



New Creation Teaching Ministry

1992 Pastors Study Group Titles

February	The Pastoral & Personal Power of Joy—I
March	The Pastoral & Personal Power of Joy—II
April	The Pastoral Power of Friendship
May	Enmity—Divine, Celestial & Terrestrial
Postscript	to 'Enmity—Divine, Celestial & Terrestrial'
June	The Revival We Need
July	God's Judgements & the Revival We Need
August	The Word of God & the Revival of the Church
September	The Pastoral Power of the Sabbath Presence
October	Things We Believe & Proclaim—I The Ministry of Proclamation
November	Things We Believe & Proclaim—II Communicating the Truth
December	The Uniqueness of Christ for Proclamation

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The Pastoral and Personal Power of Joy—I

An Introductory Note:

It is natural enough for us to study a theme with a view to using it in personal life and pastoral ministry, but—at the same time—we must try to avoid seeing biblical truth from a utilitarian point of view. If we view it this way, then we are trading in theological ideas. As we know—and will see further—all such matters as love, joy and peace are the very nature of God Himself. The fountain of them is personal. We may see the value of such elements—e.g. we can seek to use joy as a stimulant in our lives—but this is not really the point. We have been commanded to joy¹, joy is the fruit of creation and redemption, and truth will manifest itself fully in the telos, but it really God Himself in action our lives. So let us approach our present study with this reality in mind.

A Theological Conflict Regarding Joy

The matter of joy is strongly present in both Old and New Testaments. The famous statement in Nehemiah 8:10, 'The joy of the Lord is your strength', speaks of the joyfulness of God. Christ's prayer to the Father concerning his disciples, 'that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves', speaks of the joy of the Son. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy and peace—amongst other elements—and so joy is a mark of Trinitarian life and experience². The injunctions of Paul in the Philippian letter, 'Rejoice in the Lord, and again I say rejoice,' being only one of many in the imperative, assure us that joy is a significant part of Christian living. The pastoral and personal question is 'Do we have joy in our congregations and in ourselves?' Some have even concluded that joy is no indispensable part of normal Christian living. If, like happiness, it 'happens'—they say—then that is acceptable, but joy as a driving force of the gospel has always been called in doubt by some who hold joyless views of religion³. We can all think of grim church situations, especially the religious wars, sectarian strife, the Inquisition and the theology and practice of religious asceticism and legalistic severity, all of which have been joyless situations, but these must not be accorded as consonant with the gospel.

¹ The NCPI materials regarding joy include the booklet *Commanded to Joy*, the book *The Harvest of the Spirit*, and various Winter and Summer School Study books on the theme of living in the Spirit.

² To talk of God *having* joy is to make a human analogical statement. To speak of Him *being* joy is to speak beyond the analogy, even if we do not comprehend what we are saying.

³ In using the term 'religion' we do so in a generic sense regarding the gospel, much—for example—as we find its use in a writer such as P.T. Forsyth, in which case its connotation is acceptable.

On the other hand, we often see joy that has been induced in human ways—some tolerable and others quite false. For example, antinomianism has brought temporary joy to some in license and libertinism, only to turn to tragedy. Again, the idea of suffering has been presented as joyless when James says—against such shallow reasoning—‘Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials . . .’

How then, do we solve these various views and approaches to the theme of joy? To have a joyous congregation would indeed be a powerful witness to the truth of the gospel—‘the joy of thy salvation’—as well as a source of relief and blessing to both pastor and people. We set out now to explore the whole matter.

The Biblical Doctrine of Joy

Three interesting books relating to the subject are Jurgen Moltmann’s *Theology and Joy* (SCM, London, 1973), Matthew Fox’s *Original Blessing* (Bear and Company, Santa Fe, 1983) and Harry R. Boer’s *An Ember Still Glowing* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1990). It is not our intention to cover these three books, but simply to mention that Moltmann takes up the issue of human sinfulness and bondage, sees freedom through the work of the Cross, but insists that this must work out in a praxis of freedom which is the praxis of joy. In fact he opts for redeemed man living out his freedom in play, a point which David Jenkins—the writer of the book’s Foreword—does not accept. Fox—a Dominican scholar, so called—radically rejects the doctrine of original sin. He is a critic of Augustine especially and to some degree, Calvin and Luther for their doctrine of human depravity, and in effect says the church was led away from the biblical doctrine of original blessing—i.e. the blessing of creation—by the doctrine of original sin. He divides theology into what he calls ‘Fall/Redemption’ and ‘Creation-Centred’ spiritualities, the latter—in his mind—being the true one, and the former at best a temporary rationalising of the God-human situation. Boer’s position is quite different, and an interesting one for he feels the Reformers went too far with their doctrine and statement of the human depravity occasioned by the fall. The title of his book *An Ember Still Glowing* indicates his thinking. He believes we should see man as still being in the image of God and take this into account in all our thinking and practice. Some Reformers may have taken human-depravity to an extreme, but I think Boer has not fully understood Calvin on the matter, albeit he himself is a calvinist. Boer holds to Reformed theology but is trying to correct an extreme view of human depravity. He is certainly worth reading as he seeks to correct what he thinks is an extreme view of depravity as he finds it in some Reformed theology..

Moltmann⁴, as usual, covers a vast range of theology and so his book is useful since it is not—like Fox’s—reductionist. Moltmann speaks of ‘The Augustinian reversal. He speaks of deficient views of God as ‘a helper’ and says,

⁴ Moltmann’s book has an introduction by David Jenkins—an essay titled ‘The Liberation of God’, in which the writer quotes liberally from Father Paul Verghese’s little book *The Freedom of Man*. Verghese is a priest of the Syrian Orthodox Church in Kerala. He makes Augustine the chief source of ‘the pathology of Western theology’, namely ‘the total sinfulness and helplessness of man’. This view, Verghese says, leads to five distortions, (i) a low view of the Incarnation, (ii) an undervaluing of the world, (iii) the false doctrine of the childish dependence of man upon God, (iv) the emphasis on individual salvation, and (v) a low view of the sacraments. Verghese insists that ‘image of God’ view of salvation ‘makes the demand that the unlimited goodness of God has to be concretely manifested through the corporate righteousness of man on earth’.

When we cease using God as *helper in need, stop-gap and problem solver*, we are—according to Augustine finally free for the *fruitio De et se invincem in Deo*, the joy of God and the enjoyment of each other in God. Purpose-free rejoicing in God may then take the place of the uses and abuses of God.

Fox would scarcely consider Augustine as a source of joy but as a source of ‘fall/redemption pathology’, for he has virtually started from the Pelagian-Arminian position, and has taken on board a wide variety of man-centred theological materials, including some of the mystics⁵, but would call himself a *praxis* oriented theologian. I question his whole thesis that all spirituality starts from creation. No one denies, surely, the original blessing of creation⁶, but again it begs the question of the Creator Himself. Everything starts from the Creator, and His being as holiness and love—along with righteousness, truth and goodness. It also begs all Trinitarian theology and the relationships which obtain within the Godhead and from God to Man. If God’s creation is seen only as the source of happiness, and its demands for obedience, submission and ethical living are not understood, then ‘Creation-Centred’ theology must be called in question. Fox may well be about correcting erroneous views of creation—ascetic understanding of it, dread of its innate nature, and a hyper-spiritualism which rejects all materialism. However it would appear he has his own erroneous views. To read these three books in turn is certainly a good exercise.

A Biblical Approach to Joy, i.e. the Experience of God as Creator, Redeemer and Renewer of the Entire Creation

(i) Creator and Creation⁷

- (a) Creation is the result of Trinitarian creative action (Gen. 1:1–3; Psa. 33:6–9; 104:29–30; John 1:1–3; Col. 1:15f.; Heb. 1:1–3). It is also sustained in Trinitarian fashion and power as these same references indicate.
- (b) Creation is God’s primary purpose in His whole historic action, and whilst His grace is manifested in redemption, His redemption is with a view to the ultimate renewed creation. This must be well understood. *Theopoiesis* or *Theosis*—the doctrine of the divinisation of Man—must not be understood apart from the reason for creation. The fact that creation is teleological does not take away from its innate nature and importance since creation is not only teleological but ontological.

⁵ Fox really opposes asceticism and forms of mysticism, but a survey of his sources for joy is quite a mixture. Meister Eckhart, of course, is generally included in the mystics but Fox would not agree that he is a mystic. He sees him and similar writers and thinkers as belonging to the ‘original blessing’ spirituality.

⁶ It seems to me that Fox denies to the ‘Fall/Redemption Spirituality’ any participation by Man in creational joy. Depraved man is not depicted as utterly joyless, any more than redeemed man is depicted as *only* joyful.

⁷ We should first of all refer back to our Monday Study Group Paper of the 5th. February 1990, *Creation and the Liberating Glory*. This will help us to get the present paper into perspective. Then we should look at the studies on ‘The Doctrine of Creation’ (cf. *Pastors and the People* (NCPI 1989, pp. 3–43), which are highly informative biblically..

- (c) I Peter 4:19 says we can entrust our souls to a faithful Creator. That is, God can always be trusted to initiate, sustain, and fulfil His creation according to the mystery of His plan for all things.
- (d) There is no flaw in His creation, but rather functional completeness. All things are ‘good’ (Gen. 1:31; cf. Eccles. 3:11; Psa. 24:1). Creation is to be enjoyed (Gen. 2:9; I Tim. 4:1ff.; 6:17), as it is a *gift of God as Creator* and not as Redeemer. We mean creation is a gift whereas redemption is a matter of grace.
- (e) Man being in the image and likeness of God is head of creation (Gen. 1:26–28; Psa. 8:3ff.). However only in dependency upon God can he be truly Man, and so truly enjoy creation. He can only be lord of creation when he is fully under the Creator and working with Him. It is in the light of the above that we somehow understand the sheer joy that Man must have known in innocence, i.e. when unfallen. We cannot nevertheless, from our fallen standpoint, really comprehend the greatness of that joy.

(ii) Creator, Man, and the Fall of Man

The joy of Man—in creation—was no less a reality than the joy of God, since Man was made in the image of God. The loss of true joy can only be understood in the light of what happened at the fall. For those who think that only the first couple fell and that there is no organic solidarity of the human race, i.e. that the entire human race was not involved in the decision of the primal couple and especially the man, then there can be no comprehension of what is human misery. In Romans 5:12–21 Paul makes clear the solidary nature of all humanity in Adam, as he also emphasises the solidary nature of all in Christ. ‘All men *sinned*’=‘All *did sin*’ (Rom. 5:12). Thus Romans 1:18–21 really covers the rejection of God not only by the Gentiles but by all the human race.

We now have to speak of the existential misery of Man⁸. Even then, we have to bear in mind that that we cannot see the innate nature of this misery, though we may experience it. Our own evil rationalises the misery we experience as the result of adverse elements, and not as experience of our own sin and guilt. Sin has its own inbuilt deceit (Heb. 3:13; cf. Rom. 7:13), but it also has own inbuilt pain and misery as Psalms 31:10; 32: 3–4 (cf. 38:1ff.). What we have to keep in mind is this constant thrust of humanity to justify itself and its constant glossing over the real nature of sin: the endeavour to see sin as it is a never-ending battle.

- (a) Man denied his true being as that of being in union with God, created by Him, dependent on Him, receiving his life, vocation and purpose from him—all this in the face of Jeremiah 10:23 that ‘the way’ of a human being is not in himself or herself.
- (b) Man died in the day of his rebellion because he rejected the word of the Creator for the word of the created, the serpent. The man listened to the word of the woman in preference to the word of God. See II Corinthians 5:15 for the opposite to Man’s death, i.e. re-creation⁹. The curse¹⁰ that was the outcome of Man’s sin

⁸ The massing of Scripture passages on the innate depravity of Man is not difficult—e.g. Genesis 6:5; 8:21; Psalms 51:4–5; Jeremiah 19:7; Mark 7:20–23; John 2:23–25; Romans 1:18–32; 3:9–18; Ephesians 2:1–3; 2:11–12; 4:17–19; Titus 3:3—but if these are used merely as proof-texts, then the essence and substance of them is missed.

⁹ It has often been said that Man—the primal couple—did not die at the time of the fall, the day of rebellion. We must realise that relational death with God—that which did happen—is death. The terms ‘physical’ and ‘spiritual’ should not be used to specify two kinds of death, since they are one. The outcome or end of relational death is mortality, and death is ever present with Man. As Tillich once said, ‘Man is afraid of death, not because he has to die, but because he deserves to die’. Life is not life when it is in death. Paul’s promiscuous widow is ‘dead even while she liveth’.

¹⁰ In Genesis 3:14:19 we note (i) that the serpent as a being was cursed, (ii) any creational union between Man and the serpent is broken as enmity is established between them, (iii) the woman will suffer because of her part in

does in no way make evil the creation itself. It is a judgement on Man and will ultimately be remitted, but it does make a difference to the enjoyment of the creation.

- (c) Man has now come into misery because of his rejection of God's love (*agape*) and his own substitution of himself for God, and then the idols (images) for the reality. The misery was—and is—so because of the change of relationships between God and Man, and the man and the woman. We have to pierce this misery in order to understand the human loss of joy. We cannot wave off the fall of man, and refuse the terrible nature of guilt with which the human race began to live.
- (d) Man's lordship of creation was not rescinded but it changed in its emphasis since Man was not one with God (cf. Gen.9:1–7). In creation there was a harmony and unity in all things as typified by Man's naming of the animals, part of his great lordship as a glorious creature made in the image and likeness of God and placed over all creation. Genesis 9:1–7 shows that after the flood the dread of Man was upon all things. Man had been judged in and by the flood for his corruption and violence but his innate sinfulness and selfishness has always boded ill for the creation.
- (e) Fallen Man lives in a state of misery because of God's personal wrath which is always upon him in his sinfulness. Romans 1:18–32 is a strong commentary on this. Psalm 38 is the confession of Psalmist as to this wrath being upon him in his guilt. Guilt of Man and the wrath of God upon sinful Man cannot be separated.
We conclude then, that fallen, guilty man lives in a state of misery because of his sin¹¹.

(iii) Creator-Redeemer God and Fallen Man

(a) The Universal Action of God in Man's History.

The term 'faithful creator' must mean that, having created, God will ensure His creation continues and will not allow it to be destroyed. More than this, Man may suffer from guilt, death and the curse but he is not abandoned by God. God goes on doing him good. The proto-evangel of Genesis 3:15 assures this, but I John 3:10ff. shows that from the beginning there have been two families—the family of God and the family of the Evil One, the Devil. Hebrews chapter 11 shows that from the beginning there

the rebellion against God (I Tim. 2:14), (iii) the ground will be cursed because of Adam's sin. From Romans 8:19–21 we know that the creation has been subjected to futility in hope, i.e. the curse was to remain forever. Man's redemption will be its emancipation.

¹¹ Some theologians have blamed Augustine for his view of sin, saying that it arose from his particular struggle with inner evil, and that he interpreted the state of Man by that. This could also be said of Luther and others. The Pelagian view is more benign, seeing man born with a clear *tabula rasa*, but becoming infected by sin 'in the following of Adam'. The question to be considered is whether Augustine and Luther do not in fact present us with the reality of the problem of original sin and human depravity. A thoughtful and receptive reader of the Psalms is doubtless presented with the same situation.

have always been the faithful of God, so that humanity has not been one massive body of evil. Grace¹² has been with the human race from the beginning.

If the Scriptures, i.e. the Scriptures as the process of history, are seen as ‘salvation history’ then—in one sense—there is no great problem before the human race for God is always at work. That He is love means all His action will be of this nature however much they may seem to be to the contrary. He is always doing good to mankind and His world, albeit judgement is part of His ‘doing good’. In Acts 14:15–17 Paul told his pagan hearers that God was the living God ‘who made heaven and earth’, adding,

In past generation he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways; yet he did not leave himself without witness, for *he did good* and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.

He spoke similarly to the Athenians in Acts 17:22–31. He informed them that God was Lord of heaven and earth, that ‘he himself gives to all things life and breath and everything’ and that

he made from one every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find him. Yet he is not very far from each of us, for ‘In him we live and move and have our being’.

So then God does not ignore humanity but rather so creates, so moves in history that men and women may find Him, and the reality is that ‘in him we live and move and have our being’. Linked with this is the fact that creation constantly tells of God (Psa. 19:1f.; Rom. 1:21). Boer makes much of Augustine’s *vestigia Dei*—literally ‘the footsteps of God’—which may be seen everywhere—assuming that fallen Man may wish to see them. This is much the same as Psalm 19:1–4 and Paul’s statement that God does not leave Himself without a witness, i.e. He keeps on doing good to and for the human race. Of course this is borne out in Matthew 5:43–48 where the message is that those who profess to love God should love all men—including their enemies, for God loves all and ‘makes his sun rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust’.

It is quite probable that we have made so much of Israel being the covenant-people of God that we have failed to see that He has no less interest in all other peoples. After all, the Abrahamic covenant was for all the nations, and ultimately would prove whether nations would have blessing or cursing according to their relationship with Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3)—‘and by you shall the nations of the earth be blessed’. Even the covenant with Abraham did not mean that all others apart from him had no knowledge of God, nor relationship with Him. In the case of Pharaoh in Egypt (Gen. 12:10–20) and Abimelech king of Gerar (Gen. 20:1–17) in their liaisons with Sarah, there was moral knowledge of God. Indeed we do an injustice to knowledge of the law of God if we say that all the human race did not know God (cf. Paul’s argument in Romans 2:12–16).

¹² The Reformed doctrine of ‘common grace’ seeks to cover the fact of depraved Man not utterly abandoned, or utterly given over to his evil to the degree that he can rule the creation with his evil. Theology which does not recognise Man’s depravity does not have to face the same problem. If men are infected with sin rather than sinning because they are—through the fall—innately sinners, then the problem is not great.

Boer makes much of ‘the primacy of Melchizedek’, showing that this one was ‘priest of the Most High’ and quotes his blessing to Abraham,

Blessed be Abraham by God Most High,
 maker of heaven and earth;
 and blessed be God Most High,
 who has delivered your enemy into your hand,

pointing out that Abraham used the same language regarding God, i.e. ‘the Lord Most High, Maker of heaven and earth’, and that Melchizedek was superior to Abraham in that he received tithes from him. Of course Psalm 110:1–4 and the teaching of Hebrews regarding this priest tell us that he who was ‘King of Salem [peace]’ was of an order superior to that of Levi and that Levi—in Abraham’s loins—really gave tithes to this great one. Boer’s simple point is that such a high order of priesthood existed prior to and apart from the Abrahamic covenant. Certainly the matter of that priesthood bears witness to God being with the human race.

(b) The Redemptive Action of God in Man’s History

The story of Genesis 4 of Cain and Abel, especially as interpreted by Hebrews 11:4 and I John 3:10–11, shows us that man related to God through sacrifice, and that such sacrifice was within the mode of God’s redemption. We might be tempted to see sacrifice outside of covenant as being invalid, but that could not be proved. The sacrifices of the patriarchs were linked to their relationship with God. The sacrifices within Israel, as a cultus, is no indication that outside this covenant other sacrifices were of no value. Jesus’ statement ‘Salvation is of the Jews’ is certainly to be received, especially as it was an answer to a Samaritan woman by Jesus, but the Syro-Phoenician woman drew blessing from the Saviour. In these matters we must leave the mystery of election to God.

What we can say is that there was salvation in Israel, and rich as that was, it was only in preparation of Israel to be the matrix of Messiah. Salvation came clearly through Christ, and salvation—through the Cross and Resurrection—was to be for all mankind. This salvation was to be personal, covenantal, and ultimately eschatological as it resulted in the cosmic reconciliation and unification of all things in Christ, i.e. the redemption of the body and the glorification of the renewed heavens and earth. Seeing this we see the intention, working, outworking and completion of God’s salvation¹³.

Conclusion to the Experience of God as Creator, Redeemer and Renewer of the Entire Creation

We can now examine the lot of Man—even fallen Man—in the light of the material of this Section. When we think in terms of Man’s existential misery, and his living in creation we draw the following conclusions,

- (i) Man always lives and moves and has his being in God. If Man will then he can know God through the witnesses of God and other media through which He speaks (cf. II Pet. 1:20–21; Heb.1:1) such a prophecy, theophany—and so on. God is

¹³ This material will be expanded in Part II of our present Study.

self-revealing but what comes to Man must come as revelation: Man must receive the revelation as of grace, since he has refused the true knowledge of God in the fall,¹⁴

- (ii) God has given man the creation and its stewardship into his hands. It is his to enjoy. Psalm 104 and similar passages, therefore, should not be seen as applying only to those within Israel's covenant. God's love gives the rain and the sun, and God does man good all the time.
- (iii) What Fox calls 'original blessing' is not rescinded, but Man's sin has certainly incurred a curse. Even so, Man never ceases to be *imago Dei*—the image of God—and in this sense can never wholly separate himself from God and the blessings He gives. Even so, the 'original blessing' cannot be known as such, even though Man is not denied the joys that may come to him through creation. He just does not have the taste for them. It would be interesting, in this regard, to understand the place of art in Man's viewing of the present 'original blessing'.
- (iv) Man has—if he will receive them—indications of the goodness of God, and of His redemptive grace, and the ultimate intention of that grace¹⁵. The knowledge that there *can* be salvation in God should be an encouragement to joy for the sinner¹⁶. Even if he does not avail himself of salvation, it is there. Man is never beyond hope.
- (v) Man's existential experience of guilt and the misery which attends it—especially in the light of Man's relation death to God—cannot be said to be total. By comparison with 'creational blessing' it is a terrible reversion from joy, but joy is not entirely eliminated. The love of God is not wholly withdrawn, even if it is not fully felt and properly recognised. The continuing reality of the *imago Dei* keeps man at attempting good, even if his motivation is faulty.

We are now in a position to see the flaws in Fox's theology, and the limitations of Boer in his rejection of the concept of total depravity. Probably Boer is not far from Calvin whose recognition of the *imago Dei* in the sinner is a perceptive one. Man's terrible dilemma is that the *imago Dei* is in him, and whilst this does not allow his depravity to be unrelieved by anything, it, in fact, intensifies his guilt and misery. If he were not in the image of God his sin could not be so reprehensible nor his evil so deep and terrible.

Thus Man¹⁷ is a strange mixture and is in a terrible dilemma. He was created for joy and bliss and useful life. He is given over to his sin and cannot escape it. His way out of the dilemma is idolatry (cf. Rom. 1:21–25) and idolatry gives the *imago Dei* seemingly some scope for operation, only to find that it—idolatry—is self-defeating and self destructive. Sin and idolatry, passions and lusts all seem to promise joy, but

¹⁴ In terms of John 3:1–6 and I Corinthians 2:14—all in the light of II Peter 1:20–21—what Man is given by God is revelation. Man is in a state of death (Eph. 2:1–3) and is brought to life in Christ (Ephes. 2:4–5; cf. John 10: I John 3:14).

¹⁵ Here it may be debated that Man understands the matter of redemption. The principle of sacrifice known to man—as set out in Genesis 4—gives indication of salvation-knowledge. Also the whole matter of priesthood, altar and sacrifice needs to be considered. In heathen sacrifices the principle of propitiation is attempted, even if its concept is crude. Genesis 3:15 was certainly a grace-revelation, and Revelation 12:9 and context should be studied in the light of it.

¹⁶ David was within the covenant, hence he had already known the 'joy of salvation'. He does not plead for the *gift* of it, so much as the *restoration* of it. See Psalm 51:12.

¹⁷ I suggest that readers of this paper use my *I, the Man!* (NCPI, 1983) and *Man of Dust! Man of Glory!* (NCPI, 1986) in order to get the 'feel' of fallen humanity in the light of the biblical statement concerning Man.

ultimately such are abortive. ‘The wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot rest, and its waters toss up mire and dirt. There is no peace says my Lord, to the wicked.’

Joy to the World: the Joy of Salvation

If Augustine and Luther are accused of seeing the depravity of Man in the light of their experiences, and so colouring their theology, then no less can David be accused of the same. It seems difficult to separate Psalms 34 and 51, and Psalm 38—if the latter comes from the same pen—utters the deepest things of suffering through depravity in sin. It is Fox’s comparison of ‘fall/redemption spirituality’ and ‘original blessing spirituality’ in his book *Original Blessing* (pp.316–319) that is quite astonishing. It would seem he has unbelievably misread the writers he accuses of joylessness, and has missed the biblical simplicity of redemption which comes by grace.

The biblical portrayal of salvation is a portrayal of great joy come to sinful mankind. Even if we may have etymological and semantic problems over the phrase ‘total depravity’ yet if that depravity be called in question, then so must grace. The quality and measure of grace is such that it liberates Man from his dreadful violation of the sovereignty and holiness of God in the fall—the rejection of God, His deity and His power, in favour of the idols. Man’s insistence on ‘suppressing the truth of God in acts of unrighteousness’ is so dreadful a sin as to seem to be even beyond the forgiveness of God. When we further travel into the corruption of the human heart as set out by the writer of Genesis, by Jeremiah and by Jesus—to say nothing of other powerful biblical writers—then redemption, ‘even the forgiveness of sins’ is the colossal work of grace which purifies the polluted heart of Man, takes away entirely his guilt, and sets him free to be utterly free before the God who first created and then redeemed him. On the other hand, if sin is virtually nothing but mistake and regrettable (but understandable) moral failure, then only a thin grace is required; then the human problem is not deep as death in this case, and the Cross as the bearing away of the sins of the world has little virtue. As we trace redemption through in the Scriptures both as the universal ‘salvation-history theme’ and as the grace of God that personally liberates each human person, then redemption is the source of joy to the sin beleaguered human race, and the second great cause of praise in the celestial and terrestrial spheres of the creation¹⁸. We do not have opportunity here to show the intention of God before time, the action of God in time, and the conclusion of redemption for eternity, i.e. the peerless grandeur of the whole theme which, itself, evokes the thunderous applause of all creation and liberates the sheer joy of all creatures.

If we begin with Cain and Abel and see the first sacrifice in the light of Hebrews 11:4, and the redeemed family in the light of both Hebrews 11:4ff. and I John 3:10ff. then we see that the true joy the human race can know in redemption is the thread which runs from Genesis 3:15 to the great climax of the Holy City in The Revelation as the nations and tribes pour into it. The powerful development of covenant from the time of Noah to the climactic new covenant is the story of the revelation of grace that liberates persons and nations. As we have already suggested the ‘joy of salvation’ has always

¹⁸ In the Book of the Revelation in chapter four we see the primary basis and cause of worship in the celestial sphere is the fact of God Himself, his holiness and his eternity, but then these issuing in the mighty act of creation. God is accorded ‘glory and honour and power’. In chapter five the basis and cause of great worship is the redemption achieved by the Lamb, and to this Lamb is accorded ‘power and wealth and wisdom and might and glory and honour’.

been in operation where men and woman have had personal faith in God. In Psalms 32 and 51 David did not so much *come into* ‘the joy of thy salvation’ as he had it *restored* to him. Israel as a nation knew redemption, and each human being within it knew that redemption as a person.

No one can read the Old Testament and miss the terrible nature of Israel’s sin of idolatry, that nation’s constant breaking of the covenant—even to the point of apostasy—with the dreadful consequences brought upon it by the Divine jealousy and holiness of God. The judgements of Yahweh upon His people are terrible to behold. The decimation of the people, the rape and pillage of the land until even the holy city is horribly ravaged is the theme of the doomful prophets. To read Jeremiah is to be lacerated by the judgements of God, with seemingly no relief, and yet it is this very prophecy which holds out the glorious promise of the new covenant—the very words of which are used by Christ at the last supper to seal the new freedom of man. Again—in the great lament of Lamentations—amidst the terrible rape of Jerusalem Jeremiah cries,

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness.
‘The Lord is my portion,’ says my soul,
‘therefore I will hope in him.’

We need, then, to think of every true sacrifice offered by every faithful worshipper and the joy it brought, just as we must think of the one great sacrifice offered, once for all, by the Living Victim and great High Priest, Christ himself. Then it is we shall understand ‘the joy of thy salvation’. To cry ‘Peace! Peace!’ where there is no peace, and to seek to heal the wounds of sin as though they were superficial—‘as though they were a scratch’—is the deceit of sin expounded. The true joy that comes with repentance is denied. How many were the folk were led into such repentance by Jesus and so out of their sins. Such repentance was as new wine and it could not be contained in the old bottles of legalism. In heavens the angels sing for sheer delight when one sinner repents. So the angels sang at Jesus’ birth for he was ‘to save his people from their sins’.

Pastorally, then, we and our people will never know the fruit of the Spirit which is really the harvest of salvation, until the gospel is proclaimed fully to sinners under the condemnation of the law and the enslavement of their sins. There will be no liberation from the fear of punishment, and the dread of death and the grave. Calvary will not be the majestic triumph of the love of God, and the resurrection will not be the occasion of unspeakable joy.

Biblically the Acts of the Apostles, and their apostolic letters proclaim the joy that has come with salvation. The joy that came when Jesus personally applied his authority to forgive to sinful men and women was replaced and enhanced by the authority won at the Cross to proclaim forgiveness of sins to the world (Luke 24:46–47; John 20:23; cf. Matt. 26:28). Hence the joy that came at Pentecost (Acts 2:38–47) in Jerusalem, to the city of Samaria (Acts 8:7), to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:39), the Philippian jailor (Acts 16:34), and—typically as at Thessalonica—to each group of people who received the gospel (I Thess. 1:6; cf. Acts 10:43–44). It is on and by this joy that the people of God—the churches of Christ—live in joy. It is the joy of salvation, but it is joy which has new understanding and experience of the ‘original, creational blessing’ and which anticipates the eschatological joy of glorification. That is joy which has come through

faith in the love of God, the experience of that love of God, and the hope that lies before it of inheriting the new heavens and the new earth and living in them in ceaseless joy.

Note. *The second study in **The Personal and Pastoral Power of Joy** will seek to expand and cover the elements contained in the last paragraph (above). This will include the joy that is always known in covenant in the face of human sinfulness and the working of the powers of evil. We will also seek to re-work the biblical understanding of ‘original blessing’, i.e. having joy in this present creation, even in the face of the curse. Where all these elements are taught amongst us, and become known to us, there is it is that we will see the personal and pastoral power of joy in evidence and in power.*

The Pastoral and Personal Power of Joy—II

An Introduction: The Joy of the Lord

What then, is 'the joy of the Lord' which we see to be essential to the life of Man, and a great power for personal and pastoral ministry? When we look at the context of Nehemiah 8:9–10 it is that in which Nehemiah spoke to the people who were virtually stunned as they heard Ezra the scribe and priest read the Law to them—the returning exiles,

'This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep.' For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. 'Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord; and do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.'

What then, is 'the joy of the Lord'. Is it genitive—the joy which the Lord has—or is it objective—the joy which comes from the Lord? Surely it is both. In Zephaniah 3:17 we read, 'The Lord your God . . . will rejoice over you with gladness'. God—to put it quaintly—is His own joy. This joy He uses over His beloved. Israel was His beloved, i.e. His chosen people. The Nehemiah passage we may translate, 'the joy of Yahweh is your stronghold' (JB), or 'your refuge' (Keil and Delitzsch). The latter commentary¹ observes, 'Because the day is holy to the Lord, they are to desire it with holy joy. The joy of the Lord is a joy founded on the feeling of communion with the Lord, on the consciousness that we have in the Lord a God of long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth (Exod. 34:6). The key lies surely in 'the feeling of communion with the Lord'. Man is meant for joy. Man is meant for communion with the Lord. Indeed this is the ultimate for Man when he will be completely a 'partaker in the divine nature'. As we have seen this partaking is a present experience (II Pet. 1:4; cf. I John 1:3; Col. 3:3; I John 4:16–18). Let us examine some of the occasions for, and elements of, joy. This surely fits with the words of the Psalmist (16:11), 'Thou dost show me the path of life; in thy presence there is fulness of joy, in thy right hand are pleasures for evermore'. Then again in Psalm 37:4, 'Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart'.

