with this, but is a work apart from or beyond, the Cross. Such an approach would be in contradiction of Romans 8:1–5; Titus 3:4–17; and the other passages (above) that we have linked with the new life the believer.

The Sacraments at Work in the Congregation

Today we have much at work which is not the Atonement. We have humanly rationalised ministry which has one eye to utility, and another to the humanistic standards of what we call 'help', i.e. we are in the aid-trade, and are not seeking to penetrate the depths of persons, except in a psychological or psychotherapeutic way. We do not see the deepest needs and problems of man as moral and spiritual, and that only the Gospel can actually reach these depths. It is essential we realise that we have the word and the sacraments and they are sufficient for all, especially as they work through and in the context of the body-Christ's community.

When we realise that the sacraments are not only built upon the substitutionary work of Christ, but are down-to-earth aids given by Christ for man under grace, then we see that these are the means by which the work of Christ is constantly communicated to the people of God. In baptism and the Lord's Supper we have setting forth of the Cross and Resurrection and an **anamnesis** of them. This helps to keep our mind-and heart-on the work of the Atonement. Above all we must remember the Atonement is in the setting of Covenant.

Conclusion to the Pastoral Power of the Substitutionary Atonement

It is evident that this paper is inadequate to cover all pastoral elements, but at least it is the basis for a certain line of investigation as to the causes of uneasiness in many believers today, in the seeming need for counseling therapies, especially those linked with the person's past, his (or her) lack of assurance in the present, and vagueness concerning hope for the future. The pastor himself must face his own inadequacies in believing the Gospel—if indeed there be such inadequacies—remembering that proclamation of the word is also a witness to its reality to the proclaimer. In the face of present humanism, conforming pressures by the world, natural timidity, and the human tendency to walk by sight and not by faith, the pastor must be honest as to whether he believes the substitutionary work of Christ, and is not ashamed of it, or afraid to proclaim it.

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The Cross, The Resurrection and The Holy Spirit

The Aim of Our Study

In our last Study we sought to see the power for proclamatory and pastoral ministry which lies in the objective substitutionary atonement. By 'objective' we mean something which God has done in history apart from man, although it is for man has done it. By 'objective' we do not mean that it was not a personal work of the Father, the Son and the Spirit, for it was. We do not mean that Christ did not enter intimately into the human realm, and that on the Cross he did not so identify with us that he did not become one with us—become sin—and so did not suffer in our stead. In the objective atonement God did that substitutionary work whereby we have been saved from the wrath of God and the penalty of the law which is upon sin.

The purpose of this present study is to examine the relationship of the Cross to the Resurrection, and the work of Holy Spirit in regard to the whole act of the Atonement, the proclamation of that Atonement, and the bringing of it to bear upon man so that he repents, believes, is regenerated, and has as the source of his life the power of the Atonement.

The reasons we are seeking to do this are quite a few, namely because,

(a) the Cross is sometimes regarded as a preliminary to the Resurrection, which then makes the Resurrection primary, and the Cross secondary. This might be called a theology of Resurrection as against a theology of the Cross, for in this case any theology of the Cross is subsumed under the theology of the Resurrection.

(b) it is often claimed that the Cross is simply a saving initiation to the Christian life, and that justification simply opens the way to sanctification, thus making sanctification the real goal of the Atonement. This approach tends to be a theology of sanctification, so that a theology of the Cross is again subsumed under a theology of sanctification. In most cases a theology of sanctification is related to, and dependant upon, a theology of the Resurrection.

(c) it is often claimed that the Atonement is an initial step, but however important it is, the primary reality is life in and by the Spirit. That is power for Christian living does not lie primarily in the Atonement, but in the personal presence of the Spirit, so that he is the one who enables us to proclaim the Gospel, and to establish the Kingdom.

Some Objections to the Substitutionary Atonement

Let us look at some of the points we began to discuss in our last study, namely the ways in which we skirt around the Cross. They are as follows,

(a) an inadequate understanding of the substitutionary Atonement, resulting in an inability to communicate it powerfully.

If the reader will look to the two paragraphs¹ (here appended as footnotes which are excerpts from our last study) he will see what we mean by this.

(b) the objection is that it is immoral, i.e. that one person should be made to suffer for the sins of others. This is held to be immoral in society since no law is based upon such a principle.

(c) the objection is that one man cannot (i) take on him the sins of any other, and (ii) cannot take upon himself all the sins of all mankind for all time.

(d) the objection that overmuch is made of the Cross to the neglect of the Resurrection, which it is claimed is as significant as—if not more significant than—the Cross.

(e) the objection that an objective Atonement does not relate to man where he is, that it is a forensic manipulation, an unreal transaction in the mind of God—or the theologian!—, that it is mechanical, and by nature of the case impossible, i.e. because it is conceptual, and not immediately dynamic in its affects and effects, so that it is more in the nature of a theory than a functional reality. As against this Christ's defeat of death by his resurrection, and the immediacy of the Holy Spirit in communicating resurrection life and stimulating significant actions argues for a more dynamic theology than that of the Cross.

¹ The following notes are abstracted from our previous study, *The Pastoral power of the Substitutionary Atonement*, p.7.

Note 1. One of the reasons for this study is that it is an observable fact that many Christians do not live in a clear understanding of the forgiveness of sins, the radical and total purification of those sins, complete reconciliation with God, access to His presence, the abolition of judicial death, the gift of love and sanctification, the assurance of eternal life, resurrection from the dead and total glorification of the person. The pastor must see the root of these misunderstandings of the total nature of grace, so that the believer may-and shall-live freely.

Note 2. Many pastors believe in the total efficacy of the Cross but believe the reality and action of the Atonement does not come immediately to the believer, so that it must be mediated by teaching, and its full effect must come through by degrees. Often this impression arises when the pastor believes he has taught well concerning the Atonement but sees little response to that teaching. He thus believes he must gradually mediate its reality. A pastor in this frame of mind must ask himself whether he finds this model in the N.T., and consider the possibility that he had not preached dynamically, i.e. has had more of the form of the word than its transforming content. For example Paul knew (a) that by a certain kind of preaching he could rob the Cross of its power' (I Cor. 1:17-18; 2:1-15), and (b) that the Cross is preached effectively in the context of great suffering (II Cor. 4:7-15). The pastor will need to ask himself whether he is indeed himself a rich fruit of the Cross and therefore a true witness and-so-an effective preacher.

One of the problems we face in all this is that there may be certain factors which incline some towards a theology of Resurrection than one of the Cross. The factors may be of the nature of a hidden agenda, or a conscious nominated agenda, or both. It may well be argued that the case could be similar for those who espouse a theology of the Cross. In both cases the appeal must be to what Scripture teaches. When it is claimed that a theology of the Cross must include that of the Resurrection, then this cannot be gainsaid for both are essential to a full doctrine of the Atonement. It is doubtful whether anyone holds a theology of the Cross in isolation from the Resurrection. Similarly—though not necessarily equally—a theology of the Resurrection must have as its starting point the matter of the Cross, but it is to be argued that the theology of the Cross does not place the Cross merely as a starting point, but covers all theology, such as the cosmic victory of Christ being worked out in his Lordship over all things, and his ultimate triumphant telos—the new creation.

The matter becomes even more complicated when various views of the Atonement are held so that there are, in fact, different theologies of the Cross. Since we are only discussing the Substitutionary Atonement we must, for purposes of this Study, leave aside other theologies of the Cross.

The further matter of the place of the Spirit in relation to the Cross and the Resurrection makes our discussion even more complicated, but because it is essential to a true understanding of the Cross and the Resurrection we are bound to examine it.

Christ, The Father, the Spirit and the Cross

As all the works of God such as creation, covenant, and the ultimate new creation the Father, the Son and the Spirit work as the One Triune God so it is they participate together in the Atonement. Here, by Atonement, we mean the saving work of Christ through the Cross and the Resurrection.

The Initiator of the Cross is the Father.

It is by command that the Son lays down his life (John 10:17; 14:30–31). God sends him to be the propitiation for our sins (I John 4:19–10) and sets him forth as a propitiation (Rom. 3:24–26). God makes him to be sin for us (II Cor.5:21) and it is assumed He also makes him to be curse (Gal. 3:13). He abandons him up for us all, i.e. up to death, up to sin (Rom. 8:32), offering him to ‘bear the sins of many (Heb. 9:28). Romans 4:25 speaks of him being delivered for our offences. Isaiah 53 teaches us that God has laid on him the iniquity of us all (4–12), and I Peter 2:24 uses this very prophecy in this regard. Hebrews 2:10–15 makes it clear that God manifested him for the work of the Cross in order to taste death for every man, and to be the basis (pioneer) of our salvation. The Gethsemene prayer to be saved from death (cf. Heb. 5:8) is to the Father Who is asked to assist him in the hour of the Cross (17:1–5; cf. 12:27–28). Other Scriptures speak more generally of Christ being sent for soteriological purposes (e.g. John 3:16,17; I John 4: 14; John 12:27, 28 31–32; John 16:11). It is to be noted in conformity with John 17:1–5 that the Son speaks to the Father in the event of the Cross, both at its beginning and its end.

These things being the case it is clear that there would have been no Cross had the Father not initiated the event. The use of the verbs ‘made’, ‘abandoned’, ‘set forth’, ‘laid on’, ‘wounded’, ‘bruised’, all have the Son as their object. The Father is the subject of these actions as the cry ‘My God! My God!’ indicates. The Son could not

–unaided–take on him the sins of the world, could not become ‘sin’ and ‘the curse’. The Father had to abandon him, much as he also abandoned himself. To say that there was nothing penal about the death is to ignore the nature of sin being laid upon him, of him being made curse, of ‘the chastisement that made us whole’, and the matter of the judgement of the law–‘he redeemed us from the curse of the law’.

It must, then, be summed up by ‘God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them’. Whilst we must avoid patricianism–the Father being crucified–we must also avoid saying the Father was merely a spectator to the event of the Cross.

The One Who Executes the Work of the Cross is the Son

The verses which speak of the Father initiating the work of the Cross also imply the fact that the Son is obedient and carries out those works (Phil. 2:9; Heb. 2:9–10; 5:7–10; John 10:17; 14:30–31). In Galatians 1:5 it is said he gave himself for our sins according the will of our God and Father, he died for our sins–the message of prime importance (I Cor. 15:3). Again he said to have offered himself up (Gal. 2:20) and this as a sacrifice (Eph. 5:2; cf. Heb. 9:26; 10:10, 12,14). He said he would offer his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45), that his blood was for the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 26:28), and that he redeemed us from the curse of the law, that he gave himself up to redeem us from all iniquity.

It is clear that the Son works for our redemption, but is always dependant upon the Father, and the Spirit. To give himself over to being abandoned must be the apex of that work, and is incomprehensible to us, especially if we lack sight of the utter holiness of God, and the consequent and proper nature of His wrath.

The Spirit is Present and Efficient in the Work of the Cross

It is true that we only have Hebrews 9:14 to indicate the Spirit’s presence in the work of the Cross for Christ said to have offered himself, without blemish, through the eternal Spirit, and even here translators often use lower case–‘the eternal spirit’, meaning Christ’s eternal spirit. Doubtless the vexed question of whether Jesus offered himself in his humanity or deity or both is unavoidable. Certainly we cannot define a division of the two and the Father being in Christ to effect the work of the Cross preserves the reality of his humanity in that action.

The weight of evidence for the Spirit also being in the work of the Cross lies in the fact that Christ was conceived through the Spirit, baptised in–or by–the Spirit, was led to the Devil’s temptation of him by the Spirit, effected all his ministry by the Spirit, was raised from the dead by the Spirit of the Father, and was caused to ascend by the same Spirit (cf. Eph. 1:19–20). The intimate work of the Spirit in man–especially redeemed man–is shown in Romans 8:26–27, where ‘the hearts of men’ and ‘the mind of the Spirit’ are regarded as one.

We have need to explain how Christ can be the substitute for man in the work of the Cross. The fact that the Father sets him forth as a propitiation means He makes Him substitute. It is reasonable to assume that Spirit–the Spirit of personal intimacy–makes him one with sinful humanity in his conception, in his baptism, in his ministry, and in his death as well as his resurrection. Thus it is by the eternal Spirit that Jesus is able to offer himself sacrificially, and offer himself without blemish.

The Significance and Efficacy of the Triune Work of the Cross

The dimensions of the Cross are such as to make the work accomplished impossible apart from the participation of the Three. This, then, evaluates the Cross as the most significant work that is done. When we see the participation of the Father in raising Christ from the dead—a theme that is often expounded (2:24–32; 3:14–15; 4:10; 5:30–31; 10:40; 13:30; Rom. 6:4,9; 8:11; I Cor. 15:4,12,15,17; Eph. 1:19–20)—then we see the entirety of the Atonement cannot be realised apart from the Father. Since, likewise, the resurrection of Jesus was accomplished through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 1:4; 8:11, Eph. 1:19–20; cf. I Pet. 3:18), and as Jesus was spoken of himself rising from the dead (Matt. 28:6–7; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:46; Acts 17:3; Rom. 1:4; cf. Rev. 1:18) then the full work of the Atonement is Trinitarian.

The importance of this fact is that if the Atonement is accomplished by the Triune God, then its revelation to sinful man and its application to the human person must also be a Triune work. Methodologically the best way to go would seem to be to trace the work of the Father, of the Son, and of the Spirit in the application of the Cross to the life of the believer. However it seems better to look first at the goals of the Cross, and their outworking in history. Just to see these will not minimize the work of the resurrection—since it is at one with the work of the Cross—nor demote the work of the Spirit, since his goal is likewise that of the Father and the Son

The Goals of the Cross

(i) The Goals For Man

I Peter 2:24 says his sin bearing was ‘that we might die to sin and live unto righteousness’. That is salvation with a view to holiness.

II Corinthians 5:14–15, ‘that they which live should no longer live unto themselves but unto him who died for them and rose again. He died for them that they might live unto him is salvation with a view to holiness.

II Corinthians 5:21 ‘For our sakes he made him to be sin that we might become the righteousness of God in him’, shows that his death was with a view to our becoming ‘the righteousness of God’, i.e. living in true righteousness flowing by God, required by God and attained through the Cross in Christ.

Romans 6:1–4. ‘He that has died is justified from sin’ is the key to the passage. Being in a state of sin we had to die for our sins (because of our sins which equal death), but baptism into Christ makes us partakers of the death, and so we rise from the death of sin to the life of righteousness in which sin has no power to control us through guilt, since grace has liberated us. Thus the death is so that we may walk in holiness of life.

Colossians 3:3–5. We are to set our minds on the risen Christ for we died—via the Cross—and our lives are now hid with Christ in God. Thus we can live holy lives—putting to death what was put to death on the Cross.

Galatians 1:4 tells us that he gave himself for our sins, and this was the way to ‘deliver us from this present evil aeon’. **Colossians 2:14–15** and **Hebrews 2:14–15** both tell us man was delivered from the powers of darkness and from Satan, and so fear of death so that the outcome is freedom from evil. **Colossians 1:13–14** shows that through the forgiveness of sins (via the Cross) man is delivered from the powers of

darkness into the kingdom of the Son of His love.

Romans 8:1–3 shows that man is freed from the law of sin and death by the death of Christ, ‘that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us’. Again the aim is holiness of life.

There are other verses which speak of the Cross effecting the reconciliation of man with God. Romans 5:10 says ‘we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son’, II Corinthians 5:18–19 says that God reconciled the world to himself in Christ, ‘not counting their sins against them’. Ephesians 2:16–18 and Colossians 1:19–21 show that peace (reconciliation) with God comes through ‘the blood of the cross’.

This cluster of verses, then, assures us that the goal of the Cross for man was liberation from sin and evil, reconciliation with Himself, and consequent holiness of life. This theme is summed up well in Titus 2:11–14, ‘He gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good works’. All of these show the remarkable power of the Cross.

(ii) God’s Cosmic Goal For the Lordship of Christ and the New Creation

Knowing that this age (aeon, kosmos) is under the prince or god of this world (John 14:30; 12:31; 16:11; II Cor. 4:4) Christ is lifted up as a serpent (John 3:14) to effect deliverance of man from Satan, the world powers, and the world system (Gal. 1:4; 6:14; Col. 2:14–15; Heb. 2:14–15), and so Satan is defeated. The efficacy of the Cross to defeat Satan is shown in Revelation 12:10 where the saints overcome him by the blood of the Lamb (cf. I John 2:12–14). The whole world system, then, is crucified (Gal. 1:4; 6:14; cf. Col. 2:14–15; Heb. 2:14–15), i.e. defeated and delivered over to death (cf. Rev. 19:20–21; 20:10). This is the fulfilment of the proto–evangel of Genesis 3:15.

(iii) God’s Comic Action by Christ in History For the Defeat of Evil by the Cross

We have already seen that the Cross was the cosmic defeat of evil under Satan. The victory of this Cross is worked out by Christ in this present age until, and with a view to, the regeneration of this world. I Corinthians 15:14–28 describes the action of the outworking, and Revelation 5:1–21:8 describes the way it is worked out by ‘Christ crucified’ in the historical process.

If we go into the details of this outworking we will see just as the Cross was the working of the Triune God, so is this outworking of history.

The Power of the Cross, of the Resurrection and the Holy Spirit

The pastoral problem, we need to understand out is one of power—that of the Cross, of the Resurrection, and of the Holy Spirit. Are there three different instruments of power, or are they the one? Of course they must constitute the one power of God as He works via these instrumentalities. Obviously they do not vie with one another. All this is self–evident, not not to various theological views. For those who hold to incarnation theology the Cross is often seen as the outpouring of Christ’s life into us so that our humanity is lifted up. Indeed its levels rise towards that of divinisation. A view close to this is that through the resurrection the life of Christ—poured out at the Cross—is

poured into us, so that his incarnation extends the parameters of human living. All of this refuses the necessity for substitutionary atonement or sacrificial death for sins. There is a doctrine of vicarious repentance which says that Christ offered to God repentance for the human race by his going to the Cross, and this being the case man is accepted by God as he is although the example of Christ now moves him to live as a penitent and forgiven person.

The Triumphalist view is that Christ did indeed die for man, and now man is emancipated. The resurrection power of Christ is now his, i.e. there is actual metaphysical power of Christ for the believer to live against all evil and triumph over it. That power extends to the doing of miracles, signs and wonders, and such power comes to him through the Holy Spirit. In one sense he is able to leave the Cross behind, though grateful for its initial deliverance of him. Naturally enough the triumphalist has a supernatural orientation. He does not face the problem of indwelling sin—as in Romans 7:13–25—of the groaning within of Romans 8:22–24, and of daily mortification of the flesh. All for him is a vivification which has happened once for all. His view is essentially an optimistic one, though curiously enough many triumphalists think that everything can be lost through some kind of fall. Perhaps the fear of this motivates them to live in continuous—even if perilous, triumphalism.

In the face of these various views we need to understand the power of God in the life of the believer.

Note: In opposing the triumphalist view we are not opposing the operation in power of the believer: to the contrary. The believer must always work in the power of God, but in doing so will have no triumphalism. As created man had great powers, especially in the realms we call ‘moral’, ‘spiritual’ and ‘vocational’. Restored in Christ these powers operate afresh, and in one sense can be said to be ‘natural’, i.e. truly human. These work well in the context of the Atonement and the Holy Spirit.

(i) The Power of the Cross

Paul said, ‘The word (logos) of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.’ ‘Being saved’ suggests a duration and a process. That is the Cross goes on being God’s power in a believer. Our studies have shown us that it is the power to deliver man from the penalty, pollution and power of sin, from the bondage of evil and effective daily in the mortification of sin and the flesh, and the basis for victory over sin in the positive living of holiness. The Cross provides the constraint of love for obedience in every area of life. The same power enchains Satan, his powers, and his world–system. Through the Cross the believer is proof against evil, provided he lives by faith in the grace of God.

We have also seen that cosmically Christ’s death has defeated evil and caused him—by his redemptive act—to be Lord, Cosmocrator, King of the Kingdom of God, and Perfector of Creation. This, then, is the ongoing power of the Cross.

(ii) The Power of the Resurrection

Paul does not speak of ‘the word (logos) of the Resurrection’. He does speak of ‘the power of his resurrection’ (Phil. 3:10). In Romans 5:10 he says, ‘For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall be saved by his life.’

In Romans 4:25 Paul said that Jesus was ‘put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification’. The clear inference is that the death was for sins, and the

resurrection attested to the efficacy of the death for this, resulting in justification. This is what he discussed in I Corinthians 15 which is often thought of as a treatise on resurrection, but is primarily one on the effective death. The main point is that the death without the resurrection would have been pointless, but this does not mean the point lies primarily in the resurrection. Without the death nothing is done for the forgiveness of sins, but by the resurrection this forgiveness is authenticated. At the same time it is not resurrection per se which takes away the sting of death, for the sting of death is sin, and the death was for the sin. That is why Paul says (15:3), 'I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.' Doubtless 'of first importance' applies to the three elements—death, burial and resurrection—and doubtless that was the order in which they had to be reported, but the resurrection is not first mentioned, when—it would appear—it was always first mentioned in the apostolic preaching, a point which we shall presently consider.

When we look at the term 'the power of his resurrection' (Phil. 3:10) we must understand the context in which it is stated, namely in verses 7 to 14. In this passage Paul is saying that he counts his human 'gains' as 'loss' over against Christ. His desire is to be found not in his own but the righteousness of Christ, accounted to him through faith, and in which he may come fully to know Christ. He knows Christ in three things,

- (i) the power his—Christ's—resurrection,
- (ii) in the suffering of his—Christ's— sufferings, so that he—Paul—may
- (iii) be conformed to the pattern (or, shape) of his—Christ's—death.

Here resurrection power is Christ's—the power he wields in virtue of his resurrection which brings justification (cf. verse 9; Rom. 4:25), the power of being raised from spiritual death (Rom. 6:4–11), the power of Christ's risen life that is exercised in his Lordship which itself was won through his death.

This—immediately above—is really a commentary on Romans 5:10, 'if we were reconciled to God by his death, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life'. In Verse 9 Paul; had said, 'Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.' He mean that if the death justifies us now, then at the end time—the time of wrath—the living Lord shall ensure our escape from wrath. Verse 10 naturally follows, 'If his death now reconciles us, then we shall be saved because he lives'. Paul is not saying 'The death reconciles but the life—of itself—saves, but the living Christ will save us at the end time.

When we go to Ephesians 1:19–21 we see a power raised Christ from the dead. This was the power of the Father (Rom. 6:4) and of the Spirit (Rom. 1:4; 8:11), and the risen Christ works in this power. In Christ we too work within this power, though it is never separable from the father, the Son and the Spirit. It is never a power that we operate, although we do operate by it.

The power of Christ's resurrection then, cannot be divorced from the Cross as we saw in Romans 4:25 and I Corinthians 15. From his resurrection onwards Christ has operated in this power—doing all his works. We must never forget that he is always 'Christ crucified', even when he is risen, and so his Cross and Resurrection are the works which completed the Atonement. The 'power of his resurrection' is not something post—crucifixion and apart from the Cross, but one with it. So far as the forgiveness of sins, the cleansing from sin, justification and sanctification are concerned they all continually spring from the Atonement. That is why it is 'the power of God to those of us who are being saved'.

(iii) The Power of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit being the third member of the Trinity exercises power from himself. This is the power to create, to give life, and to sustain it. (Psa. 104:29–30; Job 33:4). His is the power to raise from the dead (Ezek. 37:1–14; II Cor. 3:6; Rom. 1:4; 8:9–11; cf. Rom. 8:2), and his is the power relating to the Cross (Heb. 9:14). We have seen that his power is linked with the Atonement.

Romans 8:1–4 shows us that ‘the law of the Spirit of life has set me free from the law of sin and death’. ‘The law of sin and death’ is the law against which I have sinned and which kills me (cf. Rom. 5:13; 4:15), and ‘the law of the Spirit of life’ must be the action of the Spirit in setting me free through the Gospel. Likewise this must be the case in II Corinthians 3:17–‘where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty’. The context in the Corinthians Epistle shows that we are free by grace, so that here the Spirit is the Spirit of grace. So then these two references show us that the Spirit brings the Atonement to man and liberates him. This is certainly the power of the Spirit, and is needed to apply the Atonement, without which the Atonement is virtually powerless. It is powerful in the context of the Spirit. This application is seen powerfully in I Corinthians 6:9–11, and Titus 3:4–7.

Undoubtedly the Spirit’s coming makes man free, but it also invests him with power to witness to Christ (Acts 1:8: cf. I Cor. 2:4; I Thess 1:5; I Pet 1:12; Heb. 4; 6:4; Rom. 15:19). Witness to Christ is the testimony of his life and particular his Atonement, so that man has to receive salvation—via the Spirit—before he can truly witness to it. The reality of this is seen in Galatians 4:4–6 where the Atonement is first mentioned, then the gift of sonship (adoption) which is brought to man by the Spirit.

In all these things, then, the power of the Spirit is related to the Cross and Resurrection—i.e. to the Atonement, its revelation and application— and the thought of power being separable from him is as unlikely as Christ and the Spirit being separable. When it comes to power to witness, and power to effect signs and wonders and use the gifts, then all must be by the power of the Spirit but not power used autonomously. Romans 15:18–19 makes it clear (i) that all Paul has done has been wrought through him by Christ effecting ‘word and deed, signs and wonders’ and these have been through the power of the Holy Spirit.

We ought not to conclude this section without saying that the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of his Sonship, and the Spirit of his Lordship, and so is the Spirit of the Kingdom, the present outworking of Christ’s victory, and the eschatological Spirit in that all things will be destroyed }by the breath of His mouth’ (the Holy Spirit’ as indeed all things will be given their new life in the new creation ‘by the breath of His Mouth’.

Conclusion to ‘The Cross, the Resurrection and the Holy Spirit’

Whilst our study may have appeared to be tedious and somewhat detailed, yet it does clear the air for us. We can rightly conclude that the Atonement results from the substitutionary work of the Cross, and the attesting and dynamic work of the Resurrection. That Atonement continues to be the power of God. There is no dichotomy in the Cross and resurrection for they are of the one piece, but the Cross is the work which substitutes for man, is the propitiation for our sins, takes away our guilt and pollution of sins, purifies the conscience, gives us forgiveness and

justification, and sets the basis for authentic sanctification.

Just as the word of the Cross is God's power, Christ's resurrection is said to be a matter of power, and there is the power of the Holy Spirit so these three things are of the one piece. The Spirit never takes us 'beyond the Cross' but causes us to have power within and from the Atonement so that we may live holy lives and witness to Christ as Lord. He is the Spirit of the Kingdom which is 'righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit'. He is the power of the Kingdom, for 'the kingdom does not consist in talk but in power'.

In all these things there is no place for an incarnational infusion by Christ, no place for triumphalism and supernaturalism—as such, but the power of the Atonement and the Spirit triumphal and supernatural as they may prove to be.

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Kohleth and The Congregation

Introduction to Kohleth and His Congregation

This study may seem to be a strange choice for today's pastoral ministry. It is true that in Ecclesiastes the main character is the one was known as 'The Preacher' (english), 'Kohleth' (hebrew), and 'Ecclesiastes' (greek). One thing he had in common with us was that he preached to a congregation. Technically he was not a pastor as some of us are pastors, for his role was more that of a lecturer talking to people who had come to hear him because he was most interesting, and could be quiet informative, and thus helpful. His modern equivalent today would be a layman invited to speak who had had rich experience of life, and who had gathered wisdom in the process, and who—being a person of integrity and intelligence—would be gladly listened to. The difference in Kohelth's case was that he was not invited by the hierarchy at the Temple. People waned to listen to him because he had experienced life so much, was well-known, and respected. Hearers thought they would learn something from him. Possibly he taught in the Temple court much as, later, Jesus and others did similarly.

Since Kohleth was not a pastor, as such, the teaching of the law, and the leading of the worship, and the personal instruction in spiritual life would be given by the priest or priests. We have evidence that this was the case. Even so the Temple congregation did not approximate to our modern cathedral congregation, as worshippers flowed backwards and forward from all parts of the country to be present at the various festivals and to attend to such matters as circumcision of a newly born boy, of certain sacrifices relating to guilt and thanksgiving, and to worship the Lord. All Israel really constituted the one congregation (*qahal*), and this was under one king who was supposed to be the shepherd (pastor) of his people, whilst the high priest would represent that congregation to God. The later development of the synagogue was a ready model for the new Christian church, and since it had elders and not priests, there was scope for (so-called) laymen to contribute their gifts in worship, and in commentary upon the lections. It is clear from the New Testament that there were local congregations and that their synagogues had a social function to play.

Kohleth's congregation then was partly 'by the way', although it was Preacher's steady and studied intention to get his truth across to people. This man was truly a man of the world, as well as a man of faith, and hard-headed professionals and tradesmen would be eager enough to hear him. In this sense he was fairly close to the lecturers of our day who speak on business principles, professional acumen, and who give expensive lectures on organisation, promotion of oneself, salesmanship, facing the contemporary tensions and stresses that come upon one, and learning to mix vocation with psychology and religion to get the best results. The difference between the Preacher and his modern equivalent was that Kohleth had had an objective and intelligent enquiry into life and faith, and had arrived at a distinctive and dynamic view of

God, man, God's law, morality, life and death. His was not a psycho-religious schema or methodology for making the most of life.

When it comes to the constitution of his congregation I believe he spoke to people who appreciated wisdom, although their motives may have been quite worldly. I have seen hippies entranced by Kohleth's reasonings, for hippies are generally of a high intellectual strata of life. Even so, I think Kohleth spoke to people who were both religious and worldly-wise. Doubtless their religion was part of their culture, and they may well have been regular worshippers, but were seeing everything from a utilitarian point of view. If they had religious devotion, then it would presumably have been part of a way of life which they were tempted to regard as they did other parts of life, life being the sum of those parts. It seems to me that it would have been very hard to break through their fairly case-hardened ideas of life, to bring them to the more dynamic view that Kohleth had discovered. In any case what he had to say is essential for all persons in all ages to know, but especially for those whose religion blinds them to reality.

Kohleth–The Man Qualified to Teach

Kohleth has been the centre of much enquiry and study. He has always intrigued the man in the street as much as the scholars who have tried to analyze his sermons. The book opens with the identification of the writer-preacher, 'The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.' He is evidently King Solomon. In 1:12 he claims, 'I the Preacher have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.' In 2:9 he said he had become great and surpassed all who were before him in Jerusalem. The comment on him in 12:9–10 is,

besides being wise, the Preacher taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging proverbs with great care. The Preacher sought to find pleasing words, and uprightly he wrote words of truth.

Scholars both of Jewish and Christian persuasion do not think Kohleth was King Solomon. This conviction is based on a number of factors which we cannot enter into here. Linguistic evidence points to a much later date than the time of Solomon's monarchy. Solomon himself, although reputedly a wise man, had come to the end of his days in the midst of idolatry, mainly through his many foreign wives and their worship systems, as also his own politics whereby he maintained international power and esteem. There is no evidence that Solomon repented of his involvement in idolatry.

It seems then that Kohleth was a man of the world himself, and was recognised as such. He was a man who had made his way to a dynamic faith in God, as the internal evidence of the book would indicate. He had studied Solomon thoroughly, and found him to be a good model for his thesis or philosophy of the successful man who also knew God. In one sense Kohleth acted his life out as though it were Solomon's for purposes of preaching. We could almost say that Kohleth worked empathically with his model. As in plays of Shakespeare that bard wrote of real men and women but built them up to his personal image of them, so did Kohleth with Solomon. As with the characters of Shakespeare an actor may use the image the play writer has created–i.e. often beyond the person himself–so, too, the actor can enter into the character he is portraying and make him live, so much so that he almost becomes the alter ego of that one. It seems that Kohleth had utilised the life, experience, and times of Solomon to be the metier of his own understanding and philosophy of life.

Some Attitudes to Kohleth

Being brought up to believe that the Preacher was ‘the natural man’, i.e. one who did not understand the things of the Spirit, I was inclined to write off the book as my mentors did. It was—they said—given to us as an example of the worldly man’s view of life—cynical, sterile, and unworthy of true life as it is lived in God. One commentator has called him ‘the gentle cynic’. It was included in the canon only in order to show how not to see life, for the new covenant was to hold better things. No wonder, then, that a battle was fought regarding its quality and its inclusion—or otherwise—into the canon of the Bible. Others see Kohleth as a mixture of worldliness and religion, cynicism and yet sensible joy in living that will terminate with the grave. For some there is nihilism with worldly wisdom—an expedient to help as us to cope with this futile mortality which is ours. So run the many views.

I have been surprised, recently, to find how many folk believe it is unprofitable even to study the book. It is there like a foreign object within the otherwise warm and useful canon. In the case of the Book of the Revelation many think it to be a sombre book, dealing with judgements, conflict and gloom, so that they deliberately stay away from it. In the case of Ecclesiastes they feel it is a pot—pourri of undelectable things, and is better left untasted. That is a pity since the book speaks plainly enough, and is valuable for all times. Of course it requires steady reading and attention to see what the Preacher is really saying, since so many views obtain on the substance of the text, and we could misled as to its true meaning. Study of the book will be rewarding if we assume that it must be of value since it is in the canon of Scripture, and as such—rightly understood—is the word of God.

The Principle by Which Kohleth Writes His Sermon

We take it that the sermon was delivered by mouth. Maybe it was a series of sermons. Also it has been written down, but was not purely a literary exercise—a piece of valuable prose—poetry. Great value lies in delivering the truth to a congregation of living people. One is put on his metal more than is a writer. Karl Marx spoke from his ivory tower but did not go where men were worked, where they were workers. Kohleth addressed a congregation, as we address one. In their eyes he was authentic in that he had had experience of this world. In that sense his sermon was a witness to what he had done, what he had learned, and what he had discovered about the journey of man through life both ‘under the sun’, and ‘with God’. ‘Says the Preacher’ (1:2, 7:27, 12:9–14) shows that it is the one man who understands himself to be the preacher who speaks out of his life’s experience, albeit he incorporates the history of ‘the king over Israel in Jerusalem’.

What Kohleth Saw

The Preacher had set out deliberately to view, experience, and understand everything ‘under the sun’ (1:12–4;16). Some men see, experience and understand in an arbitrary way. They follow their own wills either existentially or deliberately. They adduce conclusions from that they have experienced. They do this in a sort of ‘flat—earth’ ontology, i.e. they deduce principles of human living from their experience,

i.e. 'I have been through it, and I know it'. Nobody can shift such domatizers from their stated dogmatic positions.

Kohleth was different. 'I applied my mind to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under the sun.' He partly assumed that he had wisdom by which he could do this, and partly—we suppose—augmented that wisdom as he sought out things. 'I have acquired greater wisdom, surpassing all that were over Jerusalem before me; and my mind has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.' He appears to claim that of anyone in this world he was most qualified to research the matter of human living, and to come to conclusions regarding it. He added, 'I applied my mind to know wisdom and to know madness and folly.' In other words he did not merely experience these things, but wanted to get to the essence of them. He assumed he could draw a conclusion—or conclusions—from his intelligent research.

Again he said to himself, 'Come now and I will make a test of pleasure; enjoy yourself.' He sought to understand laughter and pleasure. 'I searched with my mind how to cheer my body with wine—my mind still guiding me with wisdom—and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for men to do under heaven during the few days of their life.' Kohleth was not simply abandoning himself to the things with which he experienced. He was rational about all of them, seeking to understand them, not allowing himself to become the object of them.

In this vein he researched the experiences of becoming rich, having great possessions, having great power and authority, and having varied experience in sex—'concubines, man's delight'. When full experiment had been made he had not been diverted by passion or lust, or the absolutising of any one thing, i.e. he had not been caught into idolising any particular person, position or thing. He claimed, 'So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem; also my wisdom remained with me.' He came to the conclusion that 'wisdom, excels folly as light excels darkness.' That is, he did not denigrate the wisdom he had.

The Conclusion of Utilized Wisdom

Naturally we are eager to know what conclusions Kohleth drew from his research. His evaluation of life, his research and his efforts are as follows,

'Everything done under the sun is vanity and striving after wind'.

Knowing wisdom, madness and folly 'is but a striving after wind'

Pleasure, enjoying oneself is vanity.

Laughter is mad, and pleasure is useless.

The building of great works, the acquiring of wealth, vast possessions, slaves and concubines, power and authority are all 'vanity and a striving after wind'.

All acquiring is but vanity because having done this 'who knows whether a fool will not inherit it all?'

There is no ultimate difference between the fate of a wise and rich man, and of a fool, because both die. In this sense a man is not better off than a beast, since both come to death. 'All go to one place; all are from the dust and all turn to dust again.'

The results of this experimentation—with wisdom—are as follows,

'I hated life'

'I hated toil'.

'I turned about and gave up my heart to despair.'

'I thought the dead who are already dead more fortunate than the living who are still alive.'

He saw of a man who has toiled that 'all his days are full of pain, and his work is a vexation.'

The Seeming Conclusion of the Preacher

We say 'seeming' because the ultimate conclusion of Kohleth is not what we have just recorded, above. His conclusion is firmly that everything—repeat, everything—is 'vanity and a striving after wind.' What does he mean by 'vanity' and 'a striving after wind'? Vanity is a word we find in the New Testament in Romans 8:20–21 where the creation is subjected to vanity, i.e. futility, i.e. inability to exercise its true functional fulness which inability is linked with corruption and decay. The opposite of vanity is living in 'the glorious liberty of the children of God, i.e. where there is no pointlessness to life and existence.

Vanity is much like this in the Old Testament. Job chapter 7 shows the insubstantiality and mortality of man. His days are 'a breath', i.e. 'vanity' (v.16), his life is but a breath, i.e. 'wind' (v.7), life is but a cloud that vanishes and fades (v.9). Vanity then is insubstantiality, emptiness, temporality, pointlessness, and untrustworthiness. We are tempted to say it is 'nothingness' but unfortunately it is actually something, which being something is as nothing because it is empty, futile, pointless—and so on. Nihilism would claim all things to be vanity and 'trying to catch the wind', but would see the creation as essentially pointless and futile. That is not the case with the Preacher who sees it as vanity by comparing it with that which is not vain. You cannot speak of vanity unless there is that which is not vain. The existentialist who says, 'This life is absurd', has in mind something which is not absurd, and is positing it as the true thing. Kohleth does not hold to nihilistic philosophy. As we will see, he thinks there is more to life than vanity.

Kohleth's Basic Understanding of All Things

The Preacher gives his powerful conclusion to everything in 12:13–14,

The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole [duty] of man. For God will bring every deed into judgement, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

We will deal with this conclusion later. At first sight it appears to be a matter of works, and even of legal obedience to God. It is not, but for the moment we can see what is in the Preacher's mind, i.e. the whole of man is to fear God and keep His commandments. There is no suggestion that this is 'vanity and a striving after wind'. Why then does he insist that all things are 'vanity and a striving after wind'?

Much of the answer lies in the three phrases he uses, 'under the sun', 'beneath the sun', 'under heaven' and 'on the earth'. These terms are used for what we might call 'horizontal life'. The Preacher had tried to develop a rationale for life on the earth. His view was purely horizontal. Whilst we are aware he had a knowledge of God this was not mentioned whilst he is evaluating life 'under the sun'. At that stage might

have called him 'the secular man'. He was looking for meaning and purpose—i.e. true wisdom—on the secular plane. He found none. He was sure everything was 'vanity and a striving after wind.

The Significance of Vanity

Vanity has no significance except to show that what seems to be substantial is really empty, that what appears to be life is nothing. Its tragedy lies in that it purports to be what is not. If all is vanity then the implications are enormous, particularly with a view to the entire creation. Creation has no essential reality, so that its Maker must be impugned for creating what is senseless. Indeed on this score 'the heavens declare the emptiness of God, and firmament shows His senselessness'. Thus everything is stripped of any meaning. Intellectual life has no authentic reality, and sensual life is without point. No wonder Kohleth thinks man's end can be no better than that of the beast.

On the other hand the emptiness of all things teaches man to give no great allegiance to the creation, to expect nothing of life, so that idolatry proves equally insubstantial. We might think—on this score—that this seeming pessimism of Kohleth is a good thing. Disabusing man of any trust in anything he may now be ready to trust God. Having no idol that is substantial he may now look to the Eternal God.

Not so, for the Eternal God would be of no consequence. He could not be called 'faithful Creator' for what He has created yields nothing but vanity when man tries it out. No, we have to look again at Kohleth and mark him down as a cynic, or a nihilist, or just a plain pessimist. A cynic is one who has been disillusioned of his expectation; a nihilist is one who is positive there is nothing that essentially has being in the universe, and a pessimist is one who thinks nothing will come his way.

Kohleth The Man of Faith

It is no wonder the book of the Preacher has puzzled people. It seems Kohleth is either a mixture of two things—cynicism and faith—or the book has different sources and has been edited from time to time in an endeavour to give it some semblance of unity. It might even seem to be two jig-saw sets of pictures which have never really been worked out, and could not be, by nature of the case, much less reconciled in the one frame.

In fact the book is the description of two views we can have of life. The first—with which we have partly dealt—is that of seeing everything in this world on the horizontal. On this horizontal everything is vanity and a striving after wind. The other view is when man knows God, and looks at the horizontal via a true relationship with the vertical. When we know God and know Him as Creator—'Remember your Creator in the days of your youth'; 'He has made everything beautiful in its time'—then you look at this world with different eyes. To see it, and live in it, and experiment in it only on the horizontal plane is to do it despite. The horizontal and the vertical—rightly understood—are one, as we will shortly see. Thus to horizontalize all things is not only to put them out of perspective, but is to attempt an impossible task. Nothing God creates is vain nor its true use vanity, since He has made everything beautiful in its own time (appropriate, functional; cf. Gen. 1:312 and Eccles. 7:29), and we do it in accordance with its appropriate time.

An Evaluation of Horizontal Living and Wisdom

By ‘wisdom’ we do not merely mean knowledge. The most informed scientist may not be a wise person. Nor for the matter the most informed theologian. Both are observers of the phenomenology of things, but it does not mean they are wise regarding these things. Anyone who moves skillfully on the horizontal is regarded as wise, and so he is—in regard to these horizontal things. He works out on ontology, such as, say, the eco-system. Roughly speaking his reasoning must be limited to the three dimensions and the five senses. He works out the functional nature of things on this plane. In fact there is no other plane for him, for if there were he would view it all differently.

People caught in the idolatry of some person or thing tend to absolutize that thing. There can be no question of anything having essential being as an idol. Hence the attempt to gain satisfaction from anything—or even all things—of the creation is doomed to failure. We must all end up as cynics, or as angry and disappointed. Seen and experienced from this point of view everything must be vanity. I believe Kohleth knew this very well, and felt he was doing a service to convince others they were on a foolish quest. He tried to arrest them in their tracks, and turn them into a more fruitful path.

The Pastoral Value of Kohleth’s Evaluation of the Horizontal

I believe it is fair to say that the Preacher’s immediate audience could approximate to our congregations. In the West we are mainly concerned with security, enjoyment of things, and obtaining goals. Short-term goals do away with the need for long-term ones. We can become occupied with the horizontal—as was Kohleth—and derive some intellectual and sensual satisfaction from it. It is only when we stop and think, or compare it with godly living and reality that we see how empty it is.

Kohleth was trying to debunk the horizontal as such. The religious conditioning, culture and training of his audience would have led them to believe they were not merely horizontal. This was a great delusion. We can easily secularize God, worship and religion. In fact I believe many dislike the book of Ecclesiastes because they unconsciously fear the unmasking of their secularity. If we can show the Preacher’s valuable understanding to our congregations it could make a vast difference to them. Their ontology would then have to move out to a wider perspective. An ontology of the horizontal cannot be a true one, and will not ultimately answer to man’s ancient knowledge of God—the innate knowledge he keeps unsuccessfully trying to push away.

The Dynamic Faith and True Wisdom of Kohleth

Whilst much of Ecclesiastes is autobiographical, Kohleth does not tell us in so many words, how

- (i) he could, firstly, simply pursue a horizontal investigation into the nature of things, and then
- (ii) how he came to change from that to a ‘horizontal-vertical’ understanding of life through some dynamic experience of God.

We have seen in history that men like Enoch, Abraham, Jacob, Isaiah, Jeremiah, John and Paul—to name only a few—all received revelations of God, and so henceforth refused to look at things from a horizontal perspective. Job is a case in point: whilst he did not have a ‘horizontal’ perspective, yet, as he confessed, he had known God ‘with the hearing of the ear’, but that changed to ‘a seeing of the eyes’ so that his wisdom expanded enormously and he came to peace of heart.

What Kohleth's experience of God was we do not know, but we see his knowledge of God in a number of statements—some of which are paraphrased—and these tell us of a strong faith in God,

- Apart from God who can eat or who can have enjoyment, for to the man who pleases him God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy. (2:24–25)
- I have seen the business God has given to the sons of men to be busy with (3:10).
- He has made everything beautiful [appropriate, functional] in its own time (3:11).
- It is God's gift to man that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in his toil (3:13).
- Whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it nor anything be taken from it; God has made it so, in order that men should fear before him (3:14). He who fears God shall come forth from them all i.e. things which may normally destroy a man (7:15–18).
- God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for he has appointed a time for every matter, and for ever work (3:17).
- God is testing the sons of men to show them that they are but beasts (3:18).
- Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Don't let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in the heaven, and you upon the earth (5:1–3).
- When dreams increase, empty words grow many: but do you fear God (5:7).
- It is good for a man to enjoy his days upon the earth, for these God has given him. He also give a man wealth and possession to enjoy, for this is the gift of God (5:18–19).
- God gives to another wealthy, possessions and honour, but God does not give him the power to enjoy them, which is a painful thing—an evil—(6:1–2).
- We should enjoy the day of prosperity and ponder the day of adversity since God gives us both (7:14).
- Though a sinner does evil a thousand times and prolongs his life it will be well with those who fear God, but it will not be well with the wicked, neither will be prolong his days like a shadow, because he does not fear before God (8:12–13).
- Go, eat your bread with enjoyment, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has already approved what you do (9:7).
- As you do not know how the Spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything (11:5).
- The youth is to rejoice in all that he does, 'but know for all these things God will bring you into judgement (11:9).
- Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth (12:1).
- The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole [duty] of man. For God will bring every deed into judgement, with every secret thing, whether good or evil (12:13–14).

Now all these elements—along with the rest of the text not devoted to the horizontal perspective—help us to see the theology of the Preacher. Roughly it can be summarized as follows,

(i) **God is sovereign.** He has created all things appropriately as 3:11 and Genesis 1:31 shows. The world (or eternity) has been put into our heart by God, hence we have an eternal and not a horizontal perspective by nature.

(ii) Men should always keep in mind that **He is Creator**, and so they should live according to the ontological principles of creation (3:11; cf. Gen. 1:31).. Those who do not will have a sad end, especially in old age.

(iii) **God in His sovereignty has ordained all times** and seasons, and whatever happens—good or bad—comes from His hands. and so we are to accept the fact of a time for this and a time for that, not absolutizing any ‘this’ or ‘that’, knowing God controls all things. This means the world is not an end in itself. Satisfying life cannot be found on ‘the horizontal’ (‘under the sun’) as such.

(iv) **All God does endures forever**, and the knowledge of this brings proper fear of God—as He intends. Man ought to fear God. Fear of God is always good (3:14; 5:7; 8:12;8:13; 12:13).

(iv) **God is the Giver** (1:13; 2:26; 3:10; 5:18; 5:19; 6:2; 8:25; 9:19;.. On the one hand He gives wealth to one person, but not the power to enjoy it. Others He does not make wealthy but they enjoy their state of life—and this is a gift. He gives power to enjoy wealth, and power to enjoy humble existence as a labourer. Not to enjoy what God has given is to reject the gifts and so, too, to denigrate the generous nature of God. It is to do what a man decides for himself—on the horizontal plane, of course. Hence the sinner seeks all things ‘horizontally’, by his own efforts.

(vi) **The world is a moral place.** Man must keep God’s commandments. He judges the rebellious sinner, but blesses the man who pleases Him, i.e. the man who fears Him and keeps His commandments. The sinner, if he is not immediately reprovved (judged) will think he can get away with his sin, but this is not so.

(vii) **Worship of God is to be a thing of reverence** (‘guard your steps when you go to the house of God’), since He is in is heaven (transcendent), and we on earth (i.e. are creatures). For this reason we should not ‘offer the sacrifice of fools’, i.e. downgrade the solemn and wonderful means of salvation, offering emptily and presumptuously (cf. Psa 51:17; cf. I Sam 15:22; Amos 5:24–25; Mic 6:7–8). We ought not to make vows to Him that we will not keep, or be foolishly talkative before Him.

Conclusion at to Kohleth’s Faith and Wisdom

If we sift the sayings of Kohleth we see he has knowledge of Genesis chapters 1 to 11. He has a strong doctrine of God as Creator, as Provider and His redemptive power via the sacrifices. He has a knowledge of the creation as functional. He has a doctrine of man as a creature, mortal, sinful, under judgement, and whilst certain men are evil in their thrust, yet others are righteous and good, but only as they fear God and keep His commandments, and rightly worship Him. The latter know the gift God’s pleasure and can enjoy living in His creation. The whole of man is to fear God and keep His commandments. We take it that this was both Kohleth’s theology and his experience. He who knows and does similarly may enjoy life and family, though there be great injustices and suffering upon earth, for God’s sovereignty holds the answer to these things.

The Pastoral Value of the Teaching of Ecclesiastes

Kohleth set out to show the futility of living only on and in the horizontal plane. He had done this, had seen the true nature of God, and come to know the eternal frame of reference in which God has placed man, so that man cannot be satisfied apart from it. Man seeks to absolutize the things of creation, including religion itself. Was this so with many in the Preacher's audience? Is it so with our people? Do our people know that 'the whole of man is to fear God and keep His commandments'? Do they know the powerful truth of Psalms such as 1, 19 and 119, i.e. the dynamic nature of God's word, precepts, laws, commandments, light and truth, so that in following these man lives up to fully what he is in God? Can we draw our people on to this? Do we live thus?

What we must recognise is that Ecclesiastes is one book of the canon, and as such must be seen in context of all other scriptures (cf. II Tim. 3:15–17), for no book should ever be seen on its own otherwise we absolutize its message. It is true that the rich matters of God's covenantal glory do not come to us in full bloom in Ecclesiastes, but even the writer's mention of sacrifice and his reverent regard for it indicate something of that covenantal grace. It is true that there is not a developed doctrine of wonderful life beyond the grave, but then that is not the thrust of the book. Incidentally commentators differ over 3:21, and it seems there is good textual evidence to say that the spirit of man flies upward to God whilst the spirit of the beast goes downward to the soil. If this is so, then Kohleth may well have the view expressed in psalm 49 which, though it seems to speak of cessation of being at death, or—at the most—the shadowy existence of man in Sheol—yet rises to say, 'But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me,' which, again, is in line with Psalm 16:10–11,

Therefore my heart is glad and my soul rejoices,
my body also dwells secure.
For thou dost not give me up to Sheol,
or let thy godly one see the pit.
Thou dost show me the path of life;
in thy presence is fulness of joy,
in thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.

If we, as pastors, see and teach the truth of Ecclesiastes in the context of all Scripture then it will be immensely valuable. It will be valuable to show the pessimist, the nihilist, the hedonist, and the secular man that things are not as they appear to be to them, and that there is a purpose in life since God has created us for such living. All is not vanity when we fear God and keep His commandments. True knowledge of God is not merely utilitarian—i.e. we can enjoy life if we do so—and-so—but is the true way of man, the functional way of living, and therefore the only way.

As pastors. we must see that we absolutize nothing, that we do not fall back into horizontal perspectives, that we understand the delight of doing God's will, and that we do not fail to enjoy what God has given, shunning asceticism, and being grateful for that enjoyment of life which comes to us giftwise from heaven. We, too, must understand the dynamics of obedience and the fulfilment of our lives as creatures of the Creator, children of the Father, and subjects of the great King. We will then know we have come to the true wisdom of God. That is why we must keep asking ourselves whether we have not horizontalised the vertical, and whether or not, therefore, the hunger of our hearts remains unappeased.

Note 1: Whilst it is true that man lives on the horizontal level, and cannot have full knowledge and true wisdom because of his failure to think and live vertically as well, yet we ought not to despise man, or estimate his vast accumulation of knowledge as pointless, frivolous and empty. What man discovers as he tries ‘to find out the end from the beginning’ is certainly valuable, and makes a great contribution to the human race. If this same knowledge were to be put into true perspective—the eternal perspective—then it would be ever so much more valuable. Horizontal wisdom cannot be full wisdom. If man ontologizes the horizontal, then his wisdom will be inadequate. If he comes to know God and to live within Him, then he will discover that horizontal–vertical ontology which will cause him to rejoice and enjoy life immensely. His previous insights will now become wonderful.

Note 2: The Scriptures show us that ‘the Spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus’ (Rev. 19:10), i.e. all prophecy relates to Christ (Luke 24:25–27), who himself has been made unto us the wisdom of God in righteousness, sanctification and redemption’ (I Cor. 1:30–31) hence we boast not in ourselves but in the Lord. Colossians 1:19 and 2:3 show us all God’s wisdom is hidden in Christ so that he is, indeed, God’s wisdom. Whilst the lawyers may have taken away ‘the key of knowledge’ (Luke 11:52), i.e. the revelation of God by which men enter the Kingdom, yet Christ gave the keys of the Kingdom to his disciples. They may now open the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:4,9; Col. 1:26–27) and his gospel (II Cor. 4:1) and so the whole mystery of life. People talk about ‘the enigma of Ecclesiastes’ but there is no enigma when a person is born from above, sees and enters the Kingdom, for then he is not the natural man but the spiritual, and knows all things (I Cor. 2:10–14; I John 2:20–27). Christ is the Key. With him life is no enigma. He is the revelation of the Father. It is this revelation which causes us to ‘fear God and keep His commandments’.

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Joy and Enjoyment in Pastoral Living

When, last month we looked at Koheleth and the Congregation there was an encouraging response. A few listeners suggested the subject should be more widely opened. I began to look at areas where this could be done, and felt the tension that exists in the book is between everything being vanity and the commands of the Preacher to enjoy life. These two things seem to be at odds with one another. How can everything under the sun be vanity, and yet we be expected to enjoy it all?

I further thought that in the pastoral context we often find little joy, and even a certain grimness in the fellowship. We know that joy is a fruit of the Spirit, and is the natural response to the Gospel, and I wondered why Christians—who should be the most joyful people in society, often are the least joyful. Nehemiah once said, 'The joy of the Lord is your strength', so that joy is an essential—indeed a primary—element of true living, especially because we proclaim 'the good news', i.e. 'tidings of great joy'. I realise that a study on joy does not necessarily promote or stimulate joy, yet it may be helpful to examine the biblical reasons for joy, and perhaps we can amend what is lacking, and so find great joy. Joy and enjoyment are intimately linked so that I feel a study of enjoyment in Ecclesiastes may be helpful. How wonderful it would be to have continuous joy in the congregation!

The Problem of Vanity and Enjoyment in Ecclesiastes

The Preacher of Ecclesiastes sees that everything 'under the sun' is only vanity. That is, as a person observes life, he can find no explanation of its meaning, nor understand its goals. This is because he looks at it all 'on the horizontal', i.e. tries to understand 'the end from the beginning', a hopeless task. Koheleth constantly says that no matter how wise a person is, nor how much he tries to figure things out, he cannot. Nor can he be satisfied with not trying to know, for 'God has put eternity into his heart so that be searching he cannot find out the end from the beginning'. Man then, has a drive to rationalise all things, but being a creature of the creation cannot absolutize the all things',

- (a) because he will never know the all things, and
- (b) because it is beyond his capacity to rationalise them.

Only God can know them.

Having shown man he cannot know the end from the beginning, the Preacher seems to taunt man by saying that in the face of the vanity of all things man must nevertheless enjoy everything—his toil, his food, drink, wife and family, indeed all of life. What Koheleth is saying is that if we fear God, if we please Him then we will discover that all things are there for our enjoyment. We should, then, enjoy them. The wicked man does not really enjoy them, and one to whom God has given 'wealth, possessions and honor, so that he lacks nothing of all that he desires' cannot enjoy what he has because God does not give him the gift to enjoy them. This would seem to

mean that those who fear God are given such a gift. However the man who keeps trying to understand it all is frustrated, loses sleep because ‘that which is, is far off and deep, very deep, and who can find it out?’

I thought that those of us who are theologians may have fallen into the same trap, trying to wrap ourselves around the whole scheme, action and wisdom of God, and so never find satisfaction whereas the simple humble person who trusts God finds rich enjoyment of life, and great joy in his Lord.

Joy in The Face of A World in Elements of Agony

Paul has shown us that ‘the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now’ (Rom. 8:22). This, of course is quite a subject all on its own. Jesus said, ‘In the world you shall have tribulation.’ He has some powerful apocalyptic statements in such tribulation as in Matthew 24. The book of the Revelation speaks of the intense conflicts that surround the Christian church, especially in the face of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. The four beasts of Daniel, the four horsemen of the Apocalypse, the seven opened seals, the seven trumpets and the seven bowls of wrath all combine to show us that history is cauldron of turmoil. It is constantly beastly, devising its beats from its own beastliness. There is nothing to encourage us to enjoy this world as it is.

Unfortunately for us who are preachers and teachers, our congregations for the most part put prophecy and apocalyptic in a special category which does not relate to what we call ‘everyday life’. Many of the children’s cartoons are more apocalyptic than the ‘soapies’, for they have grim powers which fight amongst themselves for supremacy of the universe. People in congregations are more concerned with interest rates, the cost of living, the tragedies about them of drink and drugs, of poverty and international pressures than they in a theology of catastrophes and judgements.

At this moment the state of the world—often called ‘nature’—is deeply troubling. One university lecturer tells us the world has about 40 years left if it does not get its conservation act together. Suddenly conservation is the big subject. We have seen in earlier studies that human beings seem to be afraid of creation. Now that fear is being enlarged as some of our blessings such as petro-chemical products are turning into cursings. Pesticides, detergents and plastics are confronting us with poisoned plants, animals, and foods. Our streams, rivers and oceans are increasingly becoming a problem. The world is eroding where forests are cut down. Nuclear waste is threatening us with cancer and other diseases. The ecological imbalance is hurtling us towards catastrophic disaster.

There are also many other things of great danger. In this context then, is it foolish escapism to talk of joy in life and enjoyment of the things of the creation? Is our pastoral ministry to calm fears, to encourage the faint-hearted, or is such talk flying in the face of threatening disaster? I am sure we need to know the nature of joy and enjoyment, not absolutizing them, in any way, but seeing their place, value and practice in the light of God’s word. If God’s people cannot have ‘glad tidings of great joy’ in this age, then what is the value of the Gospel? Also, would we be cheating on the world if we had joy when the world is in so much tribulation?

The Biblical Bases and Ways of Joy

I am aware that a word–study on joy, backed with textual references does not much move anyone, let alone stimulate them to joy. Since being in the Kingdom of God is simply ‘righteousness peace and joy in the Holy Spirit’–the Holy Spirit giving us the fruit of the Gospel, i.e. ‘love, joy and peace’–we all ought to be creatures of great joy. Perhaps we are, and do not even realise it. If we ask how we would be if the Gospel and the Spirit were taken from us, I think we would discover we do indeed now have great joy. How then is this so released that we live consciously in the good of it, and thus enjoy our living? I believe some of the elements below will make more conscious to us the various sources of joy.

(i) The Joy of The Lord

In Psalm 16:11 the composer sings, ‘In Thy presence is fulness of joy.’ Nothing more needs to be said. Psalm 21:6 speaks of ‘the joy of Thy presence’. In Psalm 36:8 the Psalmist says, ‘Thou givest them drink from the river of thy delights, and in 43:4 of ‘God my exceeding joy’. In Nehemiah 8:10 the weeping Israelites are told ‘Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.’ In Isaiah 65:19 God says, ‘I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and be glad in my people.’ God then, rejoices with His people, and in Zephaniah 3:17 the prophet says of God, ‘He will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in His love.’

Of course it is what we should expect of God seeing He is the fountain of joy. Twice Jesus speaks of ‘my joy’ (John 15:11; John 17:13, and wishes his disciples to have this joy. Joy flows from the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22), for he is the one who inspires with joy (I Thess.1:6; Acts 13:52).

(ii) The Joy of Creation

Job 38:7 speaks of creation when ‘The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.’ The nature of creation is such that the Psalmist says, ‘For thou, O Lord, hast made me glad by thy work; at the work of thy hands I sing for joy’ (Psa. 92:4). A constant statement is ‘All thy works praise Thee,’ and creation is constantly filled with joy, the hills depicted as clapping their hands, the rivers laughing, the field exults and ‘the trees of the woods sing for joy’ (Psa 92:11–12). Creation is a constant source of joy to man for ‘every trees of the garden was good for food and pleasant to the eyes,’ and ‘everything created by God is good and to be enjoyed’ (Gen. 3:9; I Tim. 1:4).

No wonder the Psalmist said, ‘May the Lord rejoice in his works,’ (Psa. 104:31) i.e. He saw that all He had made was ‘very good’ (Gen. 1:31).

(iii) The Joy of Covenant

If we are going to look for ‘proof–texts’ for this particular theme we may find few, as such, the main source of joy being God Himself, but then as He manifested Himself in covenant as ‘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.’ Some of the causes of joy within the covenant are as follows,

- (a) God's presence. Psalm 21:6; 16:11.
- (b) God's law. Psalm 1:2; 19:8; 119–this Psalm in many verses.
- (c) God's judgements. Psalm 48:11; 97:8; cf. (6:10–13).
- (d) God's sovereignty Psalm 97:1.
- (e) The salvation of God. Psalm 9:14; Isaiah 25:9; Habakkuk 3:17–19; Psalm 13:5; 51:12.
- (f) The love and mercy of God,. Psalm 13:5 31:7; 90:14.
- (g) The day the Lord has made. Psalm 118:24.
- (h) The words of the Lord which bring comfort. Jeremiah 15:16; Psalm 119:14; cf. Ezekiel 3:3; Job 23:12.

It is evident from the Old Testament that Israel was a nation which knew great joy from seeking the Lord (Psa. 40:16; 70:4), from righteousness (Psalm 97:11–12), from His protection (Psa. 4:7–8), from His restoration (Psa. 53:6; 51:8; 126:1ff)—among many other things.

The greatest joy seems to be shown in worship. The innumerable Psalms relating to worship (e.g. 16:18f; 42:4; 43:4; 81:1–4). Psalms 144–150 are rich in the praise and joy of worship. The many festivals were time of family and national rejoicing. In Nehemiah we have a good example of the joy of restoration to the land, 'And they offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and the children also rejoiced. And the joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off.' In II Chronicles 29:30 we read, 'And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed down and worshipped.' Psalm 98 is a special psalm of joy about worship, used endlessly by the church in both Testaments.

The Joy of the Coming Kingdom, Messiah, and Salvation

If we understand the fall of man from his primal joy, his descent into sin, and his misery then we will better understand the joys of Covenant. However many in Israel were disobedient., and so the prophecies of a Person to come who would be Messiah, the Davidic King, the Son of God and the Son of man—as well as the Righteous Branch, and the Suffering Servant all inspired the nation to look forward to joy as in Isaiah 9:1–7,

Thou hast multiplied the nation,
thou hast increased its joy:
they rejoice before thee
as with the joy of harvest,
as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.

whilst in Isaiah 49 is another great Messianic passage,

Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth;
break forth, O mountains, into signing!
For the Lord has comforted his people;
and will have compassion upon his afflicted.

Other great prophecies tell of coming joy such as Isaiah 61:3; all of Isaiah 55, and in Isaiah 56:6–7 there is a coming joy for the Gentiles. In Isaiah 60:15–16 Israel

shall be made 'a joy from age to age', whilst in Isaiah 61:1–11 joy shall come both to Israel and the nations. Isaiah 65:17–19 there is the great promise of renewal and restoration, even to the new heavens and the new earth—'I will create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy'. This is repeated, virtually in Isaiah 66:10, 14 and 22. There is also the significant promise of Isaiah 25:6–10 which closes with, 'This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation'. Equivalent promises of salvation and its joy are found in Joel 2:21, 23 and Zechariah 10:7. Zechariah 9:9 is the famous exhortation to joy because of the King who comes into Jerusalem, 'riding upon an ass, upon the colt, the foal of an ass'.

The Matter of Joy in the New Testament

With the coming, establishment, and continuity of the New Covenant we find immense joy. At the Annunciation Mary utters the Magnificat crying, 'My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour', the angel tells the shepherds, 'Be no afraid; for behold I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to the people,' and the wise men 'rejoiced exceedingly with great joy'. In his ministry Jesus tells of the joy of the woman who finds her lost coin, of the shepherd who rejoices when he finds his lost sheep, and the father who is filled with joy when his son returns, and all illustrate the fact that 'there is joy in heaven—in the presence of the angels—over one sinner who repents.

Jesus brought immense relief and joy to the sick, the demon–possessed, and to those bound in guilt. He told parables of the Kingdom which spoke of joy. He taught that if one is persecuted for the Kingdom's sake then he is to leap with joy! The disciples return with joy to Jesus after casting out demons. At that time Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit as he prayed to his Father. There was great joy at his resurrection, and after his ascension the disciples returned with joy to Jerusalem. Their Gospel proclamation brought 'great joy. Philip's ministry resulted in 'much joy in that city, and later the Ethiopian eunuch went on his way rejoicing. The apostles counted it all joy that they were permitted to suffer for Christ's sake. Later, when persecuted at Antioch in Pisidia 'the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit'

The Epistles are filled with exhortations to rejoice. The message—which we will later examine—is that joy comes with suffering—not of course morbid or masochistic suffering, but genuine suffering for Christ's sake. The church at Thessalonica is said to have received the Gospel 'with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit'. The Kingdom of God is described as being 'righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit'. The Epistle to Philippi was written by Paul from prison, but has more about joy in it than any other. The first Petrine Epistle speaks of exulting in Christ who is unseen, 'with joy unutterable and full of glory'. The last words of the last Epistle related to the prayer for Christ to present us 'before the presence of his glory, with rejoicing'.

There is much joy in the book of the Revelation, especially in the worship sections, as they deal with creation, salvation, the defeat of evil, and establishment of God's Kingship over all. The greatest nominated joy is that which will come at the marriage of the Bride and of the Lamb.

Doubtless much of the joy in the New Testament comports with that of the Old, in its emphasis on creation, salvation, and the anticipation of the ultimate Day of the Lord. We will look at some of these elements, but the message of the New Testament that 'glad tidings of great joy' come powerfully to men and women in their misery, and in the despair of the world, and bring responsive listeners to true joy.

It is this joy we wish more to examine, so that we may know how to act in these present days.

The World in Which We Live

Whilst surveys such as we have just done of Old and New Testaments may be grip us afresh with the truth of God, and greatly cheer our congregations, yet we rarely have the opportunity to communicate such coverages. As pastors we must understand the world in which we live, and help our people to face the waves of thought and feelings which keep sweeping across society. We must be purveyors of joy with the power of immediacy. How can we communicate God's joy dynamically in a world which seems to be set on a path of doom, and how can we avoid simply cheering up our people, and perhaps merely making them happy?