¹ Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on Nehemiah (Eerdmans, Reprint, 1980, Vol. 3 p.232).

The Joy and Gladness of God and Man

(i) Creation in Joy at its Different Periods and Situations

Firstly, there is the very joy of the creation coming into being, and then the nature of creation as 'good' (Gen. 1:31; Eccles. 3:11), i.e. functional, and without evil and animus against Man. When this joyful and pleasant nature of creation is taught the dread that Man has—and even the people of God have—is dissolved. Undoubtedly have come to be amongst the things of creation, but creation itself is both beautiful and joyful. Romans 8:18–25 shows it awaits full release to be wholly itself—full of praise and life and joy. Job 38:7,

'When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy'. Genesis 2:9, 'And out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food'. I Timothy 4:4, 'For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving'. 6:17, 'God who richly furnishes us with everything to enjoy'. I Corinthians 10:26, 31, 'the earth is the Lord's and everything in it . . . so, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God'.

In that joy of creation we must not miss the word 'blessed'. On the fifth day was the creation of birds and sea creatures and God blessed them. On the sixth day He blessed Man—the man and woman together. The word 'blessing' contains the ideas of happiness and joy, of peace, serenity and security. The fall has cast a shadow across understanding the rich bliss and joy known in an unfallen humanity and an unaffected creation. Even so, God goes on blessing humanity in many ways, and the subject of blessing is quite a vast one in the Scriptures.

Secondly, there are times when we see the very creation disporting itself in joy in the very wonder of *being*.

Psalms 97:1, 'The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad' Psalm 65:12–13, 'The pastures of the wilderness drip, the hills gird themselves with joy, the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout together and sing for joy.

Thirdly, the earth is under the sovereignty of God, It is not controlled by evil powers, It rejoices in this sovereignty of God. It also has moral connotation, (a) it goes into joy when God comes to judge that which is evil, i.e. when Man despoils the creation by his sin (cf. Rom. 1:18), and (b) it goes into joy when God renews His people, especially through salvation. Creation, of course, is generated, and knows the joy of this. Ultimately creation will come to full regeneration—as shown in various Scriptures, especially in Romans 8:18–25.

(a) Psalm 98:4–6, 8–9, Make a joyful noise to the Lord all the earth; break forth into joyous song, and sing praises! Sing praises unto the Lord with the lyre . . . make a joyful noise before the Lord. . . Let the floods clap their hands, let the hills sing for joy together before the Lord for he comes to judge the earth'. (b) Isaiah 35:1ff. 'The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,

the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing'².

Fourthly, providence in creation is also a great theme of joy. Psalm 104 is the *locus classicus* of this matter. In Matthew 5:43–48 Jesus speaks of this, and in Acts 14:15 Paul mentions it in a slightly different manner—'He did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness'.

Finally, joy in creation is eschatological, i.e. happens in the climax of the *telos*. This is seen in the 'the glory of the liberty of the children of God' (Rom. 8:21) in which all creation participates. It is in fact the fulness of 'the new heavens and the new earth' as predicted in Isaiah in many places (cf. 65:18–25; 66:22–23) and in Revelation chapters 21 and 22. Everything will certainly be joy in the new heavens and the new earth.

The teaching regarding the joy of creation is necessary to take away the fear humanity has of the creation, induced by humanity's guilt. Behind the fear of creation is the fear of the Creator—fear lest He is not 'a faithful Creator', lest His creation be fragile or inherently evil. We need to teach creation as a richly joyful thing. We need first to know that ourselves. Of course, wrong views of creation arise from human guilt since human guilt distorts true views of God and His 'good' creation.

(ii) The Joy of Covenant and Law

We cannot here discuss at any length the joy that must have come to Noah with God's universal covenant, and the promise of the continuing rhythm of the seasons. Abraham's joy at covenant can be taken for granted, especially as the word 'blessing' is so often used. Likewise the promises to Isaac and Jacob must have brought joy. It was Esau who virtually spurned 'the blessing' and lost any joy he might have had. Primarily Exodus 34:6–7 spells out the joy of covenant, the joy of the Lord as we have noted above in the commentary on Nehemiah 8;9–10. If we were to seek to cover all the references to the joy Israel has within the covenant, we would need many pages of references to cover these. We can only draw out the principles of joy and rejoicing, giving on example or two of each—among many.

- (a) *The Lord gives joy*—'Thou hast put more joy in my heart than they when their grain and wine abound'. Psalm 4:7. There is joy in the Lord, 'Then my soul shall rejoice in the Lord'. Psalm 35:9. 'In the presence of the Lord there is joy'. Psalm 16:11 (cf. Psalm 21:6). 'God is my exceeding joy'. Psalm 43:4.
- (b) *The righteous know joy*. 'Light dawns for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart'. Psalm 4:11.
- (c) *There is joy in the law of the Lord*. 'His delight is in the law of the Lord'. Psalm 1:2. 'Thy law is my delight'. Psalm 119:17. 'The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart'. Psalm 19:8.
- (d) *There is joy in God's salvation*. 'My heart shall rejoice in thy salvation'. Psalm 13:5.
- (e) *There is joy in restoration to salvation*. 'Fill me with joy and gladness . . . restore to me the joy of thy salvation'. Psalm 51:8,12.

² This is the time, in particular when we see the link between the joyfulness of creation and Israel's redemption. It is also linked with Man's full redemption, as in passages such as Isaiah 11:1–10; Romans 8:18–25; and Revelation 21:1–5.

- (f) *There is joy in the day that the Lord has made.* ‘This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it’. Psalm 118:24.
- (g) *There is joy in the word of the Lord.* ‘I rejoice at thy word like one who finds great spoil’. Psalm 119: 162.
- (h) *There is joy in worshipping the Lord.* This is a vast theme. ‘Sing aloud to God our strength; shout for joy to the God of Jacob’. Psalm 81:1. ‘My heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God’. Psalm 84:2.
- (i) *There is joy in meditating on the deeds of the living God—the God who acts. All God’s deeds are to recounted with joy.* ‘Let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving and tell of his deeds in joy’. Psalm 107 22.
- (j) *‘There is joy in doing the will of the Lord.* ‘I delight to do thy, O my God; thy law is within my heart. I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation’.

We know that all in the covenant were God’s people. They had joy in all His gifts—sonship, the glory, the worship, the law—and so on. They had great joy at their festivals. Sorrow might well come upon them from time to time—either from the hatred of the enemy or the guilt of their own sin—but joy would come, ‘Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes in the morning’ (Psa. 39:5). So then, we can assume that folk under the covenant knew God as the God of joy, particularly when they delighted in Him, in his promises and in His law. They also delighted greatly in the creation as the Psalms so clearly show.

(iii) The Joy of Covenant Restoration

We cannot properly cover the joy of covenant unless we recognise that Israel fell into sin, idolatry and apostasy and needed restoration. Much of this joy is expressed through the prophets and—again—we cannot spend much time on it. We have seen something of David’s personal restoration to salvation within the covenant (Psa. 51), but Isaiah which is speaking to people who will be in exile, and who will return from exile—as also Jeremiah speaks of joy in returning to Palestine and Jerusalem—all show that such communal joy will be immense. The transformation of the land in the coming of the Spirit, the rebuilding of the old places, the new understanding and exercise of worship—all these are too many to recount. Yet the promise of this was there,

‘You will say in that day: I will give thanks to thee, O Lord, for though thou wast angry with me , thy anger turned away and thou didst comfort me . . . With joy shall you draw water from the wells of salvation . . . Shout and sing for joy, O inhabitants of Zion, or great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel’ Isaiah 12: 1, 3. 6. ‘And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away’. Isaiah 35:10. ‘Then shall the maidens rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old men shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy, I will comfort them and give them gladness for sorrow.’ Jeremiah 31:13. ‘When God restores the fortunes of his people, Jacob will rejoice, and Israel will be glad’. Psalm 53:16. ‘Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains into singing! For the Lord has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted’. Isaiah 49:13.

Along with the joy of the restoration of Israel was the joy induced by the coming of Messiah, ‘Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion, shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem. Lo, your king comes to you, triumphant and victorious is he’ (Zeh. 9:9).

As we have observed above, the creation itself—particularly the land of Israel—would be transformed in the restoration of the people of the covenant.

(iv) Wisdom Literature on the Experience of Joy and Pleasure

In the biblical Wisdom literature there is much spoken about joy and pleasure. This is the case especially in some of the Psalms, certain passages in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes³. This is a subject which demands much attention, but at least the principle Koheleth outlines in his Ecclesiastes needs our attention. Most readers call it a pessimistic book, but it is not. It is simply realistic. In effect, the Preacher is saying. ‘Man looks at ‘everything under the sun’ and limits himself to this scene. As a wise man I sought to devise a philosophy and a working practice of living within ‘all things under the sun’. Man seeks to devise a rationalisation of his world, and when he does this without God he is really a ‘horizontalist’—he sees only things ‘under the sun’, and it is no wonder he turns pessimistic and even nihilistic. Knowing God, fearing Him, and keeping His commandments put an entirely different complex on the matter. Where we have—so to speak—a ‘horizontalist-verticalist’ perspective, then the things which are under the sun become intelligible, and the right use of them most pleasurable. To eat and to drink and live has point, and is rightly functional for created Man. One quote is sufficient,

Behold, what I have seen to be good and to be fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life which God has given him, for this is his lot. Every man also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and find enjoyment in his toil—this is the gift of God. For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.

It ought to be understood that this principle certainly has the background of covenant, and if it is so for the covenant in Israel, then surely it is true of ‘the better covenant’ of Christ.

(v) The Joy of the New Covenant: Joy at, and in, and by Christ’s Coming

The coming of Christ was attended with great joy,

‘The angel said to them, “Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good new of great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour who is Christ the Lord.’ Luke 2:10–11. ‘And when they saw the star they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy!’ Matthew 2:10. ‘Your wife Elizabeth with bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth; for he will be great before the Lord’,. Luke 1:14. ‘He [John the Baptist] was a burning and shining light, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light’. John 5:35. ‘For behold, when the voice of your [Mary’s] greeting came to my ears, the babe in my [Elizabeth’s] womb leaped for joy’. Luke 1:44. ‘Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden” ‘. Luke 1:46–47.

John the Baptist could say of the joy that came to him in the womb and never left him, ‘He who has the bride is the bridegroom; the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and

³ See the introductory essays to my *The Wisdom of Koheleth* (NCPI, 1990) for an expansion of his philosophy of pleasure.

hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice; therefore this joy of mine is now full'. John 3:29. The joy of John from womb to death must have been a great one.

(vi) The Joy of Jesus the Christ

Later, when Christ spoke about 'my joy' (John 15:11) he was speaking about a joy he had always had. He could speak in the sermon on the mount of joy in suffering, for when persecuted the disciples were to 'Rejoice and be glad', and to 'Leap for joy'. It is said in Luke 10:21, 'In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit'. He drew the response of joy from the people. When he healed the paralysed man he 'immediately rose before them, and took up that on which he lay, and went home, glorifying God. And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God'. Luke 5:25–26. This principle is shown in Luke 13:17, 'And all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things he had done'. Jesus reminded his hostile listeners that 'Your father Abraham rejoiced that he was to see my day; he saw it and was glad'. (John 8:56).

As we saw it was on the night of his betrayal that he said, 'These things have I spoken unto you that your joy may be full'. In John 16:20–22 he spoke of the sorrow they would have when he would go away—through death—but reminded them, 'I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you'. The joy he was to give them would be with them always. Himself 'for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is [now] seated at the right hand of the throne of God'. Hebrews 12:2. When he rose from the dead and appeared in the upper room the disciples 'believed not for joy'.

In all of this Jesus was about 'the joy of salvation'. He was building the basis and power of that salvation in the Cross as his followers later proclaimed. He said there was—and is—joy in heaven over one sinner who repents. He had told the disciples that in regard to the harvest it was for the gift of eternal life, 'so that sower and reaper may rejoice together'—a reminder of Psalm 126, 'He that goes forth weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him'. The seventy disciples, having proclaimed the kingdom to many cities and hamlets returned to the city 'with great joy'.

(vii) The Joy of Christ in the Church

The joy of the resurrection was linked with the joy of the salvation that came from the Cross, the Resurrection, and the Ascension of Christ. The three thousand 'partook of food with glad and generous hearts', and had all things in common, sharing with others what they possessed. The move into Samaria by Philip with the gospel was such that 'there was much joy in that city'. When trouble came to the apostolic band at Antioch they 'were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit'. When they gave an account of the working of God in the various churches it 'gave great joy to all the brethren'.

The Epistles constantly sound the theme of joy. Paul uses 'joy' or 'rejoice' some thirteen times in his Letter to the Philippians. In I Thessalonians 1:5–6 it is said that the Thessalonians that they 'received the word of the gospel 'in much affliction and joy inspired by the Holy Spirit'. In Romans 14:17 Paul says that 'the kingdom of God is not [matters of] food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit'. In Romans 15:13 he prays the beautiful prayer, 'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope'. James links joy with trials and testings (1:2), Peter with knowing Christ so that

one has 'joy unutterable and full of glory'. John speaks of joy as being linked with fellowship with the Father and the Son, as also with the brethren. We can see that joy comes with salvation, but that salvation is in the context of the people of God, the body of Christ, the Kingdom of God.

What is perhaps startling is that joy is often linked with suffering, and we need to examine this matter.

Joy and Suffering⁴

The prime example is of Christ as we saw in Hebrews 12:2 'who for the joy that was set before him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and was set down at the right hand of God'. We saw that he always had joy when he was on earth, and kept that joy through great opposition. He saw persecution as a cause for joy, even for leaping for joy! The disciples when persecuted by the Sanhedrin 'rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the name'. The disciples were filled joy and the Holy Spirit at Antioch when they were being persecuted. In all of this they must have remembered the Lord's words in Matthew 5:11,

Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you, and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you⁵.

They had witnessed his sufferings, yet found him joy-filled on Easter Day. That is why they counted it all joy to suffer for his sake. That is why Paul, too, could say, 'Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church,' and when listing his sufferings in II Corinthians 6:3–10 he concludes with, 'as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things'. Peter's First Letter is really one that is occupied mostly with the theme of suffering. One of his great injunctions is, 'But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings that you may rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.'

The Book of the Revelation does not directly speak of suffering as a source of joy, but certainly that is the thrust of it. In 2:10 Christ enjoins the church at Smyrna, 'Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.' There are seven powerful promises to those who are overcomers. There are so many of these and other incentives to go through suffering. One of these is in 14:12–13,

And I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write this: blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth.' 'Blessed indeed,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labours, for their deeds follow them.'

Deepest of all sources of joy is the outcome of suffering. Paul says, 'Provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.' That glory is shown most wonderfully in the last two chapters of the

⁴ The whole matter of suffering and its accompanying joy is dealt with at some length in my little book

⁵ The parallel in Luke 6:23 is 'Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for, behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.'

Book of the Revelation when the holy city is seen descending from heaven with its promise, ‘he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.’ The meaning of the cessation of pain, sorrow and suffering is surely the announcement of great joy, and such is seen in the marriage of the Bride and the Lamb, and in the glories of the eternal city with the ultimate, glorious beatitude of seeing God⁶.

What we need to see—sensibly—about suffering, is that we do not enter it to it simply in order to obtain joy. This would be a kind of perversion. A careful reading of II Corinthians 4:7–18 shows that the very proclamation of the gospel will arouse great opposition and ire, and so bring suffering upon us, and yet the intense joy of the proclaimer is felt in the fact that this is the way—indeed the only way—to truly preach Christ. Such suffering—according to Paul—is but ‘a slight momentary affliction [which] is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison’, i.e. it is a most remarkable source of great joy.

What we need to note clearly here is that our congregations need to be taught that without suffering there can be no deep and true joy. We must be careful not to teach suffering as the *cost* of joy but as the *cause* of joy. We need to show that glorification lies in the fact and process of suffering. There is no masochism in this, no self-crucifying pain of asceticism. Indeed most suffering is not felt as a thing in itself. When the apostles counted it all joy that they were permitted to suffer for his sake, and when Paul rejoiced that he could fill up the afflictions of Christ lacking in his body there was no self-consciousness of doing a great deed. It was God’s mercy that they could so share in ‘the fellowship of his sufferings’. How close they were—and we are—to Christ in all that, and how dependent is joy upon that intimate communion with the Lord!

Joy in the Congregation

We come now to some sort of conclusion regarding the experience and power of joy. We have noted that some congregations do not greatly evince deep and abiding joy. In such groups there is a lack of what we might call ‘gospel joy’. It has been said that proclamation—sometimes called evangelism—is the overflow of a heart too full to contain it. The joy of the Lord is the Lord’s joy in our hearts, and our hearts in the Lord’s joy. It is essentially His joy and does not spring from any source in us.

Indeed, it is from the Holy Spirit that joy comes, for we must note that in passages such as I Thessalonians 1:6; Acts 13:52; Romans 14:17 and Galatians 5:22 that comes, and Revelation 14:13-14 that the announcement of blessing through suffering is made by the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit who brings through a similar message in Romans 8:17–25.

We have noted that the primary joy Man was given was that of creation when the sons of God shouted for joy at the glory of it all. It was the joy Adam knew when he first beheld Eve. It was the joy he knew in keeping the garden and sharing Paradise with his wife. If we can speak of secondary joy then it was that of covenant, and when covenant was broken and brought deep tragedy, yet joy came with restoration and

⁶ We see, time and again, from Genesis to Revelation the beatitudes of God. There is blessing in creation, in covenant, in redemption, in Christian living, and the Book of the Revelation has seven beautiful beatitudes to encourage those in suffering.

salvation. Christ's bringing of joy to the world is indescribable, but it has brought relief to sinful men and women and set them upon the path of joy. There is joy in living out the law of love in the life of the regenerated person and the community of Christ. There is joy in knowing and living in the Triune God. There is joy in anticipating the joy that is to come. Perhaps most of all there is joy in proclaiming the joyful news of the gospel, and this in the midst of suffering. The gossellers would have felt themselves bereft had they been denied 'the mercy of ministry'. In that sense Paul might cry 'Woe is me if I am not allowed to preach the gospel!' 'They that sow in tears shall reap in joy'. 'They that sow and they that reap may [then] rejoice together'. Thus 'the seventy returned with joy'. If there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, so, too, is there intense joy in the company of the saints on earth. Converts were Paul's 'joy and crown'. He could say to the Thessalonians, 'For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you are our glory and our joy'.

We commenced our first study speaking of Matthew Fox's 'original blessing' by which he sought to counter what he called 'fall/redemption' theology. His appendix which compares this with 'original blessing'—a theology of his own making—ignores, or does not know, the intensity of Man's existential suffering because of his fall and his continuing sin. It ignores the terrible throes of the human conscience, the degradation and depravity of the humanity that is in Adam. It minimises the value and meaning of the Cross, and passes by the glory of grace in the suffering of Christ on the Cross. We are by no means arguing against the fact that Man was given 'original blessing;' but we are arguing that 'original sin' prevented him from enjoying the creation in the way that he had done before the fall. Under grace, Man today may resume much of the joy of the original blessing—much of the joy of creation, especially as he is redeemed and has come to know the love of God.

The question is whether we are not ameliorating the nature of grace by lessening the nature of sin, and heinousness of Man's rebellion against God. The glorious relief of grace and love is thereby denied to our people. Is that why there is often a lack-lustre living within our community—even where the doctrines of grace are taught? Is that why we have so much professionalism, and so much community living that is a mere imitation of the dynamics of community known at Pentecost and the days that followed. Great revivals have first been revivals in the consciousness and conviction of sin, and have resulted in unusual joy. Men and women's hearts have been terrified at their own sin, and gloriously relieved and released by the word of forgiveness and grace. Regenerated men and women have come to know 'joy unutterable and full of glory'. True *agape* has begun as a torrent in the congregation—'rivers of living water'—and become an ocean of joyful love. If sorrow tarries for a night, joy always comes in the morning.

The final question is, 'Have we as pastors lost our joy?' This involves other questions, 'Have we lost the sense of God's holiness, the true sense of sin, the pain of the Cross that brought redemption to our spirits, purified our consciousness and flooded us with the joy of salvation? Have we lost all our 'hope and joy in believing'? Are we selling our congregations short by indulging ourselves in worldly and fleshly joys which are a sad substitution for the pure joy? Have we failed to see that joy is not

only a fruit of the Spirit, but is a gift commanded to be used by God?⁷ Are we denying our people their authentic stimulation of joy by stimulating them to a kind of joy which is not the joy of the Lord—joy within the refuge of Himself.

We need to answer these questions, and so—at the risk of seeming to be repetitious I repeat from a previous page the sources and expressions of joy under the Mosaic covenant, for they, too, are the same for the new covenant,

- (a) *The Lord gives joy*—‘Thou hast put more joy in my heart than they when their grain and wine abound’. Psalm 4:7. There is joy in the Lord, ‘Then my soul shall rejoice in the Lord’. Psalm 35:9. ‘In the presence of the Lord there is joy’. Psalm 16:11 (cf. Psalm 21:6). ‘God is my exceeding joy’. Psalm 43:4.
- (b) *The righteous know joy*. ‘Light dawns for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart’. Psalm 4:11.
- (c) *There is joy in the law of the Lord*. ‘His delight is in the law of the Lord’. Psalm 1:2. ‘Thy law is my delight’. Psalm 119:17. ‘The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart’. Psalm 19:8.
- (d) *There is joy in God’s salvation*. ‘My heart shall rejoice in thy salvation’. Psalm 13:5.
- (e) *There is joy in restoration to salvation*. ‘Fill me with joy and gladness . . . restore to me the joy of thy salvation’. Psalm 51:8,12.
- (f) *There is joy in the day that the Lord has made*. ‘This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it’. Psalm 118:24.
- (f) *There is joy in the word of the Lord*. ‘I rejoice at thy word like one who finds great spoil’. Psalm 119: 162.
- (g) *There is joy in worshipping the Lord*. This is a vast theme. ‘Sing aloud to God our strength; shout for joy to the God of Jacob’. Psalm 81:1 My heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God’. Psalm 84:2.
- (h) *There is joy in meditating on the deeds of the living God—the God who acts. All God’s deeds are to recounted with joy*. ‘Let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving and tell of his deeds in joy’. Psalm 107 22.
- (i) *There is joy in doing the will of the Lord*. ‘I delight to do thy, O my God; thy law is within my heart. I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation’.

To all of these wonderful principles we add the joy brought by the coming of Christ—his incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension—and the eschatological joy anticipated in view of the *telos* of delight. We refer to the immediate joy of living in God’s beautiful creation, and the hope of the new heavens and the new earth.

Finally—and perhaps most important of all for our pastoral ministrations—we see ourselves as those upon whom the ends of the ages have come, and must instruct the ones we love that there can be joy unutterable in the now time, the time when we meet the forces of evil, but in faith deny the accusation that God is the God of ‘doom and gloom’. He is the God of all joy, His joy is our strength and our life. The battle against evil does not need to rob us of our joy. Nor does the suffering persecution entails. No: these can be the things of joy. The church must not be optimistic, seeking to stimulate joy from various artifices. Nor should it be pessimistic, seeing joy only as

⁷ We are thinking of the commands to be joyful, to have joy, especially Paul’s ‘Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I will say, Rejoice.’ Here I would recommend my little book *Commanded to Joy* (NCPI, 1982), as also *The Spirit’s Harvest*, (NCPI, 1987, pp.19–29).

something coming to us in the *telos*. If the joy of the Lord is our strength, and if Christ has given us his joy, then we should live in joy—even in the face of all difficulties.

It is good, then, to see that our joy derives not only from freedom from sin and judgement, but from present communion with the Triune God—abiding in Him, as He in us. It is apposite to quote the commentary in Nehemiah 8:9–10, ‘The joy of the Lord is a joy founded on the feeling of communion with the Lord, on the consciousness that we have in the Lord a God of long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth (Exod. 34:6)’.

Here, then, we live in that joy—in His presence—and there ‘treasures of pleasures’, ‘fulness of joy’ as also, ‘in thy right hand are pleasures for evermore’. The great source of joy will be our eternal participation in the divine nature (II Pet. 1:4) and already our fellowship is with the Triune God as we dwell in Him and He in us.

The Pastoral Power of Friendship

An Introduction to Friendship

I was recently given an insight when a young man said, ‘Often a congregation is glad to have a good teacher or preacher but that is what they want him, to remain—teacher or preacher. They do not want to have him as a friend.’ I thought about that and there seemed to be quite a bit of support for that idea. I wondered whether they felt that having one as close to you as a friend might put them under deeper obligation to hear your message, or whether they would not really hear it until they received you as a friend. We need to think through a lot as to whether the apostolic audiences saw the proclaimers as their friends, or whether, hearing the message of God’s love, they sensed they were friends and not just persuaders in the way that some are prosyletisers.

That led me on to think about the relationships between—say—Paul and the churches he founded, and John and the churches he wrote to. III John closes with, ‘Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends ever one of them.’ I think we should return to this a little later.

My friend was telling a congregation that they ought to read my books, giving attention to them. ‘When you just see the man as a preacher,’ he said, ‘you may not see him properly at all. He is my friend, therefore I read his books, and at least I can more easily understand them, for I know much of his mind, and I do not come to them with a prejudice.’

All of this made we wonder whether we are friends to our people, and they to us. Someone said, ‘Mostly pastors are friendly people, but they are friends to few and few are friends to them.’ That is why I think a study such as this might prove to be helpful.

Seeing Friendship in a Biblical Way

I know that ‘seeing friendship in a biblical way’ may prove to be a vast task, but let us attempt it. In the Hebrew there were two words for ‘friend’, one deriving from the verb ‘to love’ i.e. *ahab*—used only a few times—and the other is *rea*, the most often used for friend¹. *Ahab* is used in II Chronicles 20:7 of Abraham, ‘Didst thou not, O our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and give it to the descendants of Abraham thy friend.’² It is also used in Isaiah 41 God speaks of

¹ As also the Hebrew *re-eh* and *merca*. In the Greek the main word is *philos*, but *hetairos* sometimes the latter having in it a certain stiffness or formality. It was the word Jesus used to Judas when he—Judas—betrayed him with a kiss.

² What we need to keep in mind is that the Hebrew *ahab* can be translated. beloved’ and when ‘beloved’ is seen to equal ‘friend’ then the intimacy and the affection is apparent. It may well be that in the other Hebrew word—*rea*—affection and intimacy can be present, yet *ahab* is in the case of its uses in II Chronicles 20:7 and Isaiah 41:8. See Proverbs 18:24; 27:6 where the attachment is very deep.

‘the offspring of Abraham, my friend.’ In James 2:23 *ahab* becomes *philos*, “‘Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness’; and he was called the friend of God.’ In all three cases Abraham is a man who is in covenant-relationship with God, believing His promises and so being accounted righteous, i.e. one who is with God and accepted as the friend of God.

The term *rea* is used in Exodus 33:11, ‘Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, a man speaks to his friend.’ Two, then, are spoken of friends of God—Abraham and Moses. Jesus supplied one aspect of friendship when he said (John 15:13–17),

Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend. You are my friends if you do whatsoever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. This I command you, to love one another.

Friendship is One Informing the Other of What He/She is Doing

One of the elements of friendship, Jesus said, is that the one tells the other what he is doing. In Abraham’s case we have the story in Genesis 18 we have the story of God’s intention for Sodom and Gomorrah. In verses 17–19 we read,

Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by him? No, I have chosen him, that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.

We conclude that as in John 15:13–17 Jesus told his disciples what he was doing—remembering of course that John chapters 14–17 discloses all of this—so in Genesis 18 God tells Abraham all that He is doing. In fact, God has been continually telling him what he was doing. The saying of Jesus (John 8:56) reveals even more, ‘Your Father Abraham rejoiced that he was to see my day; he saw it and was glad.’ Likewise in Exodus 33:11, ‘Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend,’ was the telling of what was to happen. This is seen in Numbers 12:6–8,

And he said, ‘Hear my words: if there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses; he is entrusted with all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly and not in dark speech; and he beholds the form of the Lord.

God, of course, was continually telling Moses what he was doing in regard to Israel, i.e. from the beginning of their emancipation from Israel to their arrival into the Promised Land. In the case of Abraham he had told him that he would possess the earth, and was giving particulars within that framework regarding Sodom and Gomorrah. Likewise Jesus was predicting to his disciples what he would do, and these

three cases are cited as connoting friendship. What is there about this telling which would constitute friendship? The fact is that both friends are working on the one project. A servant does the work set out for him, and is paid for it. The other—the friend— participates in it: the friend is with his friend in it.

In the case of God speaking to Abraham and Moses they were being told the good things that would happen, and warned against doing the wrong things. In the case of Jesus and his disciples he told them of the great ministry he had chosen for them, and in which they would participate. In this sense Paul speaks about both the grace and mercy that were given to him that he would have ministry. Not to have it would have been anguish to him. In II Chronicles 20:7—and context—Jehoshaphat is reminding God of what he told Abraham would come to pass, and is holding Him to what He has promised to His *friend* Abraham. In Isaiah 41:8ff. God is telling Israel that since Abraham was His friend, so He is now caring for Abraham's descendants.

On this score, then, we conclude that friendship is not simply a matter of affection, mateship and good feeling, but is being and working together in a project which is primarily in the hands of the one making the friend, stimulating the friendship. Let us not forget that God appeared to Abraham in dreams and visions and many other ways, so that 'the God of glory appeared unto Abraham'. Likewise Moses generally saw Him in 'the cloud of His presence'. Do matters of friendship have significant implications for all life, including pastoral relationships? We note that friendship is profitable to both sides: it is a rich mutuality, but not a calculated bargain.

Friendship is in and with Covenant

It goes without saying that in being the friend of Abraham (II Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8), of Moses, and such leaders within the covenant, that in and by them God was the friend of Israel. For example, God's use of *ahab*—'beloved' or 'friend'—for Israel in Isaiah 5:1f., is the same word used for 'my beloved' in the Song of Solomon 1:16. *If we miss the matter of covenant we may miss the matter of true friendship.*³ In I Samuel 18:3ff., 'Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as his own soul.' In I Samuel 20:8 David reminded Jonathan of the covenant—not that Jonathan needed any reminder—'Therefore deal kindly with your servant, for you have brought your servant into a covenant with you.' In I Samuel 23:16–18 when David was again in danger, 'Jonathan, Saul's son, rose and went to David at Horesh, and strengthened his hand in God. And he said to him, "Fear no; for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you; you shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you; Saul my father knows this."' And the two of them made a covenant before the Lord; David remained at Horesh and Jonathan went home.'

God Revealing All His Secrets to His Elect

If telling His people what is ahead is friendship, then God is friend to all his people. Genesis 17:1–8 is at once a revelation of covenant and then what will happen within and by the covenant. It is God revealing His secret to Abraham his friend. This, in principle, prophecy

³ It may be difficult to prove that every friendship that is true comes from a covenant made by the two friends, but it seems clear that there is an understand covenant. However mutually beneficial mateship was in war-time, it was certainly known by those who suffered deeply in the hands of the Japanese, that they needed to be one with each other—in the spirit of Ecclesiastes 4:10–12. In other words, mateship 'paid off'. How close this was to the friendship of which the Bible speaks is a matter for investigation. It was often said in POW days, 'You can't survive if you don't have a mate!'

from Genesis 3:15 to the end of Revelation is God revealing His

secrets to Man, i.e. to Man who will hear⁴. In this sense God has let—and does let—His people in on what He is doing.

Revelation 19:10 says that ‘The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy’, and certainly Christ is the total revelation of God, but he is revelation in the sense that he is showing God’s plan for all creation in that the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily, that in him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and so he is made to the elect, ‘wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. The New Testament shows that it is in Christ that all things will be summed up—i.e. unified—will be reconciled in him, and they will be filled up to their fullest possible content—’filled unto all the fulness of God’. This is done by Christ in his actions in history which are really the actions of his Father (John 14:10), so that when he said in John 15:15, ‘No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you,’ he is saying that just as he is befriended by the Father so he befriends them, i.e. calls them into what he is doing. The meaning and outcome of Pentecost was that what was hitherto a mystery—i.e. what God was doing and would do was undisclosed—now the mystery is made known (cf. Eph. 1:9–10; 3:4–6).

Thus in the New Testament we are involved in the processes of the outworking of what has been variously called ‘the purpose of his will’, ‘the mystery’, ‘the mystery of his will’, ‘the counsel of his will’, ‘the mystery of Christ’, ‘the plan of the mystery’, ‘the eternal purpose’, ‘a plan for the fulness of time’, ‘the mystery of God’, ‘the revelation of the mystery’, ‘the mystery of the gospel’, ‘the mystery hidden for generations’, ‘the riches of the glory of this mystery’, ‘the knowledge of God’s mystery,’ the mystery of Christ’, ‘the mystery of the faith’, ‘the mystery of our religion,’ ‘the mystery of the seven stars’ and even ‘the mystery of lawlessness’, and ‘the mystery of the woman’. Also Paul speaks of the apostolic messengers as being ‘stewards of the mysteries of God’, and says in another place, ‘we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God’. In one place he says, ‘Lo! I tell you a mystery,’ and in another that even if one were to ‘understand all mysteries’ and not have love, then he would be as nothing, since love is essential to knowing all mysteries. If we then work on the basis of friendship with God, then we will know all things that He is doing, i.e. we are inducted into these mysteries. As we will see those who receive these are ‘sons of God’ towards God and ‘brethren’ towards one another since ‘brother’ is the closest synonym to ‘friend’.

Friendship With the World

In James 4:4–5 the writer says,

Unfaithful creatures! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God⁵. Or do

⁴ Isaiah 46:9–10, ‘For I am God, and there is none other; I am God and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done’. This is in contrast to Ecclesiastes 3:11 where Man seeks to know the end from the beginning, but cannot do so, out of his own resources. Deuteronomy 18 is a warning against those who seek to know the plan of God apart from true prophecy.

⁵ The next study we need to do is ‘The Enmity and Hatred of Both God and Man’. We cannot understand the despite enmity does to friendship, and friendship—by creation—should be the way of true Man, the true way of Man.

you suppose it is in vain that scripture says, 'He yearns jealously over the spirit which he has made to dwell in us'?⁶

Perhaps no text gives us clearer practical ideas of friendship than this passage. We will see later in our study that friendship has certain relational elements of love, and even of adoration. To be—as in this passage—'faithless' or 'adulterous' is to love the world something which John warns us against in I John 2:15–17 since *the world has no future!* 'The world passes away but only he who does the will of God abides for ever.' Likewise Paul (I Cor. 7:31) advises 'those that deal with the world as though they had not dealings with it. For the form of this world is passing way'. What we must not forget at the same time is that the world hates us if we do not love it (cf. John 14:18–6:4).

This at once explains why we must hate even our nearest and dearest if they relate to the world against God Himself⁷. The fact is that the world has its own wisdom, its own system, its own mysteries, and to befriend it is to take on its manners, modes and mould. God shows His intentions to Moses and Abraham, and through the prophecy to all His covenant people in order that they participate with Him in His intention of grace and love for the human race. No wonder friendship with the world is devilish enmity with God. The verse, 'Do you suppose it is in vain that scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit which he has made to dwell in us"?' shows us that God has an intense love for us, for what He has created, and His intentions of love and grace for us. He is not ashamed to be jealous for us, for He loves us so deeply.

Befriending Oneself

The phenomenon of persons loving themselves links with loving the world. The world is selfish. The self-lover (*philautos*) is selfish. The context he lives in is described by Paul (II Tim. 3:2-5),

For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, fierce, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding the form of religion but denying the power of it .

The world, of course, is composed of such individualists, and, regardless of God and regardless of others. The individualist's love turns in on himself. He loves himself, he loves pleasure and does not love God. He is wholly friendless, entirely alone when it comes to the ultimate. His existential anguish in life is indescribable, even though he is planning pleasure. His evil is not less describable. In a word, the self-lover has denied the original love God has showed him in creation, and spurned it for a in inner 'circuit of love' which is a ridiculous resistance to the love he ontologically needs. If

⁶ The Jerusalem Bible has this translation, 'Your are as unfaithful as adulterous wives; don't you realise that making the world your friend is making God your enemy? Anyone who chooses the world for his friend turns himself into God's enemy. Surely you don't think Scriptures is wrong when it says: the spirit which he sent to live in us wants us for himself alone?' A footnote in the JB says that literally it is 'the spirit he has made to dwell in us yearns four our love', or 'he years intensely over the spirit he has made to dwell in us'. It adds, 'This text, now lost, seems to have inspired Romans 8:26–28 as well. It is because God has shared his spirit with us that we want what God wants and that God answers our prayers.'

⁷ Thus the passages of Matthew 10:34–39; Luke 14:25–27. There is no question of emotionally hated one's family members, but of placing the priority of love on God, in which case true love me may exercised in all relationships.

this need it not fulfilled then his/her pain increases, and so self-love endeavours and efforts intensify.

Friendship Divine and Human

God is Friend to His Beloved and They to Him

There are those who are friends of God, obviously because He has first befriended them. We have seen that God calls Abraham and Moses His *aheb*, his 'beloved'. Deborah and Barak in their prophetic song concluded it with,

So perish all thine enemies,
O Lord!
But thy friends be like the sun
as he rises in his might.

Job had known God's intimate friendship. Chapter 29 is a beautiful song that tells of the loveliness of life, and the richness of Job's ministry to others, especially those in need. In the lines below he mourns the loss of it.

Oh, that I were in the months of old,
as in the days when God watched over me;
when his lamp shone upon my head,
and by his light I walked through darkness;
as I was in my autumn days,
when the friendship of God was upon my tent,
when the Almighty was yet with me . . .

Note the beautiful statement, 'When the friendship of God was upon my tent'. In Proverbs 3:32 it says 'the upright are in his [God's] confidence' (cf. Psa. 25:14), showing the intimacy of knowing Him and what He is about. In Jeremiah 3:4 God Himself protests that His covenant people have forgotten His friendship to them,

Have you not just now called to me,
'My father, thou art the friend of my youth,

and that they in difficulties wrought by their sinfulness they call upon this friendship of the Father as though it were their right. The term 'beloved' (*aheb*) is used in the Song of Solomon (1:14) for the Shulamite woman lover⁸, is used as 'friend' for Abraham and Moses, and is the one God uses for Israel in the song that constitutes Isaiah 5:1-7,

Let me sing for my beloved
a love song that concerns his vineyard:
My beloved had a vineyard
on a very fertile hill.

⁸ This has been the basis for some for the allegorical understanding of the Song of Solomon. However the word used 26 times is *dod*, ('beloved') but then by comparing Isaiah 5:1, and Song of Solomon 1:14 we can see the two words are virtually synonymous, although *dod* is used exclusively (i.e. only) in The Song of Solomon.

God's judgement on his friend Israel—'My beloved'—has to be because she has betrayed His covenant with her. In Jeremiah 11:15 God asks 'What right has my beloved⁹ to my house, when she had done vile deeds?' and in 12:7 cries,

I have forsaken my house,
I have abandoned my heritage;
I have given the beloved of my soul
Into the hands of her enemies.

Human Friendship

Deuteronomy 13:7 speaks of 'your friend who is as your soul'¹⁰—'the friend with whom you share your life' (*JB*). Proverbs 18:24 contrasts false and true friends, 'There are friends who pretend to be friends, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother'. Koheleth (Eccles. 4:9) has a comment on the power of friendship,

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up. Again, if two lie together, they are warm; but how can they be warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him.

Much is spoken of friendship in Proverbs, generally on the distinguishing marks of true and false friends. Readers are advised, 'Your friend and your father's friend do not forsake,' and the powerful aphorism, 'Faithful are the wounds of a friend'; profuse are the kisses of an enemy tells us a lot (27:6, 10). David calls a curse upon himself 'if I have requited my friend with evil' for one 'does no evil to his friend (Psa. 7:4; 15:3). Proverbs 17:17 says, 'A friend loves at all times, and kinsfolk are born to share adversity'. For all the criticisms that are made of Job's friends they did stick with him throughout all his trials—albeit they were of no great comfort theologically!

Examples of Human Friendship

We cannot here expand on the many beautiful human friendships we find in the Scriptures. The one that springs most readily to mind is that of David and Jonathan., 'And when he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David and Jonathan loved him as his own soul (cf. Deut. 13:7). After the death of Jonathan we have David's beautiful lament (II Sam. 1:25–26),

Jonathan lies slain upon thy high places,
I am distressed for you my brother Jonathan;
very pleasant have you been to me;
your love for me was wonderful,
passing the love of women.

⁹ Here the Hebrew word is *yadid* an intimate word such as used in Psalm 127:2, 'he gives to his beloved (*yadid*) sleep'.

¹⁰ The context here is dramatic, i.e. even if one is as intimate as this you must kill him if he becomes and idolater and seeks to affect his friend. This does not mean friendship is ephemeral but is the closest human relationship a man can have—'as your own soul'.

This story has to be seen in all its details for—as we have seen above—Jonathan sealed their friendship in a covenant (cf. I Sam. 18:3–4), refused to have David killed at Saul’s request and ultimately was himself disgraced by Saul for preserving David’s life. It would seem that Jonathan recognised David as God’s anointed and gave him the blessing, ‘Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, “The Lord shall be between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants forever,” (I Sam. 20:42)’. II Samuel 9:1–8 shows that David sought to honour the covenant of that friendship.

In regard to friendship with David, there was also the love of Old Barzilai the Gileadite (II Sam. 19:31–40) who looked after David at Mahanaim in his flight from Absalom. This is very tender story.

The story of Ruth and Naomi is no less beautiful. Ruth’s words to Naomi show this (1:16–17).

Entreat me not to leave you or to return from following you; for where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God; where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if even death parts me from you.

Examples in the New Testament are also many. There is no doubt that Jesus loved Lazarus with a special warmth, that there was a disciple whom he loved in a special way, and the apostles—in particular Paul, John and Peter—show great warmth and affection towards their converts. We will deal with these a little later because they must be seen on a wider canvas than the one we have just used.

Friendship and Covenant

In Psalm 25:14 the *RSV* and *NRSV* have, ‘The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him; he makes known to them his covenant.’ The Hebrew word is *sod* which can also mean ‘counsel’. The *NIV* has, ‘The Lord confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them’, whilst the *JB* has, ‘The close secret of Yahweh belongs to them who fear him, his covenant also, to bring them knowledge’. It seems reasonable to draw the conclusion that friendship, confidences and the sharing of secrets (cf. Deut. 29:29) belongs within the matter of covenant.

We have seen in Deuteronomy 13:7 that the covenant with God overrides any personal covenant of friendship with another. Personal covenant is again revealed in Psalm 55:20, ‘My companion stretched out his hand against his friends, he violated his covenant’. Proverbs 2:17 points to the highest of covenants when it speaks of ‘the loose woman’ who ‘forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God [*NRSV* ‘sacred covenant’]’. Properly seen, this means that the woman has forsaken her marriage partner, and also the covenant with God who said, ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery,’ hence the statement in Malachi 2:14 (see context)

You ask, 'Why does he not?' Because the Lord was witness to the covenant between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant'.¹¹

One of the deepest sufferings a human being can know is stated by Heman the Ezrahite in his lament (Psa. 88:18), 'Thou hast caused lover and friend to shun me; my companions are in darkness'. To be friendless is terrible. To have your friends denounce you is intolerable (Jer. 20:9),

For I hear many whispering,
Terror is on every side!
'Denounce him! Let us denounce him!'
say all my familiar friends,
watching for my fall.

Whilst Jeremiah's familiar friends were turncoats, Job's were not. As we noted, they stuck with him to the end and were to be commended, but Job's complaints and against their violations of the covenant of friendship were warranted as he saw them,

I am a laughing stock to my friends,
I, who called upon God and he answered me,
a just and blameless man,
am a laughing stock. (12:4)

My friends scorn me;
my eye pours out tears to God. (16:20)

My kinsfolk and my close friends have failed me. (19:14).

The New Testament and Friendship

Jesus Teaching Friendship

We have already seen that Jesus taught the essence of friendship in John 15:12–17, namely sharing all that he and the Father does, and giving that privilege of ministry to them. He also teaches us in Luke 11 the true nature of friendship in the parable of the friend who came at midnight. For that friend the host-friend was prepared to go to his neighbour-friend and ask for food, and this at a most inconvenient time. It is good to see the different friendship responses in this story. It is, of course, telling us that God is greater than any earthly friend. If a human friend will be inconvenienced, how much more will God be Friend to the needy.

So Jesus taught that God was 'the friend of sinners' by sitting and eating with them (Luke 15:2)¹². In the story of the lost coin and the lost sheep the friends of the owners come and rejoice—rejoicing is one of the marks of friendship. In the story of the lost son the father is friend to his son and on his return makes merry for him but

¹¹ This is a most important matter for our marriage counselling with pastoral ministry. Marriage is rarely spoken of as a covenant, and if it were, then covenant would have to be carefully explained. Malachi 2:14 should be taught thoroughly.

¹² We ought not to miss the story and rule of Luke 14:12, that when a great feast is made one is not to call friends and kinsmen, but those who are not, so that the blind, maimed and beggars they can be befriended and so become friends of 'the friend of sinners'.

the elder brother is enemy and does not rejoice, but he had wanted—so he said—'to make merry with *my* friends'. John the Baptist saw himself as 'the friend of the bridegroom' and as one who 'rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice'.¹³

Jesus also taught that to tell the good news is to be a true friend to those whom one knows (Mark 5:19), 'Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.' This foreshadows the great principle which came to God's people at Pentecost.

Jesus, Pentecost, the Holy Spirit and Friendship

It is here we come to the crux of the matter. The key to it lies in Acts 4:23, 'When they were released [from the judgement of the Sanhedrin] they went *to their friends* and reported what the chief priests and elders had said to them'. This verse establishes the fact that the people of the new community were *the friends* of the apostles, as they were to the members of the community. The coming of the Holy Spirit meant, of course, that every baptised person was forgiven all sins and received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Hence a new community arose in which

- i) They parted themselves from the 'crooked generation' (2:40) and so could not 'friends of the world'.
- (ii) 'they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers'.
- (iii) they were 'attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes', and 'they partook of food with glad and generous hearts'.
- (iv) they were 'of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common'. 'Distribution was made to every man as he had need'.
- (v) 'with great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus'.

So there was the daily distribution to all in need. Thus the terms we use such a 'brethren' and 'the saints' and 'beloved' become synonyms for friends. It is important that we see this because we may read back our present church situations into the apostolic one. To be 'of one heart and soul' is a wonderful and unusual matter. Likewise the term 'brotherly love' (*philadelphia*) has deep meaning when we realise that the main word for *friend* in the N.T. is *philos* and the word for brother is *adelphos*. When we go in depth into the life of the early church we see it was *friendship* which existed. If we do not see this then the terms 'fellowship', 'unity' and 'love' will be voided of their rich meaning.

When, for example, we read to what lengths the apostolic band went to tell the gospel—'to tell what good things the Lord had done for them'—and when we know what they suffered in doing this, then the terms 'friend' and 'friendship' lose their secular shallowness and become terms of the deepest intimacy. One excellent example is the First Letter to the Thessalonians (2:7, 8, 11, 12) where Paul tells his converts (i.e. his new true friends), 'We were gentle among you, like a nurse taking care of her children. So being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not

¹³ There is a tremendous story here of the babe John leaping in his mother's womb when she saw Mary. John has an intimate friendship with Jesus from that time.

only the gospel of God but our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. . . you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory’.

If we were to pursue this line then we would need to open much more of the texts of the New Testament. Sufficient is it that Paul always has his converts in their hearts, that he strives in prayer for them, and that he desires them to be fully inducted into all the mystery of God and godliness¹⁴. We need, now to see work out the pastoral implications and applications of such friendship.

The Pastoral Implications and Applications of the Principle of Friendship

The Theological Basis

Friendship is basically Trinitarian, i.e. all relationships obtain within the Triune Godhead, and so that is where friendship is ontologically. The relationship of the Father, Son and Spirit fulfils the criteria we have examined. ‘The Father loves the Son and show him all that He, Himself, is doing’. The Son loves the Father and seeks to do His will. The Holy Spirit—the Spirit of truth—brings revelation of the Triune Godhead, and the mysteries of which the Old and New Testaments speak so that Man—especially redeemed Man—may share in them. The intimacy of the Father, Son and the Spirit constitutes the intimacy Man may know with God, and within himself as the corporate human race, since he is made in the image of God.

Redemption has destroyed the enmity of Man (Ephes. 2:11–18; Col. 1:19–21; Titus 3:1–7; cf. II Cor. 5:19–21) against God and his fellow-creatures. All this, of course, ‘in Christ’. The proof of this—as we have seen—is the birth of the church at Pentecost as the new community of friends, and the fact that ‘we know we have passed from death into life because we love the brethren’. Theologically all friendship flows from the Cross for it is here that Jesus laid down his life for his friends, and, indeed, for those who constituted themselves his enemies. It was for them—no less than for others—that he asked forgiveness.

The Pastoral Praxis

We need to ask ourselves whether friendship, as such, is part of our life. It is always futile for us to begin—and indeed to continue—to argue from the psychological standpoint. Good as this may be it is still ‘horizontal thinking’. We must come from the theological standpoint—the biblical notion of things. This means we must see the terms for God’s people such as ‘the elect’, ‘the covenant people’, ‘the servants of God’, ‘the disciples’, ‘the brethren’, ‘the beloved’ and ‘the saints’ as all being synonyms for ‘friends’ and ‘friendship’. We know that the body of Christ has functional inter-membership, but this is intimately personal and warm.

Have matters so changed over the centuries—with of course their many exceptions—that the pastor is friendly towards all, but friend of none, or just of a few, even a coterie? This needs to be examined. Surely husband and wife are meant to be

¹⁴ I.e. the many mysteries of which we have spoken above, the secrets God tells us within His covenant, which make us one with Him—His friends, such as Abraham, Moses and Israel.

friends of the most intimate order, children in the family should see their parents as friends, and their brothers and sisters as likewise, friends. Are we looking not on our own things, primarily, but on the things of others, setting others before ourselves?

The solution, as always, lies in love, 'Brethren, let us love one another'. All fine talk of friendship or friendliness dissolves in the light of that one invitation-exhortation. Such works itself out in hospitality¹⁵, and care for the needy, but no less so in the proclamation of the gospel. All friendship—as we have seen—flows from the Cross where he laid down his life for us. So in life we must lay down our lives—whatever form that may have to take—in order to be the friends of all.

A Final Excursus

Something which needs to be examined is friendship within hierarchy. I am convinced that there is no true hierarchy which lacks friendship, no true friendship which lacks hierarchy. We have ontological hierarchy which of necessity must be a relational unit of love—*agape*. Today we may speak—in a loose sense—of hierarchies which exist as properly as possible under grace. We are assisted to such ontological hierarches by grace, i.e. by redemption, and we live in them by continuing grace. In a hierarchy such as I Corinthians 11:3 we must see that although there appears to be an ascending-descending order, yet authority being love—and only love—there is no authoritarian colour to true hierarchy. Each one within the hierarchy is the friend of the others—all others simultaneously. Whilst Abraham and Moses—and others—were friends of God they are also addressed as 'servants'. Within the friendship of two there is a form of hierarchy. 'You are my friends if you do whatever I command you,' tells us that at any given moment one may command the other. Jesus said the servant does not know what his master is doing and this is true, but the servant who is the friend of the master—the master being friend to him—does know what his master is doing, and is glad to be in the doing of it, even as a servant. Jesus is certainly the suffering servant of both God and Man, and is friend to both. We need, also, to work this out in the pastoral situation.

'Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends ever one of them.'
(III) John 15.

¹⁵ This is one of the great themes of the N.T. beginning with our Lord's teaching on caring for others, expanding in the events surrounding Pentecost, and in the spreading of the gospel. Hospitality such as in Acts 2:46, and 4:32-35 later becomes an indispensable necessity for a persecuted church in which men and women were being hounded to death. Again, hospitality begins with God 'who furnishes us richly with all things to enjoy', and we follow suit. This is true friendship.

Enmity—Divine, Celestial and Terrestrial

Introduction

I had written about half a study on the subject named above, when I felt helpless to complete it, because the materials were too profuse. Having written 13 chapters of a book on Enmity I wanted to pack its substance into one Study, but had to abandon it. I thought the only way out would be to write a sketchy Essay, and leave you to fill in the details—if you would. Helpful to doing this would be to use *The Clash of the Kingdoms* (NCPI, 1989). My style then will be a little different in our present paper from previous Studies, i.e. there will not be the usual documentation, wide use of Scripture references and footnotes.

The Matter of Enmity, Divine, Celestial and Human

When we are scarcely born into this world we begin to feel enmity, although we may not be able to define it as such. There is sometimes enmity between parents, between parents and children and between members of the family. This is often a cause for fear and bewilderment. When we see the enmity of others towards us—or towards yet others—it disturbs us. We are no less disturbed when we find ourselves with feelings of enmity and anger against others. Most of us begin to accept the *fact* of enmity as part of life, although we may not accept enmity as a needful thing.

How did enmity come into the world? Biblically speaking it came at the fall of Man. The serpent—who is described in the Book of Revelation as ‘that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the world’—tempted the woman to hear his word and place it above God’s word. God had said they would die if they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the serpent said that they wouldn’t. The woman was beguiled and ate, and induced her husband to eat. He placed her word of inducement over God’s word of prohibition. So the enmity began.

As Paul put it, ‘By one man sin entered into the world and death by sin and so death passed upon all humanity because all did [then] sin’, i.e. in Adam. Faced with their action the man blamed the woman, and the woman the serpent. The man and the woman were divided. Henceforth the man would rule the woman—something which had not previously been the case, at least in this new way. God addressed the serpent telling it he would raise up enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman.

In Revelation chapter twelve this enmity between the seed of woman and the serpent—now known as the ‘red dragon’—is shown. The red dragon tries to devour the woman’s child (the seed) and fails. The child is the one of Psalm Two who is to rule all the nations—the nations which the serpent seeks to deceive and rule. In the

heavenly sphere the red dragon and his forces are cast to the earth. In effect the red dragon has one third of the angelic powers behind him, and it has been conjectured that these are now the forces called ‘demonic’ or ‘occultic’ who always oppose God and good.

So then the primal couple was faced with two forms of enmity—that of the male-female enmity which was always to be present, and that of the enmity between humanity and the serpent. The matter was even more complicated, because the enmity between the man and the woman was somewhat akin to what we call ambivalence, i.e. a kind of love-hate set of relationships which could—and did—obtain. Further, the enmity was between the first two children born. Thus at any point of time anyone could be any other person’s enemy.

Further yet, was the next complication. The serpent—whom we will henceforth call ‘Satan’—was able under certain circumstances ‘to capture them [human beings] to do his will’. In effect, this means that in the world there are roughly two divisions of human being,

- (i) the children of God as the Apostle John called them, and
- (ii) the children of the devil as he and Jesus nominated them. Seen from another angle there are human beings who are anti-God and others who are persons of faith. This is borne out in Hebrews chapter eleven.

Satan has his kingdom which is an anti-kingdom of God’s Kingdom. It is called ‘the world’ and it is governed by Satan who has his hosts of fallen angels, and a body of human beings who are under him. Hence John said ‘the whole world lies in the evil one’. He did not mean ‘the whole created world’ for that is God’s. He did not mean ‘all the nations of the world’ for God has sovereignty over them, but from time to time the Devil is allowed to have power over the nations.

All of this may sound confusing, but we need to have that background to our thinking when we consider the matter of enmity. At this point of this pastoral essay we can anticipate what we will later discuss, i.e. the matter of enmity within our own domestic families, the enmities pastor and congregation know among themselves, and the corrosive and eroding effects such enmities bring. Added to this pastors and people know the enmity of the Devil of his world powers and world system.

All of this enmity is a reality of life to be faced, and one has to live in it. Those who are not in churches also know enmity. The people of God seem to them to be against them, or to be elitist, and they represent some kind of threat to them. Whilst they may be called ‘the children of the devil’ yet often they are far from believing such a creature exists, and certainly far from having conscious love for him. The Devil certainly has no love for them.

At this point of our essay we need to recapitulate the entrance of enmity into the world. It came by the fall, but it would seem that the serpent—a creature created by God—was already against God. In Isaiah chapter fourteen and Ezekiel chapter twenty-eight two great kings are spoken to by the respective prophets. Behind these political kings is the king (Devil) of evil, so that the *principles* of these prophecies can be applied to him. Pride in his own beauty, and a desire to be like the Most High God is what corrupts the angelic creature so that he becomes at enmity with God even ‘in Eden’. He infects man with the same pride—his so-called knowledge of good and evil and his ambition to be ‘as God’.

The Apostle Paul later calls death ‘the last enemy’. In some ways it was—apart from the serpent—the first enemy. It meant Man died to God on the day of his rebellion. The human race was henceforth *relationally* dead to God. The writer of the

Book of Hebrews averred that men and women all their lifetime are subject to Satan's bondage through fear of the death. Now, were there no sin in Man, Satan would have no power. If there were no guilt of sin in Man there would be nothing on which Satan could seize in order to keep Man in bondage. Man then, knows the enmity of Satan, his world-system and his world powers—occultic creatures that are demonic in nature. Man also knows the enmity of sin and death.

So, as we say, 'The plot thickens'. It thickens most where human beings are at enmity with one another. For this reason we need to examine closely the first family and the enmities found within it. We cannot be sure that the man and the woman were enemies one of the other, but we can be sure that guilt existed in both, for the terrible sin which posterity has called 'original' because it happened at the time of the origin of the human race, and affected the human race which was first in the loins of Adam and then in the loins of the woman called 'Eve'. i.e 'the mother of all living'. Later Paul was to say, 'In Adam all die. In Christ shall all be made alive'. The human race has sin, the guilt of sin, and the constant threat of death. These latter three elements are the weapons Satan uses to keep Man in oppression and his own domination, i.e. via the fear of death, which is the fear of judgement and punishment.

In the primal family Cain and Abel were the first children born, and probably as twins, Cain being the older of the two. When the two came to offer sacrifices to God—for whatever purpose they were given—Cain's sacrifice was not accepted by God, which made Cain angry. We cannot say he was not angry even when he offered his sacrifice. God warned him against not being righteous—'if you do well shall you not be accepted?' In the New Testament we have a few witnesses to the unrighteousness of Cain and the righteousness of Abel. The Apostle John writes that Cain slew his brother because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. In this context John says that Abel did righteous works and loved his brother, that Cain did unrighteous works and hated his brother. Cain was of Satan, and Abel was of God. The writer of Hebrews says that Abel offered his sacrifice in faith. He was a man of faith, and indeed he still is speaking. Jesus said that Abel was a prophet.

These materials help us to see the situation of Cain and Abel. Cain was a child of the Devil, was angry with God, and was murderous towards his brother. He was under the Enemy, and was at enmity with God and others. Had Cain's guilt been forgiven and cleansed by the grace of God which receives true sacrifices, then he would have been clear of the Devil and at one with God and others. Striking a human being is striking at God, which is what is inferred after the fall when God spoke to Noah. It deserves capital punishment. Striking at God is the essential nature of sin, and is an attempt to violate God's holiness. It shows how deeply enmity towards God is embedded in the fallen human heart.

We may now examine the principles of enmity which emerge from what we have covered above. The following would appear to be the case,

- (i) All enmity is primarily against God.
- (ii) All enmity proceeded primarily from the serpent.
- (iii) Human enmity against God is accompanied by guilt and proceeds from guilt. We are enemies of God through, or by our wicked works. Job sacrificed daily for his children for, 'It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts'.

- (iv) The guilt is the state of death which human beings know in their relational death to God.
- (v) The lack of innocence—the presence of guilt—causes human beings to try to justify themselves by what they do. Humanity, though depraved, is still in the image of God, and has therefore the tension of living according to the image, yet wills to live against it.
- (vi) Enmity arises in the conflict of persons seeking to prove (justify) themselves. All humanity is in competition—one with another—in the drive to prove themselves. This requires (a) developing a secure situation in which to live, (b) rising higher than the others with whom one is necessarily in competition.
- (vii) Failure to achieve may weaken the will to succeed, but the bitterness of being a failure, or not succeeding will deepen the animosity towards the Creator, and others. This is a passive sort of enmity, but quite dangerous.
- (viii) God's affirmation of men and women of faith—His justifying them—is resented by those without faith towards God. Hence the rise of opposition, persecution and overt anger and enmity.

These drives are strong in every human heart, and the forms of enmity are many from the passive hypocritical pretensions of friendship to the overt opposition which expresses itself in many forms—even to homicide—patricide, matricide, fratricide and genocide. Enmity towards oneself can result in suicide.

We now move on to God's friendship to Man. This is seen in creation, in covenant, redemption and the ultimate glorification of His people. The kind of enmity such as the Devil and fallen creatures show cannot be ascribed to God. He is love; He is holy; His works are righteous, good, just and true.

In the fall—and beyond it—Man has rejected the nature of God as Creator. In history God has moved in providence, covenant and redemption. A cosmic covenant was made after the Flood. This did not prevent the growth of idolatry. God moved in covenant with Abraham, and this was intended to be—in the ultimate—cosmic also—affecting all the nations of the earth. The covenant was developed in the midst of enmity—Ishmael against Isaac, Esau against Jacob, Jacob's children against Joseph, even Aaron and Miriam against Moses, and the stories within the 'former prophets' (Joshua to Nehemiah) tell of dreadful enmities within Israel. Even so, both Abraham and Moses were each called 'the friend of God'. God declared His glory to Israel in being the God of mercy, kindness, in being slow to anger, in abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, and in forgiving the sins, iniquities and transgressions of thousands, whilst not forgiving the sins of the impenitent.

The same eight points outlined above as related to enmity also obtained in Israel, but the law contained injunctions against enmity. Israel was to love God with its total being, its neighbour as itself, and was also to help and comfort the strangers—called sojourners—within its community. The friendship of God with Israel demanded the total response of faith, worship and righteous living. In Malachi the prophet clearly speaks the words of God, 'I loved Jacob but I hated Esau'. Of course the matter is covenantal, and has behind it the history of Esau (Edom) at enmity with Israel.