I have no doubt that the immediate answer is the one that has always been, namely that God is King in His world, that creation belongs to Him, and that every living soul is accountable to Him. He is the living God—the One who acts in ever detail of human history because it is under His sovereignty. He is Liberator of all imprisoned spirits of men through His Son Jesus Christ. His Gospel alone is the source of the joy man needs, and must have if he is to live in a crooked world. Yet His Gospel is not separated from Him. God is our goods news. Fellowship with the Father and the Son, through the Holy Spirit, is the personal and unending way of joy. There is no other. Hence we must not seek directly to simply encourage men and women but we must urge them to personal fellowship with God in Whom alone true joy is to be found. This will mean coming back time and again to 'the old, old story'.

We must realise, nevertheless, that 'the old, old story' is not merely sentimental and individualistic—a story known in a spiritual ghetto—for it is the story of creation, of mankind, of salvation history, of the plan of God's wise will and counsel worked out in the arena of creation and throughout all time. For this reason we need to look at past history and know the score of Divine triumph. We need to face what is about us now, and what prophecy has told us is coming. We need to see and assess the forces that are pitted against us in the clash and collision of two kingdoms—that of Satan and God. If—as pastors—we are squeamish, dilatory or personally ambitious then we will bring no true joy to anyone. We will not know the joy of the Lord which is our strength, especially in these terrible times.

I suggest therefore that we look at our times, see afresh God's way, and live by the elements which will keep our joy strong and vibrant.

The Situation in Which We Are Living

In each decade and generation mankind its occupied with its present context of living. From a reading of the book of Revelation—within the context of the unity of the entire Scriptures—we know that every age is apocalyptic. We expect to feel, sense, and know the reverberations of the conflict between Christ and the Beast, between the Bride and Babylon, but as preachers and teachers we are required to discern, interpret and communicate these matters to our people—to know Satan's devices and not be dismayed by them, but rather to overcome the Dragon, and vanquish him at every point.

At this moment the nations are no less in conflict than ever they have been. As ever men's hearts are failing them for fear. Every day brings its news of murders, rapes, greed, nepotism, selfishness and discontent within our local society and across

our nation. Drugs are enormously on the increase and mafias even worse than the Mafia hold politicians in their grip, whilst the drugs themselves are morally weakening the nations who are involved in the smuggling and dispensing trades. Trade wars, conniving and bargaining are no less than ever they were. Most countries of the Third World are so heavily in debt that countries like Brazil are raping the land and rain forests to get rich quickly and come out from under the crushing burden of the current mortgages.

Terrorism is on the increase. International travel is a life hazard. Anyone may be held hostage at any moment. Violence is on the increase. Children on the streets is the new and terrible order of the day. Modern technology had promised a quick, rich paradise on earth, but it is all going sour on us. Not only is the dreadful threat of a nuclear holocaust ever-present, but the weaponry available—both nuclear and conventional—could blow our world sky-high, time and again. The chemicals which promised freedom from disease the fuels and their by-products which promised modern comforts are turning on us, and we have a world threatened with a diminished ozone layer, the greenhouse effects, whilst rain-forests—sometimes called ‘the lungs of our planet’ are being ravaged beyond immediate repair. Creeks, streams, rivers and oceans are rapidly become polluted. The ecological balance is in imminent danger of being displaced. Doom and gloom stare us in the face. Not only are there endangered species of plants, trees, birds and animals, but ancient and primitive human tribes are being rapidly displaced and in danger of extinction.

On the level of our humanity we are facing other forms of disaster. The family unit has been ravaged. Fatherhood has been despised and in many cases scattered to the wind. Single parenthood is rapidly increasing—one of the causes of family disintegration and young people being thrust out on to the streets. Enormous anger is being shown at and from the family breakdown. Nine out of every ten murders happen within families. Most child molestation in incest and cruelty happen within families. The expectancy of long marriage is almost absent. Sexual promiscuity is no longer known under that heading: sexual freedom so-called, is the new order. Sexual deviations are fast being legitimized.

In describing these things we have but touched the tip of the ice-berg. We have sown a wind and reaped a whirlwind. Sadly enough we are now sowing a whirlwind and will reap a devastating cyclone. The constant flow of Cold War and Warm War (Pestroika) still keeps the nations in suspicion and tension. The conflicts of multi-culturalism in our own country and the commercial invasion of Japan portend the loss of identity of ‘the lucky country’, and the changes that face us will sweep away old landmarks.

Within the church we seem never to have known such fragmentation, such pluralism of ideas, doctrines, practices and techniques. We have imported the ecclesiastical divisions and problems of North America, and have been strongly conditioned by the current humanism that is insisting on psychological and sociological solutions to the human problem, whilst a barrage of therapies, social welfare, social justice and social activism have drawn us into ways of life and worship which outdate and outmode our former modes and patterns of church-living and action. The Scriptures have been subjected to critical analysis, changing hermeneutics, and interpretation so cautious that authoritative preaching and teaching is almost in the discard. The new ecclesiastical egalitarianism is sweeping away distinctions of every kind. Humanistic feminism is making powerful inroads, and with it a return to ancient gnosticism, mysticism, and worship of the feminine as the dynamic drive of nature. The occult is making its invasion through systems of positive thinking, possibility thinking, eastern religions all combining to form syncretistic systems of new gospels.

And so we could go on Our tabulations of these things might never end. How then dare we have a privatized ecclesiastical joy in the midst of so much damaging change, human suffering, and the doom which is coming across the world? Well might we ask the question, and well might we ask ourselves whether we can be true pastors in such a world as is ours today.

Being Pastors and Bringing Joy in Today's World

The first way we could choose to bring back joy to our alarmed people would be to smile at the human and ecological situation, as though everything is a bit exaggerated. We could talk of panic–politics, and even panic–theology, as though these things are not to be taken seriously. We could further point out that things have always seemed bad when you looked only on the bad side of things. We could encourage folk to realize that humanity will brave out these storms as it has done so with every other form and because there is some reality in these arguments they may have a certain value. Certainly we can say that the church has faced terrible situations throughout its 2,000 years of existence such as the heresies of the first few centuries, the early persecutions, the invasion of Rome of the Vandals and Goths in the fourth century, the dark ages when truth went into a decline and the Roman church achieved temporal power, the rise of the scourge of Islam, the scandalous life of much of the church and the loss of evangelical truth prior to the Reformation, the Inquisition, the religious wars, the decline of true doctrine with the coming of the Age of Enlightenment, the vacuous years of Broad churchmanship, and the persecutions within this century of churches Nazism, and Communism.

The second way to go—an addition to the first—is to show that humanity has an inbuilt moral sense so that excesses tend to be countered by a certain conservatism, that basic morality still prevails, and that humanity has always survived its most radical changes. Again there is certain factual evidence for this. We could show that certain forces are working against a nuclear holocaust, that progress has been made in cleansing of human pollution, and that conservationists are developing an ever–enlarging lobby, whilst politicians sense the way the winds are blowing, and—most of all—humanity is always prepared to make sacrifices to retain its existence on this planet, i.e. it practices enlightened self–interest. Again there is something factual in this method of tempering alarm in our people.

The Biblical Way to Joy

I believe the true way to go is the biblical way, for there is a biblical way. It is somewhat as follows,

(i) We should understand and teach the sovereignty of God. That is that God is Creator, that He is a faithful Creator, and will guard His universe in the way He sees fit, even if that does include disasters and catastrophes. Such sovereignty has planned all events, including salvation and the ultimate reconciliation and regeneration of all things.

(ii) We should understand and teach the nature of the conflict between God and Satan. This will entail showing God's plan for salvation, and Satan's attempts to foil such, and his own endeavours to set up his world–system as primary within creation. It is within this conflict that there are the great and terrible apocalyptic happenings.

(iii) We should teach the nature of the wrath of God upon man. That is we should show man to be guilty and under the continual wrath of God, in his conscience, so that all he sees is necessarily from a guilty stance, and a distorted point of view. Hence his fear at what is happening today, his attempts to find pleasure in order to neutralize his own fear, and his selfish efforts to secure himself against death. We must show that things do not happen arbitrarily, and that God is still the active Judge of all the earth.

(iv) The most dynamic of these elements is the saving grace and love of God, which, if a man know them, he can face all the tempests that come, because

- (a) he knows God is loving, faithful, and works all things for his good, and
- (b) he recognizes that a blind and hostile fate is not working, but—in the ultimate—God alone, so that calamities, catastrophes and disasters are part of His sovereign plan and working. The dynamics of justification, sanctification, and anticipation (hope) of the eschaton are what keep a person in the perspective of the truth of God.

We should therefore work along these lines, which is another way of saying we should know God personally, be under His Lordship, be in union with Him, abide in Him as He abides in us. It is this personal knowledge of Him which is our chief joy, and which enables us live in times both ordinary and extraordinary. I would like, finally, to suggest two more things, the first being ‘the way of Koheleth’, and the second prescriptions of Scripture for joy.

(i) The Way of Koheleth

We have seen that the Preacher teaches that whenever we see ‘everything under the sun’ from a confined horizontal viewpoint, then it is all vanity. Thus whilst all things are significant—including the scenario of tragedy we have outlined above—nothing is in any sense really significant. If we try to devise ‘an ontology of the horizontal’ it will not prove viable. It is a canon of our own devising and cannot stand up to the reality of horizontal-vertical ontology.

Koheleth keeps speaking of ‘the fear of God, ‘pleasing the Lord’, ‘the judgments of God’ and ‘God’s commandments’. The whole of man is to fear God and keep His commandments’. Whilst this is experience ‘under heaven’, it is not all that is ‘under heaven’. When a man tries to devise his horizontal ontology he finds it does not yield satisfaction. Why? Because ‘God has set eternity into man’s heart so that by searching he cannot find out the end from the beginning. Man cannot absolutise the horizontal and come to any authentic conclusion.

If all things on the horizontal are vanity, then how can one enjoy life—its toil, its pleasures, eating and drinking, one’s wealth and possession, one’s spouse and family? The answer is that all things on the horizontal get their true meaning from reference to God, His sovereignty—there is a time and place for everything under the sun—His commandments and His gift of enjoyment. If a man will not seek to understand it all from his own intelligence and wisdom but ‘let God be God’ and leave it at that—in God’s hands—then he will indeed enjoy life immensely, come wind, come weather, come calamities, disasters, injustices and the like. None of these things—including both life and death—shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

I think this is what we should first try to do ourselves, so that then we can teach others to revert to simplicity, to trust in God and obedience to Him, and enjoy this life He has given us.

(ii) The Way of Biblical Prescriptions

I suggest, now, that we go back to the early parts of our study and look at the sources of joy. Primarily God is our true Source, but we are not speaking as the mystic do, who practice exercises to come to union with God. We are talking about the prescriptions of God within His covenant, i.e. the commands He gives to His people. Thus 'to fear God and keep His commandments is the whole of man'. Even so we are not talking about a severe legal obedience. We are talking about a heart that has been circumcised to love God (Deut. 30:6) so that we obey Him 'from the heart'—a thought often found in Scripture. Let us look at some we have nominated,

- (a) God's presence. Psalm 21:6; 16:11.
- (b) God's law. Psalm 1:2; 19:8; 119—this Psalm in many verses.
- (c) God's judgements. Psalm 48:11; 97:8; cf. (6:10–13).
- (d) God's sovereignty Psalm 97:1.
- (e) The salvation of God. Psalm 9:14; Isaiah 25:9; Habakkuk 3:17–19; Psalm 13:5; 51:12.
- (f) The love and mercy of God, Psalm 13:5 31:7; 90:14.
- (g) The day the Lord has made. Psalm 118:24.
- (h) The words of the Lord which bring comfort. Jeremiah 15:16; Psalm 119:14; cf. Ezekiel 3:3; Job 23:12.

Now if we were to closely examine these, develop an understanding of them in their contexts and then practicalise them in life, I believe we would constantly be tapping the subterranean oceans of joy. This practise would be never-ending and would provide its ongoing cumulative stimulation and motivation.

Further I believe we should see the open-handedness of God as the great Giver, for giving is His joy. Learning this we would then become givers to both God and man, which would increase the joy. We are not in a hedonistic and utilitarian hunt for joy, but simply wish to understand its functional manners.

In James 1:17 we discover that God is essentially Giver, and all his giving is pure, hence all His gifts bring richness. 'God so loved that He gave' refers to all His ways. He loves a cheerful (Gk. *hilarios*) giver, because He himself is hilarious in giving! This is seen in various of the covenantal passages such as Deuteronomy 12:1–28; 16:9–16 and 26:5–19. The substance of these is that God has blessed His people, and they shall keep festivals—times of rejoicing when they will offer sacrifices to the Lord. They will also have festivals in which they eat and drinks to their hearts' content. Far from asceticism, good eating and drinking is a source of joy God wishes them to utilize. They are even to expend certain tithes in such festivity. At the same time they are to give the sacred portions—as God has commanded—to 'the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless and the widow' as well as to sons and daughters, menservants and maidservants.

In other words a true person of God cannot have joy when he has not done what is in his power to provide for the needy out of the substance he has (cf. I John 3:17–22; James 5:1–6). To give to God without giving to man is to give to none, including God. In the New Testament II Corinthians chapters 8 and 9 have superb teaching on the joy

of giving. One of the primary things of worship is thanksgiving, but such will be wooden unless thanksgiving is itself expressed in giving to others. Our thanksgiving arises from His giving in creation, preservation, salvation and ultimate glorification.

If we take the other elements nominated above as seriously as receiving and giving then we will certainly enjoy the life He has given Whilst not being indifferent to the agonies of this world—the groaning and travailing both in the world and in us—nor careless as to its needs, we know that

His anger is but for a moment,
and his favour is for a lifetime.
Weeping may tarry for the night,
but joy comes with the morning.

Conclusion: The Matter of Joy and Suffering

Our study would be incomplete if we simply left the mystery of suffering in God's hands, and refused to see the biblical rationale given to us. Paul's statements are 'provided that we suffer with him order that we may be gloried with him, i.e. 'Through trials to glory'. Glory is of course but love and peace and joy—man at last transformed into his true being. In II Corinthians 4:16 says of suffering., 'For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.' The apostles—we saw—left the Sanhedrin 'rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name.' On another occasion of persecution 'the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit'. Jesus had told such to leap for joy, for great was their reward in heaven.

The subject is a vast one, and we do not have the time here to deal with it, but the substance of it is clear. True joy comes with suffering. Suffering and joy are not opposites. Suffering does not cancel joy. To suffer is to share Christ sufferings even 'fill them up', and this what brings joy. In all of this the joy of the Lord Himself is our strength. We are glad that

Thou dost show me the path of life;
in thy presence there is fulness of joy,
in thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.

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Immediacy in Life and Communication

The term 'immediacy' is not one which is widely used. The Shorter Oxford Dictionary describes it as follows:

1. Freedom from intermediate agency; direct relation or connection; directness.
2. The condition of being the immediate lord or vassal.
3. The condition of being immediate in time.

The word 'immediacy' is not used in Scripture, but the related term 'immediately' is used some 80 times, only 6 of these being in the O.T. and in all case referring to action in time. Mark uses it 35 times in his Gospel. The sense in which we will use it is covered by the first meaning given in the dictionary, namely, 'Freedom from intermediate agency; direct relation or connection; directness'. The reason for pursuing the subject is that in a recent study given on 'Joy' to a pastors' group I said,

Whilst surveys such as we have just done of Old and New Testaments may grip us afresh with the truth of God, and greatly cheer our congregations, yet we rarely have the opportunity to communicate such coverages. As pastors we must understand the world in which we live, and help our people to face the waves of thought and feelings which keep sweeping across society. We must be purveyors of joy with the power of immediacy. How can we communicate God's joy dynamically in a world which seems to be set on a path of doom, and how can we avoid simply cheering up our people, and perhaps merely making them happy?

I was asked, 'What do you mean by "immediacy"?' and this paper is an endeavour to open up the subject as widely as possible. What I really meant was having the power of immediate communication, i.e. the ability to speak so directly that we convey what we mean so that the listener cannot doubt he had heard what has been said. This does not mean the listener agrees with what has been said or receives it, but there is no lack of communication by the person speaking.

In the process of answering the question I told the group that I had invented a new verb—'to revelate'. I said that the verb 'to reveal' simply means we unveil something, and it is the choice of the viewer or listener to receive or reject what has been revealed. The dictionary does speak of a 'revelation', a 'revelationist', a 'revelator', and uses the adjective 'revelatory'. What I meant was that the message communicated was given so powerfully that it had an irresistible impact on the listener so that he was forced to some decision regarding the revelation given to him.

It is in this sense that we want to discuss immediacy for immediacy is revelatory, whereas a mere unveiling of a fact or truth previously concealed may bring little or no response from the viewer or hearer. In both cases the listener will decide his own response—since immediacy does not coerce—but in the latter case he not powerfully confronted. Immediacy is an attempt to speak directly and irresistibly to the hearer. We are not talking about demagogic coercion, personal or mental conditioning—the process of brain-washing—seduction of the mind and will, or the techniques of mesmerism and hypnotism. We are simply saying that immediacy is a clear

communication which—for one reason or another—is as clearly received by the listener. Revelatory communication is such that it can break through the well-known techniques of deliberate non-hearing, or deliberate confusing of the material given by the speaker. Of course I am assuming there is such a thing as immediacy, and that it is revelatory, and perhaps it can be shown that this is merely an idea in my head.

God, Man and Immediacy

If we judge the doctrine of creation correctly then man was created through the agency of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In this sense man's creation was Trinitarian, and man related intimately with the Godhead. God spoke to him directly, and he was able to respond. No mediation was necessary. The Fall of man broke that immediacy in that man had made himself autonomous in intent. Undoubtedly God communicated with him, but man—because of his guilt—was already resistant. Romans 1:18–32 tells us of the split between man and God. Man rejected his knowledge of God, changed the truth of into a lie, and refused to acknowledge God. All this is the aetiology of non-hearing—the deliberately deaf ear, the stubbornness of the human heart against true knowledge.

Every understanding of the Fall must be tempered by the fact that man is made in the image of God and is strongly pressured by this fact. From the beginning there has also always been man-in-faith, this series beginning with Abel, so that there have been those who have responded to God's communication as well as those who have resisted. It is doubtful that there have ever been simple, neutral agnostics, although many have claimed to be.

God's Media of Communication

We do not say that because God communicates that He is heard. Jesus's saying, 'He that has an ear to hear let him hear' explains the mystery of hearing and non-hearing. God communicates because He wishes His mind to be known. Man is responsible to hear and non-hearing will be judged as culpable. The various media are creation, theophanic manifestations, covenants, law, the prophets, the actions of God in various forms such as creational, providential, covenantal, redemptional and restorative. God spoke through the prophets to older generations, but has spoken—and speaks—through His own Son in this age. He speaks via the Holy Spirit, in and through His inscripturated word—the Bible—as also through His people—Israel of old, and the church in this present era. We only know about these media from the Scriptures. Left to ourselves we would not think of them

There is no call for us here to authenticate these media, to show that by conscience and act God speaks to each man. Those who hear know how authentic are these media. Not to hear them is a difficult matter. God speaks to every man, but not every man listens and knows.

God's Immediate Communication of Himself

It seems that when God talked to Adam after the fall, and Cain after the murder of his brother Abel, that the immediacy was effective in that both knew God's mind towards them, although their conversation held elements of self-excusing. When God spoke with Noah and Abraham there was also immediacy which drew a proper response.

God's communication of Himself to Abel—as also Enoch (Gen. 5:24; Jude 14)—was linked with that person being a prophet (Luke 11:51). We need to realize that no man could be a prophet without first knowing God, and then going on knowing God. When God made a prophet He did so by revealing Himself to that person. That revelation was of a high order. To know God is everything! Nothing more is needed for any human being. Thus when 'the God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia' Abraham ceased from being an idolater and became a person who knew God. Out of that immediacy he was 'the friend of God' and did His will. Likewise this was the case with Isaac and Jacob who were both prophets (cf. Gen. 27:27–40; 49:1–27).

The Prophets and Immediacy

If we take our third dictionary meaning of immediacy as 'Freedom from intermediate agency; direct relation or connection; directness' then it means God reveals Himself to the prophets that they may communicate Him to others, and do this by means of His word, i.e. not their word. This is seen in Exodus 6:30–7:2 where Moses protests that he cannot speak God's word, and Moses is to mediate the word through Aaron, 'See, I make you as God to Pharaoh and Aaron shall be your prophet'. God speaks His word through the prophet, and in that sense the prophet is a mediator. If the prophet does not receive the word directly from God he loses that part of immediacy. The prophet is as God Himself speaking. In this sense there is immediacy.

This is seen clearly in the Book of Jeremiah. God's word is dynamic within Jeremiah—'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' (21:9). In 23:29 God asks, 'Is not my word like fire, and like a hammer which breaks the rock in pieces?' That is, His word is dynamic. It is not simply divine information passed on to man, but God speaking directly to man through the prophet (Heb. 1:1).

We need to know that God gave His word to the prophets through 'dream and visions'. This is seen in Numbers 12:6, 'If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision, I speak to him in a dream' (cf. Gen. 46:2; I Sam. 3:15; I Kings 3:5, 15; Jer.3:25ff; Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17). Moses was exceptional in that God spoke to him 'mouth to mouth' (Num. 12:7; cf Deut. 18:18).

The value of the prophetic word is seen in I Samuel 3:1, 'And the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision.' Israel needed not only the prophetic deposit of the past—the sum of all prophetic communications—but it needed the continuing word of God in the present. Without it Israel often did not know what to do. Because the prophetic word was so dynamic and functional to the life of Israel false prophecy was bound to arise, as it did. Throughout Scripture prophecy is powerful as it confronts its hearers. This why Israel had shed the blood of the prophets from Abel to Zechariah (Luke 11:51).

The Prophets and False Immediacy

Perhaps there is an ontology of prophecy, and wherever anything is authentic it is seized upon by evil powers or deluded and ambitious human powers. Deuteronomy 18:9–14 shows false forms of prophecy which are occultic in nature. In Jeremiah 23:23–32 there is strong invective against false prophets who cry 'I have dreamed! I have dreamed!' meaning they have a prophecy from God. God said, 'I am against the

prophets who steal my words from one another.’ He also said, ‘I am against those who prophesy lying dreams, and who tell them, and lead my people astray by their lies and their recklessness, when I did not send them or charge them; so that they do not profit this people at all.’

In the N.T. there are false prophets. Paul talks of those who ‘peddle the word of God’ (II Cor. 2:17), and those who ‘practice cunning and tamper with the word of God’ (II Cor. 4:2). False prophecy will be evident in the end-times and in Revelation we have ‘the false prophet’. All of these seek to tap in on the innate power of prophecy, i.e. the word of God. In other words, they try to effect a dynamic immediacy in order powerfully to affect their hearers.

Christ and the Matter of Immediacy

John’s Gospel is a clear demonstration of immediacy and its effects. As we proceed through the Gospel we see the polarizing effects of the uttered word, until at the last the chief priests and Pharisees call the Sanhedrin together to plot his death. Of course Jesus was prophetic in act as well as word, e.g. when he drove the money-changers and others from the temple and healed people on the Sabbath day. Jesus claimed he was ‘from above’ and his listeners ‘from below’. He told some they did not believe him even though it was Moses who wrote of him.

He claimed, ‘I speak of what I have seen with my Father . . . but now you seek to kill me a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God . . . Why do you not understand what I say. It is because you cannot bear to hear my word . . . He who is of God hears the words of God, the reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God . . . but you have not known him; I know him. If I said I do not know him, I should be a liar like you; but I know him and I keep his word’ (John 8:38–55). The immediacy of Jesus words can be seen in his claim, ‘The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.’ nothing could be more dynamic.

In Luke’s Gospel (8:4–21) he opened up the matter of hearing and refusing to hear. The parable of the sower, the story of the man lighting a lamp and obscuring its light, and the saying when his mother and brethren sought him, ‘My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it’, are all woven together as an exposition on the willingness or refusal to hear the word of God. In the parable of the sower four kinds of soil are those who hear the word of God, but only one hears it properly—‘those, who hearing the word hold it in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience’. The other hears do not truly hear. The man who obscures the light of his lamp does not truly hear or he would hold forth the light to show the way to others. The terrible warning is given, ‘Take heed then how you hear; for to him who has will more be given, and from him who has not, even what he thinks he has will be taken away’.

It is in this passage of Luke we have our Lord’s words to his disciples, ‘To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God; but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.’ The last clause is a quote from Isaiah 6:9–10. It seems to be an enigmatic saying, but is fairly clear in its O.T. context, ‘The more they hear, the more they will reject, and it is told to them that a judgement may take place by which they are hardened against the word of God’.

Our conclusion here is that it is dangerous to hear and not really to hear, but hearing to reject what is heard. That is why Jesus said, more than once, ‘He who has an ear to hear, let him hear,’ a statement made seven times in the Book of the Revelation in the letters to the 7 churches. In Jesus’ teaching there was always immediacy, and in the letters to the 7 churches there was immediacy. Immediacy judges those who refuse it, for they are fighting revelatory ministry.

Immediacy in the Apostolic Ministry

At Pentecost, and from Pentecost onwards we see the apostolic immediacy. Doubtless it was rooted in the revelation that the Holy Spirit brought—a point to which we will later return. Since the Holy Spirit was to lead them into all the truth, this was really a prophetic revelation of God. The truth is that the apostolic band was filled with the Holy Spirit who was the witness of truth (Acts 1:8; I John :7). The immediacy so struck listeners on the day of Pentecost that ‘when they heard this they were cut to their heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brethren, what shall we do?’ ‘Likewise, shortly afterwards before the Sanhedrin Peter so spoke that ‘When they heard this [statement of Peter and John] they were enraged and wanted to kill them’. No less did Stephen possess that immediacy, and the outcome of his communication was that they stoned him. Following the incident Christians fled from Jerusalem, and Philip the evangelist went to Samaria and preached with great effect.

Paul on being converted immediately preached with immediacy. Being in Damascus he drew the wrath of the Jews upon himself, and to go temporarily to Arabia. The account of his life in Acts—along with Barnabas, Silas and Timothy—show how powerful was his ministry. We will presently see the principle enabling his immediacy.

Living and Proclaiming in Immediacy

The quote with which we began was concerned with the subject of joy and the communication of it with immediacy. It is as follows:

Whilst surveys such as we have just done of Old and New Testaments may grip us afresh with the truth of God, and greatly cheer our congregations, yet we rarely have the opportunity to communicate such coverages. As pastors we must understand the world in which we live, and help our people to face the waves of thought and feelings which keep sweeping across society. We must be purveyors of joy with the power of immediacy. How can we communicate God’s joy dynamically in a world which seems to be set on a path of doom, and how can we avoid simply cheering up our people, and perhaps merely making them happy?

In this quote we are saying that although we may amass rich materials on a theme and believe it to be useful for a congregation, yet if it lacks immediacy it is of little value, and virtually makes no impact. So then we wish to have immediacy in our ministry. Without going into a ‘how-to’ technique we can arrive at the reality of immediacy.

Being In the Presence of God

Firstly we must know God, and live in Him, and be obedient to His will. Then it is immediacy will be present. To know God through the Gospel, through the Son, and through the Spirit is to live in God. John said, ‘the Son who is in the bosom of the Father he has declared him,’ i.e. the Son declared the Father from his intimacy with Him. When the angel appeared to Zechariah he told him, ‘I am Gabriel, who stand in the presence of God; and I was sent to speak to you, and to bring you this good news.’ Notice that Gabriel stands in the presence of God and so when sent brings that presence with him. He comes—so to speak—with the dew of the sanctuary upon him. This is true immediacy. The preacher who stands in the presence of God must have immediacy. We might say the bread is straight from the oven to the consumer! There is no opportunity for staleness.

Paul quoted a Greek poet as saying, ‘In Him we live, and move, and have our being.’ The believer does not only have this creational location, but he has a more intimate location in God through redemption. He is reconciled to God, but lives in Him. Jesus spoke of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit taking up their dwelling in the believer (John 13:15–23). He spoke of the believer abiding in himself (John 15:1–8). Paul speaks of Christ dwelling in the heart of the believer (Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:27; Ephes. 3:14–19) so that he may ‘be filled with all the fulness of God’. John speaks often in his first Epistle of abiding, i.e. remaining and dwelling in God (3:24; 4:12) and his classic statement is, ‘Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God. . . . God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God and God abides in him’ (4:15–16).

This abiding is no small thing. It arises from being reconciled with God, coming to know Him, and then living in Him, and He dwelling in the person. This is intimate union with God. So intimate is it that John says, ‘our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ’ (I John 1:3). It is the intimacy of knowing God—an experience and reality unsurpassed in the gamut of human living. This is why Jesus said, ‘This is life eternal, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent’ (John 17:3). In this vein John speaks again, ‘And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, to know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.’ (I John 5:20). Those in O.T. times who had been met by God and given visions of Him, had come to know Him. Now, through Christ, and the revelatory Spirit, the believer has no less an experience and relationship. From this point, then, the proclaimer of God and the Gospel can speak with the freshness of intimacy, the anointing of the Spirit, and the knowledge of the word of the living God.

Having Continuous Revelation of God Through the Son and the Holy Spirit

Jesus virtually told his followers that their ministry would be of witness to him (Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8; John 15:26–27). Witness is telling the truth as one has seen it, or telling truthfully what one has seen. Jesus said the Spirit of truth would come and leads them into all the truth, and they would then tell the truth (John 15:16). Jesus had borne witness to the truth (John 18:37) and now they were to bear witness to him as the Witness to (or, of) the truth (Acts 1:8). The term ‘witness’ is used many times in the Book of Acts and the Book of the Revelation. I John 5:7 says, ‘And the Spirit is the witness, because the Spirit is the truth’.

The N.T. teaches us that the Holy Spirit leads us to the Son, and the Son leads us to the Father (John 15:16; John 14:6). It also teaches us that the Father and the Son indwell us by the Spirit (Matt. 10:20; Gal. 4:6; Ephes. 3:16; Rom. 8:9–11; cf. I John 3:24; 4:13). This is another way of looking at the relationship that the communicator has with God. Not only does the Son lead to the Father, but the Father also leads to the Son (John 6:45, 65; Matt. 11:27).

The Dynamic Revelation That Makes the Revelator

Paul spoke in the first chapter of Galatians of those who communicated a false Gospel, and of himself who communicated what was true. He told how this came to be. He said ‘I would have you know brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not man’s gospel. For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ.’ The revelation of Jesus Christ was on the road to Damascus, and the full comprehension of it took place in his three days of blindness in the city. However—as with Jeremiah and others who had been set apart from their mother’s womb—Paul said God ‘was pleased to reveal his Son in me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles.’ The order is important—first revelation to (i.e. in) the person, and then revelation through the person. One cannot reveal what one has not seen; one cannot but reveal what one has seen, for it becomes the fire in the heart and in the bones. As Peter said, ‘We cannot but tell the things which we have seen and heard.’ Because these things are so vital to every human being, and because the salvation of man depends upon them the constraint and compulsion to tell them is irresistible.

The powerful point we draw in Galatians 1:11–16 was that Paul was converted in order to convert; God revealed His Son to him, that he might reveal that Son to others. To be shown is to know, and to know is to tell.

Ministering in Immediacy Today

It is clear that to minister in and with immediacy one must know God, be under the Father as a son of God, be under the Lordship of Christ, be filled with the Spirit, and so be led by him. This is the way of true relationship with God—true fellowship with the Father and the Son—and it is out of that intimacy that one may ‘revelate’ the truth of God. This requires so living in the Spirit that he constantly reveals ‘the deep things of God’, so that we are able to communicate them as commanded. As one continues to abide (continue, dwell) in God, then one lives in the reality of the truth. Truth is something one not only knows with all the heart, and mind and will, but something one does, one practises. If we do not continually obey the will of God, and practise the truth, then its reality fades, and we become stale in proclamation. If we gradually devise of a righteousness of our own, then the reality of grace pales, and we have little to say because grace seems of small importance. Only the Spirit can keep fresh and vital the truth we proclaim, and he does that in the context of our continuing personal obedience. An adage has it, ‘It is better felt than telt’. We might add, ‘When it is felt it is telt as when it is telt it is felt.’

The Battle for Immediacy

Man's history is the story of his battle to refuse the knowledge of God. He resents—even fears—the constant barrage of revelation that comes through the various media by which God speaks. In one sense it is natural for him to know God, since he has been created in His image. In another sense he is bound not to know God for the confrontation of the Holy One is too fearful to contemplate. Hence he suppresses the truth in unrighteousness, he promotes the lie, and he develops techniques of not-hearing. We all the know the psychology of refusing to hear. We can change words and meanings given by the speaker before they reach us. We can rationalize them as wrong or foolish. We impute ideas to the proclaimer which he does not think or say. We also denigrate the messenger as we denigrate God. We gather data that justifies us for not listening.

The word man receives from God is attacked. In Luke 8 the seed is snatched up by the birds—Satan's emissaries. It falls in ground too hard and dry for it to germinate, or—having germinated—the seed dies for lack of depth in soil and understanding. The 'cares and pleasures of this world' are the weeds which grow along with the true plants and choke it. Preachers are dismayed when their words are refused, fall on deaf ears, or are ill-received. Again false prophecy, with false immediacy deceives, allures, and seduces. The word of God is peddled and so is not the true word of God. It is tampered with and so becomes used for evil. Constantly a substitute word is devised and is made so attractive, that it weans listeners away from the truth. It is mixed with current thinking, present philosophy, psychology, and sociology that it is changed from its pure form and substance. Nor is this always a conscious endeavour to change the word. Loss of intimate relationship with God leaves the proclaimer open to temptations. He may genuinely wish to attract people to the Gospel and so evades telling the 'scandal of the Cross' or 'the foolishness of the Cross'. He avoids the 'dark sayings' and the 'hard words', and concentrates on the utility of the good news. There is a seeming immediacy about a utilitarian Gospel, because the person is anxious to obtain its benefits, so that he believes the message to be relevant, when, in fact it only appears to be.

Perhaps the greatest impediment to immediacy is that teachers and preachers search the Scriptures to adduce the ways of God, and thus detect principles. They then abstract these from the Scriptures, and form them into a system, devising a methodology. This methodology is then propounded, and generally as a 'how-to', i.e. how to be saved, how to pray, how to love, how to obey—and so on. It appears good and orthodox, but being abstracted from the personal relationship one must have with God, it becomes a system apart from Him. Naturally enough, there can be no immediacy, for a 'how-to' is often an unconscious endeavour to act from one's self, and not from union with God.

The Breaking of the Communication Barriers

Over many years of teaching and preaching in some 25 countries I have noticed that language does not represent an insuperable barrier. Often when we attempt to avoid offence by speaking to the culture of the people, we may miss actual communication. Speaking should be from the heart of one person to the other. The heart to the Hebrews meant the seat of the affections (sometimes called 'emotions'), of the intellect and the will. True theology is theology of the heart. Often a person may inadvertently offend culturally and yet get to the listener. P.T. Forsyth said that the conscience is the most

universal thing of all, and that which goes deepest to the conscience goes widest to the world. The person who is ignorant of the nature and dynamics of conscience will not be able to overleap the natural barrier of language. The Americans speak of ‘gut communication’, and mean that communication is somehow visceral, and not primarily cerebral, although, of course, there must be the use of the intellect. It seems to me that immediacy communicates a relationship we have with God, and although words may be few yet body language, appropriate gestures and deep sympathy will convey the message. Linguistics have shown us that translations may appear as foreign to indigenes because the indigenous thought patterns have not been understood. It would seem that exhaustive research would need to be made in order to translate well, or communicate within the thought–framework of a given people. Whilst this exercise must be pursued, yet I believe that the Gospel can simply and quickly be communicated where there is immediacy, since immediacy is always accompanied by love which is empathic, identifying with the listener, and drawing a response–or reaction–from him. I am not suggesting we should short–cut the necessary work of understanding cultural thought patterns, but that we should not be locked into this process. I have noticed the despair of communicators in a foreign culture, especially where words have a different content to the equivalent words in his own language. Since the content of words is greatly determined by the culture then the hearers must have the true content of those words injected by the Spirit of truth–even if only at the moment of utterance and reception–and I believe this is what happens in Christian communication. In Australia we talk of having ‘wombat theology’, i.e. indigenous cultural communication. This is a simplistic way of approaching the matter. Immediacy is wholly essential.

Immediacy Leads to Immediacy

Whilst a person may exercise immediacy the very thing itself comes from his personal relationship with God. It is not, then, intended that that ministry should lead to the communicator, but to God. Because all true proclamation is witness to God, rather than a mere explanation that is doctrinal and theological, then it will lead the true hearers to God. In turn they will communicate with immediacy. Immediacy springs from ardency, or as Jonathan Edwards would put it, ‘the religious affections’. Peter said, ‘Jesus Christ–without having seen him you love him; though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy’ (I Pet. 1:8). This, in a way, was his continuing answer to Jesus questions, ‘Simon do you love me, do you love me more than these?’

It is the passion which communicates. It is love which is at the heart of the message. We love because He first loved us. Christ’s love controls and constrains us. This is the first love and the continuing love. To abide in God’s love is to abide in God and is for God to abide in us. The love expressed in the Song of Solomon is not too much to describe our love with Him and His with us. We may know the Scriptures well, but not well enough if our love does not show itself towards Him, and does not express itself towards others. Samuel Rutherford has shown us this ardency as perhaps no other has done. ‘Since he looked upon me my heart is not my own; he hath run away to heaven with it,’ was one of his statements. Strangely enough our love for others cannot exist without first our passion for Him. If it does not exist for others–as for Him–then we have no genuine immediacy.

The Cost and Way of Present Immediacy

Probably no greater expression of communication-in-ardency can be found than Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians. It is filled with the passion to proclaim. In it the cost of immediacy is set out. The two great passages of his sufferings and labours—6:4–12 and 11:21–29—tell us of his love for the doomed race. In 4:7–15 he tells us of the identification with the heart of the Gospel which is essential to true preaching. We have the transcendent power of God in our earthly vessels, and whilst we are always carrying about with us the killing of Jesus, we will always be afflicted, perplexed, persecuted and struck down. The reaction to the act of crucifixion—elsewhere described as 'a scandal' and 'foolishness'—will inevitably come and vent its anger on the messenger, so much one is he with his Lord—being—crucified. Such immediacy is present in the preacher on this matter that the hearer reacts as did the hysterical Christ-hating mob on the day of his death. Yet it is the only way of communicating. Whilst this form of death works in the proclaimer, it brings life to the listener. Not only is Christ's death shown, but his very life is communicated to the hearer. That is how 'grace comes to more and more people'.

We see, then, that we cannot communicate Christ apart from Christ, his death apart from his death, and his life apart from his life. Only love will bring us to this—the love which springs from intimate fellowship with the Father and the Son. This alone explains the martyrs and their fearlessness in the face of death. It explains the great preachers down through the centuries such as Paul, Peter and Apollos; as Polycarp and Ignatius; Augustine and Tertullian; Calvin, Luther and Zwingli; the Pietists and the Puritans; Jonathan Edwards, the Wesley brothers, George Whitfield and the Welsh Itinerants; the Evangelicals of the 19th century, and then the preachers and teachers such as Charles Spurgeon, James Denny and Peter Forsyth. Nor must we miss the missionary passion which broke out in the first few centuries and carried on down through the centuries through a holy remnant until in the 19th Century, it broke our afresh, and has carried multitudes into the Kingdom of God. In our age the suffering of believers has been immense—no less than in any other age.

In all of this there has been holy ardency and holy immediacy, so that he—Christ—has seen the fruit of the travail of his soul, and has been satisfied.

Note. Recommended reading to extend our enquiry into immediacy are my booklets *'How Then Shall We Tell?'* (NCPI, 1981).

Proclaiming Christ's Gospel in Today's World (NCPI, 1986)

The Principles and Practice of Evangelism, LFS. 50

and the book *True Preaching: The Agony and Ecstasy* (NCPI, 1989).

See also Deane Meatheringham's volume,

Gospel Incandescent (NCPI, 1981) which speaks of the inherent dynamic of the Gospel.

The Reconciliation of All Things

Note: The thrust of this study is not a technically theological treatment of the theme, but it seeks to set out the thesis that our divisive differences in the history of the Christian church have arisen from a deficient and faulty view of the work of the Atonement. It is maintained in this study that were we all to know and live in the dynamic work of Reconciliation, then we would be powerfully and personally gripped by the love of God and know the centrality of the Cross—and Resurrection—for all elements of Christian faith and practice. James Denney's *The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation* and Leon Morris's *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*—along with articles in theological dictionaries—are recommended reading for a more theological treatment of Reconciliation.

Diversity is no sin or crime in itself. It has often been observed that in nature there is a unity which springs from diversity. This, of course is apparent in art of all forms—diverse colours, shapes and movements can constitute a wonderful whole. It is singularly apparent in the human race in which features, body—dimensions, finger—prints and even blood—groupings differ in every person. In theology likewise, we should not object to diversity, especially if it is the gathering of varied insights that by nature—an integrated whole.

When diversity is deliberate, when it is engineered because certain of us object to unchanging reality, then it is harmful. We ought not diverge from what is essentially real because we reject what has been long accepted, or because we seek something new, for the sake of novelty. In the Scriptures the unity of God's nature and of His people is of paramount importance. 'The Lord your God is one Lord,' is one of the most important announcements made in the history of Israel. One cannot love the Lord with heart, soul, mind and strength if He is not One. The people of God cannot have unity on the basis of a Godhead which is divided. That is why idolatry is evil—because it divides one's loyalty until there is no basic, integrated loyalty. One cannot properly serve two masters. One cannot serve no master. The integrity of the worshipper depends on the integrity of the Worshipped.

When we come to the church, its doctrines, its creeds, its notions, its operations and its worship there is a rich diversity in understanding and action. Whilst this may not necessarily be a bad thing, and may even be a good thing where it is simply unity—in-diversity, yet it can also be most divisive. We know the history of the church is that of multi-thinking. If this were merely a dialectic, i.e. a balancing of the truth by a weighing of the differing values, and adducing a synthesis which we could see had brought us back to centre—to the truly ontological—then diversity of thinking would be valuable.

Too often, what we see is a diversity which teeters on heresy, that is 'heresy' as we understand it in the New Testament sense. It is the over-emphasis upon one doctrine or fact or truth, which—in a sense—becomes absolutized in itself. It becomes the key to interpreting all truth. This is a diversion, and is harmful. Today, I believe, there is a problem we face in the extreme individualism which has arisen in the

community of Christ. It is the matter of shaping up truth by the system we have devised, and then utilizing it for personal advancement. Doubtless that has always been done, but prevalent today is the ambition of a person, especially a person who has been trained in a particular academic system who sees—consciously or unconsciously—that this will give scope to his ambition and goals. At the lowest end is the title given such as ‘The John Bloggs Ministry’, or ‘The John Bloggs Ministries’. Doubtless there has always been the master and his disciples, but when the school referred to claims that this is the true way, and the only way—as against every other way—then it is not only sectarian but heretical, even if the bulk of its teaching parallels the credal truth of the church. Not all particularistic ministries give themselves exclusivist titles.

Today we are seeing diversity in sad and damaging forms. Nothing much is gained by nominating the variations of teaching and practice. Of course the matter is not new. It is difficult to see whether this harmful diversification is more prevalent now than it has been in other ages, but anyway, even that is not the point. The point is, ‘Is there some element—or elements—we can discover, some integrating factor or factors which can help to unify us?’ By this we mean, ‘What is so basic to the Christian faith and truth that—by nature of the case—it determines the unity of truth, fellowship and practise?’

I think almost any Christian could give a quick answer of value, such as, ‘Hold fast to Christ the Head and all will be well.’ That is true, if only because God’s plan and intention is to unify all things in Christ (Eph. 1:9–10). Without question Christ will ultimately head up, fill up, reconcile and harmonize all things in himself (Ep. 1:10; 4:10; Col. 1:20–21; 3:15). He created all things unto himself, so all things, then, will find their ultimate being in him, and in unified form (Col. 1:16–21). Certainly this is the way to both present and ultimate unity.

We might also give another answer, ‘Love one another from the heart, and the unity will be there.’ This, too, is a good answer, because ‘we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren’. An answer parallel to this is ‘Live in the unity of the Spirit,’ and without doubt it is a valid way of unity. Unity is certainly through the Spirit.

The trouble is that it getting to hold fast to Christ the Head, it is getting to love one another, and getting to live in the Spirit which is the basic factor in achieving unity. We are confronted by the fact that, for the large part, we are not getting to these things. We then ask the question, ‘What is the way of reconciliation, i.e. reconciliation with God—or from God—and reconciliation with others, especially men and women of the faith?’ We know that the reconcilers—i.e. ‘the peacemakers’—are blessed, ‘for they shall be called sons of God’. Yet is reconciliation a task we undertake simply because it is desirable, good and fruitful? Do we have the capacity to reconcile persons on the deepest level of human living? Is there a dynamic constraint to reconciliation?

I believe that reconciliation in the New Testament is primarily linked with the Atonement of Christ, and not with some charismatic ability or theological principle to bring people to together and unify them. I believe a study of the few passages of the New Testament which set reconciliation forth, will show the matter has to do with the Cross of Christ, i.e. his death and Resurrection. These passages are Romans 5:10–11; II Corinthians 5:18–21, Eph. 2:14 and Colossians 1:19–23. As we see, there are remarkably few passages, but these are set in the context of other passages which relate to the matter of reconciliation. For example, when we are reconciled to God by the death of Christ, then all elements of the Atonement are relevant to reconciliation. Thus the themes of wrath, alienation and justification—to name only a few—come within the

scope of reconciliation. In other words reconciliation is not a minor doctrine of the New Testament.

Two Aspects of Reconciliation

Theologians have long classified reconciliation as being of two orders, the first dealing with God's personal reconciliation of the sinner, and the second dealing with cosmic reconciliation, i.e. the reconciliation of all things, the 'all things' constituting the elements of the whole creation. Of the passages nominated in the above paragraph one set refers to personal reconciliation, i.e. Romans 5:10–11; II Corinthians 5:18–21, and the other set to cosmic reconciliation, i.e. Eph. 2:14 and Colossians 1:19–23. It may well be that both sets overlap, and in the opinion of some they are of the one piece. We will later examine them more particularly.

What we simply observe at this point is that if all men and women must go through the crucible of the Cross without exemption, difference, partiality or favour; then, rightly speaking, we ought all to be reconciled wholly to God and wholly to one another. Even if we have difficulties working out 'reconciliation with all men' (Rom. 12:18), yet the basic effecting of our reconciliation with God has been executed, and logically we can—as we then ought—to be reconciled with all men. It is this basic effecting of reconciliation to which we shall turn our attention.

Reconciliation Effected by Christ's Cross

The Enmity Against God, and Within Creation

Reconciliation presupposes a falling out, or a separation by one from another. The Scriptures show generally—and sometimes particularly—that the initial unity of creation was broken by two sets of rebellion, the first being that of angelic powers in heaven against God, and the second that of man at the Fall. If we realize that all things were created by God, through the mediation of His Son—the Word—and via the agency of the Holy Spirit, then we must conclude that the entire creation was a unity, i.e. 'very good'. We must also think of things celestial and things terrestrial as being of the one piece. That is, there are not two creations—a heavenly and an earthly—but one creation so that celestial powers have their functional oversight of what is terrestrial. This is seen in the terms, 'principalities', 'dominions' and 'authorities'. We have biblical reason to believe all things constituted a complete whole in absolute unity.

When, then, certain heavenly powers rebelled against God, and man allowed himself to be subverted, the unity of all things was fractured. Whilst the essential unity of all things—i.e. things *de jure*—could not be broken under the sovereignty of God, yet elements within that ontological unity did become disunited, i.e. *de facto*. Satan and his heavenly cohorts set themselves against God, and man—in Adam—sought to live apart from God. Whilst we do not understand the nature of guilt in regard to heavenly creatures, we certainly understand it in regard to man. Man's conscience is such that when he is guilty before God he dislikes the One against whom he has sinned. In the Old Testament man is shown to be at enmity with God by espousing idols and worshipping them, 'He exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator'. There are many evidences in the Old Testament of man's enmity with God.

In the New Testament this enmity is explicitly named. In Romans 1:30 men are ‘haters of God’, and in 5:10 ‘we were enemies [of God]’. In Colossians 1:21 Paul said, ‘And you, who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, . . .’ Some translations seem to infer that the guilt men had from evil deeds was what set them against God (cf. Job 1:5). Others imply that evil deeds arose out of hostility to God. Whatever may be the case, separation from God fosters compounding hostility. Notice that the enmity is deep within the mind, and cannot be static. It must do evil deeds against God.

Along with man’s hatred of God is man’s hatred of his fellow man. Paul speaks (Titus 3:3) of some as ‘hated by men and hating one another’, and John speaks of two groups of people, ‘the children of the devil’, and ‘the children of God’. Abel typified the children of God, and Cain the children of the devil. Another situation of separation and hatred is that of Jew and Gentile which, in Ephesians 2:16 Paul calls ‘the hostility’.

The hostility of Satan and his hosts against God, and the hatred of man for God are not inconsequential things. They are highly significant. The history of creation is a history of violence amongst fallen angels and fallen humanity. The dimensions of hatred and bitterness are enormous.

‘Bringing the Hostility to an End’

How could such hostility be brought to an end? John said that the purpose of the Son of God being manifested was to destroy the works of the devil (I John 3:8). How can the works of the devil be destroyed? The answer lies in the work of the Cross.

In Isaiah 59:2 the prophet said, ‘Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you so that he does not hear.’ In 1:4 Isaiah had said, ‘Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, sons who have dealt corruptly! They have forsaken the Lord, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged.’ In both references it is the evil of man which has separated him from God. We need not here go into the emotional and psychological elements of sin and guilt which make and widen the gulf between man and God. The most powerful of them all is, it is clear, the sin of idolatry which is the greatest blasphemy man can utter against God. Because of his blindness, man cannot know how utterly his sin alienates him from God. The gulf is so wide and deep that no human power or action could ever begin, even, to bridge it.

One of ‘the works of the devil’ was to separate celestial creatures from their Creator, and man from his Maker. If Christ was to destroy the works of the devil then he would have had to bridge the gap between God and man and make the way open for man to rejoin God. This would have had to be a mammoth task. Man being fallen and depraved, and God being holy and righteous, access was blocked off from man to God, even if a man might wish to come to God. Paul quoted two Psalms when he wrote, ‘,o one understand, no one seeks for God. All have turned aside, together they have gone wrong.’

We will now look at some of the basic New Testament passages relating to the theme of ‘Reconciliation’.

Romans 5:1–11

Verses 10–11 of this passage speak primarily of reconciliation, but the passage needs to be read as a whole, for when the opening verse says, ‘Therefore, since we are justified

by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,' then 'have peace' means we are reconciled to God. At verse 6 Paul commences a description of the things which have caused us to know God's love. In verse 9 Paul says that having been justified by the blood of Christ 'much more shall we be saved by him—Christ—from the wrath of God'. In verse 10 he points out that we were enemies of God. We were enemies in that we opposed God: in that sense we are his enemies. In other places he says we are enemies emotionally and practically through the matter of our wicked works, i.e. our guilt places us in opposition to God. He says that if we were 'reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.' He says that this leads us on to 'rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom we have received the reconciliation'.

By all of this, Paul is saying that we were enemies with God. Now we have been made to be His friends. Whereas once we dreaded Him, had hostility, and feared God as Judge, we now are in friendship. This is extraordinary: friends with God! That is why 'we rejoice in God'. The relationship is glorious. If we are friends with God through reconciliation then the natural outcome must be that we are friends with one another. All of our life should be couched in friendship.

Ephesians 2:11–22

This passage gives us one picture of reconciliation. Having painted the picture of the Gentile utterly without God, without the covenant that so comforted Israel, and without the great promises given to Abraham and all the people of faith down through the centuries of human history, the Gentile had a deep hatred of Israel as 'teacher's pet', as God's favorite people, and as an elitist religious nation. Even so, Israel was not God's favorite people but His chosen people, and—what is more—a people who had to do God's will, fulfilling the task of being a 'kingdom of priests', among, and for, the nations of the earth (Exod. 29:5–6; cf. I Pet. 2:9–10). Having drawn this picture of the mutual hostility of the Jew and Gentile nations, Paul then describes how the hostility was brought to an end, and how reconciliation was made.

Firstly, because enmity between man and God has brought guilt, and flourishes on guilt, then guilt must be destroyed. Properly speaking it must be propitiated, and in this Ephesian passage Paul does not talk about propitiation as such. He says that Christ broke down 'the dividing wall of hostility' i.e. the partition wall between the court of the Gentiles and the court of (Jewish) sacrifice. How did he do this? 'By abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two [Jew and Gentile], so making peace [reconciliation].'

This must mean that Christ fulfilled the demands of the law for the Jews, and so outmoded the Jewish law as a factor which would continue to prohibit the Gentile entering into the court of sacrifice. It must also mean that the law of God which obtains with all mankind from creation onwards (cf. Rom.2:14–16) must also have had its demands met (cf. Rom. 10:1–4) in Christ's sufferings. Paul said the action of the Cross would bring reconciliation—'and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end'. The key statement is 'through the cross', i.e. apart from the Cross there could be no reconciliation. If Christ's fulfilling of God's law meant he suffered the guilt of men, and so met the demands of the law, then it means that both Jew and Gentile have had their sins borne by Christ, so that the law no longer controls them (cf. Rom. 7:4; 3:27–31; Gal. 2:19).

Since there is no impediment of sin or guilt between the Jew and God, and the Gentile and God, then both Jew and Gentile are reconciled with God. Being reconciled with God they are reconciled with each other. This salvific reconciliation is made living and functional by the Holy Spirit, 'for through him [Christ] we both have access in one Spirit to the Father'. Note, too, that it is to the Father, i.e. we are restored to the family of God, the place of living out our reconciliation. The rest—the figure of the new temple, members being bonded into one another, and of all being the dwelling place of God—these are the practical fruit of the Cross, but without the Cross none of these things would have been possible.

II Corinthians 5:14–21

In this passage Paul was saying that the controlling power of the believer's life was the love of Christ. Note, it was not 'love for Christ', but 'the love of Christ'. Paul then shows what that love was, i.e. dying for us that we should no longer live for ourselves (verse 14), and being made sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in him (verse 21), and by this means reconciling us to God.

When we look at the Cross we see that death was what we deserved to die, but he died it, and since sin and death are in the one bundle, then his being made sin for us, meant he took all the judgement of God upon sin—i.e. death—and endured the death, tasting death for every man (Heb. 2:9). Whilst this might sound like a theological formula, the working out of it was by no means a mere cerebral matter. It was literally a matter of life and death, the most terrible life—and–death event in all history.

For example, Paul said 'In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them.' Not to count a man's sin against him is the same as justifying him, yet how can this be done? God does not simply issue a fiat of non-imputation for He cannot. Indeed He dare not. No; Christ must be made to be sin before man can have such non-imputation of his sins. This 'being made sin' is beyond our comprehension, and certainly beyond our personal experience. Whatever, then, was the experience of Christ it has banished sin and guilt forever! There can be nothing between us and God. The way of reconciliation has been made by the trail-blazer of our salvation (Heb. 2:9–10; cf. John 14:6).

Paul exhorts or appeals to his readers to be reconciled to God. What was impossible for them hitherto, is now possible, and even mandatory, since God has given His Son for this matter.

Colossians 1:15–23

This passage contains both the ontological basis for reconciliation as well as the soteriological work that effects it. We mean by this that by creation all things were one, existing as a dynamic unity. That unity is the ontological basis for reconciliation. We can say that initially all things were reconciled for they had never been divided, at odds or in competition with, each other. Nevertheless they could not come back—as it were—to the created unity unless that were first an ontological reality. Just as all things were created through Christ and for him, i.e. unto him, so they would be in him and upheld by him (subsist in him). This enables us to see the unity of Christ, which is Christ himself.

Verses 19 and 20 are important, 'For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile all things, whether on earth or in heaven,

making peace by the blood of his cross'. This last statement is equal to 'by his death' in verse 22. As we have observed before this reconciliation appears to be cosmic. That is, it affects 'all things'. It is about the term 'all things' that much debate has ensued. How can a salvific death effect a cosmic reconciliation? We must define what the term 'all things' means, if that is possible.

In I Corinthians 15:22 Paul said, 'For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.' We take this verse to be either particularistic or universalistic. 'In Adam' surely means 'all human beings who are in Adam and remain so', and 'in Christ' means 'all human beings who have come to be in Christ and remain so'. Universalism would say, 'All were once in Adam but ultimately all will be in Christ.' The context of the verse has no such universal inference. The constant thought of spiritual death elsewhere in the New Testament becomes meaningless in the light of universalism, especially the statement 'the second death'. We should assume there, that in this and other places, 'all things' means 'all things in Christ', and 'all things that have been redeemed'. 'All things' may well include things other than redeemed persons, but not persons who have refused redemption. There is, of course, the further proposition that outside of Christ no 'thing' is really a true and authentic 'thing'.

When in Colossians 1:19–20 God is said to have reconciled all things by the blood of the Cross then verse 21 addresses believers as having been reconciled by that death of the Cross. That reconciliation is personal, and it has only happened by the death of Christ. This brings us back again to the work of Christ in the Atonement. It is by the Atonement or—rather—the atoning Christ—that we are reconciled.

We can refer here to Colossians 3:14 (and context), 'And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony'. This is much the same as Romans 12:8, where Paul said, 'If possible, as far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all [men].' However, these two actions do not produce reconciliation but proceed from reconciliation—the reconciliation already achieved at the Cross.

All Persons and Things Being Reconciled at the Cross

First let us try to deal with what has been called 'cosmic reconciliation'. Leaving aside the rational creatures of the creation—celestial beings and humans—we can say there is nothing evil in the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms—so called. Only rational beings can be evil. If in the 'all things' of Colossians 1:20–22 celestial beings are included then that would be the one reference to such having salvation, for without salvation nothing is redeemed, and so cannot be reconciled. It is clear from Romans 8:18–25 that the whole creation is eagerly anticipating the glorification of the sons of God when it, itself, will be liberated from the bondage of corruption and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. Some of the eschatological passages of the Old Testament seem to indicate the same, e.g. Isaiah 11:1–10 and 65:17–25, whilst other passages related to the outpouring of the Spirit on God's people speak of a regeneration of nature, i.e. creation.

If the liberation of the creation is dependent upon the revealing (unveiling) of the sons of God in glory (Rom. 8:19), then we can say that the 'all things' of Colossians 1:18–22 constitute the redeemed, the loyal celestial community and the remaining non-rational creation. If we ask why impenitent humans and angels are not included, we have to answer that they are cast into the lake of the fire, the 'second death'. Since none of these creatures capitulates to Christ, then each is outside Christ and not inside Christ (en Christo). Only that which is in him has life (John 1:4; I John 5:12).

Outside of Christ all is death, and nothing is substantial, i.e. ontological. It seems clear from II Corinthians 5:20 where Paul beseeches readers to be reconciled to God that not all men will do this. A real offer is made to them, but they are not forced to accede. Some do not accede.

Being Reconciled to God at the Cross

The order of salvation in the New Testament is that being aware of the offer of the forgiveness of sins, justification and the Holy Spirit, men and women repent and believe (some say, 'believe and repent'), are baptised, and receive the forgiveness of sins, the gift of eternal life, the gift of justification, sanctification, sonship and the Spirit. These persons have been reconciled to God. They are no longer at enmity with Him. Properly speaking they are no longer at enmity with anyone, though other persons may constitute themselves their enemies.

Christ's teaching is clear; that if anyone approaches God and he is unreconciled to his brother then he ought to go and effect reconciliation—whatever may be the response or reaction of the brother. This teaching can be seen in Matthew 5:9; 5:21–26 and 18:15–35. It is also the subject of the apostolic Epistles. We mention this because it seems clear that willingness to reconcile and be reconciled to others must be the hallmark of a person already reconciled to God.

Understanding the Gospel and Unreconciled Man

Coming back to the subject of our reconciliation with God through the Cross, through the blood of Christ, it would seem that not all who would call themselves 'Christians' or 'believers' have necessarily been reconciled to God. I believe this is the crucial point of our whole study. One cannot be reconciled with God if one has not been crucified with Christ, if one does not glory 'save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ', and if one does not 'resolve to know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified'. Let us be clear: we are not speaking of a 'crucifixion cult', or an absolutist concentration on the death of Christ to the exclusion of all other elements of truth, e.g. the Resurrection, Ascension and Parousia of Christ. No: we are talking about whether a person has come to the Cross and passed through the crucible of it, the crucifying experience of having died with Christ.

It is to this matter Paul refers in Romans 6:1–14; Galatians 2:16–21; 5:24; 6:14 and Colossians 3:1—and other related passages. In I Corinthians 1:17–2:5 Paul shows that two things are sought by the human race, especially relating to salvation, the first being 'signs and wonders', i.e. supernatural power, and the second being wisdom, i.e. special wisdom that is extraordinarily powerful. The Jew (the religionist) looks for supernatural power in regard to salvation, and the Greek (the intellectual) looks for the knowledge which of itself will effect salvation. In answer to them Paul says, 'We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block (a scandal) to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God'.

Now Paul is saying that some Jews and some Greeks have left their wrong ideas and have seen the power and wisdom of God in Christ crucified. Other Jews and Greeks have not. The matter which confronts us is whether or not we are trying to shape the Gospel as 'power—as—religion' and 'wisdom—as—religion'. Later we will examine whether a person who has not been fully crucified could possibly be reconciled

to God, and so to others. Indeed we will ask whether such people who espouse the Christian faith are not the ones who are primarily divergent from it, giving us the many disparate elements which prevent basic agreement on the Gospel, and so basic reconciliation.

If we could research the different presentations of Christian truth today and eliminate all those which seek for signs and wonders, i.e. supernatural power through supernatural evidences, and if we could eliminate all those who seek to show the Gospel as being extraordinarily wise, then we might be closer to basic reconciliation in the community of Christ. Let it be clear that we are not against signs and wonders or against wisdom, but we are only interested in the signs and wonders that are of Christ—whatever they may prove to be, and are only interested in wisdom as it is Christ's wisdom. Christ does not merely have the power of God and the wisdom of God. He is the power of God and the wisdom of God, but only as 'Christ crucified' and not as any one of the various Christ's we have raised up or theology— or practise—systems.

Let us state the matter more particularly. Many religionists see the offence that the Gospel is to non-believing people. They wish to pare away unnecessary offence in order to eliminate wrong ideas about the truth of Christ. This is commendable provided it does not pare away the actual offence of the Cross, nor present a false picture by resenting a 'wisdom-Gospel'. For example, the church is faced with multitudinous matters such as abortion, accelerated divorce, extreme permissiveness in sexual and moral matters, homeless children on the street, vast plagues and famines that call for material mercy, the rise in violence and crime, oppression by governments of their people, wars that stem from commercial greed, and similar matters. When asked what the church is doing about these things the church feels guilty unless it sets about rectifying the situations as far as possible. It feels the Gospel is an offence or foolish if it does not set about fighting the battles of the weak and oppressed.

Again, we have a climate of humanism today, and we may wish to show that the Gospel has something to say to the human race, a philosophy which is as good as, if not better than, what humanism or some other philosophy offers. Education is one of the primary concerns of all societies, and the church does not wish to appear ignorant, behind the times, at loggerheads with science, or in the rearguard of present advances in learning. There are those, too, who would wish to show the world that believers are good artists and artisans, good at music, good at sport, and that their religion—so-called—is not fuddy-duddy, obsolete, behind-the-time or one whit lacking when it comes to living life, sharing entertainment, and being up to the mark and the moment.

Now, whatever is good in all these things, the question is whether we have not missed the point of the Gospel. As citizens of this world we are bound—as are all other people in the world—to take social responsibility where necessary, to live where other people are, and to share their problems, their joys and their life, but with the main thing in mind, which is that if men and women are not reconciled to God then they do not know what life is about; they do not have an eternal goal, and they need to hear the Gospel as it really is, and not in its adapted forms which are intended to attract on the basis of power and wisdom.

The Basic Offence of the Cross

Having dealt with the Jewish demand for 'signs and wonders', and the Greek demand for 'wisdom', we might wonder if it is further necessary to speak about the offence of

the Cross. Its offence is not simply the lack of signs and wonders and extraordinary wisdom. Its offence is that the Cross is necessary—indeed wholly indispensable—for me as a sinner. Able religionists, and brilliant intellectuals are highly offended by the teaching that they need the Cross. Christian theology is not primarily a theology of glory, of power, of social achievement, of human compassion or of moral excellence. The Gospel is summed up in a statement of Paul, ‘The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.’ The angel told Joseph, ‘You shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.’ Jesus said of himself, ‘The Son of man has come to seek and save the lost,’ and, ‘For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.’

What we are saying in these paragraphs is that there is no reconciliation apart from the Cross, and if the Cross be not seen clearly, or received with humility and faith, then can be no practical reconciliation between God and man, and man and man. Continuing, then—regarding the necessity of the Cross—we say that there can be no doubt about the fact that sanctification of life is linked with justification and forgiveness. The church is to proclaim the Gospel of Christ in mercy, and it is to exercise mercy. It is to do good unto all men. It is a community purified to do good works, and these may take it out into many spheres of life, to ‘all sorts and conditions of men’, but its primary task is to preach Christ crucified, for this is the only way of reconciliation. Let it be said that ‘Christ crucified’ has meant many different things to many people. Theories of the Cross are not lacking, and many of them may have insights of great value, but Christ crucified is not a theory. It is not even a theology—as such. The teaching of the Cross is clear in the Scriptures:

The race of Adam is under doom because it sinned in him, it fell when he fell. Death has come as result of sin—death which has the sting of death, sin. Man cannot redeem himself. He has no moral power to do so, and any wish for self—salvation will be a spur only to self—atonement. Man is morally weak to the point of impotence. He is energized by Satan to do his will and not God’s. Man is doomed to death, and death is existence apart from God. Eternal death is such existence—for ever. God is love, and before creation had planned the slaying of the Lamb, the work of the Atonement. In time He set forth His Son as a propitiation for the sins of all mankind. No human being can do without the Cross. The Cross must confront man with his sinfulness, his enmity with God, his loss of true life, the judgement of God’s holy law, and his own moral pollution.

If all of this seems horrific and objectionable, then let a man know that God is love, that His Son has borne the sins of the world having been numbered with—and as—all transgressors. He has borne the wrath which is upon sin, he has purified the pollution of men’s evil, and he has taken the guilt which has crushed the human race. He has done all this, and has thereby reconciled us to God. There is no other way to reconciliation for there cannot be, by nature of the case.

That is at once both the offence and glory of the Cross.

What every one of us who reads this essay must ask himself—or herself—‘Have I really ever faced the reality of the Cross—its terrible offence, the horror of man crucifying the Son of God, and that crucifixion being necessary in the face of man’s evil?’

I am strongly convinced that many of us who claim the name of Christ, have not really come to the Cross, to face it, understand it, and accept our co—crucifixion with Christ, with this one who was lifted up as a snake, who crucified the whole corrupt body of Adamic humanity with himself, who was made to be sin, who bore all sins in his body on the Tree, and who was made to be ‘curse’ for us. Few of us understand that he fought Satan and the powers of darkness, and liberated us from the control of Satan and his world. We are further offended to be told we were—

or are—under the power of the prince of this world. All the things we have noted here are the things which divide man from God, and members of the human race from one another, and human creatures from angelic ones.