Next we have to observe that God became the Enemy of Israel. The statement in Isaiah 63:10 is famous, 'But they rebelled and grieved his holy Spirit; therefore **he turned to be their enemy**, and himself fought against them'. Similar statements are made

elsewhere in the Old Testament. The background of the event was the idolatry they performed in the matter of making and worshipping the golden calf.

God being the Enemy of Israel something of vast proportions. The principle is as follows,

- (i) God demands total worship of Himself by Man, and in particular by His covenant people. In covenant it is a thing of grace that He gives worship as a gift to His people—along with sonship, the law, the glory—and so on.
- (ii) God is a jealous God. His love and kindness do not permit of a freedom to worship idols, or to make the Creator in the image of anything He has created.
- (iii) All idolatry must be punished. God may withhold punishment until what He determines as ‘the ripe moment’, but He will never withhold punishment.
- (iv) Israel knew God’s judgements on their idolatry and covenant-breaking, and there would come times of personal and national repentance, in which case God would often withhold punishment, but He never withheld chastisement. A close reading of the Old Testament is necessary to see this.
- (v) The gifts and calling of God to Israel are without recall (change of mind). God in grace will persist with Israel to the end, but that must also mean He will persist in judgement and the execution of the judgement. Judgements have enormous value (a) in bringing Israel to its knees, (b) in cleansing the nations and its people from their guilt/s, (c) in bringing the joy and peace of restored covenant-living.

The Psalms give us a bird’s-eye view into the matter on enmity—mainly of the enemies of Israel, the enmity against godly people within the covenant by others within it. If we pursue a continuous reading of the Psalms then we are—sooner or later—struck by the fact that Psalmists have enmity continuously in mind. In 150 Psalms there are 75 mentions of ‘enemy’ and ‘enemies’, 28 mentions of ‘foes’, and 19 mentions of ‘adversaries’, i.e. over 120 times mention of those who hold enmity. There are 89 mentions of ‘the wicked’ and 50 uses of the adjective ‘evil’. 12 times ‘mischief’ occurs and always against the particular Psalmist-writer. ‘Anger’ and ‘angry’ are mentioned 30 times, and ‘hate’ and ‘hating’ 35 times. There are 56 uses of the words ‘fear’ and ‘fearful’, and some 60 mentions of the term ‘help’ with many more cries for assistance that do not explicitly use the word. The term ‘slay’ is used sometimes of the enemy and his action. There are numerous uses of the words ‘taunt’, ‘terrors’, ‘oppress’ and ‘oppression’. We are, then, surely forced to the conclusion that the Psalmists have come into numerous difficult situations, many of which parallel our own.

We must note that no nation is excepted from judgement upon its idolatry and its enmity towards God. A number of the major and minor prophets pronounce God’s ‘burdens’, or ‘oracles’ against various of the nations. It is deeply interesting that in most cases God restores nations when they have passed through His judgements. He is the Friend of all nations, and is only their Enemy because of their rebellion and sin.

When we come to the New Testament the references to enmity are many. We can sum up the principles of these references in the following way,

- (i) In Christ Israel is promised, ‘the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.’

That is, deliverance from the enemies. Jesus quoted from Isaiah 61:1–2 ‘he has sent me to proclaim release to the captives...to set at liberty those who are oppressed’. On one occasion he said, ‘He who commits sin is the bondsman of sin, but if the Son makes you free, you shall be freed indeed’. He also spoke of being the Stronger than-the-Strong-Man and overcoming him and liberating that one’s captives.

- (ii) Christ’s liberation of his people from the guilt of their sins, the power of the world, the domination of Satan, the enemies of the flesh, the law, the tyrannical conscience and death were all effected upon the Cross.
- (iii) The liberating gospel was then proclaimed following the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost.
- (iv) The essence of this gospel is seen in passages such as Ephesians 2:11–22; II Corinthians 5:16–21; Colossians 1:19–21. In these we see Jesus ‘slaying the enmity’, ‘bring the hostility to an end’ and ‘reconciling all things by the blood of his Cross’. This cosmic reconciliation effectively destroys all enmity
- (v) The liberated folk of the new covenant were warned against going back into the bondage of their enemies. They must live by faith and grace in love and hope.
- (vi) The new enmity they would face was spoken about by Christ. He told them they must not be surprised at such enmity—indeed they could rejoice in it. Paul summed it up, ‘They that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.’
- (vii) Both Jesus and Paul—among others—advocated love of one’s enemies, no fighting such with their kinds of weapons, and leaving vengeance to God.

Most useful of all is the Book of the Revelation when it comes to describing in apocalyptic terms the battle of the enemies throughout history, the judgements upon God’s enemies, the final conflict in which the red dragon, the first beast and the second beast—also known as ‘the false prophet’—will all be defeated. The great anti-God system of Babylon will also be destroyed. So the ‘enmity slain upon the Cross’ will have worked itself out to the end in the final destruction of the enemies, when ‘Death and Hades’ will be thrown into the lake of fire, along with the Devil, the two beasts and all whose names are not written in the Lamb’s book of life.

The final reconciliation of all things may be seen in three ways,

- (i) the enemies will forever be punished,
- (ii) the enemies will be annihilated, and
- (iii) all human persons who are enemies will be ultimately reconciled—by means that are as yet hidden from us—through the Cross. For some this means fallen angels as well as fallen human beings, even to including the Devil. It is not the place of this Essay to discuss these views, their merits and demerits. To me it seems that ‘(i)’ is the plain meaning of the Scriptures.

Now we come to our conclusion. What is the usefulness of the above truth to our pastoral situations and ministry? The best answer is to go back to our previous study ‘The Pastoral Power of Friendship’, and see that true friendship is the strongest enemy of enmity. What we have seen above will warn us against the incipient idolatry that is always in the human race, stimulated and manipulated by the dark powers of the Devil. We will need to realise that God will never allow us to get away with idolatry, with sowing to the flesh, with having naught to do with the works of the flesh. Friendship with the world is enmity with God, and this He will not tolerate. We will need to heed the injunctions to put off anger and like things and to put on the things of love and forgiveness.

So, pastorally, we need to teach these living things of love and holiness. The greatest force and power will be the knowledge—in faith—that we are justified by grace, and so do not have to be in competition with one another to prove ourselves. Thus do not have fear of death and can refuse sin, the flesh, the world and Satan at every point.

At the practical living of daily life we will see—as with Cain and Abel—what constitutes living with guilt, or being freed from guilt—by faith. We will recognise the *fact* of enmity, opposition and persecution, and will not be unduly surprised or shocked to know that enmity exists within our very congregations. It was so in the early church, and will be, to the end.

Our study then, highlights the necessity and power of true friendship with God and being in God with others, even to the point of participating in the Divine nature.. If we can accept the persistence of enmity and learn to deal with it, then it will save us from unnecessary anger, shock, disappointment and so will keep us from cynicism. It will keep us dependent upon Him and His love which both saves and keeps us.

Postscript to ‘Enmity—Divine, Celestial and Terrestrial’

Since writing the Essay above, thoughts have come tumbling into my mind. I said recently to a friend, ‘You know: revival will not come until we are friends.’ My previous thinking had been, ‘When revival comes we will then all be friends.’ My reasoning derived from two thoughts,

- (i) that the coming of the Spirit brings people together in love, fellowship and unity, and
- (ii) my reading of revivals over many centuries. I could quote many writings to this point. But then I saw the fallacy in my thinking: if we are passive and allow the *status quo* to exist, and believe that only when revival comes will things change then we are saying the power of the gospel is limited *until* revival comes. That is making revival the criterion for the gospel, not the gospel the criterion for revival. The gospel is now the power of God. To say we must await revival—even if meanwhile praying for it—is totally unacceptable. Our faith in this case is weak.

Let us take the present situation in our churches. We have many differences pertaining to doctrine, theology, worship, and the practice of faith. We quickly place folk in different categories, e.g. Reformed, Arminian, Calvinistic, Charismatic, Pentecostal, Liberal and Fundamentalist and even see one another as being Baptist, Pentecostal, Anglican—and so on. We have differences which are termed Premillennialism, Postmillennialism, and Amillennialism. We differ sometimes on the meaning and modes of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Our forms of worship have a range from traditional to contemporary, liturgical and non-liturgical, and ranging from what is called ‘cautious charismatic’ to ‘radically charismatic’ forms of worship.

The question is, ‘How can we not be friends in the biblical sense of friends (*hoi philoi*)—i.e. with all the variations and divergences—and this especially when we hear our Lord’s High Priestly prayer on the night of his betrayal,

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

The passage makes it clear that all believers are one, and that their oneness comes from being in the Father and the Son and having the glory of the Father and the Son which is what makes the Father and the Son one, and so will make all believers to be one. It is not as though believers have to work being one, but have to work from the established fact that they are one. All differences, then, are of our human making. We can scarcely pray that we may be one for Christ has already done. He has also ‘slain the enmity’, therefore we must be one since there is no enmity that we dare contain, nor dare justify.

As an encouragement it good to look at Psalm 133,

Behold, how good and pleasant it is
when brothers dwell in unity!
It is like the precious oil upon the head,
running down upon the beard,
upon the beard of Aaron,
running down on the collar of his robes!
It is like the dew of Hermon,
which falls on the mountains of Zion!

For there the LORD has
 commanded the blessing,
 life for evermore.

How then do we live out this unity? If we take it as gospel truth that we are brethren, that there is unity, that we have been flooded with love, and that we are friends, then we live by that reality. It is not that we can organize a unity, or in some way plan and legislate for loving fellowship. What we can do is start with ourselves and ask, ‘Do I have enmity towards anyone?’ This will mean being truthful, and not glossing over differences. We may feel some of the differences are significant ones, but they are not the other himself or herself. Do I love the person? If not, then I must say I do not because I will not to do so. It is not good enough to say they do not love me. It is not even enough to say, ‘Well, they have made themselves my enemy.’ If so, then they have yet to come to the full truth of the gospel that all our lives—together—are hid with Christ in God. Can we contain, i.e. comprehend the differences, and whilst now glossing over them can love the persons of all believers, and not allow the differences to divide us. Can we respond to John’s exhortation, ‘Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God’? Can we respond to Paul’s admonitions not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, to consider others better than ourselves, and not to look primarily on our own things but on the things of others ?

This is where we must start. We must make practical moves towards other in true relationships. As the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one in themselves, so must we be one in ourselves, since these selves are in the Triune Godhead, and we are constituted the body of Christ—all members being interrelated. Let us have no academic talk about love and friendship—as against hatred and enmity—if our talk is only academic and in essence, hypocritical. We may need to go back and see the causes of enmity and then proceed to see the basis, nature and practice of true friendship. This will require much prayer, much reconciliation, much sacrifice of a sectarian spirit, much understanding of others, and much exercise of love where once we thought our dislike and enmity were justified because of the others’ practices and expressions their belief and their worship.

The Revival We Need

An Introduction to the Subject

There are many views regarding revival, but two main approaches to it. There are those who say that whilst the word revival may be found in the Old Testament, and that Israel had something of a revival from time to time, yet the word is not a New Testament word in the sense that we use it today. In other words, a doctrine of revival—as such—is not to be found within the pages of the New Testament. What is found within these pages is the command to preach the gospel, found churches, pastoring and building them up. If the gospel is preached, men and women saved, and the church led into truth then its life will be maintained. To speak of revival as a doctrine is to talk of something that is unnecessary and uncalled for.

The other approach is that history tells us that the church for many reasons may, from time to time become indolent, moribund, with heresy and wrong practice making inroads into it. Just as in Israel God brought judgements, and even exiled the nation, so too the church is in similar danger. God promised Israel that He would restore her, even though she was deeply judged and punished. He would revive her into the fullness of her true being so that she would live in covenant-relationship with Him, and be whole. She would fulfil the plan He had for the nation—to be His chosen people, and to witness to him. If Israel needed to be revived from time to time then so may the church.

There may not be a great difference between the two views when they are fully analysed. The first is saying the preaching of the gospel is the power of God, and that being so the church will be strong in the word of the Cross, and will flourish as it should. The second is saying that some sovereign act of God needs to judge and renew the church when it gets into area of not fully preaching, not living in holiness and the whole counsel of God. Even so, it is the view of each which determines the ways in which its proponents go about their life in the church.

Leaving the matter here—unresolved—we will return to some conclusion later. Meanwhile we will look at the thesis of the book *Dry Bones Dancing*.

Precis of Dry Bones Dancing

The Meaning of the Word Revival in the Bible

The book commences (pp. 1–4) with an examination of the word *revival* in both Testaments. The Hebrew verb 'to revive' (*chayya*) has the meanings of to live, to live

well, to bring to life, to preserve life. This ‘enlifying’ can be from states of inertia, dispiritedness and death. Following are examples,

I [God] kill and I *make alive*. The Lord kills and *brings to life*. But when they told him [Jacob] all the word of Joseph ...the spirit of their father *revived*. Now I, [Samson] shall die of thirst...when he drank *his spirit returned and he revived*. ...the soul of the child came into him again and *he revived*...see, you son lives. :and as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he *revived*, and stood on his feet. Will they *revive* the stones out of this rubbish, and burned ones at that? After two days he will *revive* us; on the third day he will raise us up that we may live before him. They shall *revive* as corn. I [God] dwell in the high and holy place...to *revive* the spirit of the humble and to *revive* the heart of the contrite. Though I walk in the midst of trouble thou preservest me life, [i.e. You *revive* or *keep alive* my life].¹

Virtually the same meaning is found in the New Testament. The verb *zao* is used in Romans 14:9, ‘lived again’ (*ezesan*) of Christ’s resurrection, and in Revelation 20:4 of the rest of the dead—in contrast to the martyrs—who did not ‘live again’ until the millennium was finished, but generally the verb is used for living, having life, subsisting. The verb *anazo* is used in Romans 7:9 of the revival of sin through the law. in Luke 15:24 it is used of the prodigal son ‘My son was dead, and *is alive again*’ (*anezesan*), i.e. ‘lived again’.

When we look at these Old Testament and New Testament uses of the word we have to be honest and say there is no doctrine as such of revival *as a doctrine* in the Bible. That is, however, far from saying that God does not carry out an action of reviving what is dead, or moribund, or degenerated. Take for example the statement of Ezra 9:8–9,

But now for a brief moment favour has been shown by the Lord our God to leave us a remnant, and to give us a secure hold within his holy place, that our God may brighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our bondage. For we are bondmen; yet our God has not forsaken us in our bondage, but has extended to us his steadfast love before the kings of Persia, to grant us some reviving to set up the house of our God, to repair its ruins, and to give us protection in Judea and Jerusalem.

This is an important passage for it tells us that the *restoration* which God had always promised to His people once they were punished for breaking the covenant, is indeed a revival. This principle is brought out in Psalm 30:3, ‘O Lord, that hast brought my soul up from Sheol, restored me to life from those gone down to the Pit.’

Habakkuk 3:2 is an most important verse since in this the prophet virtually says to God, ‘Do it again, Lord!’

O Lord, I have heard the report of thee,
and thy work, I Lord, do I fear.
In the midst of the years renew it;
in the midst of the years make it known;
in wrath remember mercy.

God had spoken to Habakkuk telling him Israel was to be judged, and the prophet had protested, but he then saw the necessity for judgement, and that it would bring revival of the land and its people. Here, indeed, is a kind of doctrine—no revival without judgement, and true judgement will issue in revival. This is a theme pursued by

¹ Deuteronomy 32:39; I Samuel 2:6; Genesis 45:27; Judges 15:18–19; I Kings 17:22; II Kings 13:21; Nehemiah 4:2; Hosea 6:2; 14:7; Isaiah 57:15; Psalm 138:7.

the prophets e.g. Amos 2:4–16; 4:1–9:15; Jeremiah 46:1–51:64. In many of these ‘oracles’ or ‘burdens’ the nations are brought under judgement and then renewed.²

We conclude then that the meaning of revival is to take out of a state of death, turpitude, fallenness and lostness and to restore or renew into fullness of life. It is an act about which God informs His people prophetically, and executes Himself. When knowledge of the principle of II Chronicles 7:13–15 is understood then—as in Habakkuk—Israel can accept the judgements but implore mercy in them in the light of Exodus 34:6–7.

The Meaning of Revival in History

The meaning of revival in history has to do first with the death of Man at the time of the fall. Romans 5:21–21; Genesis chapter 1 and Romans 1:18–32 when conflated tell us that Man died to God through the fall. The death was first *relational* and then a death *of the body*—‘the body is dead [doomed to death] because of sin’ (Rom. 8:10). Man died in his original sin, and is dead in his sins and trespasses and will die and go to ‘the second death’ (Rev. 20:6, 14) i.e. the ultimate of eternal punishment, though he will never be obliterated as a creature.³

‘For as in Adam all⁴ die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.’ In accordance with the Old Testament use of *chayya* this is revival. The Johannine teaching of coming out of death into life can also—in one sense—be called ‘revival’. It is not resuscitation. It is the receiving of eternal life from God, through Christ and the Holy Spirit. It is all ‘against perishing’, i.e. going on into eternal death.⁵ If we believe that all are dead to God in Adam, how do we account for those called ‘the people of faith;’ in Hebrews 11, and those called ‘the children of God’ in I John 3:10ff.? They surely cannot be accounted as dead. Of course they are not dead: they have been brought to life. This is the act of God’s electing grace. Abel is spoken of as offering up his sacrifice to God *by faith* (Heb. 11:4), and of its being acceptable. I John 3:10–11 speaks of Abel as one of the children of God. We have no reason to believe people of faith—the children of God—are dead *relationally* to God although their bodies ‘are doomed to death because of sin’. We speak, then, of these as being ‘regenerated to life’. They were in death even though created. Now they have been recreated by the grace of God. In this sense they had been revived out of death into life (cf. John 5:24; I John 3:14).

The Revival of Man Prophesied in History

I Peter 1:10–12 is relevant to our enquiry regarding the revival of man.

² A close study of the oracles reveals the fact that God has His eye continually on the nations. The reasons for His judgements on them are given, and in the case of many of them their being as separate and discrete nations is disclosed. These nations will continue to exist once judged, and so, revived.

³ This raises the matter of the doctrine of annihilation, or the doctrine of universalism, but it not our purpose to enter into these here.

⁴ Again, we will not enter into the significance of ‘all’ except to say that at the end *all* in Adam will die, and *all* in Christ will be made alive, i.e. revived.

⁵ See John 17:3; 3:16; 5:24; 11:25; I John 2:24–25; 3:14; 4:7–8; 5: 11, 12; 5:20.

The prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired about this salvation; they inquired what person or time was indicated by the Spirit of Christ within them when predicting the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things which have now been announced to you by those who preached the good news to you through the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

The Spirit of Christ was in the prophets concerning the coming incarnation and work of the Cross and Resurrection that Jesus was to accomplish. This is amply verified by Christ himself (Luke 24:25–27, 24–47) and the statement that ‘The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit [spirit] of prophecy’ (Rev. 19:10; cf. Acts 26:22–23), certifies that all prophecy was linked with Jesus. What we have to note is that Jesus said ‘all the scriptures’ were linked with him. Sometimes we are inclined to think that many of the prophecies given *within* Israel, were only *for* Israel.

This is borne out by reading Acts 1:1–11. The apostles rightly interpreted Jesus’ linking of the coming of the Kingdom and the outpouring (baptism) of the Spirit to the restoration of Israel. Whilst Jesus did not deny this he indicated that the coming of the Kingdom related to Samaria and the Gentiles as well as Israel. This, then, is an important clue regarding Scriptures—especially prophecies—which relate to the restoration or revival of Israel such as those below (Isa. 43:19–21; 44:3–4; 41:17–20)..

Behold, I am doing a new thing;
 now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
 I will make a way in the wilderness
 and rivers in the desert.
 The wild beasts will honor me,
 the jackals and the ostriches;
 for I give water in the wilderness,
 rivers in the desert,
 to give drink to my chosen people,
 the people whom I formed for myself
 that they might declare my praise.

For I will pour water on the thirsty land,
 and streams on the dry ground;
 I will pour my Spirit upon your descendants,
 and my blessing on your offspring.
 They shall spring up like grass amid waters,
 like willows by flowing streams.

When the poor and needy seek water,
 and there is none,
 and their tongue is parched with thirst,
 I the LORD will answer them,
 I the God of Israel will not forsake them.
 I will open rivers on the bare heights,
 and fountains in the midst of the valleys;
 I will make the wilderness a pool of water,
 and the dry land springs of water.
 I will put in the wilderness the cedar,
 the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive;
 I will set in the desert the cypress,
 the plane and the pine together;
 that men may see and know,

may consider and understand together,
that the hand of the LORD has done this,
the Holy One of Israel has created it.

Three other prophecies which relate to Israel, do not stop at the nation but go beyond to all who will be part of the new covenant. The first is Jeremiah 31:31–34.

"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

The second is a prophecy of regeneration, i.e. bringing life to the heart where true life had been lost in the rebellion and idolatry of Israel,

For I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. You shall dwell in the land which I gave to your fathers; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

The third prophecy concerns us closely because it is the prediction of Pentecost.

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; it was full of bones. And he led me round among them; and behold, there were very many upon the valley; and lo, they were very dry. And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord GOD, thou knowest." Again he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD."

So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold, a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to its bone. And as I looked, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great host.

Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off.' Therefore prophecy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you home into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken, and I have done it, says the LORD."

We are claiming that these prophecies of the outpouring of the Spirit and the regeneration of the nation of Israel—the covenant people—are not confined to Israel but go beyond to the whole world which God so loved (John 3:16). The promise of the nations being given to ‘Shiloh’ of Genesis 49:10 and ‘the Son’ of Psalm 2:6–9 is fulfilled in Christ’s Person and Work. He and the Father—the promise of the Father—now pour out the Spirit at Pentecost⁶ (Acts 2:33). Pentecost accords with Ezekiel 37:1–14, bringing about the regeneration of new birth (John 3:3–14; 1:11–13) spoken of in Ezekiel 36:24–28. At the same time the new covenant is brought to the new people of faith at the time of Pentecost (cf. Matt. 26:28; Acts 2:23–24; 2:38; cf. Gal. 3:1–3, 13, 14).

Our conclusion, then, is that revival of the human race which was dead—the bringing back into life of God’s created people—is effected in the Cross-Resurrection-Pentecost complex, which is really the one saving event, the one renewing event. Thus Paul’s statement of Titus 3:3–7 links the work of the Cross and the Spirit,

For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by men and hating one another; but when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life.

Humanity, then, has but one true revival in and by the Cross, the Resurrection and the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost.⁷ This being so, there is no basis for speaking about a second order of revival. Revival comes to those dead in trespasses and sins when they hear the word of the gospel, repent, believe and receive the gift of salvation.

The Revival We Need

It would, then, seem quite out of place with what we have said above to insist that at times there is a need for revival in the church of which Christ is the Lord. It is obvious that when we speak of ‘revival’ it must be in another sense than we have used it above. For example: if we take the matter of God’s covenant with Israel we would assume that this covenant regenerated the people so that they could be children of faith⁸ and children of the Covenant Father. David’s plea to God, ‘Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation,’ must have meant he knew that salvation prior to his terrible sin. The God of covenant acted according to His own revelation of Himself,

The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious; slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children to the third and fourth generation.

⁶ In Ezekiel 37:9–10 and Acts 2:2–4 for the wind comes in the desert and comes at Pentecost, cf. John 3:5–8 where the wind blows to bring new birth, the very regeneration spoken of in Ezekiel 36:25–27.

⁷ Many, of course, disagree with this thesis of mine. I have tried to set it out more fully in two books *Spirit-Baptism: Spirit-Living* (NCPI, 1990) and *The Day of the Spirit* (NCPI, 1985).

⁸ See Paul’s statement about men of faith being the sons of Abraham (Gal. 3:7–9, 29).

The Old Testament is filled with this kind of thought. The Psalms reveal the intimate nature of Israel's relationship with God and its worship of Him. They also reveal the reality of the regenerate heart,

Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward being;
 therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
 Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean;
 wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
 and put a new and right spirit within me. (Psalm 51:6, 7, 10).

Israel in Constant Need of Revival

Given that Israel was a redeemed people, that in covenant-relationship with God it did not dwell in spiritual death, we are yet faced with the fact that it was an incredibly sinful nation. Isaiah 1:4–6—amongst many passages shows this fact.

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth;
 for the LORD has spoken:
 "Sons have I reared and brought up,
 but they have rebelled against me.
 The ox knows its owner,
 and the ass its master's crib;
 but Israel does not know,
 my people does not understand."
 Ah, sinful nation,
 a people laden with iniquity,
 offspring of evildoers,
 sons who deal corruptly!
 They have forsaken the LORD,
 they have despised the Holy One of Israel,
 they are utterly estranged.
 Why will you still be smitten,
 that you continue to rebel?
 The whole head is sick,
 and the whole heart faint.
 From the sole of the foot even to the head,
 there is no soundness in it,
 but bruises and sores
 and bleeding wounds.

Reading the history of Israel tells us that the nation constantly departed into idolatry and rebellion against its Covenant Father, Yahweh. Stephen's sermon in Acts 7 confirms this reality. At the same time we read of revivals within Israel, using the word, of course, in its secondary sense—renewal out of spiritual deadness into a new vitality and holiness of life. There are the revivals of certain tribes under their Judges, the ministry of Samuel as he tried in a prophetic, priestly and kingly way—as a judge—to bring the people to holiness, in accordance with the mandate given in Exodus 19:5–6,

Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.

At the dedication of the temple (see II Chronicles 5:1–7:22) the reality of God's dwelling within His temple was stated. First we have Solomon's prayer (6:36–42),

"If they sin against thee -- for there is no man who does not sin -- and thou art angry with them, and dost give them to an enemy, so that they are carried away captive to a land far or near; yet if they lay it to heart in the land to which they have been carried captive, and repent, and make supplication to thee in the land of their captivity, saying, 'We have sinned, and have acted perversely and wickedly'; if they repent with all their mind and with all their heart in the land of their captivity, to which they were carried captive, and pray toward their land, which thou gavest to their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name, then hear thou from heaven thy dwelling place their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause and forgive thy people who have sinned against thee. Now, O my God, let thy eyes be open and thy ears attentive to a prayer of this place.

"And now arise, O LORD God, and go to thy resting place,
thou and the ark of thy might.

Let thy priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation,
and let thy saints rejoice in thy goodness.

O LORD God, do not turn away the face of thy anointed one!
Remember thy steadfast love for David thy servant."

God's answer to Solomon's prayer is found in 7:12–27,

Then the LORD appeared to Solomon in the night and said to him: "I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice. When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place. For now I have chosen and consecrated this house that my name may be there forever; my eyes and my heart will be there for all time.

And as for you, if you walk before me, as David your father walked, doing according to all that I have commanded you and keeping my statutes and my ordinances, then I will establish your royal throne, as I covenanted with David your father, saying, 'There shall not fail you a man to rule Israel.'

"But if you turn aside and forsake my statutes and my commandments which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will pluck you up from the land which I have given you; and this house, which I have consecrated for my name, I will cast out of my sight, and will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples. And at this house, which is exalted, every one passing by will be astonished, and say, 'Why has the LORD done thus to this land and to this house?' Then they will say, 'Because they forsook the LORD the God of their fathers who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods, and worshiped them and served them; therefore he has brought all this evil upon them'.

Solomon's prayer and God's answer gives us the reason for the need for revival and the way of revival. Verses 13–15 (above) give us the *way* of revival. Indeed, these verses have almost become a formula for many, and books have been written about them. They really mean that when Israel falls into a sinful state then humility, in prayer, seeking God, and turning from wickedness will bring the renewal of covenant blessing. We know that Israel at times came to this place of renewal. There were revivals of a kind in the reigns of Josiah and Hezekiah. We can possibly speak of a revival of piety and holiness when the people returned from exile in Babylon. On the

other hand we see Israel often in spiritual dryness and barrenness because it refused to come to the principle of II Chronicles 7:13–15. Hence the promises of great blessing which we have quoted above seem not only to be necessary to Israel, but also to refer universally to the time when God will pour out His Spirit on all flesh, and when the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. So much for Israel: what then of the present church?

The Need for Revival in the Church of Christ

We have as historical fact the decline and the fall of the church in many of its ages, and the remarkable times of revival that brought it up again out of its state of sin, inertia, and spiritual powerlessness. Whilst it can rightly be claimed that there was always a ‘a holy remnant’ which did not go into desuetude, it is also true that vast renewal was often needed. A vast church in North Africa was decimated by the Islamic uprising. Some branches of the church have been in heresy regarding the Triune Godhead.⁹ Often the contemporary mores in philosophy and human thinking—to say nothing of phases of worldliness and immorality—have so influenced the church that it has needed the chastisement of God. Today there are those in places of power in the churches who set their sails to the prevailing winds in the interests of personal ambition, ecclesiastical ambition, and desire for promotion, or simply because they do not want to be ‘out of fashion with the world’ (cf. I Cor. 7:31; I John 2:15–17; II Timothy 4:10). Revelation chapters 2 and 3 contain seven letters written to early churches by Christ, and only two receive whole-hearted commendation. There can be no question that five of them needed reviving in one way or another. The number 7 may indicate the entire church down through the ages, so that where in the entire church there is spiritual default Christ may even blot out that part—taking away its candlestick. The church at Sardis was almost extinct even though it thought itself very much alive. It badly needed reviving!

Reformation and Revival

The time of the Reformation may well be called a time of revival. It was certainly a renewal through the word of God and the Spirit of God. It certainly fits the pattern of II Chronicles 7:13–15. First it was a revival of the word of God, and this brought a reformation of doctrine, as well as of the life of faith in its practice. It has given rise to the often-stated principle, ‘No revival without reformation’. In the days of Israel it sometimes happened that when the word of God was recovered, there was revival and renewal amongst the people. Certainly revival in the secondary sense in which we use the term is always linked to the proclamation of the word, the living truth of it. The word makes the church aware of its declension and its need for renewal. It is out of the truth of the word that remarkable events take place, so that even nations are changed by the new spiritual charge of power¹⁰.

⁹ The church has always been assailed by heresy, the word ‘heresy’ not only meaning wrong doctrine, but over-emphasis of one aspect of the truth to the exclusion of the whole, the well-rounded truth. See Titus 1:5–12; 3:9–13; Jude 3–16; II John 9–11: etc.

¹⁰ A fine volume to study is *Historical Collections of Accounts of Revival* by John Gillies (Banner of Truth, 1754, enlarged 1845, reprinted 1981). In the bibliography of *Dry Bones Dancing* there is a long list of writers linked with the subject of revival

The different natures and forms of revival must be noted. The various rationales of revival ought also to be seen. That such revivals have been needed from time to time cannot be in doubt. That some have had many aberrations, bizarre happenings and have often seemed to bring harm cannot be denied. Even so, despite the excesses and dangers which arise in times of revival, it can be argued strongly that those revivals have been greatly needed and powerfully effective.

Israel of Old and the Church Today

For those who think that in ‘the dispensation of righteousness’ there is a splendour which exceeds that of ‘the dispensation of condemnation’ there may be the tendency to idealise the church as proof against the covenant-breaking, rebellion and apostasy which often obtained in Israel—‘the dispensation of condemnation’. Refusal to see any need for judgements upon the church, and restorative revival of the community of Christ may arise out of the idea that simply proclaiming the truth is all that is needed.¹¹ That of course is needed: indeed it is primary, but all intercessory prayer carries with it identification with the wrong-doing of the whole people of God. This can be seen in Daniel’s prayers, especially in Daniel 9:3–19, which in turn accords with the principles we saw in II Chronicles chapter seven.