I believe that when we come to the Cross, see the evil of ourselves, and then the measure and mode of Christ's suffering, then, and only then, will we weep before God and be reconciled to Him, and having been reconciled to Him become reconciled to all. The exercise of this long essay is to confront each one of us with the Cross. This is the point and place of our reconciliation with God and one another. It is the only true place of unification in all history. If we respond to this confrontation in repentance and faith, and if we receive with humility all the gifts of salvation, then surely we will not be divergent in the ways we have been. Surely we will come back to centre, and in that sense be 'apostolic'. Only the heart that is broken at the Cross can become regenerate through the Gospel and the Spirit. Only it can come under the unifying Lordship of Christ, and only it can know its sonship in the Fatherhood of God, and its unity in the fellowship of the Spirit. It is these things which make for unity, for harmony, and for integrity.

I have read widely over many years, have travelled in many countries and had ministry in many places. I think I have been as thoughtful as most, and I am sure that the most humiliating thing in all the world is the Cross of Christ. How the heart refuses to admit its utter sinfulness! How it hardens at the Cross, and will not admit its need of such suffering! Yet having gone through the humiliation of confessing one's sinfulness, and having seen the unspeakable love of God in His Son and His own Fatherhood, the spirit of a man sees what he has never seen on land or sea or sky—the Father Who loves us freely. I have seen, to my sorrow, how quickly men and women who have been to the Cross, can skirt it, think of it as an initial experience and seek to go on to things which they say are 'beyond the Cross'. 'Beyond the Cross'—if we must use that term—is an impossible direction. There is still and ever only the Cross, and nothing beyond it. Yet scholars and theologians strangely rationalize the Cross until it is merely on the human plane, and the rich mystery of it is shaped into human thinking, human action, and even into a Christian humanism which has no Gospel. Theories of the Cross take the place of the Cross, and the theories ameliorate the strong meaning and message of Christ in his propitiatory suffering. Few theologians delve into the mysteries of sacrifice, scorning the Old Testament teaching on propitiation, preferring to develop soft options of their own, or romantic and useless rationalizations of the universal suffering of Christ. To them and others, the Cross is a landmark but no more, or it is sentimentalized into some non-propitiatory demonstration of love, but as such is lifeless and meaningless. In our day we need a resurgence of understanding the Cross, a regenerated theology of it, and a powerful proclamation of it by those who have been filled with the Spirit, who himself reveals the 'deep things of God', the very Cross and Resurrection of Christ, the great redeeming Atonement, and the Redeemer himself. The Cross is not just for forgiveness, justification and sanctification, but it is for all the world in every element of its existence, its government, its life and its mercy. Great love reaches down to justify guilty men by grace, and great mercy reclaims them from endless misery.

Dynamic Opposition to Reconciliation

I have suggested that man's opposition to the Cross—the Atonement—is because of the whole demand for our crucifixion with Christ. The Cross is both a scandal (to the religious) and foolishness (to the intellectual). However, opposition does not begin and end with these two types. The powers of darkness, under Satan, are disintegrative forces. They seek to shatter God's kingdom in order to establish their own. This can be seen from a reading of Psalm 2 where the nations set themselves against God—a theme strongly worked out in chapters 12 to 20 of the Book of the Revelation. The arch-instigator of this rebellion is Satan. It is theme of course, which runs throughout Scripture. The reconciling power of the Cross—the blood of Christ—is therefore a threat to the whole system of Satan, including as it does rebellious man. We would therefore expect every energy of the world—system to put itself against God, seeking to confuse humanity about God's love—action in the Atonement. In II Corinthians 4:3–4 Paul wrote, 'And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God.'

We would expect then, that in every way possible Satan would seek to minimize the reconciling power of the Cross, and would endeavor to raise up in humanity a deep dislike of that Cross. As we have observed, even some of those who have come to God through the Cross, soon skirt it and some even desert it (cf. Gal. 1:6–9).

Conclusion to The Reconciliation of All Things

There may be some who have read this essay and have said to themselves, 'That is the work of a man who has seen the basis but not the implications of the Gospel.' Others will say, 'That is hard, dogmatic, and unappetizing Gospel.' Yet others will say, 'I once thought of things like that, but time has changed me. I have mellowed. I see the sorrows of the world. This Gospel the essayist espouses by—passes the suffering of the world. It lacks compassion.' There will even be those who say, 'Ah! This is the truth I once knew, and which I have lost. I need this truth. I have forgotten I was purged from my old sins. I have fashioned out a self—righteousness which needs to be crucified at the Cross.' There may be those who remember the liberation once received who will say with old hymn—writer, 'I must needs go home, by the way of the Cross, for the way of the Cross leads home.'

I am trusting that there are readers of this essay who will see, even for the first time, the wonder of the act of God in Christ, and that they will come to the Father, full of gratitude for the forgiveness of sins and the free pardon God gives out of His generous and warm love.

For those who remain angry for what they think God has done, or not done, let me say, 'Christ was a man familiar with sorrow. He understood—and understands— our griefs and sorrows. He suffered our sins, and he bore our griefs and sorrows, and through his wounds our wounds are healed. Be comforted. Surrender to Him. Know the relief of reconciliation with Him.'

My conclusion is—without patronage or condescension or foolish dogmatism—that we would not be off on so many by—paths, strange endeavours, exotic systems, esoteric and mystical ways if we were all to come to the Cross, and live daily in Christ crucified. Since all of the sufferings—and indeed all the experiences of

all men and women throughout history—were borne on the Cross, he having experienced them, then nothing happens in history in which he has not already been involved. This is the power of his Cross. That Death is triumphant in all of life. He can give us the wonder of reconciliation with God, and with one another.

As to the reconciliation itself there will be one day, of course, a cosmic reconciliation, when all things will be unified in Christ, under his Headship. The present reconciliation between God and man is a practical fact for those who have repented and believed. The harmony of God's true people proceeds as a present miracle. We are to live at harmony with all men—as much as lies within us. We are the peace-makers—making peace. Peace has come to us through the Cross, and we bring that peace to others. Fierce dissident and dividing forces are operating in the universe, but they cannot succeed in establishing permanent division. Such forces will themselves be destroyed, and the forces of reconciliation will succeed. The work of reconciliation is not one only done at the end of time, but one which is proceeding now, and progressing. It will come to a climax of success when all things are unified in Christ, as they will also be 'filled up', harmonized and reconciled for ever.

Reconciliation in Practice

Review of 'The Reconciliation of All Things'

In our previous study, 'The Reconciliation of All Things', we saw

- (i) All things ought to be in harmony, i.e. reconciled.
- (ii) This is because they were a unity and a harmony in creation.
- (iii) The loss of unity came through the rebellion of angels and men.
- (iv) This hostility arose out of guilt. To be independent of God fallen angelic creatures must oppose God. Fallen humanity must also oppose God. The covenant people will always be opposed by the non-covenant people, since they are identified with God.
- (v) The work of the Atonement was such as to 'bring the hostility to an end'. See Romans 5:1-11; Ephesians 2:11-22; II Corinthians 5:14-21; Colossians 1:15-23.
- (vi) The reconciliation was first with God, and then (thus) with others. There can be no other way of reconciliation.
- (vii) All reconciliation is opposed by the world-system of evil. There is an endeavour to keep things in a state of non-reconciliation.
- (viii) Ultimately all things will be reconciled, but at present the people of God must work through the matter of reconciliation. If this is not done through the Cross-by the aid of the Holy Spirit-then it cannot be done at all.

Our previous study scarcely talked about the practical outworking of reconciliation in this world. It gave the eschatological dimension-total reconciliation-and left it at that. Its main point was that if we do not experience and know the reconciling power of the Cross, then we cannot truly know Reconciliation, or practise it, which would thus account for the divisions we find within the visible elements of the church both in history and at present.

The Basis of the Unity of All Things

The unity of all things must be found in God. The name in Exodus 3:14 of YWH-YAHWEH-was said to be I AM. That is, 'I am what I have always have been, what I am being, and what I will be', though such a statement is an accommodation to our time-thinking. 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End' is another concession to human thinking, since we live in the sequence of time.

We see and know God in time but His nature is not merely His being in time but Who He is and what He does. The acts of ‘the living God’ communicate to us His nature. It is not only that for Him to be is to do—which is true—but it is what He does that indicates Who He is. Even then we must not assume we can fully understand what He does, i.e. sufficiently comprehend it.

The best statement of the unity of God is ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul; and with all your might.’ The statement ‘The Lord our God is one Lord’ is literally Yahweh, our God, Yahweh, One. and can be translated variously as ‘Yahweh our God, Yahweh is one’, ‘Yahweh is our God, Yahweh is one’, ‘Yahweh is our God, Yahweh alone’. Notice that Jesus said (Mark 12:29 RSV) ‘Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God, the Lord is one.’ At the simplest level God is One, and this against the many gods, for Exodus 15:11 asks,

Who is like thee, O Lord among the gods?
Who is like thee, majestic in holiness,
terrible in glorious deeds, doing wonders?

This is saying that other gods cannot do what God does. He is not in competition with them but is utterly other than what they are, so that essentially they are not gods at all. Yet is not simply One as against the many, or superior to the many, or even over all the many, but He is uniquely One. He is One within Himself. His unity is essentially His Being. When then God demands total worship from His people—‘and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul; and with all your might,’ then He is really showing that the unity of the covenant people is contingent upon them being one with His unity. To love with one’s whole being is to be united with one’s whole being with ‘Yahweh our God’ for ‘Yahweh is one’. To worship Yahweh and other gods is not only not to worship God authentically, but it is to deny His unique unity. It is this unique unity we now seek to comprehend. Before we leave the point, however, let us note that Jesus coupled love of God with love of one’s neighbour (cf. Mat. 22:37–40, i.e. the unity of God determines the unity of the worshipper, and the unity of the worshipper determines the unity of the [covenant] people. That is, God’s unity determines all unity, and so the two commandments are the essence of ‘the law and the prophets’. ‘The law and prophets’ are all about the unity of God, and thus the unity of His people.

The Unity of God the Basis of All Unity

At this point we will not embark upon a proof of the Trinity. We will take the Christian dogma of the Triune God, especially as it is stated in the Athanasian Creed ‘. . . that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in unity; neither confounding the Persons: nor dividing the Substance. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son: and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one: the glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal. . . so we are forbidden. . . to say, There be three God or three Lords.’ It is the relationship or unity of the three Persons we wish to comprehend, that is as far as a human being can receive the revelation of this mystery.

The orthodox way of speaking of the Triune God is to show the fact of the Person of the Father, the Person of the Son and the Person of the Spirit, And then to show that each Person has had Deity. This is not too difficult if we take a certain

exegesis of portions of the Scriptures. Then it is pointed out that there are certain elements which speak of an innate plurality in the Godhead, such as ‘Let us make man in our own image’, and ‘who shall go for us?’, whilst adding to the first reference ‘So God created man in his own image’, and to the second reference ‘Whom shall I send?’ In these passages of Genesis 1:26–27 and Isaiah 6:8 we have both a plural and singular pronoun referring to God. The next step in orthodox presentation of the Trinity is to show the truth that God is love, and hence the Godhead is unity in love, and love in unity.

What I propose to do now is to leave this apologia and proceed with the idea of the relational unity of the Godhead. The Athanasian Creed speaks of ‘The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Ghost uncreate’, i.e. that the Three have ever been. There never has been when the Father was not Father, when the Son was not Son, and the Spirit not Spirit. What is important to us is to see that God’s Fatherhood is not to be understood by using the analogy of human fatherhood, nor the Son to be understood by using the analogy of human sonship. At best human fatherhood and sonship can be but a faint reflection of essential Fatherhood and essential Sonship. That is why the Creed speaks of ‘The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible: and the Holy Spirit incomprehensible’. In Isaiah the prophet asks, ‘To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him? (40:18; cf. 40:25; Mic. 7:18; Exod. 8:10; 15:11). Whilst man is in God’s likeness, God is not in man’s likeness. Even so we do have relational factors in human fatherhood and human sonship which help us to come to some understanding of the Divine relationships.

Before we proceed further we should also see that human masculinity should not be the basis of trying to understand God’s ‘masculinity’. God is always spoken of as ‘He’, but we must never use the analogy of human masculinity, or we will prejudice true understanding of God as ‘He’—as ‘Father’ and as ‘Son’.

The Internal Social Relationships of the Triune God

Admitting the incomprehensibility of God we nevertheless have Scriptures which bring us revelation of the relationships within the Trinity: nothing is incomprehensible to us which God chooses to reveal by His word. We repeat, revelation shows us all we need to know as human beings. Here Deuteronomy 29:29 is relevant,

The secret things belong to the Lord our God; but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.

God gives the knowledge that leads to practical obedience. There is no knowledge that is merely noetic, occultic or esoteric. In order to have knowledge of God, and especially of what we call ‘the internal relationships of the Godhead, we doubt that there is a better place to begin to understand than the 17th. chapter of John’s Gospel. In this long passage Jesus opens his heart to God his Father, and to those who heard his prayer. That opening of the heart is richly intimate and most revelatory. We recognize that it was the man Jesus who spoke to God, but his relationship with God as Father did not begin and end with his humanity. The whole Gospel witnesses to the fact that he was one with the Father long before his incarnation. He was given glory by the Father ‘before the world was made’, and ‘before the foundation of the world’. He could say, ‘Before Abraham was I AM,’ with all the connotations of that expression.

This Gospel also tells us that the one who became incarnate was always the Word (the *logos*), and that everything was made by him—statements which are supported in other New Testament passages namely Colossians 1:15–17; I Corinthians 8:6 and

Hebrews 1:2–3. When the Word became flesh he did not cease to be the Word. Likewise when the writer of Hebrews tells us that God ‘created the ages by [a] Son,’ he was ‘Son’ before he was incarnate, i.e. his Sonship preceded time. In regard to the Father and the Son Paul sums up,

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

John 17 speaks of the full relationship between the Father and the Son, and the intimacy that has always existed, both prior to creation and in the present—the present time of his prayer. Statements such as the following reveal that firm relationship,

... all mine are thine, and thine are mine ...

... that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may also be one ...

The glory which thou hast given me, I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one ...

Jesus also made other statements such as

I and the Father are one.

For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself ...

... the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever he does that the Son does likewise.

I am in the Father and the Father in me.

He that has seen me has seen the Father.

Matthew’s Gospel adds to these a similar statement,

... no one knows the Son except the Father and no one know the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

These statements show that there is an identity of nature of the Father and the Son. Since ‘Father’ and ‘Son’ are not terms analogical, but terms direct, then the terms ‘father’ and ‘son’ are not to be used in order to understand God as He is Father, and God as He is Son. In other words the ontological relationships of the Father and the Son cannot be conveyed by human ontological relationships—especially as they are marred by sin—but the Divine relationships not only transcend in degree those which are human, but also transcend in quality. Yet whilst it is true that they are ‘wholly other’ they are not wholly beyond the comprehension we need to have as human confronted with the Divine Nature.

This is shown by John 17:3 and I John 5:20,

And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.

And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding to know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

In the first reference eternal life is knowing God, and knowing God is eternal life. This is also the case in the second reference. The amazing fact is that we come to know God, i.e. as human beings can come to know God. Here we need not go into the mystery of such revelation, but we know the means God uses to reveal Himself are His word and His Spirit. John said, 'And the Spirit is the witness, because the Spirit is the truth.' Jesus said of the Spirit, '... he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak . . . ' Paul said, '... no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God . . . and we impart this in words . . . taught by the Spirit.' We can, then, comprehend the mystery of the Triune Godhead so far as we need to know.

What we know, then, is that there are Three Persons, and that the relationship between the Father and the Son are necessarily intimate, and those of love. The Spirit is the Spirit of the Father, and the Spirit of the Son. Whilst all Three have discrete Being, yet they are not three monads, or three deities. Their unity is that of ontological precedence of being. One hesitates to use the phrase 'of hierarchical order of authority', because the word 'authority' is corrupted in the minds of the human race, since it was rebellion against authority—in the Fall—which brought this word into disrepute and into the discard. It is clear enough that

... the Son can do nothing of his own accord . . .

When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority but speak thus as the Father has taught me.

the words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does his works.

It is also clear that the Holy Spirit does nothing of his own accord, for

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority [from himself], but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things to come.

The Son then cannot be a monad for he is Son to the Father. The Father cannot be a monad for He is Father to the Son. The Spirit cannot be a monad for he has being as the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of the Son. If we cavil at this interpretation of the Johannine statements regarding the Son's relationship with the Father, insisting that it is his earthly [incarnate] Sonship which makes him contingent upon the Father, then we must note that the Spirit, without being incarnate, was [is] also contingent upon God. The Spirit may not speak from himself, and when he does he may only tell what he has heard from God.

The Mutual Inter-dwelling of the Three

The statements, '... the Son who is in the bosom of the Father,' 'I am in the Father, and the Father in me,' 'the Father who dwells in me,' '... I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love,' '... even as thou, Father, are in me and I in thee . . . ' 'that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one , , ,', along with Paul's use of *exapostello*—'God sent forth', i.e. from or out of Himself, tell us of the intimacy of the Father and the Son.

Incidentally, in the same context ((Gal. 4:4–6) the same verb (*exapostello*) is used for the sending forth [out of Himself] of the Spirit.

Now this mutual inter-dwelling of the Three is because, and out of, the reality that ‘God is love’. It is no less, of course, out of the reality of God being righteousness, truth, goodness and holiness. The word ‘attribute’ may be useful but God does not so much have attributes as He is the moral elements we have just stated. We say this because God is not love apart from these other elements, and, in the ultimate they are all One. To have or be love without having or being holiness is impossible. Yet in speaking of love we are speaking of the oneness of God, His true unity, the pure social unity of the Three. When we use the word ‘love’ on the human level then we need the Divine revelation of its meaning and its action. We have sufficient statements in the New Testament that the Father loves the Son, and the Son loves the Spirit, and that there is ‘the love of the Spirit’ to allow us to conclude not only that God is love, but that all Three love one another within the Godhead of Themselves. Nor is it merely incidental—or coincidental—that the only number that can truly test or express love is Three.

Our Need To Understand the Unity of the Godhead

In our pursuit of full unity we must comprehend the unity of the Godhead, or unity within manhood will neither be understood nor accomplished. For this reason we must seek to understand the extraordinary matter of ‘God is love’, i.e. the love that each member of the Godhead has for the others, so that we can also understand the love of God for man, and then man’s love for his fellow-creature, since ‘we love because He first loved us’. Failure to understand this will thoroughly impede all proper discussion of reconciliation. This can be seen from the following Johannine statements,

. . . the Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand.

For the Father loves the Son, and shows him all all that he himself is doing.

For this reason the Father loves me because I lay down my life that I may take it again. . . this charge [command] I have received from my Father.

. . . I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.

. . . that thou hast loved them even as thou hast loved me.

Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given me, may be one with me where I am, to behold my glory which thou hast given me in thy love for me before the foundation of the world. . . that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them.

From the above references we adduce the following points,

- (i) The Father loves the Son and gives all things into his hands, i.e. the authority over all creation, and the ministry relating to redemption. The Father loves the Son for doing his redemptive work.
- (ii) It is in love that the Son is obedient to the Father.
- (iii) The Son does nothing but what the Father shows him, and it is the Father’s love to show him these things.
- (iv) The Son’s obedience shows his love for the Father to the world.
- (v) The Father’s love for His elect is no less—and no other—than His love for His Son.

We must conclude that love being one with all the attributes of God, and all those attributes working together appropriately and the Father, the Spirit and the Son having identity of nature, it is love which constitutes and sustains the unity of all things, i.e. within the Godhead, and within the creation made by God. The discrete being of each of the Three does not make Them monads, but rather is the true discreteness of life, and it is this which gives hope for mankind, since all humans are made in the image of God. Human beings cannot naturally be monads, since this is against man's essential (created) nature. Sin is the denial of creational sociality, and always tends towards making persons monadic. Reconciliation is the restoration of those relationships natural to created man, and which thus image the nature and action of God.

These elements, then, are absolutely essential to the understanding and practice of reconciliation, for if we do not know the basis of all relationships, we cannot understand the restoration to man of the relationships which were impaired by the Fall and its consequences.

Reconciliation in Practice

The Nature of Unity

We must remind ourselves that the unitive nature of the Triune Godhead is reflected, functional and active via the image of God in man. Each human being made in the image of God is not a monad but a social being, and the whole human race is essentially social. This unity is moral, i.e. derives from 'The Fountain of Life'—God—so that 'from the heart of man flow the issues of life', i.e. the moral issues of love, goodness, righteousness, holiness and truth (faithfulness). Whilst man is one with the God Who is One, then total unity will (must) prevail.

The Loss of Unity in Creation

In our previous study we saw that the break of angelic and human creatures with God has brought dissonance into the creation. Separations and divisions of every kind are now extant. The sin of man because of the Fall has brought dissident elements into the universe, and through the curse all creation is affected. Although man—by nature of the case—lives and moves and has his being in God, yet he does not volitionally dwell in God, nor does God relationally dwell in him (cf. Isa. 59:2), i.e. there is no relational unity. The tragedy of this has its personal, familial, racial and cosmic effects. Any reconciliation which comes will have to effect personal, familial and racial unity, and climax in the unity of the whole creation, i.e. of elements both celestial and terrestrial.

The Reconciliation of All Things

This was the subject of our former Study, in which we saw that the separation between God and man came through the Fall, original sin (rebellion, the drive for autonomy) and separated man from God. Man had an essential need to worship, to have a dependency and so he devised idols and lordships to fulfil these emotional, relational and functional needs. Because man is not centred in God he has no true

source of unity—hence the great gulf between him and God, and the innumerable divisions which we have called personal, familial, racial and cosmic.

The work of the Cross removed the guilt of man and freed him from the domination of the world—system, from Satan the prince of this system, and from every other enemy. Man, through the Cross, has been reconciled to God. Christ, in defeating the dissident elements—the enemies of God—did so by taking away the guilt of His people, and making them one with himself. It was for this that Christ prayed in his High—Priestly prayer of John 17—a prayer at which we must shortly look. In this ‘God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself’.

It has sometimes been said that man has to reconcile God to himself. It has to be seen that man—left to himself—would not see the necessity for such reconciliation, would not move to make such reconciliation out of a pure motive, and would be unable to effect acceptable reconciliation. It has to be admitted that man does seek to make self—atonement, but this is both the expression and compounding of his basic sin—his drive for autonomy, in which is the illusion that he can justify himself. It is better, then, to say that man has to realize he cannot effect reconciliation with God, but yet that he is duty—bound to do so. The fact is that God is the Prime—Mover in reconciliation, a matter which is set out in Leviticus 17:11

For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I [God] have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood which makes atonement, by reason of the life.

God, then is the Initiator of reconciliation, and so Paul speaks of ‘Christ, through whom, we have received our reconciliation’.

The Indispensable Nature of the Atonement For Reconciliation

The whole point of our last Study was that unless each person comes to repentance and faith and is crucified with Christ, i.e. comes to the effective work of the Atonement, then practical reconciliation with God and man cannot effectively take place. What we might call ‘internal experience of reconciliation’ cannot take place without the objective work of the Cross, and whilst this is sufficient, our understanding of reconciliation will be deficient if our beings do not grasp the significance of the Atonement. Indeed a failure to understand the love of God dynamically will affect our understanding—and practice—of love, goodness, holiness, righteousness and truth. We must have dynamic union with God before we can have it with others. We have warned ourselves against humanistic ideas of reconciliation, and human attempts to effect such. The matter is of such vast dimensions that human beings cannot even cope with personal, familial, racial and cosmic divisions, let alone effect their reconciliation.

The Reconciling Practice

Coming to Reconciliation

If we look at the requisite elements of coming to reconciliation with God we see that they are dynamic. These things are repentance, faith and turning (converting). Repentance and faith are gifts of God and not primarily works of man (Acts 5:31; 11:18). Through these, then, come the further gifts of God to man, namely forgiveness

of sins, purification of sins, justification, sanctification, regeneration, adoption [sonship] and love. These gifts entirely alter everything for the believer, who can rightly claim, 'If any man is in Christ he is a new creature [creation]. Old things have passed away, behold they [the old things] have become new.' It is this newness which comes from and gives reign to reconciliation so that we dwell in the Father, in the Son, and in the Spirit, and the Three dwell in us so that reconciliation now goes outwards to all persons, and to the creation.

Acting in Reconciliation

We first need to see the position into which the gifts of God has placed us. We are reconciled to God. We know the Triune God. We come into new relation living. Eternal life is to know the Father—the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent'. Just as The Son knew [knows] the Father by relational so do we. 'Now are the children of God'. 'We are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus'. 'As man as are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God'. 'He has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying 'Abba! Father! ' Through the Son and the Spirit we are sons of God. The Son is our Elder Brother, and we are being conformed to his image so that he might be the first-born among many brethren. The Spirit is 'the spirit of Sonship', and he is 'the Spirit of our [your] Father'.

All of this is familial: hence Paul said,

I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family on heaven and earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of God which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fulness of God.

If we examine this passage we see our familiness comes from the Father, and with it all relationships. The Spirit and the Son also dwell in us, and we come to know the love of Christ and to be filled with all the fulness of God—an amazing reality. Thus we are led into the fruits of the Lord's High-Priestly prayer. We will repeat some of these elements

. . . all mine are thine, and thine are mine . . .
 . . . that they may all be one; even as though, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may also be one . . .
 The glory which thou hast given me, I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one . . .
 Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given me, may be one with me where I am, to behold my glory which thou hast given me in thy love for me before the foundation of the world. . . that the love with which thou hast loved me be in them and I in them.

We saw that the oneness of the Father and the Son is because of love, because of their indwelling of each other, and because they were One in vocation, in the plan of God in creation, salvation, and the ultimate unification of all things—the cosmic reconciliation,

I and the Father are one.
 For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself . . .
 . . .the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever he does that the Son does likewise.
 I am in the Father and the Father in me.
 He that has seen me has seen the Father.

Now we need to see the reality of man's union with God, his indwelling of God, and God's indwelling of him. In the way is the reconciliation true and dynamic in effecting reconciliation in all cases. In John 14 Jesus spoke of the Spirit coming to dwell in his disciples. He added, 'If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.' In John 15 Jesus called for the action of 'abiding'. Just as he was [is] dependent upon the Father for all things, so they will be. Jesus spoke of the love that would be experienced by this, 'As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.' In his First Letter John spoke of 'the abiding' by saying, 'All who keep his commandments abide in him, and he in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us.' Again: 'No man has ever seen God; if we love one another God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit . . . God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.'

Paul also has passages which refer to this dwelling of us in God and God in us: 'I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.' 'Christ in you, the hope of glory.' 'For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God.' He also speaks of our bodies being 'the temples of the Holy Spirit', and that all God's people are the temple of God, i.e. the place of His indwelling. He confirms this by saying that we are all part of the growing holy temple of God 'in whom you are also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.'

All of these statements add up to a saying of II Peter 1:4 that we are 'partakers of the divine nature'. We are not divine, nor ever will be, but participate in God because of His dwelling in us, and our dwelling in Him. We conclude then that since the Godhead is the true unity, and we dwell in that unity and indwelt by that unity, then there is an irresistible thrust and drive to 'follow after reconciliation with all men' and to 'live peaceably with all'.

Personal Reconciliation

Most of the New Testament precepts should be read in the light of the moral-ethical system of covenant Israel. In that law every possible provision was made for 'keeping the peace', i.e. keeping each reconciled to his neighbour. The law of love to God and the law of love to one's fellows summed up 'all the law and the commandments and James and Paul—to saying nothing of John—indicate that this is how it is in the true 'Israel of God'. Thus the injunctions of the Sermon the Mount spring from the former [Mosaic] covenant. To have anger is most reprehensible, indeed is about the worst element one can have (cf. Matt. 5:21–22). There are injunctions for coming to reconciliation with one's neighbour (Matt. 5:21–26; 18:15–20). In the New Testament Letters there are many exhortations to relational reconciliation.

Familial Reconciliation

The church is looked upon as ‘the family of God’ (cf. I Tim. 3:15; 4:1–3; Heb. 3:1–7; Eph. 2:19). Because it is ‘in the Father’ (I Thess. 1:2; II Thess. 1:2)—since all are sons of God—then the family peace must be kept.

Racial Reconciliation

In the family of God there no differences which can divide for ‘there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.’ The famous passage of Ephesians 2:11–22 shows that racial reconciliation has come through the Cross. The hostility between man and God, and race and race has been brought to an end. Nor do those of Israel ‘have the edge’ on those Gentiles who have become believers, since they are ‘fellow–heirs, members of the same body, and partakers in Christ Jesus through the gospel.’ Nations have to be baptized ‘into the Name of’ the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Nations are to be baptized into God! Is this not the defeat of the nations, and the bringing of them to dwell in God? These are the nations which will bring their glory into the Holy City—the nations whom Satan seeks to deceive but who are ultimately smitten by the sword in the hand of Christ the Conqueror! This is the ultimate racial reconciliation.

Meanwhile the church is the true ‘Israel of God’, the house of prayer for all nations!

Cosmic Reconciliation

As we saw, briefly, in our previous Study ‘all things’ are to be reconciled by ‘the blood of the Cross’, i.e. by the Atonement. The fruit of the Atonement, i.e. ‘the travail of his soul’ is the unifying of all things,

For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

This is the cosmic reconciliation which comes with the defeat of all evil, when all things are ‘filled up’ by Christ, when the curse has run its course, and all things are harmonized by love. This is when every enemy shall have been put down—the last enemy being destroyed will be death—and when the Holy City descends out of heaven adorned as a Bride for her Husband.

Conclusion to ‘Reconciliation in Practice’

We are forced to see that it is ‘by the blood of his cross’ that God will ‘reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace . . .’ This means that all reconciliation whether personal, familial, racial or cosmic can come only through the Cross—Call other endeavours are futile, bound to fail. The extraordinary dynamics of the Cross are the rich and full expression of the love of the Triune God, working in sociality to effect the irreversible triumph of total reconciliation.

In practice this means we are to live in discerning love. We derive all our relationships from God—from the ‘social Trinity’. The dynamics of reconciliation are

all present in the Persons in Whom we dwell, and Who dwell in us. There is no overall strategy that we can devise. Any blue print there may be is in the hands of the Triune God. It is the richest of all revelations to know that God loves me—really loves me, loves me no less than one member of the Three loves other members of that Unity. This must not only be known by us, personally, but the same love must work through in all our relationships. This means that spouses can love each other, and no marriage need be seen as beyond repair and rehabilitation. No two persons are necessarily incompatible. Parents and children can become a family—in-unity. Anger and resentment, bitterness and enmity can be dissolved and a new unity replace them. Families can cease feuding and come together as the larger family. Racism, colour-consciousness and anger from injustice can change to genuine unity. Yet all of this must be through the Cross, the transformation of sinful men by forgiveness, purification, membership within the family all effected by the Spirit of love.

We must be realistic and recognize that no reconciliation can be effected apart from repentance, faith and turning from what was to Christ himself. When it comes to one person being reconciled to another there must be love as from God, repentance for one's own divisive sinfulness and faith that love can heal. This must apply in marriages, in familial relationships, and relationships within the whole community of man. When it comes to nations once pitted against each other¹, then there must be national repentance and international repentance, and where this is in Christ lasting reconciliation can be achieved. We must recognize that reconciliation is not primarily individualistic. It is not privatized for persons, or even for ecclesiastic groups but it structured for nations, and contains within its (Himself) all the dynamics which can effect reconciliation. There is, of course, false repentance which is often little more than regret or dry remorse. Even so it is a testimony to the fact that nations ought to repent and convert.

For the other—that climatic eschatological reconciliation—then let us remember that it too come from and through the Cross. The measure of repentance, faith, family and sonship—along with the other gifts of creation and redemption—are all working for God, for the ultimate liberation of the creation 'from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God'.

¹ Alexander Solzhenitsyn has a magnificent essay 'Repentance and Self-Limitation' in *From Under the Rubble* (Fontana/Collins, 1976, pp.105–143) in which he discusses the matter of internal repentance within a country, and repentance towards another—or other—countries.

‘In Unity To Dwell’

Rev. Dean J. Carter

‘in Scotland it was generally recognized that if there was a time to rend, there was also a time to sew. Possibly no country in the world has shown a darker record of separation, but it may also be claimed that in no other country have so many efforts been made to accomplish unity.’¹

On October 2, 1929, the union of the Church of Scotland with the United Free Church of Scotland was finally effected. In the face of a small remnant of the United Free Church (‘Continuing’) which declined to join, the two main assemblies met in Edinburgh. Led by their Moderators, they processed from their respective Halls, met and merged at the junction of Bank Street and the High Street, and entered historic St. Giles Cathedral. As they did so, they joined in singing Psalm 133 to *Eastgate*:

‘Behold, how good a thing it is,
And how becoming well,
Together such as brethren are
In unity to dwell.’²

This paper deals with the renewed calls for a clarification of the doctrine of the Church, with particular reference to its unity. It covers what has been termed ‘the ecumenical revival’, the New Testament data on the Church, its unity and theological implications, and then provides a brief survey of leading advocates of unity through Church history. The divisions of the Presbyterian Church in Scotland, and the ventures to establish unity, are then treated. One of the key figures in the Scottish Church, James Denney, is introduced. His life, work as a Church leader and contribution to theological thought forms the main focus and bulk of this study.

The issues treated in this paper are related to the writer’s research thesis—‘One Body through the Cross’: a critical evaluation of the theology and praxis of ‘unity and reunion’ in three recent ecclesiologies (James Denney: Presbyterian; P. T. Forsyth: Congregationalist; J. Scott Lidgett: Methodist). The thesis was prompted by the comment of W. E. Wilson that ‘within this present generation, Drs. Denney, Forsyth, and Scott Lidgett, have expended great learning and eloquence in an endeavour *to* present a view *of* the work of Christ that can appeal to the man *of* today.’³ While this comment relates *to* their views *of* Christology and tile Atonement, each was directly involved in advocating and promoting the reunion *of* die Churches.⁴

¹ David Woodside, *The Soul of a Scottish Church* (United Free Church of Scotland: n.d.), page 284.