There are many strong warnings in the New Testament based upon the experiences of Israel in Canaan. In I Corinthians 10 Paul speaks of what happened to Israel in the wilderness—that despite Christ the Rock being with them ‘they were overthrown in the wilderness’. He cites other cases of judgement, and then says, ‘Now these things happened to them as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come’. That is, we are warned that if we do the same things that Israel did we too shall be judged. The writer of Hebrews is constantly warning his readers against apostasy, and in 3:7–13 he warns against the very situation that Paul speaks of in I Corinthians 10, related to Psalm 95:7–11. In one sense the principles of Israel in Egypt, release from it, the journey through the wilderness, and the dangers of idolatry there and in Canaan still confront the church. The judgements on Israel will be no less than judgements upon the church. Peter makes this clear in I Peter 4:17,

For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

So then, the church needs revival and renewal constantly, if we mean by revival the restoration of the body of Christ to its true functional operation in proclamation of the gospel, the life of holiness, and living in faith, hope and love.

A Conclusion Regarding Revival and Revivals

We must first make the point that true revival of God’s people must always be the action of God. If revival really means ‘*re-vival*’, then it is bring to fresh life that which has become stale and dead. The proper life of the church is life—His life. There should never be need for revival. The church when it lives properly lives in ‘vival’, i.e. in *life*.

¹¹ It would appear in Revelation 2:1–7 that the church at Ephesus was correct in its ministry since it was wholly orthodox in its doctrine and practice, but then it lacked love, and thus was in danger of extinction. What if this primary criterion of love were to be applied to churches today?

It proclaims the word. It offers Christ to the nations. It calls for ‘repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ’. It proclaims ‘the gospel of the grace of God’. It preaches ‘the gospel of the Kingdom’, and it gives forth ‘the whole counsel of God’.¹² In this is its life and being. It has no subsidiary doctrine of revival. At the same time it must be alert, gird up its loins, be watchful and sober against all things which may subvert and damage its life and action, and when evil makes inroads to accept the judgements and corrections of the Lord of the church.

I have desisted from opening up this study to an examination of the history and nature of the revivals which have taken place in the church, preferring to show that Israel and the church are very similar in their experiences of the battle with Satan and his forces which seek to deceive, seduce and threaten the people of God. Even so, I am convinced that what we call ‘the norm of Christian living’ is often not the biblical norm. The gospel can easily be reduced to a stating of the elements of the *kerugma*—dynamic and animated as that stating may be—and lack the power of the Holy Spirit and the confirmatory and supportive signs and wonders that follow the proclamation of the word in the New Testament.¹³ It is clear that in times of vital preaching and what may be termed revival that there is an undeniable clarity of the word, an extraordinary reception of it, as well as a violent opposition to it. There are unusual elements which attend this work of the Spirit and it would seem that in such conditions the word of God is indelibly imprinted upon listeners, and the effects of revival are strong and lasting within those who receive and obey the word.

Finally, let us not debate the matter along the lines of formulae. That is, let us not say that revival is a way of enlivening the church, and let us not say simple preaching of the gospel will do that anyway. We create an unnatural dichotomy—a division between the word and revival. There is none such in Scripture. Christ’s mandate given to us is to ‘preach the word, in season and out of season’, in times of spiritual alertness as well as times of spiritual decadence, being neither hot nor cold, and seeing that seasons of worldliness, heresy and idolatry call for repentance on the part of God’s people, seeking His face for the reviving of the church *where it is needed!* Where there is fire in our belly and our bones God will work His will and way. Where we seek to make a formula of proclamation or of revival we will be hindering the Spirit who blows where he wills.

¹² See Acts 20:18–27 where these terms are all related to the proclamation of the gospel.

¹³ See my *God and Man in Signs and Wonders* (NCPI, 1988) which seeks to deal with the obsession some have with signs and wonders (I Cor. 1:22–24), and the rejection others have for them as though they were peculiar only to the apostolic days. See Paul in Romans 15:18–21; II Corinthians 12:12.

God's Judgements and The Revival We Need

Judgement and Revival in the Scriptures

Judgements and Revival in the Old Testament

There are many passages in the history of Israel which speak about God's judgements and the revival of the nation. Two classical ones are 11 Chronicles 7:11-18 and I Habakkuk chapter three. Often folk take 11 Chronicles 7:14 as a formula for getting God to give revival. However 7:23 says, 'When I shut up the heavens so there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people,' showing that judgement has come to the nation, and the nation, seeing this judgement has come then follows the prescription of verse 14, 'if my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and forgive their sins and heal their land'. That is, judgement follows disobedience, and this alerts the nation to its need for repentance. Likewise in Habakkuk chapter three we have the verse,

Oh Lord, I have heard the report of thee,
and thy work, O Lord, do I fear.
In the midst of die years renew it;
in the midst of the years make it known;
in wrath remember mercy.

The context of this passage is that Habakkuk has been told that God will judge and punish Israel with all invasion by the fierce and bitter nation of the Chaldeans. The prophet has come to the point where he accepts the fact of judgement, but he prays beyond the judgement, asking that just as God did great things in the past, so He will do similar deeds now and liberate Israel. He is not asking for a remission of judgement but for a revival of God's work, so that in His judging wrath He may 'remember mercy', i.e. judge but not destroy, but then also bring a revival of His redemptive work. On the basis of this prayer to the known covenantal nature of God (cf. Exod, 34:6-7) the prophet rests his case and is at peace. He trusts God for what is to come.

The passages in 11 Chronicles and Habakkuk are not new and novel ideas. The Book of Deuteronomy spends much time oil the judgements God will bring personally upon Israelites and corporately upon the nation where there is failure to live by the covenant. Generally speaking¹ Israel will always be judged (*shaphat*) when it departs

¹ We say 'generally speaking' because the subject is quite intricate and involves understanding the words used for in the OT for 'righteousness (tsedeq), 'justice' (tsedeq) the verb 'to judge' (shaphat, but also din and others, shaphat being (lie main verb), 'judgement' (mishpat). There is all excellent treatment of these in The Biblical Doctrine of Judgement by Leon Morris (Tyndale, London, 196, 1970).

from *mishpat* (justice) and *righteousness* (*tsedeq*) which in essence are the keeping of the covenant and its law, but are linked with God's lovingkindness, faithfulness, righteousness and mercy (Psa. 36:5ff; 99:14; Hos. 2:19) and consequently that kind of *mishpat* is evident in the community. When justice and righteousness are absent then the community comes under judgement (*shaphat*) which returns it to *mishpat* and *tsedeq*. This return is virtually 'revival' of the covenant community. Whilst judgement always carries elements of punishment, it is also chastising with a view to bringing to repentance and renewal, i.e. back to justice-righteousness. Isaiah 30:15-26 is a passage which shows that Israel will look for deserved judgement in order to be renewed to justice, and in this verse 15 is central,

Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you;
therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you.
For the Lord is a God of justice;
blessed are all those who wait for him.

We need to know this principle of covenant-living, covenant-breaking, coming under judgement, being judged and being revived that is germane to Israel, because the same principle obtains in the New Testament with the New Covenant people of God. Before we look at the New Testament we need to keep in mind that God is 'King over all the earth', and as Creator is over all the nations. Whilst Israel is His chosen priest-nation, He is no less concerned with all-with each-of the nations. So in Jeremiah 46:1-51:64 the judgements are pronounced upon various nations. Many of these judgements speak of decimation of certain nations, without any promise of renewing or 'reviving' them, but then some are promised restoration such as Moab (48:47f.), Ammon (49:6) and Elam (49:39) and it may be that other nations will be restored. What concerns us is that for at least some nations judgements will be restorative. At the same time we must never miss the punitive and retributive elements of God's judgements. The finally impenitent will be subject wholly to these. For such national judgements see also Ezekiel chapters 25-32, and Amos 1:3-3:15.

Judgements in the New Testament

Scriptures that indicate believers in the New Testament are without condemnation (John 5:24; Romans 8:1-2) must be seen alongside other Scriptures which warn that those 'who do such things' i.e. as the works of the flesh, will not enter the Kingdom of God (cf I Cor. 6:9f.; Gal. 5:19- 21; 6:7-8; Eph. 5:5-6; cf. Matt. 7:2 If.). Mere assent to the gospel does not mean one will not come into final judgement, but however that may be true believers are also judged where there is sin. There is, for such, present judgement. It is seen in its most drastic form in the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. It is to be noted that following their judgements the church was increasingly powerful,

Now many signs and wonders were done among the people by the hands of (the) apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Porch. None of the rest dared join them, but the people had them in high honour. And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.

We saw in our last Study that a number of warnings are given in the New Testament not to be like some were in Israel when in the wilderness. So I Corinthians 10: 1- 13 is didactic on this score. Verse 11 says, 'Now these things happened to them as a

warning, but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have conic'. Likewise in Hebrews 3:7-4:13 there is a similar warning. Admittedly it is spoken to Hebrews who might draw back from the gospel to the old covenant, but it is nevertheless apt for the church.

In I Corinthians 11:27-32 a strong warning is given against drinking the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner. Indeed, some have been doing this and that is why 'many of you are weak and ill, and some have died'. Paul said that 'if we judged (discerned', *diekrinomen*) ourselves truly, we should not be judged'. Thus must surely mean that the Christian has always to judge or discern himself so that he may not come under the judgements of God. Paul adds, 'But when we are judged by the Lord we are chastened so that we may not be condemned along with the world'. He is surely saying that God's judgements are good-whether we be sick or die-as they prevent us from being judged as those are who are outside Christ. This is an important principle. It is, virtually, the same as God's judgements within Israel when it sinned².

I Peter 4:17 and context speak of a judgement which is coining 'to begin with the household of God'. The word 'with' in the RSV, NRSV, is translated 'from' (apo) by some scholars. This 'with' and 'from' might be reconciled by seeing the judgement begins with the house of God and flows *from* it to others. In any case it is clear that the time for judgement had come, and that the judgement was firstly to do with the household of God. Obviously this judgement has firstly to do with the house of God, and 5:9 speaks of all 'experience of suffering' which the whole brotherhood throughout the world will know. It may well be that 11 Thessalonians 1:4-5 is linked with this, for there are 'persecutions and afflictions' which the Thessalonians are enduring. Paul adds, 'This is evidence of the righteous judgement of God, that you may be made worthy of the kingdom of God for which you are suffering'. It seems impossible to avoid concluding that whereas on the one hand persecution is coming to them from others, yet at the same time God is using these sufferings as a form of judgement for them who are enduring the persecutions. If this is so, then we have a very valuable insight, namely that all suffering call be used by God as a means of judging us.

In the case of I Peter 4:17 there is the matter of 'the household of God', and Peter has shown in 2:4-10 that this household is a spiritual priesthood, paralleling the priestly nation of Israel as set forth ill Exodus 19:5-6. As in the former household, so, now, in the latter. As Ezekiel 9: 1 -11 there was to be a cleansing, and it was (verse 6) to 'begin at my sanctuary', and as in Malachi 3:1-6, 17, 18, 4:1 there was to be cleansing of the temple, so in the new temple. Thus in I Corinthians 3:16-17 Paul said,

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells within you? If any one destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are.'

When we look at Isaiah 56:6-8 we realise that this new temple-the church of God-is 'a house of prayer for all peoples', hence it is not to be defiled. God's judgement will be against those who do defile it.

Of course if we who are within the church needed no judgement whatever, then the suffering would be purely a maturing agent for us. If, however, there is all action of God that is always judging us when sin comes into our lives then that is a healing judgement, a judgement of mercy, a judgement keeping us where we should be

² Gerhard Vos in his *The Pauline Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, 1952) comments ion this passage, 'this happens not to the detriment of their final salvation, rather to the furtherance of it'.

‘when we are judged by the Lord, we are chastened so that we might not be condemned along with the world’. Surely this is the meaning of the passage of Hebrews 12:4-11 where, it would seem, God is ever chastening His children that out of that discipline might come, the peaceful fruit of righteousness for those who been trained by it, i.e. by painful discipline. In 12:14 we are enjoined, ‘Strive for peace with all men, and for the holiness without which no man shall see the Lord’.

All the time God is judging, and in one sense it is impossible not to do so. If the wrath of God comes upon the elements of ‘fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness which is idolatry’ (Col. 3:5-6) then He will be judging wherever believers begin to be involved in them. The Book of the Revelation contains the seven letters, sent by Christ and the Spirit to the churches, and in five of these are strong rebukes,³ and even the threat of taking away the candlestick of at least one church. Again, in the text of Revelation believers are warned against taking on the mark of the beast.

So then, for us to say that ‘as long as we preach the gospel all will be well, and we will need no reviving or renewing’ is indeed simplistic. In one sense we cannot authentically preach the gospel unless we are living in it. To preach the Cross we must live as those crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20; 5:24; 6:14) and as those who are always carrying about in their body the ‘dying of Jesus’ (11 Cor. 4: 10). We cannot preach with power apart from the Spirit (I Cor. 2:4; 1 Thess. 1:5; 1 Pet. 1:10) so that we must always be ‘aglow with the Spirit’ (Rom. 12:11), always being ‘filled with the Spirit’ (Eph. 5:18) and always ‘walking in the Spirit’ (Gal. 5:16, 19, 25-26). We can be tempted to love the world, and some fall into that temptation. We can love in *eros* love and be deceived into calling it *agape* love. This is one of the most dreadful of all deceptions.

History, Judgements and Revival

Certainly the history of the church over 2,000 years tells of its many triumphs, successes, spiritual advances and the taking of many nations for Christ. At the same time we see, sadly, the decline of the church in matter of faith and practice. We see in some cases that the church has been little more than a servant of the State and that it has increased in worldliness, participation in political power, and departure from the apostolic truth and practice. Sometimes governments have become the servants of a church that has accumulated wealth and political power beyond that of those governments.

There are other forms of worldliness into which the church has come other than the political one. Each age has its particular attractions for the church, to tempt it out of its apostolic stance of truth and practice. Often the church has set its sails to the prevailing winds of intellectual thinking, hoping to get the ear of the world, and to bring numbers into its ranks. In so doing it has often departed from its essential power—the ‘word of the Cross’ which is ‘the power of God and the wisdom of God’. Yet a true reading of its history will show that time and again—as in Israel, so with the church—God has revived it from its lethargy and worldliness by powerful revivals. It is indeed a special and great age when the church can claim it is alive and well, has no

³ In Revelation 3:1 Jesus addresses the church at Sardis, ‘I know your works; you have the name of being alive and are dead.’ It would seem this was the most living of churches but it needed ‘re-vival’. So also for that matter four other churches, and no less the one at Laodicea which was I lukewarm— neither hot nor cold.

need of awakening judgements, and is empowered by a holy fire that is taking bastion after bastion of the world for Christ its King.

Three fine works are :

- (i) *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (1974 Banner of Truth reprints of the original Editions of 1834),
- (ii) *Historical Collections of Accounts of Revivals by John Gillies* (first published in 1754, and revised and enlarged in 1845. and reprinted by Banner of Truth Trust, England, in 1981),
- (iii) *Lectures on Revivals* by W.B. Sprague (first published in 1832, and reprinted in 1959, by Banner of Truth Trust).

These three works are invaluable in understanding the nature of Revival as a subject and as a happening of the church in history. Horatius **Bonar who wrote** the Preface to the 1845 revised edition of Gillies' book on revivals had this to say,

The volume before us contains not die history of the sleeping many but of the waking few. Its object is to trace out their story and record it for a memorial to all generations. The world has written at large the history of its sleeping multitudes, it becomes die Church of Christ to record the simpler, briefer annals of its awakened ones... Their story is as full of interest as it is of importance. 'The waking up of each soul would be matter enough for a history,-its various shakings and startings up, cre it was fully aroused; the word or the stroke that effected the work; the time, the way in which is became awake for eternity and for God, as well as its new course of light after it awoke,-all these are fraught with all interest to which nothing of time on earth call ever once be compared. And then, when the voice of God awakes not one, but thousands, it may be in a day; when whole villages and districts seem as if arising and putting oil new life, how intensely, how unutterably interesting! At such a crisis it seems as if the world itself were actually beginning to awake,-as if the shock that had broken the slumbers of so many were about to shake die world. . . The history of the Church is full of these awakenings, some on a larger and some oil a smaller scale. Indeed, such narratives as those with which the work abounds for the true history of the Church, if we are to take our ideas from the inspired church history given to us in the Acts of the Apostles.

Bonar then goes on to describe the men whom God used in the apostolic days.

1. They were earliest about (lie great work of the ministry on which they had entered.
2. They were bent upon success.
3. They were men of faith.
4. They were men of labour.
5. They were men of patience.
6. They were men of boldness and determination.
7. They were men of prayer.
8. They were men whose doctrines were of the most decided kind, both as respects law and gospel.
9. They were men of solemn deportment and deep spirituality of soul.

One cannot read Bonar's Preface without being deeply moved. The mention of men such as Stoddard, Shepard, Mather, Edwards, Tennent, Whitefield and the Scottish preachers under whom such rich revivals happened, is enough to set one's heart and spirit oil fire. Gillies' book itself moves one as he traces the cavalcade of saints down through the early centuries to the sixteenth century and the Reformers, with whom lie deals powerfully. The seventeenth century has a plethora of names which many of its have never known, though they were men of such fire. Enormous detail is given. The incidents and happenings of revival through these men we generally call 'Puritans' were of such a nature as to make us ashamed of our comparatively mediocre and lack-lustre ministries. The eighteenth century saw the rising of men such as the Wesleys and Whitefield, and others named above at the head of this paragraph.

Whilst the history ends at the eighteenth century and deals mainly with Great Britain and North America, yet an Appendix and a Supplement—both written by Gillies—were added to show something of the movement of revival in Holland and in the Colonies of North America.

Sprague's book on revivals is a series of lectures concerning the nature of revival, and it also contains a series of letters written in the late nineteenth century, which describe revivals that have happened, and the principles observed regarding them. Of course Edwards greatly discourse on the awakenings in the New England, and the blessings and problems of such revivals drove him to write his famous 'The Religious Affections', a book of immense value to those who observe revivals.

We are so close to the late nineteenth century revivals and those of the twentieth century that it is difficult for us to assess their values and shortcomings. There is no lack of descriptions of them. It is here the Bibliography of my book *Dry Bones Dancing*⁴ that should prove helpful. Most helpful is R.O. Roberts' *A Preliminary Bibliography of Published Books and Pamphlets on Revival with Annotations and Historical Notices* (Wheaton, R.O. Roberts, Publishers, 1992). Certainly in this Essay we cannot cover the 19th and 20th century Revivals but they have been many and across many countries in the world.

Personal Experiences and Views of Revival

I now undertake a difficult task of discussing my own experiences of revival. Even here I hesitate to enter into descriptions and analyses of the events I have shared. In some cases I am not sure whether what I saw and shared really comes under the term 'revival'. What I am sure of is that my own life was vitally revived and has, generally speaking, gone on in that vein. The great reality of the work of the Cross and the Resurrection has always taken primacy in my life and ministry. In the mid-sixties when I was Rector of the Garrison Church (holy Trinity) at Millers Point, Sydney, I experienced a dramatic spiritual quickening in my life, and my wife Laurel did also. We saw first a rapid decline in the size of the congregation and then not only a vast growth in the congregation, but a demand for ministry from many outside the parish church and my own Anglican denomination, as well as within it. We saw remarkable things happening at Guest Services—a new thing in those days—as also in the whole life of the church—and many of the folk effected went into Bible and Theological Colleges and Deaconess House, some of them going overseas as missionaries. We would often see pools of tears on the floor, and folk crowded into meetings, services and Bible studies wherever I was invited. I was called to take a number of missions, and generally we went with a team of folk from the church. Many clergy and others found themselves greatly enriched. Each month some of us—clergy and laity met together for a full day's retreat, and we had regular all-night prayer meetings where we prayed often with tears and prostration on the floor—for revival to come to our churches. I found myself with a great hunger for the Scriptures and prayer and would spend most

⁴ I would think that some readers will find the section entitled 'The Spirit and Revival' in my book *The Day of the Spirit (NCPI)*, 1985), pp. 218-252 useful. It is not an account of revivals, but it could be read profitably along with *Dry Bones Dancing*.

of the night for weeks on end, reading and praying. Quite unsolicited many came for prayer for healing, something I had not expected, and of which I had known little.

The next startling event took place at the end of 1957 when we were in Hyderabad, West Pakistan, as missionaries. Meetings in which I spoke by translation brought about the conversion of some 40 folk or so. No event such as this had previously happened in this area over a long period of missionary ministry. Some months later we witnessed what was undoubtedly revival. We had been praying at 5 a.m. each morning in a meeting which started with a handful and grew to something like a hundred in number. When a series of planned meetings began which went for over a week, and which went through the days into the evenings folk poured in from the countryside, and the meetings were packed. Children who were generally noisy sat still and listened. Each night following the meetings all-night prayer proceeded, there being some 150 at midnight and some 50 when day broke. Folk confessed their sins, prayed with weeping and made reconciliation with others with whom they had held feuds for years. There were visions, dreams, and all to some purpose. One or two remarkable-but quiet—healings took place. The outstanding thing was the beautiful singing, the worship of both peace and joy, and the hunger to hear the teaching of God's word. That was perhaps the most outstanding thing. As with all revivals some of the gains were not substantiated: others were, but I was impressed by the fact that those hours of revival seemed to imprint the truth indelibly upon the genuine hearers, more so than years of protracted teaching would seem to have done.

In early 1966 revival suddenly broke out in a series of most unusual events in the Rahim Yar Khan area, but for more than a year previous to it happening strange—you might say supernatural—events had been appearing from time to time. It was certain that many hungered after the outpouring the Holy Spirit, yet years of teaching by Students and Staff of our Bible College had built up a listening community. For months prior the revival I had seen and witnessed strange things which I not care to record here. For nearly ten years we had annually visited the area and had taught the great truths of justification, the power of the Cross, the Lordship of Christ, the Kingdom of God, and life lived in the Holy Spirit. In the last year I had more than ever been gripped with the reality of the Fatherhood of God and this teaching brought great blessing. Then the events took place which could be called nothing other than revival. What people call 'the gifts of the Spirit' were often manifested, although glossolalia was absent in the early days.

For years we have tried to convert the older men of the Christian communities those generally known as 'rice-Christians'-but they had steadfastly refused to respond. Now they responded in wonderful ways. So much weeping, so much confession of sin, so much repenting and coming to Christ and being filled with the Holy Spirit-it would take a book to describe it. Feuding ceased, broken relationships and church divisions were healed. Both Muslims and Hindus were deeply impressed and many of them deeply affected even to the point of conversion. I can say with confidence that there were genuine signs and wonders, although no one was asking for them, or expecting them. The primary blessing was the love, joy and peace that folk felt, especially as they experienced intimately the Presence of God amongst themselves. Prayer meetings and rich worship were what they loved. In fact the word 'love' may be said to be the primary one to describe all those events.

Of course I could regale eager and interested folk with such stories which accompany revival, but that is scarcely the point. When we returned to Australia and told folk of the

happenings, there was a curious lack of desire to hear. Some of the people professed they had prayed for us for years, but they seemed to have a distaste for what had happened. We found this quite strange and sad. I think many thought we had changed the doctrines of grace and the Holy Spirit we have previously been preaching, but this was far from the case. We were called to head up the Adelaide Bible Institute and really relished that ministry for some years. In 1969 I was asked to bring a team of College students and to conduct a teaching mission at Wudinna on the West Coast-on the Eyre Peninsula. This mission went the closest I have seen to revival in Australia- excepting the events at Millers Point in the mid-fifties. Certainly the movement of folk to both hear and respond cannot be put down only to the prior organising of the Mission-fine and foundational as that had been. Many who were converted or brought to a richer understanding of the grace of God in Christ were called to useful ministry, either as those who took ordination or as 'layfolk'. Certainly the fruits of that mission have remained over these last 23 years. I think some of the happenings could be said to be beyond logical explanation.

Over the past twenty-years I have seen many wonderful things happen, many of them in the work of the New Creation Teaching Ministry since 1973, though many were also prior to that time. I could not say these would fit into the conventional view of revival, but yet I believe there has been a wide awakening, even if it been quiet and gentle for the most part. I have seen so many respond to teaching, so many ordained and so many having quiet but rich ministry in the body of the church.

Personal Views on What Has Happened

I will make these brief. I think Bonar's description of the leaders of revival in the 18th. Century would fulfil the criteria I believe are requisite to revival. I know of no movement which was not preceded, and which did not arise out of, faithful and true teaching. I think nothing has happened where leading ministers of congregations have not been deeply involved in the Scriptures-in the living out of the truth in consonant practice of life. I believe that in every case fire has come to be in the bones and bellies of the persons God used to revive His people. Leaders of such movements know that only the sovereign acting of God brought about revival. They also know that when revival occurs, some manifestations are authentic and some are false. Indeed the gift of discernment is necessary if much of the fruit of revival is to be retained and sustained.

In my own case-particularly over these past few years-I have come to experience the correcting and purifying judgements of God in my own person. I know this to be God's love towards me, as I also know that our love and fire wane when so many things can distract us from the essential ministry-that of the word and the Spirit. We can forget the great things that have happened. We can become matter-of-fact in our proclamation of the truth, and we can 'settle down' to a regular ministry without the pain and suffering that is at the heart of all true teaching. Ambition is deadly, desire for comfort enervating, and lack of fire in proclaiming 'the great eternities' can find us desiring revival, but being ourselves lethargic and apathetic and even unbelieving.

We know what God has done in the past-in Creation, in Israel, in Christ, and in all history- but we can slumber in spirit when passion, revived energy, and persistent pursuit of the truth, and proclamation of the gospel in the power of the Spirit is needed.

Let us then cry with Habakkuk,

Oh Lord, I have heard the report of thee,

and thy work, O Lord, do I fear.
In the midst of the years renew it;
in the midst of the years make it known;
in wrath remember mercy.

Our cry surely is, 'Do it again, Lord!' This does mean we withdraw from our present ministry, our continuous proclamation of the gospel and our preaching of the gospel. No: it means we will more energetically than ever teach what is the conviction of our hearts, that the word of the Cross is the power of God, and Christ crucified is the wisdom of God and the power of God. But, then, let us expect that Christ will awaken the slumbering multitudes and bring them into salvation, into his community and finally into glory. He will cleanse the church from many of the things which today defile it, and, and set it afresh to be apostolic in its proclamation, biblical in its teaching, and filled with power and love in its ministry.

The Word of God and The Revival of the Church

The Word of God and Revival

In this the third of our papers on 'Revival'¹ we need to resolve the seeming dichotomy between those who assert there is no doctrine of Revival-as such-in the Scriptures, and those who assert there is. We have seen that the meaning of the word 'revival' is, roughly speaking, 'bringing back again to life that which had become lifeless'. We have histories in the Old Testament and the New, as also from the time of completing the Canon down to the present day, of revivals amongst God's people. We may argue about the term *revival*, and about its modes of happening, and whether such things constitute a *doctrine*, but we ought not to deny the *principle* of revival. In Israel there were national declensions in faith and practice, and the later writings of the New Testament show us that such things happened in the church, i.e. in local churches.

Whilst we endlessly discuss *why* and *how* declensions came, and even *how* and *why* revivals occurred yet at the present moment we are faced with a decline of faith and practice in many churches throughout the world. At the same time we can also see great movements of the Spirit of God which are happening, and it would appear that they spring from and are accompanied by the preaching of the Scriptures, the Word of God.

It is the habit of some of us to argue about revival-whether such a thing exists or not, whether we should be praying for it, and how it might come about. We have discussed these ideas in our previous studies, but what we all would-or should agree on is that the gospel must be preached. The preaching of 'the whole counsel of God' is what is needed to bring men and women to Christ, to found churches, and to maintain such churches in true faith and practice. Having this in common, let us look at what we should preach and the way in which we should preach, keeping in mind the consequences of such preaching, and the pastoral ministry which must follow.

Let us note that the history of revivals down through almost 2,000 years has much to offer us in teaching the ways in which God brings revivals, and the principles that obtain prior to, within, and following such times of revival.²

¹ See also the section in my *Day of the Spirit (NCPI, 1985)* entitled 'The Spirit and Revival' (pp.218-252).

² See the bibliography in my *Dry Bones Dancing (NCPI)* which is so comprehensive as to demand much time to cover the materials produced concerning revival. Such materials cannot be dismissed out of hand as being irrelevant. They so emphasise the point that revival comes out of preaching that they must always be relevant to our ministry.

Preaching and its Consequences

Before we look at what we should preach and the way we should preach let us see that the outcome of true preaching will be the formation of fellowships of believers, i.e. churches. This would be especially so where churches have not already been founded, According to the New Testament there will be a structure of ordained elders, deacons and all in the new group will serve one another, and the new church will be that unit which will further the proclaim the gospel it has received, and by which it lives. There will be gifts given by the Holy Spirit to ensure the life of the church is functional and kept at true pitch. 'Me Spirit will be the power for all the life and actions of the church.

We have to face the fact that elements such as nominalism, traditionalism, and other factors so affect churches from time to time that the picture and principles we see in New Testament churches are often found to be lacking. Even in the Epistles, and in Revelation chapters two and three we can detect such elements.

New Testament Preachers and Preaching

Forgetting for the moment the fact of revival let us look at the nature of preachers and preaching as we see them in the Acts and Epistles. In the Gospels the initial twelve were called in to Christ to be sent out by him. Judas was destroyed, Matthias took his place by the drawing of lots and Paul was later called in to be an apostle. One of the criteria of apostleship was to have seen the Lord. Apostleship was that truth given to the apostles to proclaim—the truth which was the truth (acts) of Christ in the light of the Old Testament, and the Old Testament in the light of the truth (acts) of Christ. A new teaching emerged which was consistent with Christ and the Old Testament truth, but which was now salvific in a way the Old Testament truth had not been conclusively. This apostolic teaching incorporated all of that Old Testament.

This apostolic truth was what was proclaimed in the early church, following Pentecost. Theologically this has been called 'the announcement' or 'the *kerugma*'. The form it took can be adduced from the sermons in Acts and supported, amended and amplified by the teaching found in the Epistles. It was, generally speaking along the lines we now indicate,

- (i) Messiah has come in conformity with the prophecies of the law and the prophets. This coming, and the events of Christ constitute a continuity of the new with the old, whilst also constituting a seeming discontinuity, i.e. defining differences regarding salvation, the life of the community-and so on.
- (ii) The shameful fact of crucifixion can be attributed primarily to the will of God shown in the prophecies-and secondarily to the wickedness of the Jewish leaders and the Gentiles present at Jerusalem at the time of its act. The crucifixion was no accident, but something determined beforehand by God.
- (iii) The primary fact of history on which the gospel was based was the bodily resurrection of Christ. Its significance was obvious-Jesus was shown, by resurrection, to be Lord, Lord over life and death, and hence over sin. One believed in the resurrection of Christ and confessed him as Lord.

- (v) Repentance, converting, with baptism for the remission of sins³ would save those who believed in Christ's resurrection and his Lordship.
- (iv) Such repentance, believing and receiving the forgiveness of sins would bring the gift of the Holy Spirit, the gift which had been promised by the prophets and especially the Father.