² For an account of this occasion, see George M. Keith, *Reminiscences of the United Free Church General Assembly 1!900-1929* (The Moray Press: 1933), pages 340-343. Keith suggests that a more appropriate title for the ‘Continuing’ Church would have been ‘The Disunited Free Church!’ For a further account see *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948*, ed. by R. Rouse and S. C. Neill (SPCK: 1954), pages 449-450.

³ W. E. Wilson, *The Problem of the Cross* (James Clarke & Co.: 1929), page 21-22. Wilson, a Quaker, advocated the Moral Influence theory of the Atonement.

⁴ Denney will be treated in this paper. Of Forsyth: the ‘problem of the church’s broken unity’ Forsyth had squarely faced in his time, and what he had to say is still worth pondering today by all who seek to break down the barriers that separate Christians from each other and blunt effective Christian witness to the pagan world.’ A.

1. THE ECUMENICAL REVIVAL

'There is a 'crisis in ecclesiology'.⁵ So commented Hans Schwarz, in 1982: he was echoing Brunner's call from thirty years ago.⁶ In the midst of the advance of missions, and the fervor accompanying the birth of the World Council of Churches, the same issue was raised, 'what is the doctrine of the Church?' Again, hand in hand with cooperation in mission the call was heard, 'why are we not united in other areas of service, why does the Church continue to suffer from its "unhappy divisions"?' Such voices were raised from within sectors of groups that saw that an 'ecumenical revival' was needed for the well-being of the Church. Would others heed such a call?

Some responded by arguing that Christian unity does not require Church union. Does one require the other, or is there a disparity? If union is appropriate, in which form should it take place? Should it limit itself to informal fellowship, or have a wider perspective, such as mutual recognition, extending to co-operation and federation, or even look to the realisation of corporate and organic union? Would others be content with administrative cooperation, or consensus with a new formulary? The answer to this view was swift: the Church lives not by its confession, but by Him whom it confesses.

Others asked for a clearer definition of the 'Church'. Did and does the term denote a congregation of believers, a broader organized communion (such as the Anglican?), or is it the sum total of all such bodies—the Church militant? Again, is it the 'true disciples' within each of the organized congregations and communions—the Body of Christ, the faithful Christians of all centuries—the 'communion of saints', or is it the People or Family of God? When each of these was considered, the issues of unity were generally confined to the first three suggestions. Further, the areas of consensus were believed to be 'faith', 'worship', the 'sacraments', 'polity' and 'orders'.⁷ Were other more important issues overlooked, was it even necessary to hear and heed the call for union? Perhaps we can begin to answer these questions, after we have given some consideration to what the New Testament appears to give as the basis for our Church life and thought.

M. Hunter, P. T. Forsyth (SCM: 1974), pages 84-85.-At the Addresses delivered on May 11th, 1922, to unveil the Tablet in memory of Forsyth in the New College Library,- Campbell stated that 'within the last ten years his reputation has grown enormously outside the borders of Congregationalism, and both directly and indirectly has had much to do with the creation of the new and better atmosphere in which all questions of common action between the Established Church and the Free Churches are being discussed.' Cited in C. S. Pitt, Church, Ministry and Sacraments (Uni. Press of America: 1983), page xxxi. Of Lidgett it was said that 'he took a leading part in the 'politics' of Methodism, especially in the manifold discussions which preceded Methodist union in 1932, and was deservedly elected President of the Uniting Conference in that year.' See R. E. Davies, Methodism, (Epworth Press: 1976), page 151. Gordon S. Wakefield comments that Lidgett was the 'omnipresent figure' in all aspects of this union. See D. J. Carter, Thy Will Be Done, (Unpublished Master of Theology qualifying thesis, Flinders University, 1987), page 10, for the citation of Wakefield.

⁵ H. Schwarz, The Christian Church (Augsburg: 1982), page 13.

⁶ E. Brunner, The Misunderstanding of the Church (Lutterworth: 1952).

⁷ H. P. Van Dusen, World Christianity, (SCM: 1948). For surveys of the doctrine of the Church, see I. J. Achtemeier, The Quest for Unity in the New Testament Church (Fortress: 1987), G. C. Berkouwer, The Church (Eerdmans: 1976), O. Cullmann, Unity through Diversity (Fortress: 1988), D. Hedegard, Ecumenism and the Bible (Banner of Truth: 1964), F. J. Leenhardt, Two Biblical Faiths: Protestant and Catholic. (Lutterworth: 1964), J.-L. Leuba, New Testament Pattern, (Lutterworth: 1963), M. Marty, Protestantism (Holt, Rinehart & Winston: 1972), K. Runia, Reformation Today (Banner of Truth: 1968), T. F. Torrance, Theology in Reconstruction (SCM: 1965), Theology in Reconciliation (Eerdmans: 1975), 'Our Oneness in Christ and our Disunity in Churches' in Conflict and Agreement in the Church Vol. 1: Order and Disorder (Lutterworth: 1959), page 263-283, 'The Mission of the Church' in Scottish Journal of Theology Vol. 19 No. 2 (June 1966), page 129-143, D. Watson, I Believe in the Church (Hodder & Stoughton; 1978).

2. The NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

2:1 "What is the 'Church'?"

Our English word 'church' or 'kirk' is derived from the Greek adjective *to kyriakon*, as in *kyriae oikia*, which means 'the Lord's house': it was used to denote a place of worship, and then of His people. However, a different word is employed in the New Testament. It is *ekklesia*, which means 'congregation' and not a place or building. In its Hellenistic context it meant an assembly or meeting, having been summoned to gather (see Acts 19:39). When we look behind this to the Old Testament, we find that the Septuagint translated the Hebrew word *qahal* with *ekklesia* : *Israel* as a congregation was constituted at Sinai, and assembled before the Lord at the annual festivals. Whether the Christians took their primary meaning for 'church' from the Jewish or Gentile background has been much disputed: what is certain is that they saw it as meaning a local meeting, rather than an institution or a society.

There were many churches in cities and households, but they were all part of the one *Ekklesia*. The New Testament does not appear to carefully define or explain the linking of the One to the many: there is no apparent organisation or federation (cf. the amphictyony of the Twelve tribes in the Old Testament). Certain churches are prominent in the New Testament: the Jewish church in Jerusalem, the Gentile church in Antioch, and the Pauline churches. Their focus was on hearing and heeding the Word of God, and calling upon God in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. They were recognized by faith as a manifestation of a heavenly reality, experienced the intrusion of the powers of the coming age, and were motivated by an eschatological hope.⁸ Given the diversity of racial, political, geographic and social backgrounds and settings of the members of the Church, was their any common feature, or unitive principle? Was unity of this Church an issue?

2:2 The Concern for Unity in the Church

That unity in the Church was a significant issue may be seen by a brief survey of New Testament documents. In Luke–Acts the question of Jews and Gentiles, together with Samaritans, is treated. Again, this comes to a head at the Jerusalem Council. The regulation of unity and fellowship is considered, and circulated to the scattered congregations. In the Johannine writings, the Gospel speaks of the one Shepherd and His one Flock, Caiaphas' unwitting prophecy that Jesus would gather together all God's children, and what is called the High Priestly prayer, with its emphasis on the unity of the Father with His Son, and the correlative unity of the disciples of Jesus. Unity is stressed in a different form in the Johannine epistles, where the concern is to remain or abide within the community which experiences 'fellowship with the Father'. The letters to the Seven churches in Asia, recorded in the Revelation, do not appear to explicitly mention unity (can you imagine a Synod or Conference with representatives of these local churches?!). However, since the churches in Ephesus and Laodicea ('next door' to Colossae) are included, unity may well be an important issue. To appreciate this suggestion, we need to turn to the Pauline epistles

⁸ For thorough treatments of 'Church' in the New Testament, we refer the reader to Earl Radmacher, *What the Church is all about* (Moody Press: 1978). Radmacher is a Dispensationalist, having completed his doctoral studies at Dallas Seminary. See further, L. Coenen, 'Church, Synagogue' in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* Vol. I, ed. C. Brown (Paternoster Press: 1975), pages 291-307; Karl L. Schmidt, 'Ekklesia' in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* Vol. III, eds. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (Eerdmans: 1968), pages 501-536.

(for the sake of this paper, we accept Pauline authorship of those letters commonly attributed to the apostle).

Paul's letter to the Ephesians emphasizes unity of the Church: it is considered in terms of the one new man, Jews and Gentiles, the headship of Christ over His Body, the oneness of the Spirit and the faith, and the unity manifested in the *Haustafel* stipulations regulating family and social life. The Colossian epistle (to be read in Laodicea) speaks of the unity in Christ, and the danger of seeking security and unity in pagan philosophies. In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul expresses his astonishment that Christ (and so the Church) could be divided. Again, unity at the Lord's Table, in the Body and worship, and unity in the Spirit are mentioned. The second letter speaks of unity under authentic apostolic ministry, and fellowship in the Collection. In Romans we observe the unity of the people of God, both Jews and Gentiles, in worship and witness, as Paul speaks of salvation history, and the pastoral care of weaker and stronger brethren. Galatians treats unity in terms of baptism, fellowship in the one Gospel, and the fatherhood of Abraham over the one people of God. To the Philippians, Paul gives the exhortation to remain united in the face of persecution, sharing in the fellowship of the Gospel, the Spirit, and having the mind of Christ. The Thessalonian church is encouraged to remain 'in the Father', and to stand alongside the other churches facing persecution. Timothy and Titus are given apostolic directives which promote and sustain unity within the people of God.

While unity is not treated explicitly in the letters to the Hebrews, of James and Peter, what is conducive to the maintaining of order is provided.⁹

2:3 Issues arising out of a consideration of the Church

A cursory examination of the Biblical data shows that the apostolic Church experienced both oneness, and a surprising and living diversity. Does this diversity contradict the unity, is it an unavoidable expression of the Church, or is it perhaps an essential feature of the Church? These, and other questions come to the fore in any analysis of the Church.

Some of the issues that demand consideration are: how is the Church related to Christology, since it is His Body and Bride? What of the fact that the titles used for the Church are all singular? Can the age long question of the 'One and the Many' be reconciled within the Church, or is this dependent on the unity of the triune God, and God with man in Christ? What of the issue of 'corporate personality'? Could Christ be 'divided', could the Church be 'divided'? How does this relate to the ontology of the human and divine in the person of Christ? Is there a place for a multiplicity of churches'?

Since the Church is related to Christ by creation, union, and the atonement, how do these concerns assist in our understanding of the Church's oneness? What is the relation of the Spirit to such oneness? Is the unity dependent on a more 'practical' base—mission? Again, if the unity is eschatological, could this allow the Church to dispense with any concern over empirical unity, or is this a 'cop out'? How does the distinction of the

⁹ Apart from the standard commentaries, the reader should consult Mark L. Appold *The Oneness Motif in the Fourth Gospel*, (J. C. B. Mohr: 1976), J. Brown *An Exposition of our Lord's Intercessory Prayer* (Wm. Oliphant & Co.:1866), E. Kaisemann *The Testament of Jesus* (SCM: 1968), G. S. Wakefield *The Liturgy of St. John* (Epworth: 1985), J. D. G. Dunn *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (SCM: 1977), G. Panikulam *Koinonia in the New Testament* Ana. Bib. 85 (Bib. Inst. Press: 1979), R. P. Martin *Reconciliation* (John Knox Press: 1981), L. B. Smedes *All Things Made New* (Eerdmans: 1970), M. Barth *The Broken Wall* (Collins: 1960), C. C. Caragounis *The Ephesian Mysterion* CBNTS 8 (CWK Gleerup: 1977), N. Dahl 'Christ, Creation, and the Church' in *Jesus in the Memory of the Early Church* (Augsburg: 1976), pages 120-140, J. Mackay *God's Order* (Nisbet & Co.: 1953), J. P. Sampley 'And the Two shall become One Flesh' SNTSMS 16 (Cambridge: 1971), idem. *Pauline Partnership in Christ* (Fortress Press: 1980), G. Howard *Paul: Crisis in Galatia* SNTSMS 35 (Cambridge: 1979).

'visible' and 'invisible' help our understanding, if it does? How does this Church relate to Israel as the people of God: does it have continuity or discontinuity?

Within the Church, what could provide unity? Would the canons, creeds, theological methodology, orders of ministry, liturgy, or the sacraments give an adequate basis for unity.¹⁰ If these, and other such issues, provided some form of agenda, in the first century, did they constitute the same agenda for the following centuries? Do they determine our agenda, or are other elements or issues more crucial for us? While an extensive coverage of these questions is beyond the scope of this paper, brief comment ought be made of outstanding contributions to Church unity and reunion.

3. CHRISTIAN UNITY IN CHURCH HISTORY

3:1 The Early Church and Medieval Period.

The first major contributor to the Church's understanding of Unity was Ignatius of Antioch (d. 98/117). He is the earliest witness to the threefold ministry, and argued that episcopacy maintained the unity of the Church: he did not mention apostolic succession. Again, congregational unity was strengthened by the Eucharist.

Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage (c. 200/10–258) dealt with persecution and schism, and wrote *The Unity of the Catholic Church*. He affirmed that the Church was one for two reasons: the primacy of Peter, and the role of episcopacy. The other great advocate of union in the Early Church was Augustine of Hippo (354–430), who insisted that the Atonement was crucial for unity, in the face of the Donatists, and the significance of the eschatological purity of the Church.

While the Councils and their Creeds provided a focus for the Church, the great schism occurred, with the Eastern Church breaking from the West (1054). A number of overtures were made to resolve this divide, but none was successful. The main steps to reunion came as a sequel to the Reformation, which itself entailed a division within the Western Church.

3:2 From the Reformation onwards

'The Reformation was a revolt, not against the principle of unity and catholicity, but against the privileged and oppressive monarchy of Rome—an uprising not merely of national, but of catholic feeling, against what had become a localized and overcentralized imperialism in Christianity, which made true catholicity impossible The catholicity at which the

¹⁰ For further treatments of these issues we refer the reader to Scripture and Confession ed. J. H. Skilton (Presbyterian & Reformed: 1973), H. Kung *The Church* (Search Press: 1976), Leonard Hodgson *The Doctrine of the Trinity* (Nisbet & Co.: 1960), esp. pages 176-183 on the Divine unity as the pattern for all true unity; R. J. Rushdoony *The One and the Many* (Thoburn Press: 1978), points out that for the Reformers truth had priority over unity; see also Rushdoony's *The Foundations of Social Order* (Thoburn Press: 1978), for the view that the concern of the creeds was truth--not unity--against error, was the faith and not the Church, and that the anathemas were an essential and integral part of the (all) creeds; C. Van Til *The Defence of the Faith* (Presbyterian & Reformed: 1967), esp. pages 23-30; Herbert Schlossberg *Idols for Destruction* (Thorn. Nelson Pub.: 1983), for the 'New Community' as resolving the question of the One and the Many; H. R. Boer *Pentecost and Mission* (Eerdmans: 1975), on unity and mission see pages 186-204; E. Schweizer *The Church as the Body of Christ* (John Knox Press: 1976); J. A. T. Robinson *The Body* (SCM: 1977); R. N. Flew *Jesus and His Church* (Epworth Press: 1951); R. Schnackenburg *The Church in the New Testament* (Burns & Oates: 1981); L. Newbigin *The Household of God* (SCM: 1953); P. S. Minear *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Westminster Press: 1977); Otto Weber *Foundations of Dogmatics Vol. II* (Eerdmans: 1983); E. Kasemann 'The Canon of the New Testament and the Unity of the Church' in *Essays on New Testament Themes* (SCM: 1971), pages 95-107, and 'Unity and Multiplicity in the New Testament Doctrine of the Church' in *New Testament Questions of Today* (SCM: 1969), pages 252-259; T. F. Torrance 'The Atonement and the Oneness of the Church' in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 7 (1954), pages 245-269.

Reformers aimed was one of spontaneous, though visible and corporate, fellowship in the obedience of Christ.’¹¹

Following the reformers, G. W. Leibnitz (1646–1716) has been hailed as the ‘greatest supporter of church unity the world has yet known.’¹² In England the chief advocate was Richard Baxter (1615–1691), a noted Puritan.¹³ He wrote *Christian Concord, or the Agreement of the Associated Pastors and Churches of Worcestershire* (1653), *Catholic Unity* (1654), *Universal Concord* (1660), *The Cure of Church Divisions* (1670), *The True and Only Way of Concord* (1679). The major American contribution was made by Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) in his *An Humble Attempt to promote Explicit. Agreement and Visible Union of God’s People in Extraordinary Prayer* (1747). It was taken up and promoted by the Erskine brothers in Scotland. Three further advocates of reunion, in Scotland, were Thomas McCrie (1821), who published *Unity in the Church, her Divisions and their Removal*, and Thomas Chalmers and Robert Candlish, who contributed to *Essays on Christian Union* in 1845. It is to this situation in Scotland that we must now turn.

4. THE CHURCH IN SCOTLAND

Scottish Presbyterianism has been exceptionally fruitful in divisions, yet has also provided a fertile soil for both the resolution and patience required for reunion. As Woodside admits, ‘if Scotland has shown the spirit that divides, it is plain that it has also shown the spirit that unites.’¹⁴

‘The Scots Reformation had been relatively thorough, and a national Church without appreciable rival had been established.’¹⁵ While this situation obtained for the seventeenth century, the same was not so for the next century, as political, economic and social factors, together with rationalism, began to undermine the stability of the Church. ‘Sectarianism, which had made remarkably little impression on seventeenth-century Scotland, now wrecked the visible unity of the Church and destroyed its authority. Separation after separation occurred until by 1806 there were no fewer than seven recognisable Presbyterian denominations in Scotland living in a spiritual atmosphere heavily charged with poison.’¹⁶

The main issue that precipitated the disintegration of the Church of Scotland was the principle of Voluntaryism, over against the principle of Establishment. Voluntaryism meant that membership in a religious body should be free, and not coerced. From this a number of implications were asserted: no religious body should be supported by the State, rather by voluntary contributions, and all groups are viewed as standing as equals before the law, yet independent of the law. This principle has tended to pluralism of churches, especially in

¹¹ J. T. McNeill, *Unitive Protestantism*, (Epworth Press: 1964), page 86-87. McNeill gives Luther's contribution, as well as Calvin's. he then gives a thorough survey of the major advocates of reunion within the Protestant Church. Surveys are available in P. D. Avis, *The Church in the Theology of the Reformers* (Marshall, Morgan & Scott: 1981), G. J. Slosser. *Christian Unity: Its History and Challenge in All Communion*, in *All Lands* (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co.: 1929). On Calvin see Jean Cadier, 'Calvin and the Union of the Churches' in John Calvin ed. by G. E. Duffield (Eerdmans: 1968), pages 118-130, B. C. Milner, Jr. *Calvin's Doctrine of the Church* (E. J. Brill: 1970).

¹² G. J. Jordan, *The Reunion of the Churches: a Study of G. W. Leibnitz and His Great Attempt* (Constable: 1927), page 31.

¹³ See further H. Martin, *Puritanism and Richard Baxter* (SCM: 1954) and A. H. Wood, *Church Unity without Uniformity* (Epworth: 1963).

¹⁴ Woodside, op. cit., page 286.

¹⁵ G. D. Henderson *Church and Ministry* (Hodder & Stoughton: 1951), page 64.

¹⁶ Henderson loc. cit.

Scotland and the United States of America, to viewing theology as a divisive element and liability for the church, as well as spawning a proliferation of parachurch groups engaged in education and missions.¹⁷

The Establishment principle, also known as Erastianism, is the doctrine that the State has the right to intervene and overrule in Church affairs. It takes its name from Thomas Erastus (1524–1583), a Swiss born physician and professor. A Zwinglian by persuasion, he opposed the introduction and imposition of Presbyterian church polity in Heidelberg: he lost, and left. Similar views were espoused by Richard Hooker, with the supremacy of the secular power being recognized in his *Ecclesiastical Polity* (1594). The Westminster Divines held similar tenets and affirmed the authority of the local magistrates. The Church of England is seen as the prime example of an Established or Erastian church: those consecrated as Bishops have been appointed by the Crown, and any significant or major liturgical modifications are dependent on Parliamentary approval.¹⁸

Following the Reformation, and Revolution, the Church of Scotland was established. Yet it suffered a slumber of breaches. The Reformed Presbyterians, adhering to the principle of Voluntaryism, refused to be part of the established church. They rejected the 'divine right' of kings, affirming that only Christ was legal ruler of the nation. They lived in an unbroken lineage from the original Covenantors, who had vigorously opposed the imposition of episcopacy in Scotland. Founded by Richard Cameron and John Renwick, their communities formed a Synod in 1811, but split again in 1863 over the issue of parliamentary election franchises. Those for whom this remained an open issue later joined the Free Church, in 1876.

The first main secession from the Church of Scotland occurred in 1733, with a group led by the Erskine brothers. They further split into the Associate (Burgher) Synod and the General Associate (Anti-Burgher) Synod, yet later reunited to form the United Secession Church in 1820. The other main breach of the eighteenth century was that of the Relief Church, in 1761. Formed by Thomas Gillespie, they reacted to having their ministers appointed by the Church patron. They were more lax in theology and discipline than the United Secession groups, but more evangelical in practice. These two Churches united in 1847. Meanwhile, the remainder of the General Associate Synod who refused to join the United Secession Church (in 1820) joined forces with the Associate Presbytery, which had separated from the General Associate Synod in 1806: they took the name of Original Seceders. 1842 saw the union of the final and original remnants of the Associate Synod with this Original Seceders; this group became the 'Synod of the Original United Seceders'. Most of this group united with the Free Church in 1852.

The Free Church originated in 1843, following the Great Disruption, when about a third of the ministers and members of the Church of Scotland seceded with Thomas Chalmers. 'they refused to submit to what was regarded as State control of the Church. However, they still held to the principle of Establishment: they saw this, however, in terms of the national and public recognition and protection of the Christian religion in Scotland, rather than State control. Following their union with the Reformed Presbyterians in 1876, the Free Church experienced a further split in 1892, as the new group, calling themselves the Free Presbyterian Church, objected to the Declaratory Act. This stated that the Church disclaimed any intolerant or persecuting principles, and that its office bearers were not

¹⁷ For the operation of the principle of Voluntaryism in Scotland see James Bannerman *The Church of Christ* 2 Vols. (Banner of Truth: 1974), especially Vol. 2, page 354ff., and J. R. Fleming, *The Church in Scotland 1875-1929* (T. & T. Clark: 1933).

¹⁸ For a good survey of the whole Erastian controversies in Scotland we refer the reader to William Cunningham *Historical Theology* Vol. 11 (Banner of Truth: 1969), pages 557-587.

bound to any principles which would prevent or prohibit liberty of conscience and private judgment here was a unique break in that it was precipitated on theological or doctrinal grounds, not on a Church–State issue. The Act was later repealed, in 1900.

The largest union took place in 1900, between the Free **Church and the United** Presbyterians, this forming the United Free Church. The remnant of the Free Church that refused to join retained the name of Free Church (the ‘Wee Frees’), and took ecclesiastical, and then civil action against the United Free Church. The Free Church won this action before the House of Lords, which caused great consternation among the Churches and nation. Meanwhile, the United Free Church commenced negotiations with the Church of Scotland: their union was completed in 1929.

While the Presbyterian Church in Scotland had suffered from dreadful factionalism, they had also embarked on reunion. As Woodside aptly points out, ‘the tributary streams that broke off found their way back again, to mingle, we hope, in the end with the great river, which shall include all Presbyterians in Scotland, or possibly something even greater. In almost all these cases of Union ... there were small handfuls left in the wilderness; but these again frequently found their way later on into some larger body.’¹⁹

5. JAMES DENNEY

James Denney, a Scotsman of one theme—the atoning work of Christ, was born on February 5th 1856, at Paisley, of a Reformed Presbyterian (‘Cameronian’) family. When he was just a few months old the family moved to Greenock (James, the eldest, had a sister and two brothers), where his father John Denney worked as a joiner, and served as a deacon in the local church. Denney attended the Highlanders’ Academy for four years as a pupil–teacher. After serving as a Sunday School teacher and being employed as a clerk in Liddel and Brown’s tug boat office, he proceeded to Glasgow University (1874). There he excelled, gaining the outstanding distinction of a double–first honours degree, in Classics and Philosophy. Such was his ability that it was assumed that he would join the Arts faculty on his graduation in 1879, but he continued his studies at the Glasgow Free Church College (now Trinity College) under A. B. Bruce (who exercised the chief influence on Denney’s developing thought), J. S. Candlish and T. M. Lindsay.

Having completed his studies in 1883, Denney applied to the Foreign Mission committee for the staff vacancy at the Free Church College in Calcutta. He failed in this venture, and instead became a Home Missioner in the East End of Glasgow, under the auspices of Free St. John’s.²⁰ Within three years he was ordained, and appointed to Broughty Ferry (where A. B. Bruce and James Moffatt also served). On July 1st 1886 he married Mary Carmichael Brown, which union brought him ‘nearly twenty years of utter happiness.’²¹

¹⁹ Woodside, *op. cit.*, page 285. For further treatments of the reunion of the churches, see John MacLeod, *Scottish Theology* (Banner of Truth: 1974), J. K. S. Reid *Presbyterian and Unity* (A. R. Mowbray & Co.: 1962), A. P. F. Sell, *Defending and Declaring the Faith* (Paternoster Press: 1987), page 22ff., and Thomas Whilelaw ‘The Church Union Movement in Scotland’ in the *Contemporary Review* Vol. 104. Dec. 1913, page 817-825.

²⁰ Alan P. F. Sell, *Defending and Declaring the Faith: Some Scottish Examples 1860-1920*, (Paternoster Press: 1987), page 196. See also I. H. Marshall, ‘James Denney’ in *Creative Minds in Contemporary Theology*, ed. by P. E. Hughes, (Eerdmans: 1969), pages 2U3-236, John R. Taylor, *God Loves Like Taht* (SCM: 1962) and A. M. Hunter, ‘The Theological Wisdom of James Denney’ in *The Expository Times* LX (1949), pages 488-494.

²¹ George J. Jeffrey, ‘James Denney’ in *Fathers of the Kirk*, ed. by R. S. Wright (Oxford University Press: 1960), page 253. The couple enjoyed a certain ‘mania for golf’: he confessed to J. P. Strothers, ‘there is a small golf course here [at Auchterarder, during a holiday in 1894], and Mrs. Denney and I have been gaining health and losing temper, balls, etc. etc., over it almost every morning. To-day we almost resolved never to go back any more; we seem to get worse and worse at it the longer we play.’ See *Letters of Principal James Denney to His Family and Friends* (hereafter LFF) (Hodder & Stoughton: 1922), page 60-61.

In this, his only charge, he hammered out his theological and pastoral perspective. Two features must be noted: a shift in his theological stance, and his writings. His stance has been labeled 'liberal' or 'broad', but he underwent a significant change. Evidently due to the suggestions of his wife, Denney was encouraged to read the sermons of C. H. Spurgeon: he developed a more evangelical conspectus and creed. Nicoll comments that 'it was Spurgeon perhaps as much as anyone who led him to the great decision of his life—the decision to preach the Atoning Death of the Lord Jesus Christ He spent and was spent in making it everything to the Church.'²² Denney, the pastor, also became known internationally as a scholar. While in this pastoral charge, he published the fruits of his passion for a preachable theology. In 1891 his translation of Delitzsch's commentary of Isaiah was released, followed in 1892 by his contribution to the *Expositor's Bible*, a commentary on *Thessalonians*, and in the same series II *Corinthians* in 1894. His *Studies in Theology* appeared in the same year, being the substance of his lectures delivered at the Chicago Theological Seminary in April 1894. For this work he was honoured with the D.D. from Chicago: similar honours were conferred on him by the universities of Glasgow, Aberdeen and Princeton. Later, in 1896, a more popular work entitled *Gospel Questions and Answers* was published, and he began to contribute articles and reviews to the *British Weekly*, the *Expositor* and the *Expository Times*.

Following Candlish's death, Denney was appointed in 1897 Professor of Systematic Theology in the Glasgow Free Church College: he was the first alumnus of the College to be appointed to a Chair there. In 1899 he was transferred to the Chair of New Testament Language, Literature and Theology, taking over from Bruce. In spite of the suggestion that he revert to the Chair of Systematic Theology following the reconstruction of the College at the union of the United Presbyterian Church and the Free Church of Scotland in 1900, he remained in the New Testament Chair.

His time at the College was his most fruitful. The major works for which he is remembered were written during these College days. In 1900 his contribution to *The Expositor's Greek New Testament* series—Romans—appeared. 1902 saw the publication of *The Death of Christ*: its sequel, *The Atonement and the Modern Mind*, a series of lectures addressed to the Aberdeen College Summer School, appeared in 1903. *Jesus and the Gospel* was released in 1908, and his (undelivered) Cunningham Lectures *The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation* was published in 1917. A collection of sermons—*The Way Everlasting*—appeared in 1911, and his Drew Lecture *Factors of Faith in Immortality* was published in the same year. His response to the First World War was published as *War and the Fear of God* in 1916. A more popular work, consisting of articles from the *British Weekly* was published under the title *The Church and the Kingdom*. Finally, major articles were contributed to Hastings' *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* ('Fall', 'Mediation', and 'Righteousness in Paul's Teaching'), *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels* ('Anger', 'Authority of Christ', 'Holy Spirit', 'Jealousy', 'Offence', 'Preaching Christ' and 'Regeneration'), and *Dictionary of the Bible* (14 articles).

²² W. R. Nicoll, 'Appreciation' in *Letters of Principal James Denney to W. Robertson Nicoll 1893-1917*, (hereafter LN) (Hodder & Stoughton: 1920), xvi. Denney became an ardent admirer of Spurgeon as a preacher, and a discerning and sympathetic student of his work. Nicoll, the great editor, was the prime mentor of Denney's initial attempts at writing.

Again, he was engaged in the theological and ecclesiastical concerns of his day. In 1905 he paid a further visit to America; this was followed in 1909 by a visiting lectureship at the Presbyterian College in Vancouver. In 1910 he attended the international Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh. On the death of Lindsay, in 1915 Denney was the sole nomination for the Principalship of the Glasgow College (others on the staff included the theologian James Off and the Old Testament specialist George Adam Smith). Denney taught New, Testament and Pastoral Theology, and his manner and teaching deeply impressed his students:

*day after day in the classroom he kindled in them his own flaming passion for the evangel It was his chief service to his students that he initiated them into the sheer joy of the Gospel and the consequent exhilaration of preaching it. He taught us that we could lean our full weight on Christ's promise of deliverance not only from our sins but from our sinfulness.*²³

At the end of 1907 Denney suffered 'the most shattering blow . . . in the course of his lifetime'²⁴, the death of his wife. From this time onwards Denney devoted himself unstintingly to his Church affairs, to the cause of Church reunion and as Convenor of the Central Fund. He had earlier held to a position strongly opposed to the Establishment of the Church, but as the times and issues of Church and nation changed, so did his opinion and actions. He became a leader in the moves toward reunion of the United Free Church and the Church of Scotland. As convenor of the Central Fund Committee, he was responsible for the collection of dues from which ministerial stipends were paid. Although others wished him to continue working on a major book on Paul, Denney replied, 'I have left the Word of God to serve tables.'²⁵ This work, coupled with his assistance to the Temperance Cause, drained his last energies. He died on 11th June 1917 at the age of sixty-one.

A quiet and modest man, an unimposing yet passionate preacher, Denney sought to find common ground with his students and peers.²⁶ With a quick wit, often given to sarcasm, he revelled in English, French and Italian literature. However, he found no place for humour in connection with the Scriptures.²⁷

His death was deeply lamented, in Scotland and far wider. He had claimed that the cross was the 'hiding place of God's power and the inspiration of all Christian praise': Robertson asserted that he was 'the embodiment of the truth he spoke.'²⁸ Alexander Whyte wrote of Denney's Letters to Nicoll that the book was 'full in every page of the unique power, insight, and versatility of that remarkable man.'²⁹ Professor H. R. Mackintosh stated that 'by the death of Principal Denney at the summit of his power evangelical religion throughout English-speaking lands has suffered a greater loss, we might say with sober truth,

²³ G. J. Jeffrey, *op. cit.*, pages 256-257.

²⁴ G. J. Jeffrey, *op. cit.*, page 255. This was all the more distressing since the couple had no children. One of Denney's students, the Rev. Professor I. A. Robertson, of Aberdeen, commented: 'All his public labours were the work of a great heart; but the last years of unsparing activity were the spendings of a broken heart.' See LN, page xliii.

²⁵ Cited in G. F. Barbour *The Life of Alexander Whyte* (Hodder & Stoughton: 1924), page 508.

²⁶ Robertson, *op. cit.*, page xxxix, also comments that 'he always toiled-to become all things to all men, often fingering awkwardly a lighted cigarette while he strove, for he was no smoker.'

²⁷ Denney commented to Strothers that the only thing in the New Testament that caused him to smile was the expression 'by chance' in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Again, 'an inspired joke is a conception hard to realise.' Finally, 'everything [in the Bible] draws it in to Mount Sinai or Mount Calvary, and these are not places to be funny at.' See LFF, pages 78-80.,

²⁸ Robertson, *op. cit.*, page xxxii. He was acknowledged to be the 'incarnation of the conscience of Scotland in his later days.'

²⁹ Barbour, *op. cit.*, page 638.

than would have been inflicted by the withdrawal of any other mind.'³⁰ Denney, hailed as a 'Barthian before Barth',³¹ was sadly missed by another great mind—Forsyth. He wrote, 'Denney became a court of reference in my silent thought. No man was so needful for the conscience of the Church and the public... There is nobody left now to be the *theological prophet* and lead in the moral reconstruction of belief.'³² It is to Denney's contribution to the 'reconstruction of belief', especially in relation to Church unity and reunion, that we now turn.