This was the *kerugma* as found in the early chapter of Acts, and as such is what we must preach today. The preaching of revival as *a thing in itself* is not found in the New Testament⁴. The ministry of Philip the Evangelist in Acts 8 shows that the gospel was

- (i) proclaiming Christ (v.5),
- (ii) proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God, and
- (iii) proclamation of the *name of Christ*.

Belief in these things qualified hearers to be baptised.

The Pauline Enunciation of the Kerguma

With the advent of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus other elements become explicit which were previously implicit *Believing in Christ* brought *the washing away of his sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit—all* in conformity with the simple *kerugma*. His ministry was formulated as proclamation which would turn both Jews and Gentiles 'from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place [inheritance] among those who are sanctified by faith in me' (Acts 26:18).

In Acts 13:26-37 Paul delivers faithfully the simple *kerugma* in its apostolic form to the people at Antioch in Pisidia but to this he adds the teaching of 'justification through faith' (13:39), a truth brought out powerfully in the *Epistle to the Romans* whilst 'sanctification by faith' and 'inheritance' are also part of 'the whole counsel of God' i.e. the apostolic truth and gospel, and are also found in *Romans* as in other Epistles. *Romans*, of course, emphasises the resurrection as part of the apostolic truth.

The *centrality of the Cross* may well have been expounded in the *kerugma* found early in Acts, but it is not explicit as such in the Acts, but Paul made it central in his teaching to the Corinthians (I Cor. 1: 17-2:5) when he went there, and we assume it was the case with Paul all the time. Likewise the Epistles of Peter and John show it was central to their teaching⁵. Paul also emphasises the salvific power of the resurrection in this latter, especially in chapter 15. In *Galatians* he enlarges on the power of the Cross (1:4; 2:10--221; 3:1-14; 5:24; 6:14). *Colossians* emphasises the Cross in destroying the power of the *law* and evil principalities and powers (2:11- 14), and speaks of the power of the Cross to effect cosmic reconciliation (1: 19-2 1). Many of these elements may be traced in other Epistles he wrote.

In Acts 20 he discusses the nature of the gospel-'the whole counsel of God' in terms of the following,

- (i) repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ.
- (ii) the gospel of the grace of God.

³ In Acts 3:19 brings 'the blotting out' of sins.

⁴ At the same time note Acts 3:19 which speaks of 'time of refreshing coming from the Lord' when hearers believe and have their sins blotted out.

⁵ We make this point of the centrality of the Cross because some scholars take the view that the Resurrection was the central emphasis. In the light of Romans 4:25 it would seem the Cross-Resurrection complex was of the one piece, and this would be borne out in I Corinthians 15. (iii) preaching the kingdom of God. (iv) the whole counsel of God.

- (iii) preaching the kingdom of God
- (iv) the whole counsel of God

This means that ‘the gospel of the Kingdom’ preached by John the Baptist and Jesus has become ‘the gospel of the grace of God’ and demands ‘repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ’ for salvation.

In Acts 16:38 Paul says *to believe in Christ is to be saved*. In the Epistles Paul does speak of *eternal life*, linking that with *salvation*, and also Christ’s *resurrection*, much as we have seen above in the *kerugma*. (see Rom.5:18, 21;6:22-23; Titus 1:2; 3:7). If we read all Paul’s Epistles then we know that forgiveness, purification from sins, justification by grace and sanctification by faith, along with regeneration and adoption (sonship of the Father) were all linked together in the proclamation of the gospel. Something of immense importance—salvation and transformation of the person in that one’s total being—resulted from the proclamation and reception of the gospel. This alone brought the change of coming out of death into life (cf. Eph. 2:1-10; Titus 3:3-7).

The Petrine Enunciation of the Kerugma

We have seen in Acts the *kerugma* that Peter and John preached. In Peter’s First Epistle we see the centrality of the Cross and the Resurrection for redemption, forgiveness of sins, purification from sins, and sanctification. These points are covered in chapter one, and in 2:24-24; 3:18 and 4:1-6. Again, we have to understand the dynamic of such proclamation in order to see that today it will have no less effect when it is ‘the good news preached to you through the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven’ (1: 12).

The Johannine Enunciation of the Kerugma

We know that John’s Gospel contains much that formulates the *kerugma* proclaimed after the events of the Gospel. In it believing brings freedom from Condemnation (5:24) and eternal life (3:14-36; cf. 20:30--31). The Cross forms a central part of the Gospel (6:51 et al ; 12:31-32; CF. 20:23). John’s First Epistle expresses the centrality of the Cross and belief in it and Christ (1:9- 2:2; 4:9 -10; cf. 5: 8-12, 20) out of which eternal life comes to those who believe.

The Practical Effects of the Gospel on Those Who Hear

What we need to see are the affects and effects of the preached gospel so far as the hearers were- and are concerned. It is so easy for us to take tip such words as repentance, faith, conversion, forgiveness, justification, regeneration, and sanctification and think of them noetically and theologically and yet miss the deep and powerful working of them and the significance they present to hearers. We know that innumerable listeners turned away from preaching, disliking, opposing and rejecting it. Others were radically transformed by it. For those who work in lands where there are other religions, the offer of salvation, forgiveness of sins, eternal life—linked with resurrection—is often quite unknown, and when the message is heard there is an excitement beyond description.

So it was in apostolic days and the days that followed. In Western countries which have had Christianity we face a number of problems such as follow.

- (i) The philosophical history of the West which has gradually reduced the credibility of the Bible as an intelligent canon of truth, and therefore something to be believed as being the very word of God.
- (ii) The growth of the empirico- scientific system of research, thinking and application which seem to outmode that which is biblical-theological.
- (iii) The growth of alternatives to the gospel, many of them being secular, religious, ideological and psychological systems or gospels which are intended to supplant the biblical gospel.
- (iv) The decline of faith and practice in many churches due to seeking to interpret biblical truth by the use of the empirico-scientific method, and the desire to sound intelligent, modern and credible to those outside the churches as well as many of those within them.
- (v) The state and presence of traditionalism which sometimes obscures the purity of the gospel. Also an ecclesiasticism which is not consonant with the Christian gospel, in[] often grips some whilst it repels others—both elements missing the simplicity and power of the gospel.
- (vi) The attempts by the use of apologetics to make the gospel sound reasonable to hearers The use of an intellectualism which appears to put the gospel on par with other reasoned systems, but which obscures the true gospel.
- (vii) The presentation on the one hand of the gospel as a commonsense system, and the use of persuasion to give it intellectual assent without presenting ‘the scandal of the Cross’. On the other hand there are the uses of a ‘supernatural’ presentation, along with strong manipulative pressures to bring people to decisions or commitments. Often evangelists use either ‘soft sell’ or ‘hard sell’ methods where, in fact, proclamation is what is required, whether people will be persuaded or not by this realistic ‘non-sell’, since the gospel is primarily a command from God.

There are many other things such as the deadly dullness of some churches, a dry way of ethical and church-living, the parochial view of the gospel and life-and so on. All of these tend to dull any expectation of some great action of the Holy Spirit and the word of God effecting anything.

Proclamation Which Powerfully Effects a Response and a Transformation in the Hearer

We are aware that sects and small groups loyal to their beliefs may have a convincing appearance of life. People living in sects are banded together against the systems outside which oppose them. Certain phenomena are present in all groups which suffer rejection and persecution. Some groups are quite heretical but they display social integration of members, and a strong ability to evangelise or proselytise others. So much so, that they often shame others who proclaim the biblical gospel. Again, often those who proclaim the gospel, see results come from their proclamation and form themselves into dynamic congregations may claim that the simple preaching of the gospel is all that is needed. ‘The fire that burns keeps hearts warm and proclamation alive. Even so, it may happen that ‘the whole counsel of God’ is not preached. An evangelising congregation is a fine fellowship, but sooner or later the social

and relational problems known in the early church—and (town through all generations— appear and pastoral ministry will be needed. Proclamation's continually needed but proclamation per se is riot the whole life of the church. Reductionism of any kind will sooner or later bring certain unfortunate consequences.

Proclamation in the Power of the Holy Spirit

I Corinthians 1: 17-2:5 ought to be closely studied. Eloquence, brilliant argumentation, the use of emotionalised preaching and the like may hinder rather than help in proclamation. Only the Holy Spirit can bring revelation, and when he does then those things we have nominated above come to life—so to speak. We mean that repentance, faith, conversion, forgiveness, justification, regeneration, and sanctification flow become alive to the hearer. Conviction of sin, sensitivity to one's own evil, recognition of God's holiness, arid the wonder of salvation—and such—all suddenly seem to grip the hearers. Their repentance, belief, response and their reception of forgiveness purification and justification are vivid and alive.

Thus repentance—'a change of mind, understanding, and attitude' is dynamic. Faith is a living experience. The forgiveness of sins is bewilderingly beautiful and wonderful. The sense of utter purification, and the passing away of guilt through justification by grace all deeply affect the hearer. The inflow of life assures the believer of resurrection from the dead and that dispels the fear of death (Heb. 2:15-15; 1 Cor. 15:55-56). The flooding in of love by the Holy Spirit, and accession of the fruit of the Spirit, arid the continuing presence of the Spirit himself, all go to make for a powerful transformation in the life- of the new believer

Such happenings occur in places where the gospel is constantly and faithfully preached, but where threatening, human persuasion, manipulation, gimmicks, nicks and mavericks are used this result does not come. Hence the puzzlement that people are 'converted' yet do not remain steady, do not grow and mature and do not have the fire a believer should show. Such are apt to 'fall away' or 'backslide' or become indifferent.

It sometimes happens that the doctrine of new birth is preached, yet without reference to the Cross. Sometimes people seem to come into the Kingdom on the crest of what is called 'it Holy Spirit experience' yet the centrality of the Cross is not presented. This can result in puzzlement and even it dulling the person. Likewise some hear 'the word of the Cross' but its presentation is so doctrinaire, and often so 'Cultic' that the direct impact of the Cross and Resurrection through the Spirit is not really felt.

All of these things we have spoken of above give us cause for great concern. If the gospel is the power of God unto salvation and 'the word of the Cross' the power for those of us who are being saved, then surely we desire to see it all in action.

The Proclamation of the Gospel and the Power of Revival

Our first statement must be, 'Whenever, and wherever the gospel is preached according to its apostolic truth and in the power of the Holy Spirit, then that is what is required of those who are "stewards of the mysteries of God".' Nothing more can be asked. Both the form and substance of the gospel will then be communicated. This does not mean

that immediately the gospel will produce results parallel with those known under the preaching of the apostles. If we take into consideration the seven points set out above which militate against the proper preaching and true hearing of the gospel then we see that these are the things today through which we have to break in order to bring the light of the gospel to hearers. The apostles also had to break through other impediments to the acceptance of the gospel, so we should not despair. The gospel is the power i.e. the word of the Cross is the power of God to redeem.

The History of Revivals

In our three papers we have avoided referring to revivals that have happened in the Christian church, and here we will not make quotations from the books which give us accounts of revival, but one point we must make. *No revival happened unless there was the true preaching of the word.* In some cases many years were given to doing that. Techniques of threatening, persuading and manipulating were not used. It seems that the constant plain preaching of the Scriptures ultimately resulted in first the phenomena which precede revival, and then the actions which can properly be known as revival phenomena. That is, the word of grace finally penetrated, made its mark, affected hearers and effected salvation and the things accompanying it such as repentance, faith, the response of surrender to God, conversion, and the gifts of forgiveness, purification, adoption and sanctification—the latter placing believers within the holy people, the church.

Those who think all that has ever happened to the church that can be called ‘worthwhile’ happened only within the canon of Scripture—e.g. the Book of the Acts—have failed to see that the church is ever the body of Christ, that he is ever its Lord, and the church moved on in history, led and enabled by that same Lord. This is our history and continues to be thus.

One of the great phenomena of this history is that of revivals. It so happens that when revival takes place it brings a new sensitivity to the Person and Being of God, to the fact and nature of sin, to the truths of the gospel, and so the response is a heightened experience of the elements of repentance, faith, forgiveness, purification, conversion, adoption and sanctification. Suddenly—it would seem—the word of God has power in a way hitherto unknown during the period of patient proclamation. Yet the proclamation is the same as that preached previously, but suddenly impressions are made upon the mind and hearts of hearers that seem beyond any hitherto known. Also hearers seem to learn and then retain the truths that come to them. So to speak—in a few moments truth breaks open with such light as to be unforgettable. Response to the gospel in repentance and faith is suddenly quite remarkable.

God’s Plan and Revivals of His People

Sadly enough we sit down and work out from the Scriptures the operative principles we can adduce, and then we try to apply them as is done in the empirico- scientific research that results in applied science. We can have no argument with that on the horizontal level, but what are we about when we preach the Kingdom of God—the very foundation of our gospel? How dare we think we can induce revival? How dare we think that God’s plan for creation is limited to soteriology, i.e. the gospel which we think is simply to save human beings from judgement and hell, and sin and death. It is as much that *unto* which we are saved as *from* that which we are saved which is the

gospel. All soteriology is (a) to do with creation and (b) to do with the *eschatos* and the *telos*.

Revivals, then, are part of God's sovereign plan in fulfilling His Kingdom, making it come, and making it come up the earth in the *telos*. The revivals that come are not a higher technique than the simple preaching of the gospel. They are sovereign acts in history to do with His Kingdom and the *telos*. Therefore we must see that God visits His people in reviving power, not to assist them in a difficult situation—although that may well be some of the case—but to go on to fulfil the Lordship of Christ over the nations, and 'bring in' the Kingdom.

That should humble us, when we talk for or against revival, and should give us the true perspective of it all. Thus when we preach our gospel will be soteriological, creation oriented, eschatological and teleological, i.e. be in the perspective of 'things to come' and the justification of God in all history, as well as the ultimate glorification of mankind and the creation.

A Personal Question: Am I a Man of the Spirit and the Word?

Discussion of revival, proclamation and our place as pastors, teachers and people in the order of God's plan in history is an interesting pursuit, but the real question is whether we are men and women of the Spirit and the word of God. We can be evangelists and preachers operating in the energies of our own egos, inspired by *eros* but not *agape*, motivated by self-proving and not primarily by the gospel and the Spirit, perhaps capable of moving multitudes but not of bringing conviction of God's holiness and Man's sin to our audiences. Some of us may see evangelism as that which 'gets the church going', and which enlarges our congregations. Some may see revival as a 'quick fix' for the church, overcoming the present problems of our churches and society—problems moral and spiritual—but not yet see the great holiness of God, and His sovereignty that deals in judgement in the world, no less in us as believers. Some of us may even feel that we must prompt God into action in our present crisis, urging Him to move, whilst others may see this kind of importuning as failure to believe God will Himself move, yet refusal—on these grounds—to pray and anticipate visitations of God may be the sign of indolence and not faith.

To be men and women of the Spirit and the word demands constant sobriety, constant alertness, constant holiness of life, constantly being filled with the Spirit as a moral exercise (Acts 4:8, 31; 6:3, 5; 7:55; 9:17; 13:9; Rom. 12:11; Eph. 5:18; Gal. 3:3; 5:16, 16, 25; cf. Phil. 1:19), constant attention to the word (Acts 6:43; 1 Cor. 2:1-5; 1 Thess 1:5; 1 Pet. 1:12) and constant responsibility (I Cor. 4:1-2; 11 Cor. 4:1-2) with constant suffering (Acts 5:41; 13:52; 11 Cor. 4:7-15; 6:3-10; 11:23-29) and never ending compassion.

We are then, not dealing in polemics of speculation but in realities. To be men and women of God demands constant vigilance and rejection of personal ambition. The gifts and the fruit of the Spirit are ours—if we will.

Conclusion to our Study

Why, then, should we not covet revival, not pray for it to happen, not long for it to break forth? This does not mean denigration of any true preaching, but rather revival

as we contemplate it, and pray for it-seems to promise a richer outcome than what we have hitherto known. At the same time we must not idealise revival, nor make a fetish of it. We should not seek it to the exclusion of faithful preaching, nor put down in our thinking the authentic gospel - preaching which is presently happening. Any substitution for preaching for some hoped-for revival in the future would be disastrous. We must preach the word 'in season and out of season', i.e. always. We must not be dismayed by the states of society which seem so far away from true godly living. We must not abandon society to its own sins and evils. In no way must we give up hope. Nor must we withdraw from the world in order to have our own little spiritual ghetto, and be domestic in sharing the gospel with our own.

What we must pray and look for is a sovereign work of God's Holy Spirit as He may choose to visit us with reviving power. Israel knew such seasons, the church has known such seasons, and there is no reason why we should not know such seasons, as in sovereign grace He visits and revives His people, and gives even further power and effects than we know at this present time.

The Pastoral Power of the Sabbath Presence

Introduction: The Matter of the Sabbath

A number of theologians¹ look upon the Sabbath as an element of and intrinsic to the original covenant of creation made with Man, whilst others see it as an element of the covenant made with Israel with reference back to the first [creational] covenant. The question of a covenant of creation made with Man is still a moot one. Most Reformers held to this doctrine, but their emphasis was not primarily that it was a covenant of grace, but of law, whilst other theologians who use the word 'grace' in connection with it, may unconsciously be emphasising that it was a covenant *with a view to grace*. If there is an implied covenant in Genesis chapters 1 and 2 then it is not necessarily of grace, since grace implies restoration rather than creation as a simple act of God bringing into being that which He purposed. God as Creator may imply the need for grace² when Man falls since God is 'a faithful creator' (I Pet. 4:19), and will, by His own means bring creation to its appointed goal, preserving it along the way.

Roughly speaking, two views of the Sabbath obtain,

- (i) that it was given as part of the creational mandate and order, i.e. it relates to the functional nature of creation, and
- (ii) that it was an ordinance or principle of life for Israel, whilst being at the same time a sign of the redemptional covenant.

On the basis of the former the Sabbath is part of the ontological order, and on the latter a part of the order of covenant for Israel which does not obtain universally for created Man. In fact it is linked with the redemption of Israel from Egypt. Even so, a choice between the two views does not necessarily have to be the case.

Creation and the Nature of the Sabbath

As an introduction to our thinking of the Sabbath it may be good to look at what **Barth** says of the seventh day³,

It is not man entering upon the work appointed at his creation who is to be the hero of the seventh and last day of creation, although now everything seems to be ready for him to multiply and spread abroad on the earth ... The very man commissioned for this task is now to witness a very different occurrence. It is not man who brings the history of creation to an end, nor is it he who ushers in the subsequent history. It is God's rest which is the conclusion of the one and the beginning of the other, i.e., God's free, solemn and joyful satisfaction with that

¹ E.g. Karl Barth is convinced that there was a covenant of grace made with Man at creation (*Church Dogmatics, Vol. III, part 1, p. 94ff.*). Likewise W.J. Dumbrell (*Creation and Covenant, p.34ff.*).

² 'Need for grace' is a theologically naive statement, since grace is the free act of God and cannot be called upon to meet a contingency. That God is 'the God of all grace' means He is free to do as He wishes.

³ *op. cit.* pp. 98-99.

which has taken place, and has been completed as creation, and his invitation to man to rest with Him, i.e., with Him to be satisfied with that which has taken place through Him. The goal of creation, and at the same time the beginning of all that follows, is the event of God's Sabbath freedom, Sabbath rest and Sabbath joy, in which man, too, has been summoned to participate. It is the event of the divine rest in the face of the cosmos completed with the creation of man—a rest which takes precedence over all man's eagerness and zeal to enter upon his task. *Man is created to participate in this rest.* It is the covenant of the grace of God which in this event, at the supreme and final point of the first creation story, is revealed as the starting point for all that follows. Everything that preceded is the road to this supreme point. The connection and sequence of the individual events in the history of creation, and these individual events themselves—each in its own place and manner—all point to this last event, to this positive and yet limiting relation of God's Sabbath rest to the man striding forward to this work for which he is prepared... God rested on the seventh day after the creation of man and prior to any human activity.

The Decalogue, the Moral Law, Israel and Man

At this point we need to look at whether the Sabbath is of creational order and so its observance is an ordinance from the beginning or whether it is one applying only to Israel. H.W. Richardson⁴ (pages 112-113) under the heading 'The Sabbath as a Sacrament' says

It is one of the peculiarities of Christian history that the American Puritans attempted to reestablish an institution which the Church, in its continuing opposition to Judaism, had rejected. There is, of course, an obvious basis for Christian observance of the Sabbath. The commandment to keep the Sabbath holy is included in the Decalogue and would seem, therefore, to be part of the universal moral law that is binding on all men. Yet because of anti-Jewish polemics, Christian theologians have generally argued that the Sabbath commandment is not like the other nine, but only established a 'ceremony' that Jesus Christ later abolished. In this way they have denied that keeping of the Sabbath is one aspect of general human righteousness.⁵

It is to be noted that in Exodus 20:11 it is said, 'for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and hallowed it'. This basis for keeping the Sabbath is that all creation was completed on the sixth day. Taken at face value this Exodus statement means the Sabbath has its origins in the seventh day of creation, and a case can be made out for it that it is universal. The statement God 'blessed the seventh day and hallowed it' is of great importance. No other day is said to have been blessed and hallowed. If blessed and holy then it must be regarded as something unique in the order of creation and for the history of Man and the goal of God. In Deuteronomy 5:12 it says, 'the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God' hence all must rest. The prime one recognised in relation to this day is God. The rest is linked with the fact of the enforced labour Israel knew in Egypt, so that the Sabbath is a liberation from such labour, and thus no Israelite may enforce labour on any servant on the Sabbath. We should note that Exodus 34:21 ruled, 'Six days shall you work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; in plowing time and and harvest you

⁴ H.W. Richardson, *Theology for a New World* (SCM. London, 1968)

⁵ We will later take up the argument that the first day of the week has—for the Christians—supplanted the Sabbath, as it is 'the Lord's day' and outmodes the Sabbath. If the principle of the Sabbath is universal it cannot be moded, but if the Lord's Day is the eschatological form of the seventh day—the Sabbath—then that would present a different matter. shall rest'. In Exodus 35:2 the rest is called 'a solemn rest'—'Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a holy Sabbath of solemn rest to the Lord; whoever does any work shall be put to death; you shall kindle no fire in your habitations on that day.' All of these things show us how clear of weekly work was the day, and how set out for rest and refreshing.

Shall rest.’ In Exodus 35:2 the rest is called ‘a shalom rest’ —“Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a holy sabbath of solemn rest to the Lord; whoever does any work shall be put to death; you shall kindle no fire in your habitations on that day.’ All these things show us how clear of weekly work was the day, and how set out for rest and refreshing.

The ‘Work’ of the Rest of the Sabbath

When Jesus said, ‘My Father has always been working, he is inferring that the Sabbath was not a day of indolent idleness. In Genesis 2:1-3 it is written, ‘Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all the host of them. And *on the seventh day God finished the work which he had done*, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation’. We notice here that God is resting from, but in Exodus 20:11 it simply says ‘He rested’, whilst in Exodus 31:17 it says ‘he rested and was refreshed’. If that is the way the Sabbath is for God, then how much it must be also for Man. Speaking of Israel, W.J. Dumbrell says (op. cit. below p.35),

This notion of divine rest which man is thereafter invited to share becomes a dominant one in the later Old and New Testaments and the institution of the Sabbath (Exod. 32:13-17) becomes the particular covenantal sign of the concept. So the Sabbath, which brings to an end the week, becomes for Israel an invitation to enter into, and rejoice in, the blessing of creation. It is noteworthy that when the Sabbath is legislated for (Exod. 20:8-11), it is brought not only into a framework of redemption, but also into particular connection with creation.

What Happened on the Seventh Day

Notice that in Genesis 1:31-2:1 God completes his work, the peak of which is Man-His image-yet 2:2 says, ‘*on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done*,’ that is, something *more* was done on this day, or something *other* than what had been done in the six days. In Genesis 2 it appears that *after* creating man (Genesis 1) he *then* puts him into the garden of Eden (2:15). Is this the work which is completed on the seventh day? Is it-in a manner of speaking-induction into the Sabbath? Again, has the Sabbath been completed as God’s seventh day, or is this Sabbath still proceeding?⁶ In fact in chapter 2 the action-or the beginning of the action—of what God was completing? Dumbrell (op. cit. pp. 34-35) says

Gen. 2:1-4 forms the conclusion to the account of creation... By the divine rest on the seventh day the goal of creation is indicated, a goal which will be maintained notwithstanding sustained human attempts to vitiate it. Not only does the seventh day rest denote the goal to which creation points, but it is the call of man to begin history holding firmly to the view that "the goal of creation, and at the same time the beginning of all that follows, is the event of God’s Sabbath freedom, Sabbath rest and Sabbath joy, in which man, too has been summoned to participate".⁷

⁶ We mean, ‘Is the age in which Man’s history proceeded the age of the Sabbath? Given in the curse on creation, is the Sabbath nevertheless God’s own day, inviolate from *His* point of view, but variously experienced from Man’s point of view, i.e. as fallen Man, as redeemed Man, and eventually as eschatological teleological Man?’

⁷ Here Dumbrell quotes C. Westermann, *Creation* (London; SPCK, 1974) p. 65.

Dumbrell then quotes an important observation by Westermann,

What is peculiar to the holy day in the course of every day happenings is that it points to the goal of the creature which God has created in his image. The work which has been laid on man is not his goal. His goal is the eternal rest which has been suggested by the rest of the seventh day'. (My emphasis).

All of this lends significance to man being placed in Eden. Was this the place of rest? Was this the way of rest? Losing his place in the garden was Man placed outside of God's rest? If so then why should Man keep the Sabbath? Deuteronomy says it is 'a Sabbath to the Lord'. At the same time Israel celebrated the Sabbath for its own good. It might be suggested (Dumbrell, p.36) that Man was placed in the presence of God in order to be equipped to fulfil the creational mandate of Genesis 1:28f. and for which he had been blessed. What is certain is that the Sabbath- which is God's-is linked with Man's rest, since this rest comes from God. Man does not so much receive a rest from God, as he is expected to participate in God's own rest. This point can be seen from Hebrews chapters 3 and 4 where the writer speaks of entering into God's rest—a rest which was for Israel in Canaan, a rest which is for the present and rest for the future.

The Matter of the Institution of the Sabbath for Israel and All God's People

For Israel

The passage of Exodus 31:12-17 needs to be examined. It speaks of Sabbath-keeping 'that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you'. It also teaches that the Sabbath is 'holy to the Lord'. Verses 16-17 giving the notion that the Sabbath is 'a perpetual covenant' ('lasting covenant' (JB), and 'a sign for ever between me and the people of Israel'.

31:12 And the LORD said to Moses, 31:13 'Say to the people of Israel, 'You shall keep my sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you. 31:14 You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you; every one who profanes it shall be put to death; whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. 31:15 Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD; whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death. 31:16 Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a perpetual covenant. 31:17 It is a sign for ever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.'"

For All the People of God

Relevant for our subject are the two facts of (i) the family of God which did not begin with Israel, although it was included in it. I John 3: 10-11 shows that there has always been a family of God- at least from Abel onwards-and (ii) there has always been the people of God: again, from Abel onwards (Heb. 11:4ff.). The family of God and the people of God must be identical. That they have always been in the presence of God can be inferred from Genesis 4:13-16. Cain goes from the presence but not the children of God.

The question naturally arises, 'Have the people of God kept the Sabbath, even if they were not all of Israel? Have they not then been living in God's rest, His own Sabbath? Certainly in this regard Isaiah 56:6-8 has to be considered, even though it is to be regarded as eschatological,

56:6 "And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD,
to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD,
and to be his servants, *every one who keeps the Sabbath, and does not profane it,
and holds fast my covenant —*
56:7 these I will bring to my holy mountain,
and make them joyful in my house of prayer;
their burnt offerings and their sacrifices
will be accepted on my altar;
for my house shall be called a house of prayer
for all peoples.
56:8 Thus says the Lord GOD,
who gathers the outcasts of Israel,
I will gather yet others to him
besides those already gathered."

This is surely the new temple of which Isaiah speaks. Is it the temple of the restoration following the exile or is it the New Testament church—the new temple (I Cor. 3:16; 6:19; Pet. 2:4-10; etc.). The temple of the restoration in Israel's history did not have foreigners as part of it. In any case the prophecy speaks of

foreigners who join themselves to the LORD,
to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD,
and to be his servants,
every one who keeps the Sabbath, and does not profane it,
and holds fast my covenant.

Does it mean they keep God's Sabbaths when they join the congregation of God's people, or have they kept them—in principle—prior to visibly joining the *ecclesia*? Is there some kind of universal Sabbath keeping which is inherent even in the situation of sinful mankind even though not meticulously followed?⁸ For example, it is known that the previous USSR tried to dispense with the one day's rest and found it was impossible to implement. Even the animals needed it.

The Meaning of God's Rest, God's Sabbath

That God could rest from his labours of creating must first be the sign that all He has done is 'very good', i.e. it is creationally, functionally, and so ontologically 'good'. Had He not rested then there would be some 'touching up' needed. His rest also indicates that where God is there is rest, and that that rest is the era of the seventh day. Even so, it also indicates that in resting from he did not need to perfect what had been done. This—so to speak—certifies the true nature of His creation. At the same time it is Man who must share the Sabbath of God, and his sharing of it must in some way be linked with the creational mandate. So then the Sabbath is linked with what has been

⁸ Here see my *Sabbath Rest or Human Turmoil* (NCPL 1981, pp.43-54).

accomplished, what is being so, and what will be, i.e. the eschatological. This indeed makes it universal, and eternal, so 'eternal rest'.

If we think that the exclusion from Eden means exclusion from the continuing Sabbath of God, then we must see that the presence of God does not cease to be with Man, and 'the rest' is linked with *relationships*, rather than the state of the place in which the primal couple were placed. The fall broke the relationship, and so the two had to be ejected from Eden, yet Eden itself was retained and the thief on the cross was promised entrance into it on the day of his death- 'This day shall you be with me in paradise', i.e. 'in the garden'. It can also be seen from Genesis 4:14 that Cain was still before 'thy face', and that going into Nod he went away from the presence of the Lord.⁹

God, Man and the Sabbath

For those in Israel Exodus 20:8-11 indicates that the Sabbath was linked with both creation and redemption. Creation gave the Sabbath, and redemption restored it, and so it became a mark of the covenant. Covenant held in view a restoration to enjoyment of the Sabbath as also a token of it. Israel was released from seven days work and bondage to a rest from oppression as it had known them in Egypt. Thus Psalm 95 shows that Canaan was going to be 'my rest', i.e. the rest God would give them, and the rest which was his-'my rest'. Even so both the creational and redemptional elements of God's rest were not exhausted in the idea of Canaan, for the writer of Hebrews pushes the 'my rest' into the future, into the eternal situation—a matter we shall later pursue.

Barth shows that the Sabbath is not merely for man to recuperate, nor even to gather strength for what is ahead in the new set of six days, but he says of the Sabbath keeper,

On the Sabbath he belongs to himself. Whether he be farmer, artisan, servant or maid, he is just the man who for six days had to be these things and had to perform the corresponding tasks, but whose being and existence is more than all these things and his work, who in and with these things and his daily work seeks to be a man, this man, male and female, and as such to be before God. It is this which gives perspective and depth, meaning and lustre to all his weeks, and therefore to his whole time, as well as the work which he performs in his time.

Barth then goes on to show that God was content with what He had created. 'He was content with the creation of the world and man. He was satisfied to enter into *this* relationship with *this* reality distinct from Himself, to be the Creator of this creature, to find in *these* works of His Word the external sphere of His power and grace and the place of his revealed glory.' Barth then proceeds to say that the first feature of the Sabbath rest is God's freedom-i.e. not to further create, which would mean the initial creation was inadequate and required introducing new factors, expedients and creatures. His second principle needs to be quoted in full.

The second feature of God revealed in the rest of the seventh day is His love. A world-principle without this limit to its creative activity would not be loving like God, but would be a being without love, never ceasing, never finding time for any creature, never satisfied with any,

⁹ The question is whether 'the presence of the Lord' can be taken relationally or geographically since **Paul** points out that all 'five and move and have their being' in God, and this would certainly have been the case for Cain.

always positing other beings in infinite sequence. Although it would seem to be an ocean of love, it would not really be love at all. Missing every possible object of love, at bottom it would be condemned to pursue its own shadow. Love has a definite, limited object. Love is a relationship which is itself limited and defined by this object. It is in this way that God loves. And the reason why He refrains from further activity on the seventh day is that He has found the object of His love and has no need for further works.

We deduce from this that Man has a creational gift, state and context--God's rest-which is essential to his well-being, his life and his growth, namely the Sabbath, and that participation in it is his freedom¹⁰

Since God loves His creation Man is loved within the Sabbath, and possesses that freedom which is his way of life. It may well be that it is the realm in which he realises his creative powers.¹¹ released as he is from the sheer necessity of his six-days works. The love in which Man lives in the Sabbath is surely also that which refreshes and heals in a sinful world. Its redemptive nature effects the fullness that has been lost by sin.

The New Testament, Christ and the Sabbath

In the New Testament the Decalogue is mentioned a number of times by Christ and the apostles¹² and there is no outward indication that the principle of the Sabbath is rescinded. In Romans **13:8-10** Paul says 'And any other commandment,' which must include the fourth commandment regarding the Sabbath. It has been pointed out that the Son of Man was not made Lord of the Sabbath in order to rescind it!¹³ What Christ did was show that it was a day for Man's benefit, rather than a day of oppressive regulations that actually prevented real rest. Since the Sabbath was also looked up eschatologically by the people of God something of its love, peace and joy ought to have been known in Christ's day. He certainly encouraged a good view by the healings and acts of mercy he did on Sabbath days.

There is much made in the four gospels of Jesus' activity on the Sabbath, and we need not here look at in particular. The things emerge, (i) the Father never ceased working on the Sabbath: He ceased from creating, but He was always working (John 5:17). Jesus was also working with him¹⁴, (ii) **the Sabbath** was made for Man and Man was not made for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27), i.e. it was for many to enjoy, rest, live in and so on. The legalisms and laws of Jewish writers had to fit the category of the Sabbath being enjoyed by Man, and not the Sabbath dominating Man, (iii) The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28), that is he is not subject to the Sabbath but it to him. The Gospels show that Jesus healed on the Sabbath and did not think he was *essentially* infringing that day. Since enjoyable things-such as healings, liberations happened on the Sabbath the nature of the Sabbath was seen to be a restful day-people entering into rest from their afflictions. Jesus himself had respect for the Sabbath, though not for the moralistic accretions that had attached to it over the centuries.

¹⁰ Of course

¹¹ By 'creative powers' we do not mean that Man can ex nihilo create anything, but by being in the image of God, he can have creative thinking, action and production. This should strictly be called 'procreative action', but it is nevertheless one of the most dynamic drives and factors in man for full living.

¹² Matthew 22:34; Mark 12:28-34; Romans 13:8f.; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8.

¹³ This thought is in the book *Call the Sabbath a Delight* by Walter Chantry (Banner of truth Trust,1991)

¹⁴ This Johannine statement surely indicates that the Son was involved in all that the Father was doing on the Sabbath. It almost parallels Mark 2:28 that the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.

Does his being Lord of the Sabbath extend beyond authority regarding Sabbath observances, to the very fact of the seventh day, the perpetual rest Man can have in that context?

Matthew 11:28-30 twice contains the word 'rest', once in its verbal and once in its nounal form. Jesus will give rest, though with the rest will not be cessation of work, but work that is joyful. They will find rest for their souls. Is there here some reference to the rest which is the very essence of the Sabbath? If we look at Jeremiah 6:16, 'Thus says the Lord: Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.' To walk in the true law is to have true rest. Jesus was offering rest for those who were heavy laden. Does this rest approximate to Christ's peace—"He is our peace"? Is not 'He is our peace,' really He is our rest?

'Rest' in Hebrews Chapters 3-4

In these two chapters the writer is warning the readers of his letter against hardening their hearts, lest they never enter in 'my rest, i.e. God's rest (3:11 *et al*). Disobedience and unbelief prevent a person entering His rest (3:19). The promise of such a rest remains, but only obedience and belief will ensure entrance in that rest (4:1-3). In 4:11 the argument is as follows, 'There is a rest, God's rest, and the obedient who hear God's promise will enter into it. Whilst initially that rest was one at creation, there is another rest spoken of, namely entering Canaan-as set out in Deuteronomy 12:9-10

For you have not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance which the Lord your God gives you.. But when you go over die Jordan, and live and live in the land which the Lord your God gives you to inherit, and when he gives you rest from all your enemies round about you, so that you life in safety ...

then Canaan was certainly to be the place of rest, yet since many years later David wrote Psalm 95 and spoke of yet another rest-not primarily that of the seventh day of creation, but of a rest ahead for "there remains a Sabbath rest¹⁵ for the people of God; for whoever enters God's rest also ceases from his labours as God did from his", so that one should strive to enter into that rest by obedience, and not lose it by disobedience.' Undoubtedly this is the eschatological rest, but one now enters into it.

It is to be noted that verse 9 says, 'So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God; for whoever enters God's rest also ceases from his labours as God did from his.' The term 'Sabbath rest' is, technically speaking, 'sabbath-keeping' (*sabbatismos*; here only in the NT), and might even include the idea of resuming Sabbath observance, though not in the manner of the Mosaic covenant, seeing the writer of Hebrews sees such as outmoded by the new covenant. It takes us back to creation, and the fact that God rested from His labours of creation, bill tile Sabbath was a situation in which lie rested. It is obvious that this Sabbath lay ahead for the author of the Letter and his readers. It is also obvious that they had to come into it by doing what was their portion of obedience, so that they then could rest.

We cannot avoid seeing that all that lies ahead beyond this life is the 'eternal rest' of God. That will not be a time of doing nothing but will relate to the new heavens and the new earth, the people of God resurrected and glorified, and being 'a kingdom of priests unto their God'. Thus we may speak of the *hope* of Sabbath, the *hope* of the eternal rest. If the readers revert to the former covenant they will then be disobedient and never enter into His rest.

¹⁵ Here 'Sabbath rest' should be translated 'Sabbath keeping' (*sabbatismos*)

Man and the Ontological Necessity for Rest

In this section we approach the pastoral power and value of the Sabbath. You will note that we have not tried to resolve the seeming difference between the seventh day which is the Sabbath of Israel, and even some sections of the Christian church, and the first day of the week which is known as 'the Lord's Day'. This difference requires a scope wider than our paper, but is discussed in other books¹⁶. At this point we can only say that one day of Sabbath rest in seven days should be the principle observed.

If we take the Sabbath as relating to creation and its eschatological *telos* (conclusion), then we must assume that Man cannot function truly apart from Sabbath rest. Just as with any functional principle of creation, so with the Sabbath: it must be observed if a person is to live fully. What we call 'the fruit of the Spirit' in Galatians 5:22-23 is really Man as he was created-at his fullest. Love, joy and peace are never apart and cannot be known apart. They constitute the *rest* which a human being can know as Man-in-God. Proverbs says variously 'a tranquil mind give life to the flesh', 'Better is a dry morsel with quietness than a house full of feasting and strife,' (14:30; 17: 1). Ecclesiastes 4:6 says, 'Better is a handful of quietness than two hands full of toil and a striving after wind'. 'The real contrast of restlessness and rest (peace) is found in Isaiah 57:15-21 where the one in whom God dwells is at peace, and 'the wicked are like the restless sea' for "There is no peace, says my God for the wicked". Thus Paul can quote 59:7-8 in Romans 3:15-17, 'Their feet are swift to shed blood, in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known.' Isaiah 30:15 gives good advice,

For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, 'In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and trust shall be your strength.'

So the quiet man is the man whose trust is in God. He does not get into states of panic (Isa. 28:16). Yet it is not quietness simply from fret and strife, but the assured quietness of the one who walks wisely in life, knowing and doing the will of God. It is also the quietness of one **who knows God**. Psalm 63:1-8 shows this, and is of immense pastoral value,

1 O God, thou art my God, I seek thee,
my soul thirsts for thee;
my flesh faints for thee,
as in a dry and weary land where no water is.
2 So I have looked upon thee in the sanctuary,
beholding thy power and glory.
3 Because thy steadfast love is better than life,
my lips will praise thee.
4 So I will bless thee as long as I live;
I will lift up my hands and call on thy name.
5 My soul is feasted as with marrow and fat,
and my mouth praises thee with joyful lips,
6 when I think of thee upon my bed,
and meditate on thee in the watches of the night;
7 for thou hast been my help,
and in the shadow of thy wings I sing for joy.

¹⁶ E.g. my Sabbath Rest or Human Turmoil? (pp.55ff.), and Call the Sabbath a Delight (Walter Chantry, Banner of Truth pp.82ff.).

8 My soul clings to thee;
thy right hand upholds me.

Whilst we could pursue this line much more we can see that Man is participating in the Sabbath of God-i.e. God's intrinsic rest-when he is one with God. This oneness is not so much *union* as is it *communion*. Yet this 'rest' and 'quietness' and '4 communion' is not all of what it is to participate in the Sabbath rest of God. This we will examine under the next heading.

The Value of Sabbath-keeping for the True Life and Health of the Community of God's People.

Walter Chantry in his book *Call the Sabbath a Delight* (pp. 90, 91) has the following to say,

On the seventh day of creation, God entered his rest. All his works were finished. All the display of God's glory in his works was completed. Therefore, the Almighty ceased working on the seventh day. Again, the chief issue is not non-activity on God's part but full enjoyment of his work and the receiving of glory from the works of his hands. However he did not intend to enter this rest alone. From the seventh day of creation, man has been called into God's rest. Man is to share with God the pleasure and satisfaction of all God's work. Man is to glorify God, not for some future personal blessing but for God's finished work. Man is to be God's special companion in the enjoyment of God's finished work and in giving God glory for his finished work.

It is thus being said that the seventh day is from creation until now and beyond to the *telos*. Thus we live as Chantry says, by being God's companion in the finished work and in giving glory for his finished work. When we ask, 'Is that how we see it in our congregations and are parish life?' the answer must often be a vacant or incredulous stare, as though what we are saying is irrelevant. Of course, some will understand keeping a day in a sacral fashion, but then Sabbath is spread across all life. Of course we ought deliberately-as a sacramental act-to set aside a day, a time, and place for the freedom of which we spoke in Barth's first quote above, but then Barth sees the Sabbath as covering all life. H.W. Richardson (op. cit. p.112) says that 'God's end in creation is the sanctification, or spiritualisation of the world' and has to do with 'the holy worldliness of the kingdom of God'.

If, in pursuance of this aim-this wholeness of the Sabbath in the sanctification of creation- we ask, 'How does one keep the Sabbath, i.e. keep it as holy?' H.W. Richardson (op. cit. p. 119) answers as follows,

Now, in fact, keeping the Sabbath holy is nothing other than the way that man lives to the glory of God. For Sabbath holiness and the glory of God are one and the same thing. I grant that this equation is not an obvious one. It involves a special conception of holiness, one that identifies holiness with God himself, for only if 'holiness=God' will 'living for holiness=living for God alone'.

The passages of Isaiah 56:1-5; 58:13-14 seem to confirm this principle.

56:1 Thus says the LORD:
"Keep justice, and do righteousness,
for soon my salvation will come,

and my deliverance be revealed.
Blessed is the man who does this,
and the son of man who holds it fast,
who keeps the Sabbath, not profaning it,
and keeps his hand from doing any evil."
Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say,
"The LORD will surely separate me from his people";
and let not the eunuch say, "Behold, I am a dry tree."
For thus says the LORD:
"To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths,
who choose the things that please
me and hold fast my covenant,
I will give in my house and within my walls
a monument and a name better than sons and daughters;
I will give them an everlasting name which shall not be cut off.

58:13 "If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath,
from doing your pleasure on my holy day,
and call the Sabbath a delight
and the holy day of the LORD honorable;
if you honor it, not going your own ways,
or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly;
then you shall take delight in the LORD,
and I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth;
I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

All this being so, we should seek to revive the teaching of the Sabbath amongst our people. We should not only warn them against the invasion of the Lord's Day Sabbath, and seek again to have a day of holy rest and pleasurable participation with God in His whole creation every one day in seven, but we should seek to see that since all eternity will be God's holy Sabbath-rest, that we should be participating in that now.

To have such a restful view, and a calm understanding through love and grace of God's present Sabbath and His intention for the eternal Sabbath, will doubtless bring strong reaction from those who pursue pragmatic means and ends. What we are not advocating is quietism but practical holiness and the glorifying of God as His companions and partners in His present practice of His holy Sabbath-His total satisfaction with what He has done with creation, His calling Man to share with Him, His purposes of redemption to restore what Satan and rebellious Man have made unholy, and His purposes for the new heavens and the new earth, the eternal rest which is His very nature, and into which He is inducting us for all eternity, i.e. as 'partakers of the divine nature'.

All this may well be called 'the pastoral power of the true Sabbath-keeping within the Sabbath presence of God Himself.

Closing Important Note: Throughout this Essay we have refrained from relating the Sabbath to redemption. That it is related to the Sabbath in Israel is quite clear. That redemption is the means for rehabilitating the creation under the curse so as to ensure full renewal of the creation is also apparent. Most theologians would argue that Sabbath observance always finds its impetus and motivation in grace and love, and no less the

grace of propitiation leading to justification. It may also be argued that redemption is the work of the seventh day for the seventh day. True and provable as all these propositions may be we have not attempted to use them in this Essay simply because the range would then be too diverse.

Things We Believe and Proclaim-I: The Ministry of Proclamation

Introduction: Are we Preaching the Gospel?

We ask the question because it is possible to be speaking evangelically, and yet not be preaching the gospel. Recently I was told of a notice-board outside a Sydney church the following was written,

The Church in the Hills C.L.C.

Relaxed Informal,
Non-confrontational,
Laid Back Unique
Stimulating messages
Special Guests
Soulful music.

Sunday late 8.00-9.00 pm
at the Hills Centre.
Coffee's hot at 7.45 p.m.
this Sunday.

It seems this sort of thing is not unusual for today. It appears that churches are anxious to provide for certain needs which they think the public has in mind. In the USA there are now churches which provide all possible amenities including sports gymnasiums, spa-baths, dining rooms, entertainment, and which have thousands attend each Sunday. Such demands are made by the 'baby-boomer' generation, which insists on service, comfort and luxury. It would seem that such churches also have something in mind, namely to increase the number of adherents and make a name for themselves. One Sydney church—Cherry brook Community Baptist Church has faxed out an invitation,

Want to be a **SUPER SUCCESS**

We've got just the ticket!

Success breeds success ... but how do you keep it? How come some people have it and others don't?

You can learn to be successful, stay successful, learn how to make successful decisions, how to establish life's objective, how to reach your goals and make a name for yourself.

This series was to be for seven Sundays starting at 8:55. a.m. at a local Technical School, 'creche and kids facilities provided'.

Doubtless such churches think they are the doing the right thing by those who attend their ministry. It would be an almost impossible task to analyse wily it is that we have come to this pitch today. What we have mentioned above are some of the milder forms of attempted 'evangelism'. The more serious attacks on the Christian faith come from horizontal thinking, that is, that use of current psychology, psychotherapy and sociology as they are applied in the teaching, pastoral and counselling situations.¹ This is especially the case where there are hybrid therapies which are an amalgam of empirico- scientific and so-called religious truth.²

Further to these things are the application of contemporary organisational and marketing methods applied to the action of the church in promoting its various products. Using the term 'products' means we believe we have such-the things which are immediately attractive and useful to the community. For those who use such methods any 'scandal' or 'foolishness' that is in the gospel-see I Corinthians 1:17-23-must necessarily be avoided. We ought never to reject the good means which are available to spread the gospel, but in using some of these we may even neutralise the power of the word of the gospel. This word contains its own power to transform men and women and bring life to churches.

As far back as 1987 Neil Postman published his *Amusing Ourselves to Death*,-an analysis of television's effect on culture. In it he is scathing in his criticisms of the use of TV to reduce useful thinking to entertainment. He contrasts many modern tele-preachers to thoughtful theologian-preachers of the past.³ His indictments of entertainer-evangelists are made in the light of the more profound preachers such as Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield and Charles Finney. Having listened for forty-two hours, to TV preachers his first conclusion is that 'on television, religion, like everything else, is presented, quite simply and without apology, as an entertainment. Everything that makes religion an historic, profound and sacred human activity is stripped away; there is no ritual, no dogma no tradition, no theology, and above all there is no spirit of transcendence. On these shows, the preacher is tops. God comes out as second banana' (page 119). It is no wonder that if things were in desperate straits in the late eighties they are unbelievable in the early nineties.

¹ I am not attacking any of these disciplines or methods of promotion-whatever their merits or demerits may happen to be. We are not even saying they ought not to be used in many cases, but we are saying that when they are posited to us as gospels complete within themselves, then we are faced with a new kind of theology altogether, and one which cannot be called 'biblical'. We expect such operations in the community of our society, but surely it is not obligatory or mandatory for us to use these methods. We may question whether we are really using biblical means of proclamation and the founding and maintaining of churches.

² There can be no doubt, for example, that the Puritans were physicians of the *soul*. Biblical leaching has always met human beings at the point of their need-be it emotional, psychical or relational. It is when we substitute secular disciplines for the healing truth of the gospel that we do despite to the great power of salvation.

³ *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Methuen. On page 5 he says, 'Not long ago I saw Billy Graham join with Shecky Green, Red Buttons, Dionne Warwick, Milton Berle and other theologians in a tribute to George Burns, who was celebrating himself for surviving eighty years in show business. The Reverend Graham exchanged one-liners with Burns about making preparations for Eternity. Although the Bible makes no mention of it, the Reverend Graham assured the audience that God loves those who make people laugh. It was an honest mistake. He merely mistook NBC for God.'

In the light of these many present developments in some churches I believe we need to rethink what we are about as the church of God, and return to the first principles of being the community of Christ and—as that—making proclamation into the world.

Proclamation in the Book of the Acts

Peter's proclamation on the day of Pentecost brought the following result:

2:41-47 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

It can be seen that the hearing of the gospel brought converts into the following way of life-

- (i) 'they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers',
- (ii) 'And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need',
- (iii) 'day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people' and
- (iv) 'And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved'.

If we look at all the events of proclamation we will find that it was out of the word of the gospel that men and women were converted and churches were founded. Nothing other than salvation was offered them⁴. Certainly when churches were started they became communities in which care for their own was the normal expression of love, but it was never a form of bribe to entice listeners into the faith.

A trek through the Book of the Acts will show how consistent was the preaching of the gospel—both in method and content, and then pastorally in abiding in 'the whole counsel of God'. If we take such to be the norm then we have to face one important question, 'Does that gospel really have the same power today, given that we preach it in much the same way as the apostles?' Doubtless the media for proclamation have increased, and of course life's conditions have changed, but have these changes necessitated changes in the modes of proclamation and in the content of the gospel? That is the question each of us who seeks to proclaim the gospel must answer.

⁴ That is as against the many inducements some missionary societies offer such as education, social welfare, medical aid—and so on. There is surely nothing wrong in giving such aids but such should not be offered as inducements to become believers in the gospel. The gospel must stand on its own. Lest we be critical of this sort of inducement, we ought to ask what kinds of inducements we use in our homeland

What Problems Faced the Apostolic Proclaimers?

The new Christians faced the hostility of the Jewish community wherever they went. They also faced the anger of Gentiles who were idol-worshippers. They faced the problem of Rome in regard to the fact that appeared to oppose the Caesars of their days. Most of all, they faced the enmity that is aroused through the 'scandal' and 'foolishness' of the gospel (see I Cor. 1:21-23). Paul's passages regarding persecution and rejection such as 11 Corinthians 4:7-15 and 11:23-27 tell us vividly of the enmity men and women had to God and His gospel. We have no reason to think it is otherwise today. When we take into consideration the factor of the entire kingdom of darkness set against the ministry of the gospel, then this should not surprise us. So often we are not aware of the devices of evil. Seeking secular ways of commending the gospel can bring us into the very camp of the Enemy.

We may ask what opposition there is today to an apostolical proclamation of the gospel. By 'apostolical' we mean just preaching the word the disciples did, even though our language and presentation may be somewhat different. As in the apostolic times so in these days the gospel is open to criticism through (a) misunderstanding, and (b) human 'understanding' which rejects the gospel demands. Basically it is the same problem, namely that 'the natural (unspiritual) man receives not the things (gifts) of the Spirit (*ta tou pneumatou*) of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned' (I Cor. 2:14; cf. John 3:3-6; James 3:15; Jude 19). What we must see is that those commissioned to preach the gospel are 'stewards of the mysteries of God' (I Cor. 9:17; 4:1; Eph. 3:2f, which means they must have been inducted into these mysteries and so know them fully. Only out of such understanding can the gospel be preached and preached convincingly.

The major problem which faced the proclaimers was (i) the failure of Israel to understand that Jesus was the fulfilment of the prophecies and so was the Messiah, Son of God, Son of Man, the Suffering Servant, the Davidic King, the Righteous Branch and so on. This has been Paul's own failure. Then there was (ii) the failure of the Gentile listeners to understand who Jesus was because they did not even have the background of the history of Israel, and its prophetic expectations. What is more, they had the confusion which arose from the various cultural-religious backgrounds in which they lived, and by which they had been conditioned. The gospel must necessarily have come as a foreign *schema* which was unrelated to their world view, their theology and their way of life.

Some of the Problems Facing Present-Day Proclaimers

These are far too numerous to tell, for whereas the early proclaimers faced Jews and Gentiles who differed from them, today we have the many variations of Christian faith and practice. These are within the constituency of the churches. Modern humanism has captured a large part of the society which was once known as 'Christian', and this humanism is strongly opposed to the evangelical gospel. At the same time there is all evangelicalism which is not humanistic, but which is primarily cerebral and cannot be called visceral. It tends to argue its case in terms of apologetics, or simply presents a system which, when accepted, ushers the believer into the Kingdom of God. Such seems close to 'easy believism', i.e. an intellectual assent which does not seem to affect the affections, and accomplish notable heart-experience. Such evangelism may for a

time promote its owl' 'head of steam', but eventually fail because it does not declare the whole counsel of God and because it does not teach what the Puritans called 'experimental religion'.

Again, we face the competition of churches which seek to be successful in attracting adherents along the lines we have indicated above, mainly those of entertainment and 'easy listening'. If we add to these all the maverick groups, and those which espouse some forms of heresy in faith and practice, then the task of returning to 'the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints' (Jude 3) and the 'amending of what is defective' (Titus 1:5) seems to be an almost impossible task. If we add to all of this the influence of a society which has become permissive of immorality, and whose educational principles⁵ seek to secularise all that is truly spiritual, then we see the formidable opposition which faces today's preacher of 'the great eternities'.

In all of this we have said nothing of the resurgence of ancient Eastern religions, many of which are making their headquarters in countries hitherto known as Christian. These, too, present a threat to the preaching of the gospel.

The Proclaimer of the Gospel

The materials assembled above in regard to the climate in which the preacher lives today scarcely cover the extent of the growing problems which face us both in the church and outside it. Some would analyse church history and come up with the simple statement that it is the incipient Pelagianism, Socinianism and Arminianism⁶ which has plagued the church that is to blame for much that faces it today. Others would say that Calvinism and Reformed doctrine have stultified the ministry. It becomes clear that we need to have a rich understanding of the apostolic truth, the gospel as taught by the apostles. The full nature of that gospel comes out of the Gospels, the Epistles and the Revelation, but all with reference to the Old Testament. The form of the gospels sometimes called 'the proclamation' or 'the *kerugma*'—*can then* be worked out and proclaimed, but the element which is so necessary to proclaim with power and effectiveness must be the gospel as revelation given to the preacher, and this will include the unfolding of the mysteries of the gospel of which he is intended to be a steward. We can call this the *substance* of the gospel. Such cannot be preached simply by our determination or induced animation. It must come through the revelation of the Spirit whose presence and power effects the true statement of the gospel.

The Gospel as Revealed Mystery

Christ told his disciples that they had been given the power to understand the secrets of the kingdom of heaven. The word 'secrets' (RSV, NEB) derives from the Greek word

⁵ In our own land today we are virtually riced with what we may call 'utilitarian education'. plus the deliberate attempt to teach moral and ethical values. Indeed there is a playing down of values and a pragmatic view of society as an economic unit. Anything metaphysical is opposed. The liberal arts are not given status: anything not of economic value is put down as useless.

⁶ Pelagianism is that doctrine which opposes the idea of original sin, which claims that human beings are born without sin, have free will and can attain by their efforts to righteousness. Socinianism is really unitarianism, the doctrine that God is one, and the Son and the Spirit do not have deity. Arminianism is that way of theological thinking which opposes the doctrine of predestination, and sees man as able to achieve salvation by the use of his will, which it claims is 'free'.

mysterion, which is generally translated ‘mystery’ throughout the New Testament. In Matthew 13:11-17 we read in regard to the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven,

Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to him who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah which says:

‘You shall indeed hear but never understand,
and you shall indeed see but never perceive.
For [his people’s heart has grown dull,
and their ears are heavy of hearing,
and their eyes have closed,
lest they should perceive with their eyes,
and hear with their ears,
and understand with their heart,
and turn for me to heal them.’ But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. Truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

The following are some of the remaining references to the term ‘mystery’ in the New Testament.⁷

Romans 11:25, Lest you be wise in your own conceits, I want you to understand this mystery, brethren: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles come in.

Romans 16:25-26, Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed and through the prophetic writings.

I Corinthians 4:1, *This is* how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

I Corinthians 15:51-52 (cf. 13:2; 14:2), Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 15:52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.

Ephesians 1:9-10, 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 fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

Ephesians 3:3-4, how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. When you read this you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ.

Ephesians 5:32, This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

Ephesians 6:18-19, *To* that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, 6:19 and also for me, that utterance may be given me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel.

Colossians 1:25-27, of which I became a minister according to the divine office which was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, 1:26 the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now made manifest to his saints. 1:27 To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Colossians 2:2-3, that their hearts may be encouraged as they are knit together in love, to have all the riches of assured understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

⁷ For the OT use of the term ‘mystery’ see Daniel 2:18-19. 27-30, 47; 4:9. where the mystery is the revealing of the meaning of certain dreams. Only God reveals mysteries (2:21, 22, 28, 47). Thus a mystery—as in the NT—is a secret closed off until it is revealed when it ceases to be a mystery as such.

Colossians 4:3, Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving; 4:3 and pray for us also, (fiat God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison, 4:4 that I may make it clear, as I ought to speak

11 Thessalonians 2:8, For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way

I Timothy 3:8-9, Deacons likewise must be serious, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for gain; they must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.

I Timothy 3:16, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth.

Revelation 1:20, As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

Revelation 10:5-7, And the angel whom I saw standing on sea and land lifted up his right hand to heaven and swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there should be no more delay, but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God, as he announced to his servants the prophets, should be fulfilled.

Revelation 17:5, and on her forehead was written a name of mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of harlots and of earth's abominations."

Revelation 17:7, But the angel said to me, "Why marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that carries her".

The point of looking at these mysteries *is* to **ask whether we understand**, for example, 'the mystery of Christ', 'the mystery of God', 'the mystery of the gospel', 'the mystery of the plan'—and *so on*. *If* not, then may we truly preach the gospel? It *is* clear from I Corinthians 2:6-13 that the *Holy Spirit* searched the depths of God, and conveys what *is* in *His* depths to our depths,

Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written,

"What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him," God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what person knows a man's thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit.

How can the believing person have the truth within him *so* that he can truly proclaim the gospel? *To* understand we must see that Man has a secret heart (Psa. 51:6) which *is* also called 'the inward being' (cf. Prov. 4:23; Rom., 7:22; 11 Cor. 4:16). Hence the Psalmist cried, 'Out of the depths I cry to thee, O Lord!' (Psa. 130:1; cf. Psa. 69:2b). We saw above that God has 'depths'⁸ which may mean the things God has revealed in the gospel (cf. I Cor. 1:21-25), or 'the thoughts (the things) of God' ('*ta tou Theou*'-I Cor. 2:11). This links with I Chronicles 28:9 where David said, "And *you*, Solomon my son, know the God of your father, and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands every plan

⁸ Although it does not here concern us, yet we see that Satan also has 'depths' since Revelation 2:22 speaks of 'the depths of Satan', i.e. the things he thinks and knows, and seeks to teach, concerning himself

and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will cast you off for ever". This shows that what is in 'the deeps' of the heart is 'every plan and thought'. Thus in the deeps of God are 'every plan and thought' which are His.

Further to this we see in Proverbs 20:27 the strange statement, 'The spirit of man is the lamp of the LORD, searching all his innermost parts', which is very much like the idea of the good conscience in the New Testament (I Tim. 1:5), so that Proverbs 21:4—'Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, are sin'—is really speaking of an evil conscience (Heb. 10:2, 22).⁹ These two verses in Proverbs tell us that Man has an innermost being, and that some faculty in Man is as a spirit searching that man. In I Corinthians 2: 10-11 it is the Spirit of God which searches God's deeps, and it is the spirit of a person which searches that person's deeps. Doubtless Romans 9:1 is linked with all this—'I am speaking the truth in Christ, I am not lying; my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit', for conscience cannot be trusted except when it is in the Holy Spirit. A man's spirit can only be trusted to be 'the lamp of the Lord' when it is in the Holy Spirit.

The significance for all this is that 'the mystery of Christ', 'the mystery of God' and 'the mystery of the gospel' can only be known properly when what is in 'the deeps of God' is brought to be resident and operative in the 'the deeps of man' by the Holy Spirit Who is the Spirit of truth (John 15:26; 16:13-15; 1 John 5:7). This is borne out by I Corinthians 1:12- 13,

Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit.

Thus when Paul was visited by God (Gal. 1:15, 16)—'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 in¹⁰ me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles'—he was given an inner revelation of Christ by the Spirit. He claims (Gal. 1: 11), 'For 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'.

What we are saying in all this is that unless a person has a revelation of Jesus Christ which affects him—or her—in the inner man, then there can be no authentic preaching of the gospel. It could possibly be that as to form a person may preach the gospel, but as to reality it would lack the true *substance* unless the person were to have been gripped by Christ. This would then explain Paul's statement, 'The love of Christ constrains me,' and Peter's words, ' . . . 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'. Only one who has been in this way gripped by a revelation of Jesus Christ—i.e. by the gospel—can properly proclaim it. This is the one who can rightly claim to be 'a steward of the mysteries of God'.

⁹ Proverbs 20:27 is variously translated, 'The lamp of the Lord searches the spirit of a man. It searches out his innermost being' (NIV), 'Man's spirit is the lamp of Yahweh, searching his deepest self' (JB), 'The Lord shines into a man's very soul, searching out his innermost being' (NEB), 'The spirit of a man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the innermost parts of his being' (NASB).