6. DENNEY'S VIEW OF THE CHURCH AND ITS UNITY

The praxis of the Church cannot be divorced from its theological foundations, nor can proper theological reflection take place apart from its own specific historical setting. This section of our study will take the form of a survey of Denney's practical contribution to Church reunion in the Assembly and committees of his denomination, followed by a treatment of his theological statements on the issue.

6:1 Denney the Advocate of Church Union in the General Assembly

For Denney, the commitment to the unity of the Church grew out of the dear-bought discipline of prayer and study and experience. He had been reared in one of Scotland's smallest and most conservative Churches and he admitted to an early prejudice in favour of small denominations. But as he studied the New Testament he could not avoid its demand for unity; and as he took his responsible place in meeting the widening call for service he moved forward and began to take an active part in the cause of union. And with him moved his Church.³³

Denney's latter years showed him to be an able and reliable leader in the Church courts. The year 1904 saw him take steps to prominence in relation to Church reunion.³⁴ What prompted these steps? The final decision of the House of Lords in favour of the minority Free Church ('Wee Frees'), when it appealed to 'Caesar' in its claim for the entire property of the original pre-union (1900) Free Church. The appeal was described as 'calamitous', the decision was 'grotesque'.³⁵ At the Conference in Inverness that same year, Denney denounced the Establishment for the majority of the woes of the Church.³⁶ For him, the only proper 'established religion' was that which was 'established *in the hearts and consciences of the people of the land*.'³⁷ What he believed was required, was a far more serious, conscientious and considerable approach, giving due recognition and liberty of

³⁰ H. R. Mackintosh, 'Principal Denney as a Theologian' in *The Expository Times*, XXVIII (1917), page 488. He further commented, 'from start to finish, Calvary was the centre of his world.' P. Carnegie Simpson regarded Denney as the 'finest scholar . . . in the Church' in *The Life of Principal Rainy*, (Hodder & Stoughton: popular edition, n. d.), ii. page 378.

³¹ Of course, for those who are not enamoured with Barth, this is no recommendation!

³² In a personal letter to W. R. Nicoll dated November 25, 1920, cited in *Taylor God Loves Like That* (SCM: 1962), page 26.

³³ Taylor, *op. cit.*, page 160.

³⁴ In a letter to his friend J. P. Struthers, dated May 18, 1896, Denney writes, 'terrible as it may sound to you, I think the Papists have a truer conception of the Church than any 'nationalists' can possibly have; and it is one of the things I envy them. I could be a Papist (provided I were Pope) or a Quaker, but not a nationalist in religion.' See LFF, page 69.

³⁵ George S. Gunn, 'Robert Rainy, 1826-1906' in Wright, *op. cit.*, page 238.

³⁶ Denney consistently argued that 'it is always dangerous when we call in the law . . . to defend the gospel.' See *Studies in Theology* (Hodder & Stoughton: 1894), page 195.

³⁷ Robertson, *op. cit.*, page xli.

conscience to others: unless and until such was in evidence, he saw little reason, and felt no enthusiasm for further union.³⁸ But he later mellowed, and took a more moderate view of Established Church of Scotland. He came to perceive that a new situation obtained, demanding an openness and resolution to meet the new challenges.³⁹ As Moffatt comments, 'when the signs of the times pointed to a larger duty and broader vision, he had mental and moral force enough to advance.'⁴⁰

One of these 'signs of the times' was the International Missionary Conference, held in Edinburgh in 1910. Denney attended, and in answer to the continued disagreement about the nature of the Church, reminded the conferees that the Church was and could be one in a united organization. After all, he argued, all the members of the Church have essentially the same attitude to Christ. Further, 'unity consisted in the loyalty of Christians to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, and not to carefully digested theological propositions or ecclesiastical constitutions.'⁴¹ Within the next twelve months, Denney appears to have fixed his heart decisively on reunion of the Presbyterian churches in Scotland. And in relation to the 'establishment principle' he now affirmed that a 'national' Church should represent and manifest Christ in the State.⁴²

Denney's speech at the 1911 Assembly was conciliatory, as he calmed the veterans who still doggedly held to their outmoded theories and concerns. His address to the Assembly a year later was hailed as 'a great speech',⁴³ as he explained how he perceived that spiritual freedom had been secured for all, that the Church of Scotland recognized both the churchmanship and contribution of the other churches to the national religion. Such recognition, he affirmed, meant that there was in effect, no reason to bar the coming union. Therefore he had no anxiety about the future, and was willing to grant that the Church of Scotland held a lively place and role in the history of the nation. Its witness far outweighed any propositions and theories still held by closed minds. (In the face of younger doctrinaires and older traditionalists, he called the Assembly to move forward. In the Joint Conference on Union held in the same year, he urged that such union should safeguard freedom and not curtail relations with other fellow Christians.

A speech to the 1913 Assembly created a 'great impression' as he spoke on statutory liberty for both doctrine and practice in any united Church. He supported the moves for the proposed Draft Constitution as he saw no reason to further resist union.⁴⁴ Two other features of this year must be noted: he had two articles on reunion published—'The Constructive Task of Protestantism' in the *Constructive Quarterly* (June 1913) and 'Presbyterian Reunion in Scotland' in the *Contemporary Review* (July 1913)—and supported a motion on International Peace, urging calm and conciliation with Germany.

³⁸ See his letter to Nicoll, dated June 6, 1906, in LN, pages 65-66.

³⁹ Jeffrey, *op. cit.*, page 254.

⁴⁰ J. Moffatt, 'Introduction' in LFF, page xv.

⁴¹ See C. Simonson, *The Christology of the Faith and Order Movement* (E. J. Brill: 1972), pages 6-7. Simonson remarks that Denney's phrase, 'Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior', became a touchstone of ecumenism. Denney's phrase came from his suggested 'Creed for the Church', which will be treated in the following section of this paper.

⁴² James Denney, 'Presbyterian Reunion in Scotland', in the *Contemporary Review* Vol. 104, (July 1913), page 50. McNeill also shows that the concern over the 'voluntaryism principle' had become obsolete; see *Unitive Protestantism*, page 326.

⁴³ Comments by Nicoll, in LN, page 164ff.

⁴⁴ In a letter to Nicoll dated September 18, Denney confided that union was required for spiritual reason, and not for pragmatic or expedient reasons. 'That union with the Church of Scotland, though it seems to me a clear duty to attempt it, will strengthen the Church in the country, I do not see: what it needs is to be spiritually strengthened, not politically or financially, and meanwhile we seem to have lost contact with the source of power.' See LN, page 220-221.

When the Draft Constitution was presented to the Assembly in 1914, it was pointed out that perhaps too much had been conceded to Voluntaryism. Whitelaw was critical of the Constitution Committee, opposed their proposal and moved an amendment. This prompted a quick response: 'the speech of the day was made by Professor Denney.'⁴⁵ He exhibited his penetrating insight and clear perception of reality⁴⁶ in his passionate exhortation to the Assembly. He insisted, in his address which virtually carried the meeting,

I am sorry that after all the years that have been spent on this subject, there should still be members of the Church who apparently have not got beyond the barren logomachy of talking about "establishment" and "dis-establishment." I wonder if there are really people who think that, by manipulating abstract nouns like these, they will ever be able to adjust all the complicated historical questions that are involved in the relation of the Scottish Churches to one another and to the State. We cannot solve historical and moral problems just by juggling with terms like that. There is nothing that lends more to intellectual degeneration than to play with words like these and imagine that when we are doing so we are actually dealing with anything.⁴⁷

On the evening of the second day of the 1915 Assembly Denney spoke at the devotional service.⁴⁸ 'through the Assembly deliberations it was hoped that the War would lead to the healing of divisions—both political and ecclesiastical. In these discussions, Denney warned against 'moral suicide' by failing or refusing to fight. A year later, he spoke in the debate over the proposed grading of Sunday—school lessons. Following a series of 'experts', Denney rose to address the Assembly: 'he made hay of the specious arguments of the other side, his own long and rich experience of a teacher enabling him to do so with authority and effect.'⁴⁹ While he delivered what was acknowledged as the best argument, the motion was past, and the innovation introduced.

As the Assembly met in 1917, Denney, as Convenor of the Central Fund, was unable to attend due to ill health. When it met the following year, he (among others) was again absent. For, during the War, 'the strain told terribly on many, and tended to shorten valuable lives.' Denney was one of them, as 'the personnel of Scottish Christendom, as well as not a few of its old characteristics, was materially changed in that fateful time.'⁵⁰

The War ended, the climate for reunion was further enhanced. In July 1921 a Bill, giving the Church the right to legislate on all matters of doctrine and practice, was past. Fraternal negotiations developed, blossomed, and came to full fruition in the union sealed on October 2, 1929. Though not able to see this great goal to which he had committed himself, and served so freely, Denney had played a major role in its direction and progress. As Mackintosh later wrote, 'the cause of Church Union wavered or advanced in no inconsiderable measure according to his judgment.'⁵¹ This is echoed in Walker's comment that 'if Dr. Denney advocates union, there will be union; if Dr. Denney is opposed to union, there will be none.'⁵²

⁴⁵ Keith, *op. cit.*, page 155.

⁴⁶ Moffatt comments that Denney 'insisted on brushing everything aside to reach reality. His own mind generally reached it in advance of most around him, and he could no bear being hindered in practical or ecclesiastical affairs by those who clung obstinately or sentimentally to outworn shibboleths.' LFF, page xiv. 'Reality' was one of Denney's favourite words, and chief concerns.

⁴⁷ Cited by Moffatt, in LFF, pages xiv-xv.

⁴⁸ See the collection of addresses, sermons and articles published in 1916 as *War and the Fear of God*.

⁴⁹ Keith, *op. cit.*, page 175.

⁵⁰ Fleming, *op. cit.*, page 101.

⁵¹ Mackintosh, *art. cit.*, page 488.

⁵² Walker, cited in Taylor, *op. cit.*, page 16U. Walker's remark is also noted by Nicoll in LN, page xxii.

6:2 Denney's view of Church Unity

While Denney is chiefly remembered—and revered—for his meticulous and penetrating writings on the Atonement, he provided a careful analysis of the Church and its unity, and offered suggestions for the reunion of the churches. This section covers his view of the Church, its unity, factors that have militated against this oneness, and his proposed new creed.

'The Kingdom as organised and as acting collectively for the moral discipline of its members seems to be called the Church.'⁵³ Christ as King is Head of His Church. Yet He is not always acknowledged, nor does the Church always recognise that its identity and mission are located in the Christ and the New Testament. For, in 'degenerate times' the Church loses its proper self-consciousness; the only true answer to this dilemma is a return to the New Testament conception of the Church. It will not be resolved by appealing to dogma, ritual, organisations, or social activity. What is this 'conception' of the Church? Paul's first writings about the Church show it to be 'in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ' (I Thess. 1:1; II Thess. 1:1), and that it centred on worship and reciprocal love.

That the Gospels speak of the Kingdom of God, whereas the remainder of the New Testament appears to employ the term 'church', Denney saw as significant. The apostles dropped the use of the term 'kingdom of God' in the Gentile world, and stressed the social facets of the Gospel with 'church', *ekklesia*. This term was not to be explained by either the Septuagint or the Greek city business gathering. 'It means whatever the apostles use it to mean.'⁵⁴ They deliberately exchanged this for the 'kingdom' term, but not thereby discarding it. Why? So that the 'grace of God could find easier access into the hearts of men.'⁵⁵ Against those who charged that this did not take seriously the actual words of Christ, Denney countered that the apostles knew the *mind* of Christ, consequently were not bound to His words. Their concern was not to quote or parrot Him, but to reproduce and reflect His mind, constantly known by His Spirit. This same Spirit brought the rich and dynamic experience of what Christ had effected on the Cross.

The unity of the Church was based on the work of Christ, and experienced by its members by the Spirit of Jesus: the 'Spirit is the bond of union.'⁵⁶ This oneness is known by each of its members, and their local congregations. For, 'these local churches, reciprocally independent as they were, were nevertheless one; they were a church; they were *the* church of the living God.'⁵⁷ And the uniting bond, for churches as well as members was their common reception of God's love in Christ, and the common consent to the obligations that the reception of the love dictates. Such unity is not founded upon offices, constitutions, creeds, polity, for such matters are not mentioned or imposed by the apostles. Rather, the Christ's gifts to His Church are His Spirit and Spirit endowed men. The diversity of and within the gifts show that unity is not uniformity, for uniformity .suffocates all originality and enterprise in the Christian life.'⁵⁸

What is behind and above this universal Church? It is the 'ideal' Church, the eschatological Bride of Christ. This Church is 'the contents of the divine decree of redemption . . . the end of all God's works.'⁵⁹ Given that that is the goal, does the present Church live and work without beliefs and organisation? No, it has creeds, and forms or

⁵³ Denney, SIT, page 179.

⁵⁴ Denney, SIT, page 185.

⁵⁵ Denney, *ibid.*

⁵⁶ Denney, *op. cit.*, page 187,

⁵⁷ Denney, *ibid.*

⁵⁸ Denney, *op. cit.*, page 190.

⁵⁹ Denney, *op. cit.*, page 191.

orders of ministry. Yet both of these factors have tended to work against its essential oneness. What does Denney say about them?

A creed is an 'authorized statement or definition of religious beliefs.'⁶⁰ Only a religion of revelation could possibly have a creed, for pagan religions are essentially devoid of doctrine (they focus on ritual). There is no creed as such in the Old Testament. The Ten Words are perhaps a symbol of divine requirement, not a lively confession. The *Shema* (Deut. 6:4) is the 'nearest approach to the enunciation of a doctrine.'⁶¹ [However, it must be remembered that even this is in the form of a command, and the practical issue is not so much the excommunication of heretics, but the discipline of the disobedient. It is orthopraxy, not orthodoxy.]

When we come to the New Testament, a different situation obtains. Here we detect the requirement of expressed faith in Jesus, the confession of the exaltation of the crucified Lord Jesus Christ. This is the earliest form of creed in the Church. It was coupled with the Baptismal rite, with its Trinitarian and Christological affirmations. Further summaries of apostolic teaching were provided for liturgical and catechetical uses (I Cor. 15:3ff.; I Tim. 3:16ff.; II Tim. 1:13; I Tim. 6:20). Doctrinal formulations may be detected in Hebrews 6:1ff., Romans 6:17 and Rom. 16:25.

To these small beginnings the creeds may be traced. Certainly the tendency for their formulation and employment appears to be as old as preaching and teaching within the Church their use was sanctioned, and they safeguarded the truth disclosed in, through and by Jesus. Since the chief dogma of the Church was the Trinity, it was only natural that it became the central content of the creeds, all being dependent on the revelation of the Father, the bestowal of the Spirit, these also being dependent on the knowledge and disclosure of the Son. This is Denney's understanding of the Biblical background and basis for creeds. However, how they developed and were used by the Church was a matter of special concern. Initially the Church held to no legally formulated and binding belief or constitution. But with the advent of baptismal creeds, and then the 'Apostolic' creed as a rule of faith, the situation began to change. Due to the use of the Apostles' creed, and the fact that the Canon (whatever statements and books were congruent with apostolic authority and accepted by Christians and the universal Church) was finally decided in Rome, it became known as the primary See. A shift was taking place: from a living community the Church was moving to confessing and safeguarding facts, from being spiritual to intellectual. No longer were the marks of the Church seen as Christianity 'in them' or the new life owed to Christ, and constantly enjoyed and experienced by a deep experience in Him, but correctness of opinion.

Now the 'significant issues' were related to dogma, as the Church wilted under the pressure of temporal concerns and external demands; now the law was called upon to defend the Gospel. How could the 'law' guarantee the required apostolic authority and character? What method could be employed to sustain the new position? The Church's answer was that the *episcopal constitution was apostolic*. Such a claim failed to appreciate the simple fact that there can never be a historical or empirical guarantee: the Church lives by faith, not sight. It had now supplemented a general historical practise with a dogmatic assertion, it was supplanted by an absolutised order in an institution. Finally, having commenced as a spiritual and holy society, the Church moved through the stage of being a

⁶⁰ Denney, 'Creed' in A Dictionary of the Bible, ed. J. Hastings (T. & T. Clark: 1892-1902), Vol. 1, page 516.

⁶¹ Denney, 'Creed', page 517.

defensive intellectual school of true doctrine to end up as a hierarchical institution with a clerical polity. Having been committed to this wrong course, it followed it to the end.⁶²

What was Denney's opinion of this creedal 'development'? He showed that the Church should avoid shackling its members to a fixed creed: since the Bible does not act as a 'straitjacket',⁶³ neither should, or could, creeds and confessions. Such formulae can at best be secondary, and their answers provisional (cf. I Cor. 13:9): they are always subject to revision. Denney's biographer Jeffrey commented that he would have heartily endorsed the saying that 'you can no more imprison the living, loving, Risen Christ in a form of words than you can capture a perfume in a net.'⁶⁴ He preached, 'our Church expressly gives those who sign its confession liberty to dissent from it on matters not entering into the substance of the Reformed faith.'⁶⁵ The substance of this faith is binding on all: 'the Church must bind its members to the Christian attitude to Christ, but it has no right to bind them to anything besides.'⁶⁶ Again, he held that the creeds and confessions, even those of the Reformation, seemed to remain one step beyond or adrift from the believer's experience and life of faith.

Having seen his aversion to what had occurred through the course of history, Denney nevertheless recognised that creeds had their place. He devised a formula or symbol which he thought that all Christians could affirm as a basis of union. It was 'something of a radically different kind'.⁶⁷ It reads, 'I believe in God through Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord and Saviour.'⁶⁸ While some saw insurmountable difficulties in and with it, two of his peers gave favourable responses. Forsyth, writing on his own advocacy of a single article as the basis of union, comments, 'I was greatly relieved and cheered to find Dr. Denney taking the same position in his great book on Jesus and the Gospels.'⁶⁹ This was echoed by Mackintosh, 'his exposition of this simple but profound confession has done more than perhaps he knew to quicken the movement for modification of the Creed, into a formula vital, unspeculative, and essentially religious.'⁷⁰

The main criticism of the 'symbol' was its failure to include reference to the Holy Spirit. Denney suffered from the accusation that he was implicitly binitarian in his theology.⁷¹ Taylor, Denney's chief expositor, has conclusively shown that such an accusation is totally unfounded, and shows a failure to appreciate the place and role of the Spirit in Denney's thought and writings.⁷² For Denney, argues Taylor, the Spirit's

⁶² Denney, *SIT*, pages 191-198. See also O. Quick, *Doctrines of the Creed*, (Collins: 1963), A. Richardson, *Creeds in the Making* (SCM: 1935), Klass Runia, *I Believe in God* (Tyndale: 1968), and Erik Routley, *Creeds and Confessions* (Duckworth: 1962), and T. F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, (T. & T. Clark: 1988).

⁶³ Sell, *op. cit.*, page 204.

⁶⁴ Jeffery, *op. cit.*, page 259.

⁶⁵ Denney, *The Way Everlasting*, (Hodder & Stoughton: 1911), page 69. The sermon is titled 'Learning from the Enemy', on It Samuel 16:11.

⁶⁶ Denney, *Jesus and the Gospel* (Hodder & Stoughton: 1908), page viii. See also page 375, 'Christianity does not mean the recognition of necessary truths of reason, but an attitude of the soul to God, determined by Christ.'

⁶⁷ Denney, *JAG*, page 391.

⁶⁸ Denney, *JAG*, page 398.

⁶⁹ P. T. Forsyth, *Theology in Church and State*, (Hodder & Stoughton: 1915).

⁷⁰ Mackintosh, *art. cit.*, page 493.

⁷¹ See Sell, *op. cit.*, page 205. For further information, see Darlow's *William Robertson Nicoll: His Life and Letters* (Hodder & Stoughton: 1925), pages 360-365, for Nicoll's correspondence to Denney and Mackintosh on this matter.

⁷² Taylor, *op. cit.*, page 119ff. The chapter is titled 'The Touch of God'. Denney claims that the Creeds have historically been embarrassed about the article on the Spirit: Sell suggests that such embarrassment is Denney's!

operation is co-extensive with Christian faith and experience. The Spirit is *everywhere* through his theology, without being explicitly cited. The implications for this, are, for example, 'to understand what is meant by the Spirit is to understand these two things—the New Testament and the Christian Church. . . In them and in their mutual relations we have the only adequate witness to what the Spirit means for Christians.'⁷³ It is this Spirit of Jesus who unites the members of the Church to Christ their Head and King, and who brings all Christian experience to unity. Hence, anticipating some reaction to a supposed overlooking of the Spirit, Denney argued that since the Spirit and faith are correlative, the Spirit is included.⁷⁴ Again, when the Church was criticised for its apparent failure to live up to the creed—'I believe (in) one holy catholic and apostolic Church', Denney rose to its defence;

The unity of the Church *is* not to be achieved by gathering all these [Episcopalians, Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Methodists] into what the law *would* recognise as one *entitg morale*; they may be one in the only sense which the New Testament cares for without having one and the same legal constitution. They may be one in the unity of the Spirit, one in participation in the same supernatural life, without being one in organisation.⁷⁵

Other criticisms of his creed were anticipated, and answered in his exposition. Was his confession 'too indefinite', allowing even Arians to adopt it? To this, he countered, 'if we wait for unity in the Church till all Christians accept the same Christology, we may as well give up the thought of unity at once.'⁷⁶ To the accusations that he omitted reference to the birth and resurrection of Christ, and even the Atonement, he responded that they are all assumed, in the attitude of the believer to Jesus as Christ, Lord and Saviour. What he wished to impress upon his fellows was that true confession of Christ was not bound to water-tight formulations. 'It is not the signing of a creed which keeps men true to their religion, but something quite different':⁷⁷ it is the personal experience of the Christ who has claimed us. As he so clearly and concisely stated, 'the Church's confession of faith should be sung, not signed.'⁷⁸

The other feature that Denney exposed as militating against unity was 'orders of ministry.' He strongly argued against any 'priesthood' within the Church, apart from the sole High Priesthood of Christ. Any such 'official mediators' are, in effect, to 'apostasize from Christianity.'⁷⁹ That the Church of Rome, with its ecclesiastical hierarchy, should claim to have an unbroken line reaching back to the apostles is without foundation. Empirically, there is no unbroken succession, and even if there were, no external continuity could ever guarantee spiritual correlation to Jesus and His apostles.⁸⁰ The much vaunted 'apostolic succession' was derided as 'a dead weight which some Churches carry, and

⁷³ See Denney, 'Holy Spirit' in A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels Vol.I, ed. James Hastings (T. & T. Clark: 1906-1908), page 731. See further the Spirit in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans in the Expositor's Greek Testament (Eerdmans: 1970), and The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, (James Clarke & Co.: 1959), especially pages 310-311.

⁷⁴ Denney, 'Holy Spirit', page 738.

⁷⁵ Denney, 'Criticising the Church', in The Church and the Kingdom (Hodder & Stoughton: 1910), page 147-148. Further, varieties of organisation are the 'necessary counterpart to the unity of the Spirit.' Unity is real, and varieties are complimentary, promoting love and devotion to the ends of the gospel. To suggest that unity could be achieved by a constitution, or recourse to the 'law', Denney saw as contrary to the Gospel, and the Creed, for 'to look to law, is to forget a main article in the Creed-I believe in the Holy Ghost.' 'The Church and Legislation' in TCATK, page 133.

⁷⁶ Denney, JAG, page 403.

⁷⁷ Denney, *ibid.*, page 409.

⁷⁸ Moffatt, LFF, page xii-xiii.

⁷⁹ Denney, 'Priest', in A Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. IV., ed. James Hastings (T. & T. Clark: 1902), page 100.

⁸⁰ Denney, TWE, page 102.

which, though sometimes imposing to the imagination, is never in the truest Christian sense inspiring.'⁸¹

When we weigh up Denney's contribution, we must give due regard to his own conclusion to his work on Church unity and his proposed creed: 'it is not the acceptance of any theology or Christology, however penetrating or profound, which keeps us Christian; we remain loyal to our Lord and Saviour only because He has apprehended us, and His hand is strong.'⁸²

It is fitting that we should remember the contribution of Denney to the cause of Church reunion, on this day which commemorates the union of the United Free Church with the Church of Scotland. Let us conclude with the call made to the Church by Alan Sell:

'How are the churches to confess the gospel today? How far and along what lines may a satisfactory Christian world view be articulated?' These are among other questions which Denney poses to contemporary Christian thought. The former is receiving considerable attention in ecumenical circles, and Denney's views deserve consideration in this context.⁸³

⁸¹ Denney, SIT', page 198.

⁸² Denney, JAG, page 411.

⁸³ Sell, op. cit., page 226.

The Pastor and Christian Communications

Part One: Competition in Communication

Everything and Everyone Communicating

What we know is that everyone is in the matter of communications. Husbands and wives communicate—whether they wish to or not! So do children and parents, friends and enemies. We all communicate, but do not view it as a business. Others do. Advertisers are out to capture their readers, listeners and viewers. Political parties seek to win the minds of the electorate. Social clubs, sporting groups and churches wish to influence people for their own advancement. One of the latest facilities is ‘Rent-a-Crowd’! Artists, writers and musicians many times are found offering their wares, although not always. Most of these ‘persuaders’ are reasonably mild. They aim to communicate directly and reap quick results. More formidable are the forces which aim to change the minds of persons, and capture them psychologically, religiously and ideologically. Every person ought to read William Sargent’s *Battle for the Mind* (Pan Books, London, 1959), if only to see the powerful techniques used to induce changes in the thinking of devotees of sects and ideologies. The method of changing the mind through induced abreaction, i.e. the technique of building up fear in the mind by heavy emotion and guilt until the mind rejects its past by a psychological catharsis, thus laying itself open to the inrush of a new suggested scheme of thinking and action, is called brain-washing.

The techniques of manipulating the human mind are ancient. In Sargent’s book there is a long article written by Robert Graves on the ancient Greek rites by which devotees were ‘born again’. Whilst they were mostly horrific, they were certainly dynamic. Sargent sees parallels in many of the religious sects of today. William Kilpatrick in his book *Psychological Seduction* (Thomas Nelson, 1983) shows that re-birthing rituals are part of almost every culture. Whatever may be the interpretations of mind-changing rituals, the fact is that we live in an age when propaganda is exercised in world-wide proportions. Some countries have a Minister of Propaganda. The diplomatic and spying networks of countries are vast and intricate. Misinformation is also utilized to effect misleading knowledge to the human mind.

Biblically this is nothing new. We have touched on the Satanic system and the so-called ‘wisdom’ of this world. Without allowing ourselves to be intimidated by the idea of an horrific conspiracy, we ought to recognize that the powers of darkness seek to blind human eyes ‘to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ’ (II Cor. 4:4), and that the word ‘deceptive’ is applied to sin, human beings, human lusts, the world and the devil. The devil is the one ‘who

goes out to deceive the whole world' and 'to deceive the nations'. J. B. Phillips translates Ephesians 6:10–12, 'Put on God's complete armour so that you can successfully resist all the devil's methods of attack. For, as I expect you have learned by now, our fight is not against any physical enemy: it is against organizations and powers that are spiritual. We are up against the unseen power that controls this dark world, and spiritual agents from the very headquarters of evil.' Paul was saying that every day and in every way there are communications that emanate from 'the very headquarters of evil'. This is doubtless why he tells the Christians at Rome, 'Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.' He does so because just as subliminal advertising can powerfully affect human thinking without the object of it being consciously aware, so evil emanations can deeply affect us. We need an initial change of mind—i.e. repentance (the Greek word *metanoia* means 'change of mind')—and then a constant process, daily, of renewal of the mind. This is effected by reading and obeying the word of God, however it may come to us.

We conclude then, that everyone and everything is seeking to grip the human mind and condition human thinking and action. As Christians we need to know the world in which we live, and what are the commands to preach the Gospel to it, as well as to know what it is to be light and salt within it.

What we need to realize is that all that is evil—Satan, his world—system and human beings—are not only drawn on by unholy ambition, but are compulsively driven to prove, vindicate and justify themselves and their systems. If we miss the reality of this drive and the enormous compulsion of it, we will fail to realize why people do not hear our communications properly. We communicate in fact, but what we say is threatening to survival of the others, and is violently rejected, or passively ignored.

Knowing the World to Which, and in Which We Communicate

Two things we must know:

- (i) what we wish to communicate; and
 - (ii) the world in which we live and in which we wish to communicate the truth.
- We need a biblical exposition of these two things or we will be confused.

What We Communicate

As for what we communicate—that is God who is the truth, and His saving elements which redeem man, bringing him back to God and assuring him of true life in this world, and of even more wonderful life in the world to come—we must know it properly. Undoubtedly we need to comprehend 'the whole counsel of God', much of which can be learned via reading of the Scriptures, use of aids such as bible dictionaries, bible commentaries and theological works. (I suggest two of my own books, *The Things We Firmly Believe* (NCPI, 1981) and *Salvation History* (NCPI, n.d.)

What we communicate must not simply be what we teach because we have been indoctrinated and conditioned to believe it. Nor must it simply be to gain devotees or proselytes to our group situation. It must not even be the best amongst a number of options. It must be truth of God.

Note on the Insubstantial Nature of Material Communicated:

Ronald Conway in an article in *Quadrant* (Oct. 1987) entitled 'Peeping Into The Abyss', opens with a quote from Professor Neil Postman's book *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (Heinemann, 1986), 'When a population becomes distracted by trivia, when a cultural life is defined as a perpetual round of entertainment, when serious public conversation becomes a form of baby-talk, when in short a people becomes an audience and their public business a vaudeville act, then a nation finds itself at risk, culture-death is a clear possibility.' Conway notes that 'Postman is at his most withering when discussing the junking of religion and spiritual transcendence by the TV evangelists. This is not only the case with fantasts like Oral Roberts but even with the smoothies like Dr Robert Schuller, who had his own coronary by-pass operation televised because "there was no way they could lose me on prime time TV. God might possibly fail Dr. Schuller but CBS or NBC certainly couldn't." Postman said, 'I believe I am not mistaken that Christianity is a demanding and serious religion. When it is delivered in as easy and amusing way it is another kind of religion altogether.' Conway adds, 'Far from being flashy, Christian "witness" on our local networks consistently favours either a sort of drab proletarian whining or the archly twee or occult messages put out by the Christian Television Association. These latter oddities pose a kind of cross between cut-rate Picasso and kindergarten frolics . . . Christians tend to frame their TV "prophecy" with either the naive critical arrogance of Sister Veronica Brady or in the ultra-cautious manner of a well-known and worthy archbishop who always has the misfortune to behave and sound exactly like Uriah Heep.'

The World to Which, and in Which We Communicate

Christians are often confused over the use of the term 'the world'. It is better for us to use the word primarily for the whole creation, but with special reference to our own planet. Secondly there is the use of it to cover the system under Satan-'the prince [or, god] of this world'-which includes fallen celestial and terrestrial creatures, and is organized against God and for Satan, that he might attain to his unholy ambition of ruling the creation (see *The Dominion of Darkness and the Victory of God*, NCPI, 1977).

What we must first understand is that this world is God's and not Satan's. Christians need never think that Satan controls the creation: it is God's alone. Nothing created is evil of itself (Gen. 1:31; Eccl. 3:11; Rom. 14:14; I Tim. 4:4). Without doubt Satan and his powers were originally given authority: their names-'principalities', 'authorities', 'dominions'-testify to this, and they refuse to let these go, choosing to use them for evil purposes. It is also clear from the Scriptures that God allows them to work their will in many ways so that some sicknesses are linked with them, as also demonic possession, oppression and manipulation of persons and nations. Even so, Christians should not be apprehensive or frightened. God is in control and all authority has been given to Christ who is Lord over all. In fact God, in Christ, can be said to have re-won the creation by the Incarnation and the Atonement. Not that-in one sense-it was ever lost, but God's reign over it all was established irreversibly by the victory of the Cross.

Further, we should see that evil forces work in the good creation of God, insinuating that things such as food, comfort, sex, and pleasure are evil, when in fact

they have been given for man's enjoyment (cf. I Cor. 10:26; I Tim. 4:1–4; 6:17; I Cor. 10:31). These powers seek to control the action of history, especially of nations. The Book of the Revelation—especially chapters 12 to 20—sets out the following forces:

(i) The dragon who is in fact 'that ancient serpent, the devil, who goes out to deceive the whole world'.

(ii) Clones of the dragon, namely the first and second beasts. The first beast is a copy of the dragon, the second beast is 'like a lamb', whilst the 'image' and the 'false prophet' seem to be one and the same.

(iii) The city called 'Babylon, the mother of harlots', the city with whom the kings and merchants of the world do trade.

We do not say that these evil powers are literally as they are depicted because the language is apocalyptic, having strong symbolic presentation, but behind these figures are the realities of beastly and false and seductive powers. We do not think a hideous dragon or beast is lumbering about, spatially, but we do believe that what these pictures symbolize is actual and terrible. At the same time, none of these figures operates as seen and dreadful creatures. Many interesting interpretations of them and their actions can be read, but our reading should help us to see that what is draconian, beastly, deceptive, attractive but deceptive and evilly seductive, is abroad in our world. Because humans are sensual and proud creatures the communications which come from these forces are most powerful. In one sense the forces of holiness and love stand little chance against them. Their ambition is to destroy all the forces of God, and to enslave all His creatures, conscripting them for their purposes.

One example of their operations is 'the mark of the beast', the number 666. Many interpreters have sought to give us true understanding but cannot do so satisfactorily. It can only be known by contrast to 'the seal of God'. Those with the beast's mark are sealed for evil, and those with God's mark are sealed for Him. The beast is said to triumph for a time, and the dragon, the beast and the false prophet to be able to deceive the kings and leaders of nations so that they set out to destroy even God.

This World is God's

Our seeming diversion above—regarding evil powers and the world system—may seem to be out of our subject of communications. To the contrary: it is very much to do with it. We will have to understand that the human race is torn between the devil and the deep blue sea! Communication is not a joke or an idle option. It is deadly business. If we could easily distinguish 'worldly' and 'Christian' communications then our task might be easier, but that distinction is difficult to make. Deception, seduction, coercion and threatening are the tools—in-trade of the worldly powers. We cannot 'take a leaf out of their books' or cleverly match them—as it were—act for act. Essential to true action is the understanding that this world is God's. He is Sovereign. Despite seeming appearances to the contrary He is King over all. The Scriptures freely admit that the world will seem to swamp mankind and history and appear to be the most powerful force, but also tells us that in the end all evil will collapse, and every knee bow to Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of the Father. The kingdom of this world will become the Kingdom of our Lord and His Christ and as His people we shall reign for ever—'a kingdom of priests unto our God'.

That this world is God's is greatly important. True believers are not strangers in this creation, though they may be very much strangers to the ways of the Satanic world-system and do not feel at home in it. In our next study we will see that 'worldlings', too, are not at home in the world-system. Indeed they are much in anguish within it. They are still confronted by the word of God, i.e. by God talking to them through many media which they cannot cut off. The central prophecy of Scripture is that the sword of the Spirit—the sharp two-edged sword which issues out of Christ's mouth—will 'smite the nations'. The sword is the word of God and all believers should take heart and become part of this action of the sword—i.e. of the final and dynamic communication.

Part Two: Communicating in the World Today: The Matter of Transcendence

'Ecclesiastes' and the Human Dilemma

The Book of Ecclesiastes is probably the most popular—and most quoted—book of the Bible outside the group of those who read the Scriptures as people of faith. It seems to be a book in which worldly disillusionment and hard-headed pessimism are presented. The writer of the book is called 'Ecclesiastes' in Greek and 'Koheleth' in Hebrew, meaning 'The Preacher' in English. We need not here discuss who he was, but he was a preacher with considerable experience of life and probably had had more variety of human living than his audience.

His thesis is that nothing 'under the sun', i.e. 'under heaven', or 'upon the earth', has any substantial value or purpose. No matter what man does—either in deliberately sensual living, or high and lofty ambition—will ever come to anything. Everything is 'vanity', i.e. 'a striving after wind'. It is pointless, fruitless, windy and empty. If, however, one fears God and keeps His commandments then the whole world of living is different. One cannot only enjoy this world, but one is commanded to do so.

If one looks for the explanation of life by experiment, by the writing and reading of many theses, then one will fail to understand it. By saying this, Koheleth virtually destroys all the religious and philosophic thinking man has achieved in his history. When we use the word 'destroys' we do not mean there is no value in all that philosophers or religionists have thought, but we mean it is only of relative value, unless, of course it is at one with the word of God. This insight is extremely valuable for our matter of communications. Going down the track criticized by Koheleth leads us nowhere. The interpretation of the book is, then, as follows,

We can live as flat-earthers, i.e. be occupied in everything—and anything—that is 'under the sun'. This is 'horizontal' living. It has nothing of transcendence about it. Ultimately every one living this way will find it pointless and purposeless. There may be clever people who will develop an 'ontology of the horizontal' but it will not stand up to the living of life, for it will produce nothing. If we were to live in a purely 'vertical' way we would be 'out of this world' and not properly in it. Koheleth speaks of those who are 'righteous overmuch' and 'overwise'—but to no point. If we see all that is horizontal in

the light of the vertical, and the vertical in the light of the horizontal, then that will be reality and life, and in fact, life most enjoyable.

This insight of Koheleth is most valuable for us. When we see ‘horizontal man’ and realize he can never be satisfied since ‘God has put eternity in his heart so that he cannot find out the end from the beginning’, then we will realize that because man is never satisfied with the horizontal, he is driven to devise an explanation and a purpose for the horizontal, only to find there is none! It is to this unsatisfied and frustrated humanity that we can speak of ‘the light of life’ and ‘life that is abundant’. To the one who thinks that death offers nothing, salvation and eternal life can become living issues, and the way out of his dilemma.

What we are saying is something we said before, i.e. ‘the ontological is on our side’. The deceptions of evil do not bring true satisfaction, by nature of the case. Human radar towards God may be ‘out of focus’ but it still forces man to seek out what corresponds to God—if indeed, there can be such! We mean that when it is said, ‘Men and women are looking for something’, then we have to agree; but the something is not necessarily God. It would have to be some substitute for Him, something to fill up ‘God-shaped blank’ in man.

Man Must Relieve Horizontal Boredom by Introducing the Transcendent

Innately man can only live with fullness of life where there is the ontological. Those who confine their sight to the horizontal life cannot meet the innate, the inner thrust of ‘eternity in the heart (Eccl. 3:11) and the desire to ‘know the end from the beginning’. In other words, man must make an ontology of the horizontal—a task impossible by nature of the case—and since there is nothing transcendental on the horizontal, as such—he must import something which is not merely horizontal. This is where art in all its forms brings a note other than the flat—horizontal. Hence, the deep interest in music, painting, sculpture, drama, poetry and writing. Also anything that is parasensory or occultic would tend to indicate experiences beyond the horizontal, and they would be followed with interest. We can see how quickly ‘art for art’s sake’ would develop. In relation to all of this see my essay on ‘The Greatness of Writing’ in which I pursue the idea that writing can only be ‘great’ when it deals with great themes, such as Susan Moore speaks of in her essay ‘The Dragon on the Road’ (*Quadrant* May 1989). She mourns the fact that few, if any, Australian novels are ‘great’ in this sense for they do not attempt to work out themes ‘with a supernatural Christian dimension’. We have to task ourselves whether this does also apply to our sermons. Do we ‘horizontally’ deal with that which is ‘supernatural’?

Living in the World of Art and Culture

We now come to the heart of our subject of communications. Given man’s loneliness when he is apart from the Presence of God, and even has to live with the (seeming) Absence of the Presence, and lives in dread that the Absence might at any moment become the Presence, we see that man cannot entirely cut himself off from the truth. Since God has ‘put eternity into his heart’ he is forced to investigate ‘the end from the

beginning'. The way in which he derives a certain satisfaction and some sense of the transcendent is through art and culture. These lift him from the dreariness of 'horizontal' living and tell him of things different, perhaps things beautiful, but certainly things which release him from perpetual boredom. That man can occupy himself with art and culture is axiomatic. He has the ability to paint, sculpture, compose song and music, create dances and drama, and write in the forms of poetry, stories, novels, biography and history, and—what is more—man generally can enjoy what the artist has brought into sensible being.

Origins of Art and Culture

By the word 'art' we include all that we have just described in our last paragraph. By 'culture' we mean the mores and manners of any societal group. Since our study is not strictly an anthropological one, but more a theological one, we will content ourselves with saying that we can trace tribes and peoples back to certain beginnings. It seems that it was—and is—always innate in man to communicate his thoughts and experiences by means of art, and for these to be outworked in culture. Culture must be something which develops and evolves, and perhaps for certain reasons also retrogresses and even dies.

Biblically we see that man's rejection of God led him immediately to idolatry—surrogate deity—and it appears that his culture revolved around his gods. His world-view was linked with these. Cultures in one way were the rationalization of his world view—his ideas of creation, the world about him, life and death and the relationships and environment in which he had to live. Arts as he practised them seem to be abilities and skills which were innate and became developed. Whilst Israel was forbidden to make anything to be worshipped which was in the likeness of anything on earth, in the sea, and the sky, yet the presence of art in the building of the tabernacle and its furniture—let alone the later temples—shows that the arts of painting, sculpting, music and dancing were not forbidden. The Scriptures and other documents are testimony to the fact that poetry, historical and prophetic literature, including the written law, biography and teaching were acceptable. Because God is ineffable, all attempts to visualize Him by art were rejected. That does not mean however that God's voice could not and would not speak through these special media.

Communicating in and by Art and Culture

Romans 1:21–25 shows that man's rejection of God caused him to make substitutes for God, which to a great degree explains cultures. We have also seen that man can never escape the ontological, and the word of God that keeps coming through God's various media. It is inevitable, then, that universal principles of the truth cannot be wholly ignored, and will tend to assert or produce themselves in various—if not all—cultures. We refrain from trying to prove this point. What we are saying is that not all that is in any culture is necessarily wrong and to be rejected. Generally speaking there is a sense of morality and rejection of certain objectionable practices across most cultures. Some objectionable customs remain in certain societies, but other cultures may counsel abolition of such, e.g. suttee in India and the destruction of twins in certain tribes.

The Christian should not think that all things belonging to any given culture are per se wrong. It is better for him to see himself in a world in which there is vast variety of customs and practices. He can live with most of them with ease—if he will. It is not

‘the Gospel versus culture’, but ‘the Christian in God’s creation’ that should be at the heart of our thinking. Likewise the Christian should not think of all the arts as belonging to the world, to Satan, and therefore to have an inbuilt evil. They, in fact, like anything else, can be used for moral or immoral purposes. At the same time the believer should not wish to use them for propaganda or indoctrinating purposes. Rightly used all arts are the vehicles of the word of God, and are the means by which communications come to the human race.

What do we mean by this? We say that because God made man in His own image and likeness, he must therefore reflect all that God is, and since God is Creator, then he must be creative. The term ‘creative’ has to be qualified. Only God can create, i.e. *creatio ex nihilo*—creation out of nothing, or, at least ‘out of the things which do not appear’ (Heb. 11:3). No maker of painting, music, sculptures and writing makes things out of nothing. What he creates may seem to come from nowhere, i.e. ‘out of the air’, but in fact he can only visualize or sculpt or paint from things already known to the mind even if he over-emphasizes, exaggerates, minimizes, changes or fantasizes what he has seen or heard. In this sense we call man a second-degree creator. It is almost impossible to coin another word when we wish to insist that only God is Creator. In one sense the person can be called ‘an originator’, but what he invented or devised did not wholly arise from himself, seeing man cannot be wholly autonomous. The term ‘procreative’ is possibly the best adjective we can use, i.e. the action of generating something. Since parents did not invent the ability to procreate, then creation must be put down to the Creator.

There is an enormous danger of human egotism in the procreative skills of artists, musicians and writers. It is the danger of thinking we are God or gods. That is why use of the arts is fraught with problems. If we could think of God moving artists to generate with their gifts, then we would have to say that the artist moves after God, not prior to, or wholly apart from Him. This could be so even if the person were a militant atheist. On this basis it is then wrong to speak of ‘a Christian artist’ or ‘Christian art’. Undoubtedly art that is linked with the Christian Scriptures may loosely be called ‘Christian art’, but it could equally be done by a person who is not a Christian, i.e. depictions of God and of events or persons in the Bible, including Jesus. These could be faithful productions of the artist’s thinking, but only a person who is a Christian could produce the word of truth through his work.

The term ‘word of truth’ is relevant to what we are saying. Not every element of truth that comes to us through an artist has to be ‘religious’ or ‘biblical’ or ‘moral’. An artist may depict in music, painting, sculpting, or writing, essential elements of creation which have missed the eyes of the non-artist and even the artist who is a Christian.

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Christ's Lordship and the Pastoral Ministry

Part One: Christ the True Pastor

In Hebrews 13:20 the author writes, 'our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep', and in I Peter 5:4 the apostle calls him 'the chief Shepherd'. In John 10:11 Jesus called himself, 'the good shepherd'. These three titles show the unique office of Jesus as God's Shepherd. This shepherd in Ezekiel 34 is first God Himself. 'I myself will search for my sheep', 'I will feed them with good pasture', and 'As for you, my flock' are statements God makes about His people Israel. That is why Peter calls the sheep 'the flock of God'. Psalm 23 refers specifically to God Himself, the Shepherd of Israel. In Acts 20:28 Peter exhorts the Ephesian elders to 'take heed to yourselves and all the flock . . . which he [God] obtained with the blood of his own Son'.

Even so, God appoints a shepherd (king) over his people. In Ezekiel 34:23 God said, 'And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them. He shall feed them and be their shepherd.' 'My servant David' must refer to Christ, and indeed it is primarily from Ezekiel 34 that Jesus makes the claim to be the good shepherd. That is why he could say to the apostles, 'I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me,' He could also say, 'I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd.' That is why he said to Peter, 'Feed my sheep.' 'Feed my lambs.'

If we wish to know what the shepherd meant in the Old Testament in human terms then Moses was designated as such. Isaiah 63:11 (LXX) asks, 'Where is he that brought up from the sea the shepherd of the sheep?' and this refers to Moses, and perhaps also to Aaron, since the RSV has 'shepherds'. Psalm 77:20 states, 'Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.' Incidentally, Hebrews 13:20 is modeled on Isaiah 63:11 where God brings from the dead ('out of the sea') the great Shepherd of the sheep.

Of course the flock is jointly of the Father and the Son. That is clear from John 10: 25–30 where Jesus says the Father has given him the sheep, and none shall pluck them out of his hand or out of the Father's hand, and the Father and the Son are one. The flock is most precious to God as a reading of Ezekiel 34 well shows. In Jeremiah 13:17 it is 'the Lord's flock' that has been taken captive, and Jeremiah weeps bitterly. In Zechariah 10: 3 God says, 'My anger is hot against the shepherds, and I will punish the leaders, for the Lord cares for his flock, the house of Judah.'

As the flock is precious to God the Father, so it is precious to Christ the Son. He lays down his life for the sheep. He is the shepherd of Zechariah who is smitten so that the sheep are scattered. He applied this scripture to himself in Matthew 26:31. It was by the blood of His own son that the Father bought or obtained the flock of God.

We draw the conclusions then that the flock is the flock of God, that it is the flock of Christ, and that it is most precious to the Father, and none the less to the Son.

God is essentially Shepherd. His Son is essentially Shepherd. 'Good' shepherd, must mean the archetypal Shepherd. 'Chief' Shepherd must mean 'beyond all other shepherds God appoints under him in the flock'. 'Great' Shepherd must mean beyond any other shepherd. He drew Moses and the flock up out of the sea, but in Christ He draws all the elect-flock out of death.

The Meaning of 'Shepherd'

In the New Testament this word 'pastor' or 'shepherd' (*poimen*) is used only once of a ministerial gift, namely in Ephesians 4:11 where 'pastor and teacher' almost certainly means 'pastor-teacher'. In I Peter 5:1-4-referring to 'under-shepherds'-it relates to elders, and again in Acts 20, so that 'pastors', 'bishops' ('overseers') and 'elders' seem to be much the same. Doubtless this eldership or leadership has its roots in the Old Testament where Israel had 70 elders for the nation, and elders within the tribes themselves.

We may have sentimental and romantic ideas of a shepherd, but from Sumerian times the word shepherd was one used for kings and the associated verb 'to pasture' was a common figure of speech for 'to rule'. Numbers 27:16-17 reads, 'Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation, who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord may not be as sheep which have no shepherd'. In Matthew 9:36 Jesus-as Messiah-both thinks and quotes this statement. In Jeremiah 6:3 it is written of the enemy, 'Shepherds with their flocks shall come against her [Jerusalem]; they shall pitch their tents around her, and shall pasture [rule] each in his place'. This sort of language is not intended as a euphemism! In Jeremiah 25: 34-36 the shepherds of the flock of Israel are also called 'the lords of the flock'. In Ezekiel 34 the shepherds have betrayed and exploited the flock. Israel, then, will need a strong leader-shepherd-to rehabilitate it as a flock. This will be the Messianic figure, David, or 'great David's greater son'.

We can rightly conclude then a shepherd is also a 'lord' The references to elders and leaders in I Thessalonians 5:12-13, and Hebrews 13:7, 17 should make it clear that the 'leaders' or 'rulers' were not merely mild advisers. The Shepherd of Psalm 23 is so strong that he brings the sheep through the valley of the shadow of death and prepares a place for it in the presence of its enemies! Of course, the true shepherd has affection and concern for the sheep, but he must be a strong leader to 'guard the flock' and to feed it. Moses had to care for, and lead hundreds of thousands, and that was no situation for a merely affectionate and mild shepherd.

We may observe here that any effective pastoring we will have will only be within the Shepherd himself, drawing from his power and resources.

Part II: Jesus, the Great Shepherd of the Sheep, is Lord of All History

The Flock and the Lordship

The amazing message in the early church was, 'Jesus is Lord!' Only this message could save (Acts 2:36; Rom. 10:19; Col. 2:6; Rom. 14:9-10; II Cor. 4:5). This meant he was

Lord over life and death, and so over sin, Satan and the world. As a result of the Cross and Resurrection Jesus was raised from the dead to be seated at the right hand of God in the heavenly places, 'far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come'. God has 'put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all'.

The practical implications—and ramifications—of this translation to Lordship are enormous. The rise and fall of nations is dependent upon him (cf. John 1:51; Eph. 1:21; Heb. 10:12–13) and the present outworking of this is seen in I Corinthians 15:24–28, and in various eschatological passages such as I Corinthians 1:51–58; I Thessalonians 4: 15–17; II Thessalonians 2 and the whole book of the Revelation. Christ has already defeated Satan, the principalities and powers, and is subduing all enemies. The kingdom of this world is becoming the Kingdom of our Lord and His Christ, and he shall reign forever.

This then, is the one who is 'the great Shepherd of the sheep', 'the good Shepherd', and the 'chief Shepherd'. His flock—God's elect—is a vast one. He has so loved the flock that he has given his blood for it, given himself up for her—his Bride—and watches over the flock, guarding it with all the powers of his Lordship. What we have to see is that if he were not the great and chief and good Shepherd, then the flock would be ravaged, exploited and destroyed. As Paul warned, even from outside the flock wolves would come to tear it, and from within the elders themselves would arise 'men speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them'.

In regard to the matter and action of pastoral ministry Christ is the Shepherd. Just as God was over the flock of Israel and had appointed under—shepherds, so Christ has done the same. He clearly appointed Peter as a shepherd—'Feed my sheep! Feed my lambs!' In Acts 2) Paul told the elders, 'Take heed to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.' Peter said, 'Tend the flock of God that is your charge.' Note the conditions, 'Not by constraint, but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples in the flock.' Equally good advice was given to the Ephesian shepherds at Miletus (cf. Acts 20:28–35).

How then does one have true pastoral ministry, especially in this world today where there are many wolves and when often those of the flock of God are betrayed from within? The answer must be that we should hold fast to our under—shepherding, that we should be under the Shepherd, that we should abide in him, so that his shepherding will come through us.

Our Relationship With the Person of Christ

We ought to fear that in pastoral ministry we would do anything apart from him, Christ. He would do nothing apart from the Father. We all know the doctrine of being 'in Christ', 'abiding in Christ', and that without him we can do nothing, and are fruitless. We need to keep realizing that we can do all things in him, but what we tend to forget is that those 'all things' are only what he is about doing. We have our things which we often assume are his things, when they may not be so. Sometimes we are not aware that God as Sovereign of the universe has committed all things into the hands of the Son, and works through him. In a similar sense the Son has committed all things into the hands of his people—'All authority is given unto me, go you therefore . . .' and so he works through us. We are his body 'the fulness of him who is filling all—in—all'. We are

co-workers with him, but we are not just workers for him. We are not given *carte blanche* to do just what we think ought to be done.

Christ and the Theology of Christ

Many of us spend time reasoning what Christ has done for us. We have a theology of Christ. Generally it is theology of the work of Christ. So we speak of his incarnation, life, ministry, death, resurrection, ascension and reigning, and it is good that we do so. It is possible to have a doctrine of Christ, and his work—especially his work—and yet not to live by personal faith in him. It is possible—and it happens—that we separate the work of Christ from Christ himself. We develop a theology of the work, and though it may be correct in its form, it is still without Christ. The theology gives us the illusion that it is Christ of whom we speak and with whom we work. We are so much in the indicative that we are never in the vocative; so much speak about him in the third person yet without addressing him in the second. It is a tragedy when theology separates us from living union with Christ who is our shepherd. The word of theology which we have may approximate to the work of Christ, but it not the very Son himself. We do more informing and telling to others than we do witnessing to a living union with him. People begin to think of him as a figure from the past, and one who is presently absent. He has done his work. He has gone to the Father. That which ‘Jesus began both to do’ has now been rounded off—anyway—at the end of the Book of the Acts! Some agree that he is yet to come, but think that he does little between now and his arrival, for they push his final work to the end.

Human Ways of Planning and Working

So much of our thinking is that God has given us a mandate to preach the Gospel throughout the world, and with it to organize the church, causing it to grow if possible. It is as though a message has been put into our hand, and we must use all means possible to get it out and persuade people to receive it. We are empirical, relying on observation and experiment. We devise different ways of doing things. We are pragmatic: what works is best. We think of the process of cause and effects. Everything is explainable in these terms. We devise causes, and calculate the effects. We plan with a view to certain assessable results. Much, if not most of our effort is on the horizontal level. We admire scholarship, and are only interested in what can be authoritatively shown to be ‘the truth’. In all of these approaches, including the ‘theology of the work of Christ’ system we are on safe ground. Our world view is as close to ‘scientific’ as possible, that is we have certain knowledge within our grasp and operate accordingly. We feel bound to develop strategies in the world-wide proclamation of the Gospel. We feel we must muster all resources, utilize all thinking, and work to the limit of our given talents and capacities. What of the personal presence of Christ the Lord of all creation as he is at this moment working within his creation, with his church, and has the plan of God in his hand, and is working for its fulfilment—to will and to do of his good pleasure?

What we are really saying in this section is that we think of all that we do as some kind of a commission from Christ, but we do not think of doing just what Christ leads us to do, or we do not expect him to be in all things just where we are. As for some remarkable—and even supernatural—intervention, we do not expect it. It might puzzle us, or we might rationalize it—i.e. ‘horizontalize it.

The Natural and the Supernatural

Much of what we have described immediately above is 'the natural'. Most people are empirical, pragmatic and strategic in their thinking and action. They hold the 'cause and effects' explanation of life and the world's history. Whilst the thought of the supernatural may intrigue them, and the occult may sometimes attract them, they live for the most part in 'the natural'. Some persons of faith want everything to be 'supernatural'. The natural bores them or it seems wrong, or it seems to be other than the Gospel. Whilst 'flat-earthers' allow for nothing of the supernatural, they see no value in anything which is not supernatural. Whereas those in the natural are horizontally oriented, the others are vertically—and only vertically—oriented. They are happy to ascribe special happenings to Jesus, but again they have theology of the supernatural, rather than the present action of his person in the world in which we live. I have a godly friend who only seems to give value to the unusual, the remarkable, and always looks for the supernatural to happen since anything apart from it seem 'unspiritual' and without value.

Part III: Our Intimate Union with Jesus, the Great Shepherd of the Sheep, Who is Lord of All History

We Are One With Christ

Romans 6:1–11; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 3:1–5 (cf. Rom. 6:6; Gal. 5:24; 6:14; Ephe. 2:5–6; II Tim. 2:11) all tell us we have died with Christ: we have been crucified with him, buried with him, raised with him, and are now seated with him in the heavenly places. This speaks of a wonderful unity. We have been with Christ in the crucible of the Cross, in the grave, and in emergence into new life. Our union with him is described as being baptized into Christ, putting on Christ, as being branches of the True Vine, members of the Body of Christ, living stones in the temple of God which is also the Holy City and the Bride of Christ. There could be no more wonderful miracle than what has happened to us. That is why Paul can say, 'For me to live is Christ!' He said, 'I live, yet not I but Christ lives in me.' We are also told that we abide in Christ as our natural habitat. Perhaps one of the most telling statements is, 'Your life is hid with Christ in God.'

It is this intimacy and union which is at the basis of true pastoral ministry, indeed all Christian ministry. A look at John 14:9–14 leads us to the principle of that intimacy in which the Son works with the Father, and by which he causes us to work with him. In verses 9–11 Jesus said he could do nothing apart from the Father. In fact what he did was only from the Father. It was even the Father doing the work in him—the Son. In verses 12–14 he was saying, in effect, that if we believe in him we will do the works that he does, and even greater works, since he goes to the Father and we remain in this world—where the works must be done. Yet it is the Son who will do the works when we ask the Father regarding them, in the name of the Son. Jesus said, 'If you ask anything in my name I will do it'.

We then ask, 'Do we really do anything if Christ does, in fact, does it?' The answer must be, 'Yes, we actually do the works, but yet it is the Son who does them,

and even then it is the Father who does them.' In other words the intimacy of Father, Son and us is such that we are fellow-workers, for it is at this point in John's Gospel that Jesus tells them that

- (i) the Holy Spirit will come to dwell in them,
- (ii) that the Father will come to dwell in them, and
- (iii) that he himself will come to dwell in them. This will be when he has suffered on the Cross, risen, and ascended.

There are other wonderful passages which speak of the indwelling of the Godhead. To repeat Colossians 3:3, 'You have died and your life is hid with Christ in God.' This may seem to be very mystical, but the truth is it is not, for it is a preliminary to Paul's prescriptions for holy and loving living. Again Galatians 2:20 is not mystical. One lives now in this world-'in the flesh'-by faith in the Son of God, by faith union with him because of what he has already done in one's life. Having 'Christ in us the hope of glory' is the same as being in Christ. It is the way of action-producing fruit.

In I John 3:24 the writer says, 'All who keep his commandments abide in him, and he in them.' Abiding produces action. In 4:11-12 of the same letter John adds, 'Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.' He is saying that when we love in action (cf. 3:17-18) we are living in God and God in us. After each of these two references John says, 'By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit.' It is the Spirit by whom the Father and the Son indwell us (Ephes. 3:16; Matt. 10:20) and by whom we indwell Them.

Working From the Intimacy

We see that since the Father has formulated the plan of history and of our lives from before time, and this plan is in the hand of the Son, and the Spirit is appointed as guide to us (Rom. 8:14; Acts 10:19-23; 16: 6-10) then there can be no talk of work that is not initiated and aided by God (cf. Ephes. 2:10; 3:20). Paul spoke of us as 'God's fellow workers' (I Cor, 3:9) and as 'working together with him' (II Cor. 6:1) and said that although he had 'worked harder than any of them' it was only by 'the grace of God which [who] was with me'. It is clear that there is no work we do apart from Christ, the matter which Jesus stressed in the teaching of John 15:1-11.

Perhaps his clearest statement of working in intimacy with Christ is in Romans 15: 17-19, 'In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has wrought through me to win obedience from the Gentiles [nations], by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Holy Spirit, so that from Jerusalem and as far round as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.' Look at the phrase 'what Christ has wrought through me'. It points us back to the principle of John 14:10-14 that what we do is the Son doing it, and yet it is the Father doing it in the Son. This lends point to Luke's introduction to the book of Acts where he says that his Gospel was the account 'of all that Jesus began to do and teach', inferring that the Book of the Acts is what Jesus went on doing and teaching.

It Is The Works Which Matter

There can be no question about the matter: the church is a works-oriented community. Jesus spoke about works, saying we would know people by them, and that the good works when done glorify the Father i.e. not us, since the Father does them in us (Matt. 5:16). Jesus directed us to the works we were to do. The people of

God are zealous for good deeds (Titus 2:14), and indeed when martyred these deeds follow them (Rev. 14:13). In Revelation chapters 2 and 3 it is Christ who tells each church, 'I know your works,' and it is the works which count. At the judgement seat of Christ believers 'receive back the things done in the body, whether good or bad' (II Cor. 5:10). All humanity is judged by its work in regard to the degrees of punishments and rewards (cf. Rev. 20:11–12), although eternal life is not earned, but is the gift of grace.

This rapid survey tells us that our works matter very much. This causes us to consider whether the works we have done are 'wood, hay, straw' or 'gold, silver, precious stones'. We know that the works done from ego will perish, whilst the works done out of love will remain (I Cor. 13:1–3; I Cor. 3:10–15). It is a sobering thought. How, then, can we do only the true works? The answer must be, 'Only in the intimacy of Christ the Lord within us, and Christ the Lord over us, directing us.'

Christ In All the Works

This, then, brings us back to the widest issue of all—Christ working in the world today, and his people working with him. He commanded the disciples—on going into the world—to preach the Gospel to every person, and to make disciples of all nations. On the basis of their doing this he promised, 'and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.' That is, he would never be apart from them. Hence he appears to Paul and tells him at the time of his conversion, 'Rise, and stand upon your feet: for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you to serve and bear witness to the things in which have seen me, and to those in which I will appear to you.' Paul tells us in Acts 22:17 that Christ visited Paul in the temple at Jerusalem and gave him a command to leave the place. In Acts 16 it was 'the Spirit of Jesus' who would not allow the apostolic band to go into Bythinia. Any idea of the absence of Jesus to his people is unacceptable. Reigning at the right hand of God does not mean he is absent from the action of history, or that he merely directs it. He reigns in order to accomplish.

His programme of works is set out in I Corinthians 15:24–28, and in many passages of the Book of the Revelation, as well as in eschatological sections of the Gospels, and the Prophets, particularly those which refer to the Messianic Mission, and the Messianic triumph linked with the Day of the Lord. Much of it is described in the Revelation, and all of it shows Christ as active.

Participation in the Messianic Action

Really the whole point of our study is that apart from Christ we can do nothing. In fact, we can do plenty, but only that which is aligned with Christ's Lordship is of any consequence. The Son did nothing but what the Father told him: so it must be with us. In this respect it is essential to realize that the Christian's calling is primarily to ministry. A clear case in point is that of Saul of Tarsus—Paul the apostle to the nations. His statement of Galatians 1:15–16 is classic,

But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in [Gr. en] me, in order that I might preach him amongst the Gentiles [nations] . . .

and tells us that Christ did not appear to Paul simply to convert him, but to set him on ministry. This is amplified in Acts 26:15–18,

Rise and stand upon your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you to serve and bear witness to the things in which you have seen me, and to those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from the people and from the Gentiles—to whom I send you to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

It is clear, then, that the principle of being redeemed in order to share with Christ in doing the Father's will is the true order. In this respect see Acts 9:5, 6, 15; 22:14–15; Romans 1:1; Ephesians 2:10; 3:1–13 and I Timothy 1:15–16. The early Christians understood that all had ministry (Eph. 4:12) which was why they were all called 'servants' (see my *The Sons of God Are Servants Of All*, NCPI, 1982). This brings us back to our former main point, namely that Christ is working now as Lord of the church, and Lord over creation and all history, and his people are working with him, and the works they do are his works as they share the ministry the Father has given to him. The principle which he stated when with the disciples is still the principle for our day, i.e. 'We must work the works of him who sent me.'

Part Four: Christ the True Pastor of the World and the Parish

Christ's Lordship in the World

If the pastor does not see Christ as Lord of the nations, then he will reason his work empirically, pragmatically and by the principle of cause-and-effect. Or he will see it only vertically, i.e. as having to be only supernatural. If he sees Christ as Lord over all, then he will not fear the rise and fall of nations, of ideologies, of systems, of theologies, and of methodologies. They will leave him untouched. He will not come under stress because of these things. He will understand that God is sovereign and that His Son is subduing all the enemies, and bringing all things to heel until the kingdom of this world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and His Christ.

He will also recognize that the (so-called) missionary task is in the hands of Christ. He will realize that its action is not according to 'missionary strategy' or 'missiological understanding', but according to the Father's ancient plan for the nations (cf. Acts 17:26; Deut. 32:8; Acts 1:8; Rom. 1:3; 15:18; 16:26; Rev. 7:9–15; 22:24–26), the Son having been granted those nations (Psa. 2:6–7; Acts 1:8, Eph. 1:21–22). This serenity which comes from a recognition of God's sovereignty will enable him to view the macrocosm with equilibrium. It will enable him to work parochially without (a) ignoring the wider dimensions of Christ's activity and (b) without minimizing the value of the local ministry.

Christ's Lordship in the Parish

Christ is the true Pastor. We know the pastoral passion of God's heart from the references we have studied in Psalm 23; Isaiah 63:11; Ezekiel 34 and other passages. We have seen in the New Testament that Christ had compassion on the multitudes because 'they were as sheep without a shepherd'. We see in John 10 that he castigated the rogue shepherds of the sheep because they had cast out the man born blind because healed by Jesus. We read his disquisition on his own pastor-heart as also the pastor-heart of the Father. By all these things we know that Christ's Shepherd heart is as present in the local flock, as in the wide world.

We who are under-shepherds find our task altogether too difficult, but mainly because we feel the lot has been cast on us, and that we have to pastor on our own. This is not so, and I Peter 5:1-3, and Hebrews 13:20-21 make this clear. If Christ laid down his life for the sheep, and his heart was to bring other sheep not of the Jewish fold, then his heart is no less passionate and compassionate today than it was then. We pastors have no pastoral ministry but his pastoral ministry. For this reason there is no place for pride, and there is no place for disheartenment. There is place for great joy and great anticipation. Just as within the Trinity the Members are 'other-Person centred', so we, who are in the image of God, are 'other-persons-centred'. We look not on our own things but also on the things of others. We put them-the people of the flock-before ourselves. We are incarnate in the flock as servants. That is why we can be 'leaders', 'rulers', and 'overseers' without prejudice, even in our egalitarian society. As' pastors-shepherds of the flock-we can have a holy kingship, since it is not our 'kingship' but his great Lordship, working itself out through us. Only in this way can the flock be secure, and rest in the authority of Christ-'the great Shepherd of the sheep'.

That is the sum of pastoral ministry. We know when we fail to render true ministry. Often we deprecate ourselves because we have failed so much. I have discovered that it is not just pain of being remiss as persons, but of being remiss in ministry. We reason that if we were not remiss as persons we would not be so remiss in ministry. The other side of the coin is that we rejoice when we see the 'progress and joy in the faith' of the flock. If we feel we are too weak for the task, then it is the Lord of the flock who enables us to be strong pastors both in guarding the flock and in leading it. By his gracious strength we are preserved from domineering over the flock. Being sheep ourselves before we are pastors helps us to be faith pastors. He himself was led as a Lamb to the slaughter, and out of the death of the Lamb comes the resurrection life of the true Pastor, and all his appointed pastors.