¹⁰ Some translations use 'to me' (RSV) but most (NIV, JB,) follow the Greek 'in me' (en emoi).

The Gospel as Mystery Unveiled to the Willing Hearers

We saw above that Jesus told his disciples that only those that had an ear to hear would come to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Only those who have heard properly can truly proclaim. Having heard there is a sense in which they cannot not proclaim, e.g., ‘We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard’. As we have often said, ‘Proclamation is the spilling over of a heart that is too full to contain the gospel—the things which it has seen and heard, and which it must declare to sinful and lost humanity.’

The Things We Believe and Proclaim—The Substance of the Gospel

It is often said in these days that the message of the early church is outmoded. Various reasons are given the main one being that we live not in the first but the twentieth century, which is a truism. Along with this main reason are the assertions that as the years have passed new elements of information and helpful truth have appeared, and these necessarily moderate the apostolic message. ‘The matter of scientific discoveries and research make us go back to our original documents and teaching to look at afresh in the light of the new discoveries. Work done on the text of Scripture causes us to revise and renew our hermeneutics, and the demand is that we view the doctrines of salvation, of the church, and even of God afresh in the light of our modernity. There is, of course, much in these claims but reviewing does not mean we are committed to such modernity. The basic emotional, relational and theological needs of the human heart do not really change with the passage of history.

Yet, when all is said and done, we are confronted with the fact that the Scriptures and the apostles speak of Man before God, the matters of an eternal covenant, love, grace, holiness and, indeed, of eternal life. These things are not much linked with the passing of time, new discoveries, new doctrines, and new approaches to God and Man—approaches which are mainly anthropological and which arise out of our human empirico-scientific approach to the church and society. Church history has shown us that there are times when the apostolic message was all but lost, and the states of the church and its spirituality have greatly declined. Church history has also shown us there are remarkable awakenings of the churches to newness and freshness in, and because of, the apostolic gospel. We do not have the time or space in this essay to cover the events of this kind in the history of the church.

What we do say now is that the most powerful action and life of the church has been in evidence where there is a rediscovery of apostolic truth. This was particularly evident at the time of the Reformation, the days of the Puritans, the Great Awakening of the mid-eighteenth century, and the evangelical revivals of the mid-nineteenth century. ‘The nineteenth-twentieth centuries have also seen great movements in the proclamation of the gospel, especially in what has been called ‘The Modern Missionary Movement.’ To a great degree the *substance* of the gospel determines the *manner of* its proclamation. In the Acts, the Epistles and the Revelation claims are made in regard to the revelational nature of the gospel. The apostles insist they have been given the apostolic truth, and that it must be proclaimed in boldness and with clarity so that its issues are never in doubt. They present the gospel as ‘proclamation’ (*kerugma*) and

good news' (*euangelion*),¹¹ insisting that the gospel is a command, and that men and women ought to respond in repentance and faith and so obey this gospel. Certainly the nature of the gospel does not validate present methods of attraction and entertainment that modern evangelism espouses. We may speak of 'soft sell' and 'hard sell' but the gospel is not sold, but proclaimed. All thoughts of enlarging the church as a goal in itself are to be rejected. The Lord adds daily to the church such as are being saved (Acts 2:47; cf. 13:48).

Conclusion to Part I of our Study

We are today faced with a crumbling of churches, disintegration of doctrine, the breaking down of morality within the church community as well as in society generally. There is an incoming tide of various elements inimical to the gospel. None of this new in history although it is always a course of dismay in every generation when such movements are discerned. At the same time what we may see as judgements of God on the church are happenings which are bringing some members to renewed repentance and faith, whilst some are seeking to proclaim anew the apostolic word of the gospel, speaking it into our present situation. We will attend to this latter movement in our next Essay. Meanwhile we need to join the army of faithful prayer warriors and seek God's face for a whole revival of the truth, and for certainty as to the things we firmly believe and seek to proclaim.

¹¹ This is a rough division of the two elements—*kerugma* and *euangelion*, and these words deserve and will get—better treatment.

Things We Believe and Proclaim-II: Communicating the Truth

Communication is no Problem

It is not difficult for a person to communicate with another person or even a creature. Awareness of one another as creatures is universal. Body language, gestures, looks, movements are all ways of communication even where no words are uttered. To communicate fully what we wish to others to receive is another matter. In communication there is the one articulating and the other one hearing or receiving. What we seek to communicate may be mistaken by another, or understood, yet the receiver does not wish to receive. What a person wishes to communicate may not itself be worth receiving, or be thought desirable for reception. We have our ways of not receiving; our ways of insisting on thinking as we will. We have well-prepared defences against what we refuse to acknowledge. As Jesus said, 'He that has an ear to hear, let him hear'. We saw from Luke 8:4-21 that this is the case, the sum of which is that the true hearer of the gospel is one who obeys what he hears. Again, the word is not only proclaimed in order to have hearers of it respond in acceptance, but to have hearers of it reject it and so be hardened and come under judgement. Hence the quotation of Isaiah 6:9-10 in Matthew 13:14-15, in context of the parable of the sower.

We conclude, then, that communication as an intention and act of the proclaimer does not mean that he—or she—will be received, or, if some reception takes place that that the message will not be distorted in the transmission-receiving process. We take it that true proclamation is-in the ultimate—a matter of will, and that reception of that which is proclaimed is also a matter of the will.

God is Always About Proclamation

Scripture claims God to be ineffable, i.e. that He cannot be known by Man's attempts to know Him. Since He cannot be likened to any created thing or any artifact devised by humans, He cannot be known through human endeavor. The use of analogues cannot conduct its too personal or even noetic understanding of God. This is no cause for sorrow or frustration since God constantly proclaims Himself and His nature by the means of creation, His word (given to Man via human beings such as prophets), by theophanic manifestations, by celestial creatures, by covenant, by law, by conscience, by His Spirit, by His Son, by His people known as persons of faith or children of His family, but latterly called 'the church'.¹ If one wishes to know Him, then God—for His part—is always proclaiming. Romans 1: 18-32 informs us that man did not (does not) wish to know God, but has exchanged the knowledge of Him for the knowledge of

¹ For these media of revelation see *The Knowledge of God* by G. Bingham. (NCPI, 1985).

idols. Romans 1:28 says that because human beings do not wish to know God then His wrath is upon them. In the Old Testament both atheists and idolaters are ridiculed, because there is no excuse-God is always proclaiming albeit some of this is for the purpose of judging the human race.

God's Truth Known by all the Human Race

Romans 1: 18 says God's wrath is 'revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth'. Verse 19f. shows this 'holding back of righteousness' is deliberate in the face of *the evident knowledge of God given in creation*.² Thus 'suppressing' or 'holding down' of the truth is deliberate, for 1:28 says 'they did not see fit to acknowledge God' and 1:32 concludes, 'Though they know God's decree that those who such things deserve to die, they not only do them, but also approve those who practice them'. In 2:3, 15- 23 there are Jews who do the same evils and they certainly have the formal knowledge of the truth. Luke 12:46-47 speaks of the unworthy servant 'who knew his master's will'. John 3:19-21 speaks of that those who do the works of darkness and deliberately do not come to the light. They know of the light, but do not come *to* it. In 11 Thessalonians 2:10 Paul speaks of those who are to perish because 'they refuse to love the truth and so be saved'. Luke 11: 13 says, 'If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children . . .', meaning that the truth of giving is known to evil human beings. It may be argued that Man is *unconsciously* opposed to the truth but the quotations given by Paul in Romans 3:9-18 would appear to indicate otherwise. Two useful passage for close study are Romans 2:12-16 and I Timothy 1:8-11 where it seems probable that there is an incipient knowledge of the law of God in the hearts of all-however much that knowledge may be rejected or repudiated. Rejection of the Creator-God and the deliberate replacement of him by the human ego and its idols tells us that really there can be no 'honest' atheist.

If what we say here is true then we must never seek to teach our listeners that there is a God, nor try to develop 'God consciousness' as a deliberate technique, but we must proclaim the truth through the Holy Spirit who alone can convict of sin, righteousness and judgement (John 16:7- 11). That proclamation must be the gospel.

Cultures, Acculturation and Transcultural Proclamation

It is evident that we must take cognizance of cultures, and the cultural background of people to whom we speak.³ Biblically it would seem we need to think of at least four factors Put before us, (i) those—generally—of Acts 17:22-31 (cf. 14:15-18), (ii) In particular Acts 17:26-28, (iii) Romans 1: 19-25 and (iv) Genesis.

For the moment we must lay aside the argumentation of general and special revelations, and see that in '(i)'

² Note that 'the knowledge of God' is taken to be the truth of creation which creation articulates concerning God. In this sense it is the truth, for it is this 'truth of creation' which Man seeks to suppress or hold back by going contrary to it.

³ There are some Australian theologians who think "a should 'discover' the 'true Australian' and speak to him or her. When we ask, 'What is the typical Australian?' it is not easy to find that type, especially with our multi-cultural situation. Of course there is an Australian ethos but this does not mean it lacks a variety of types. Whenever we speak to culture as such we may well be understood, but the deeper question of what we communicate still confronts us.

Paul is pointing to God as the Creator of the universe, as the Creator-Father, Whose children we are and to the repentance that is required of ‘all men everywhere’.

In ‘(ii)’ we see that all nations spring from one man—Adam—and that the ‘allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation’—i.e. of all nations have been deliberately set beforehand with the intention that human beings should seek after God. This indicates that we have a *common humanity* no matter what our nation or culture may be⁴

‘(iii)’, points to the fact that humanity in general replaced the Creator with devised gods and idols, that is the objects of their worship changed from the ‘one, true, and living God’. We doubt not but that cultures are related to the deities. We also see that creation—i.e. things of creation—are worshipped over and against God Himself.

‘(iv)’ speaks of an event in history which brought division in the body of humanity by means of the confusion of tongues. This was to break the monolithic power of the human race, as it gathered to secularize⁵ creation in its favor over and against God.

All these elements were conducive to the establishment of cultures. Generally speaking cultures are rationalizations of deity, the environment, and the place of humanity in it. Some would see all cultures as expressions of the idolatry which replaced God in Man’s worship, and so have variant theologies, cosmologies and anthropologies. This may seem to be a simplistic estimate of culture, but it would be partly true. Even so, this does not make all cultures wholly false or evil, nor are elements of truth not be found amongst them, but the presentation of God, Man and the cosmos varies from the biblical one. Revelation 22:24-27 states (i) the kings of the earth will bring their glory into the Holy City, (ii) the glory and honour of the nation shall be brought into the City and (iii) nothing unclean shall enter into it. If this passage means cultural treasures will be brought into the city, then they will be pure ones cleansed of anything impure. Of course it may simply mean that the nations whom Christ has conquered will bring only pure elements of their cultures into the Holy City.

Can the Gospel be Proclaimed in All Cultures?

Jesus’ commission to preach to all nations and make them disciples, and his statement that the OT Scriptures had written that ‘repentance and remission of sins should be preached in name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem’ seems not to envisage the impossibility of proclaiming the news in different cultures. The distribution of the nations as in ‘(i)’ (above) seems to indicate much in favour of proclamation. The ontology of Man seems also to accord with this. The practical difficulties of language and culture have to be surmounted. Note that language and culture are intimately the one. The learning of another’s language and culture are obviously of great advantage in proclaiming the gospel, but are they indispensable? In Romans 10: 18-21 Paul asks whether the nations have not heard and then says that—as against Israel—the Gentiles have responded to the gospel. He seems to infer the gospel has gone throughout the world but whether only the known world in Europe and Asia we

⁴ Doubtless the age-old acculturation of niny years will have brought layers of customs and manners and ways of thinking which may be foreign to the gospel, but the basic common factors of humanity will be there, e.g. P.T. Forsyth’s statements that conscience is what makes Man Man, makes him one, and make him eternal’ and ‘that which goes deepest to the conscience goes widest to the world.’

⁵ When we say ‘secularise’ we do not mean that excluded religious systems. Idolatry is really a secularising force within the creation, in that it takes from the unique deity of God, and so distorts the meaning of creation. Idolatry is human rationalisation of God, Man and creation.

do not know.⁶ The historical point is that the gospel has been spoken into many cultures. Certainly there will always be linguistic difficulties but since there are ‘overlaps’ in knowledge of languages—some persons being multi-lingual, even the language problem is not insurmountable. Trade languages—by necessity—often exist in vast areas. Today SIL/Wycliffe and other missions are translating the Scriptures into many tongues, although translation *per se* does not necessarily mean the tribe will read the translation with understanding. Communication—to put it briefly—is still a ‘gut thing’.

Does God Communicate Apart from the Scriptures?

We saw from Proverbs 20:26 that ‘The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching his innermost parts’. The question is not ‘Can God communicate to people without the proclamation of the bible?’ but ‘Is God always communicating to people everywhere?’ We have no reason to think He is not for when Romans 10: 14-15 asks the question as to how people can hear without a preacher, and how can preachers preach unless they are sent, the context says ‘Their voice has gone out into all the earth’. It is belief in God which is the primary demand, and believing the gospel is the second⁷. Is it not possible that one cannot believe in God and yet not believe in His gospel. Men and women of faith have existed since Abel’s time, and long before the written gospel. The question is, ‘Does God convey the fact that He is the God of mercy and grace such as Abel knew and Cain denied, although he must have known it to be the case?’

We are often told by missionaries going into previously unvisited areas that ‘The Holy Spirit got there before us.’ Folk were ready for the gospel and somehow understood it quickly. Of course we cannot build a doctrine on these happenings, but they may reinforce the claim that somehow God communicates the gospel even prior to its eventual proclamation by the biblical word.

The Matter of Direct Communication

Given sufficient competency and skill to be able to verbalize the gospel to any given people, how is it that the proclaimer can communicate? In answer we may approach the matter from the principle of ‘deeps’ as set out in our previous paper. God has deeps; Man has deeps; Satan has deeps. The communication of the gospel is conveying to the deeps of Man from the deeps of God that which is the truth.⁸ What is necessary to be communicated of that which is in the deeps of God is already contained in Scripture. By this we do not mean the passage of noetic material to the minds of the hearers although we do not exclude that, either. We mean that the Holy Spirit first takes the truth—the gospel—and brings it to the heart of the proclaimer, who is then—through the power of the Spirit able to convey it to the depths of another fellow human creature. If the proclaimer does not—so to speak—have the gospel impregnated in his—or her

⁶ Some understand this passage with its reference to Psalm 19 to mean that the gospel has always been preached, that it is innate in the knowledge of God, especially since He has always been Creator-Redeemer. This is a view which needs full consideration.

⁷ The order in Acts 20:21 is ‘repentance to God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ’. James says that to believe in God is ‘to do well’, but then the devils also believe and tremble. Mere intellectual comprehension is not authentic belief in God.

⁸ We must continually keep in mind that ‘the god of this world’ seeks continually to blind the mind of unbelievers ‘to keep them from seeing the light of the glory of Christ’. Satan out of his deeps keeps deception working in the deeps of Man.

depths, then there is no way-apart from special grace-act of God-that the proclaimer can effectively proclaim. We will pursue this matter later, but a good example of the authentic communication of God's message can be seen in the case of Isaiah, especially in chapter 6. This is a paradigm for all proclamation. We will now consider it, along with some parallels of Isaiah's experience.

Some Paradigms of True Communication

(i) **Isaiah**—already a prophet—had a powerful vision of God in the temple (Isaiah 6:1-13), that is, a glorious theophany.⁹ His personal experience was that he understood his own uncleanness in the light of God's holiness. In intolerable agony, and sure lie was lost because he had seen God, he was relieved from this misery by the fiery coal taken from the altar of sacrifice and the seraphim pronounced, 'Behold, this [coal] has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin forgiven'. Whilst the experience of other believers in receiving such pardon and purification may be equalled in history, none surpasses it. Now the message of God's grace is-so to speak--burned into the prophet. When, then, God called for someone to go for Him the prophet replied urgently, 'Send me!' He now had the truth of God's deeps within his own deeps that he might take it to others and convey it to their deeps.

(ii) If we ask whether this is common to messengers of God the answer has to be, 'Yes!' **Jeremiah** fits this paradigm. At his call (1:1-19) Jeremiah is told,

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
and before you were born I consecrated you;
I appointed you to be a prophet to the nations.

When Jeremiah protested he was told,

Do not say, 'I am only a youth';
for to all to whom I send you you shall go,
and whatever I command you you shall speak,
be not afraid for I am with you to deliver you.

Then it was God put forth his hand and touch Jeremiah's mouth, and said, 'Behold, I have put my words in your mouth'. In 5:12 God says of the false messengers, 'The prophets will become wind; the word is not in them. Thus it shall be done to them!' He went on,

Therefore, thus says the Lord, the God of hosts:
'Because they have spoken this word,
behold, and making my words in your mouth a fire,
and this people wood, and the fire shall devour them.

The principle of the word being fire-especially in Jeremiah's mouth-is stated clearly in Jeremiah 23:29, 'Is not my word like fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer which breaks the rock in pieces.' 23:18-22 shows, virtually, that this word of God is

⁹ Some commentators on John 12:37-41 conclude that the passage refers to Isaiah 6 and so the statement, 'Isaiah said this because he saw his glory and spoke of him', to refer to Christ- as yet not in incarnate form.

the one spoken in ‘the council of the Lord’ (18) and ‘in my council’ (21)-an awesome thought! Jeremiah’ suffered deeply in the proclamation of that word and his experience is powerfully described in 20:7-18, during which Jeremiah says,

If I say, ‘I *will* not mention him,
or speak any more in his name,’
there is in my heart¹⁰ as it were *a burning fire*
shut *up* in my bones,
and I am weary with holding it in,
and I cannot.

(iii) The word is more powerful than Jeremiah: lie is compelled to speak it. So in Acts 4:20 the apostles told the Sanhedrin, ‘We cannot but speak what we have *seen* and *heard*.’ In the Old Testament there are many examples of a chosen prophet being called into God and given a revelation of Himself so that when sent out the prophet has—so to speak-‘God in his deeps as also is now in the deeps of God’. No doctrine of inspiration has any power apart from this reality.

(iv) In the New Testament, Paul is the powerful paradigm of a call which brings the deeps of God-i.e. the truth that is in the deeps of God-into him. Galatians 1: 11- 16 needs to be studied to understand this. He says lie received the gospel¹¹ through a revelation of Jesus Christ, which he later describes, ‘He [God] revealed His Son in me (*en emoi*)’. The ‘in me’ is important, because Paul-as Saul of Tarsus—had heard the Christians teaching the gospel, had imprisoned and doubtless talked with them. He would have heard their use of the O.T. and its relationship to the gospel of Jesus. It needed, then the appearance of Jesus as Lord on the road to Damascus, and the work of the Spirit in his heart also-along with the infilling of the Spirit, but climactic and processive—for the Son to be revealed in him, i.e. the gospel to be brought to the depths of Paul. It was from these depths that Paul ever spoke. His statements, ‘Christ lives in me’, and ‘Christ in you’, show that the presence of Christ, the word of God and the gospel were all of the one piece. The statement also that the Holy Spirit dwells in every believer tells us that the Spirit who reveals ‘the mysteries’¹²

Our Own Calling and the Word of God in Us-With its Fire

‘We are now confronted with the fact and question of our own ministry. Whilst we may not all have as overtly remarkable and demonstrable events of a ministerial call such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Paul and others experienced. yet in our depths every authentic call is just as remarkable and depthful as was theirs. It is an extraordinary matter to be called by God, however simply it may seemed to have happened. Time and again we need to ponder the callings of the men we have just named in order to see the fact of our call. We need also often to ponder Romans 10: 11-15,

¹⁰ NRSV has ‘then within me’. This is surely Jeremiah’s ‘deeps’.

¹¹ Cf. I Corinthians 15:1-3 Paul speaks about receiving the truth. In Galatians 1: 12 lie says lie did not receive it from man, but probably meant lie was not taught the gospel by a person. This (foes not mean lie did not know what the gospel was that the Christians believed, and which they had received through the apostles.

¹² See previous Study (Oct. 1992) on pages 6-7 ! for the nature of ‘the mysteries’

The scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him. For, "every one who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved."

But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news!"

Again, we need to look at the principle of Galatians 1:15-16a, 'But when lie who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in *order that I might preach him among the Gentiles,*' for our true conversion is *with a view to our calling to preach the gospel.* Nothing else matters. It is this which fills-i.e. should fill-our whole life. I Corinthians 9:15-26 tells of Paul's determination to let nothing come between him and his calling to preach the gospel. He dreaded 'being disqualified' and strove to keep 'the sacred fire' blazing in his heart.¹³ II Corinthians 4:7-12 speaks of the pain that fire caused in Paul's life,

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death **is at work in us, but life in you.**

The question is whether we are prepared for such ministry, and at such cost. What we have to keep in mind is that *we can convey nothing of what is in the depths of God—i.e. the gospel—if it is first not in our depths.* The word, by the Spirit, can alone be conveyed when that fire is burning. If personal ambition, desire for approval by men or fear of their disapproval; if our aim is to build a church by our gifts, to be a great preacher, to succeed in the eyes of others, and not to be thought to be fools by the gospel we preach, and if we avoid the scandal and foolishness of the Cross, then the fire will die. In its place we will seek to animate ourselves so that we appear to be men and women filled with the Spirit. It may even be that the audience to which we wish to speak would be evangelical, biblical and the like, and that we would wish to please them. Man—pleasing of any kind will quench the fire. We may seek our intellectual support from the best of old and modern writers and theologians, and we may even be brilliant and convincing with our apologetics but it will human fire, and will not bring cleansing, judgement and life, for it will not be the fire of the Holy Spirit.

¹³ Here see Charles Wesley's great hymn,

O Thou who camest from above,
The pure celestial fire to impart,
Kindle a flame of sacred love
On the mean altar of my heart.

There let it for thy glory burn
With inextinguishable blaze;
And trembling to its source return,
In humble prayer and fervent praise.

If we do not daily live in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ we will never—can never—speak from such fullness. It is as simple as that. It may be that the attrition of the years—the opposition to the centrality of the Cross, to the humiliating message of grace—has gradually worn us down. Our confidence may have been eroded. We may have been able to hold out against the opposition; we have ceased to carry about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus. We have failed to live in the secret place of the Most High. We have been busier in our actions than we have been at the seat of mercy. We have given away to the accusations of the enemy—Satan and Man. So the fire has died. We are then in need of ‘another gospel’—one in which the strong reality of grace for sinful Man has been tempered. We then need methods and systems to shore up our churches and make them shine brightly, and so justify us as pastors and leaders.

Timothy was told to ‘fan into a flame the gift that God gave you when I laid my hands on you’ (11 Tim. 1:6, JB). We may take comfort from the fact that Paul had to buffet his body and keep it in subjection, that he had ‘fighting’s without and fears within’ and that he lived in self exhortation to keep that fire blazing. We may also be glad that the Father will never cease to chastise us, and the Son—our Lord—who is the Lord of the church will never cease to rebuke and correct. We can take comfort from the support and exhortation of the Holy Spirit resident within us, and the very fire of God himself. We can know that constant fire and wonder of His love if we will, and then that love will break through our trembling and inadequate utterances. When we are ‘not many mighty, not many noble’ then the power of the gospel, will manifest itself in a undeniable forest—and prairie fire, or-to change the figure—in torrents of living water’ which will burst from us.

Taking Courage to Preach Faithfully

We have a great treasury of history, from the day of Pentecost until now. We are compassed about with many witnesses to the faith. We have the apostles and proclaimers of the New Testament period, the encouragement of the great prophecy of Revelation, and two thousand years of grand preachers, powerful proclaimers, simple evangelists, faithful pastors, willing martyrs and the certainty that at the end He will say, ‘Well done, you good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Lord’. It will be worth the discerning of what is good and evil in society, in life and ministry, and within ourselves, and holding out for the truth only. It will also be worth holding out against the temptation to succeed, to be acknowledged, to be someone. It will be worth bearing the heat and burden of the day. It will be a grand eschatological occasion when sinners redeemed through our proclamation and those who required our pastoral ministry welcome us into eternal habitations. It is then we will realize fully that ‘our light affliction is but for a moment and has prepared us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison’.

The Uniqueness of Christ for Proclamation

The Need To Understand the Uniqueness of Christ Today

In Australia there have been vast changes in our society over the past twenty-five years or so. We now have a multi-cultural society, and this embraces many religions which we never dreamed would set foot in our country. 'Mere has been a mosque in Adelaide since the days of the Afghan camel-drivers. Now there are mosques being built everywhere, Hindu temples, and other places of worship. Migrants' children now speak as Australians, and wish to share their faith and culture with others as they grow to adulthood. People who have come up through the church, and whose forebears have been Christians for many generations, are listening to those of other religions or hear the Christian faith being called into question. The religious tolerance that is abroad has led many to believe religions are all ways to God and even to heaven. For a long time it has been mooted that we can learn from other faiths, and some say that it is a conceit to think Christianity is the exclusive way to God. These are the things we face now in pastoral ministry and will increasingly do so.

In the late-twenties and early-thirties the liberalism regarding the Christian faith and other religions was so affecting the missionary movement that a well-known missionary statesman named Robert R. Speer wrote a book *The Finality of Christ*. He wrote over 60 books but this one stands unique amongst his others and brought evangelical sense into the debate and in that era helped to turn the tide in favour of increased missionary activity. Speer was for 46 years the Secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions in the USA. He also lectured at Princeton College for 11 years. His book is still most moving when read today.

Of course we do not only meet liberalism in regard to the claim of Christ to be exclusively the way to the Father and to be, himself, the giver of salvation and eternal life. We face modern humanism, atheism, and a rejection of the Scriptures being the final present authority of Man. We face the idolatries of a consumer age. We fight the angers many have over unfortunate relationships with parents who professed to be godly, and also the turning away from, the churches by those seeking pleasure, fulfilling of ambition, or lethargy in regard to the things of God.

We ask ourselves to what point do we really proclaim the gospel if we do not understand the uniqueness of Christ. It is easy for us to point how much better a man was Jesus than Mahomet, Buddha and Confucius, but do we realise fully the uniqueness of Jesus. That he was God incarnate is a stunning claim, and a remarkable fact. That he was truly a man and not a docetic Christ or 'God in a skin' is what the world needs to see. Perhaps it is more conscious of what he was than we might believe, but every believer needs to be urgent with telling the world of this unique Person. His offices as Son of Man, Messiah, Davidic King, the Righteous Branch, the Suffering Servant-and the like-are claims never made for any other human. His

being the Son of God, and through his life, death, resurrection and ascension being acclaimed Lord over all creation must be of immense significance if it be true. That it is the true is the conviction of true proclaimers. This is what they proclaim. The knowledge that these things are so to possess the preacher that he cannot withhold them and they are his food day and night, they are the drive of his spirit, they are the continuing thoughts of his mind.

We have to face the fact that we who are pastors constantly face the danger of professionalism, in which case the word of God loses much of its dynamic: indeed, if not all of it! We are also tempted to be ambitious, to develop a reputation, to build our own churches and achieve recognition and acceptance. We are in danger of Jesus being our subject as Mahomet is the subject of the mullahs of Islam, or Ram the subject of Hindu theologians. For a moment let us ask ourselves how gripped we are by Christ, and whether he means *everything* to us. This is not a mindless question for if he means all to us then the Father and the Holy Spirit will have that part of our spirits as possessed his.

Let us look at the offices of Christ we have mentioned above, and then see them in the light of Newton's hymn, 'How Sweet the Sound of Jesu's Name'.

Jesus, my Shepherd, Husband, Friend,
My prophet, Priest, and King;
My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,
Accept the praise I bring.

It would be easy to gather together elements of the New Testament such as Jesus' claim to be uniquely and exclusively the Way to the Father, **the Truth of the Father**, and the Life of the Father, to be one with the Father, to have been uniquely anointed with the Spirit. We could hear Paul's statement of the things he received as primary importance, 'that Christ died for our sins in Accordance with the Scriptures, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures', and then ask ourselves whether these things are of primary importance to us. When we hear Peter's statement to the Sanhedrin regarding Jesus, 'And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.' If then we add Paul's simple but remarkable statement of I Timothy 3:16,

Great indeed, we confess,
is the mystery of our religion:
He was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated in the Spirit,
seen by angels,
preached among the nations,
believed on in the world,
taken up in glory,

then we are in wonderment, and our passion for Christ is such that we cannot withhold from preaching him. With this revelation of Christ we 'cannot but tell the things which we have seen and heard'.

Proclamatory and Pastoral Ministry Are the One

As we will see, pastoral ministry mainly springs from the preaching of the Scriptures. Romans 10: 17 says it is ‘the word of Jesus Christ’ that we preach. We have seen in past studies that whatever men and women are confronted with in society—especially through the media—is where their minds are kept. Today with all our Current Affair Programs, our TV. Discussion panels and our talk-back radio sessions certain topical issues are kept alive, and if we do not withdraw from much of this we will be influenced and even conditioned by it.

For the early church the need to preach was urgent. This had ever been the case with the prophets of the Old Testament. The extraordinary event of the Incarnation never ceases to grip the mind of the true person of God. The preaching brings churches into being and then nourishes them, bringing their members to maturity in all areas of their lives.

In this paper we will primarily deal with the pastoral ministry in the light of the uniqueness of Jesus, remembering that all the issues of community, of life, of death, of vocation in this world, of obedience to Christ as Lord, being led by the Spirit, and moving towards eternity are issues our congregations ask us about and need to know in order to live in this world whilst also being members of the Kingdom of God. Jesus’ uniqueness does not place him in a sphere away from mankind. He is the one at its very heart. Once-along with his Father-its Creator, he is now its Saviour and Lord. We need to know him in all his offices, and in all present and eschatological operations and works.

Pastoral Ministry in the Light of the Uniqueness of Jesus

In one way or another all pastoral ministry pivots on the matter of the family. Biblically all humanity is a family within the context of the one primal couple (Acts 17:26; Rom. 5:12ff.; I Cor. 15:21-22; cf. Gen. 11:1-9). Societally we are all one, though sinfulness brings divisions within human relationships. Modern therapies take into account the problems encountered in familial relationships in the face of community, national and international societies. In biblical and non-biblical therapies marital, parental, familial and other societal interactions are taken into account.

Christianity is a Trinitarian faith, assuming the Holy Family or Society of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Man, that is, humanity composed of the man-women entity, derives its relational being and praxis from the Triune Godhead. Man is made in the image of God—the Triune God—and is, and carries, the *Imago Dei*. This image posits human vocation and responsibility in fulfilling the creational mandate to have the stewardship and leadership of creation. The second mandate is for those of the redeemed family: it is to proclaim the saving grace of God to all the world. The Christian person is occupied with both mandates. In all of this we are faced with the matter of the Incarnation. Redemption calls for incarnation in the essential order of things, especially with a view to the Atonement. ‘The Incarnation of the Son does not only bring the saving act of God to persons within the world but is concerned with the following,

- (i) The revelation is made of God as **Father, both archetypal and fontal**, so that He as Father is love¹. ‘The Father takes the initiative in Creation, Redemption and the ultimate Renewal (Regeneration) of all things. All familyhood and relational living stems from and depends upon this Fatherhood. Man—the man-woman entity—created in the image of God, has an ontological need and thrust for true Fatherhood, and is emotionally and relationally fulfilled when this comes to him or her through the revelation of the Father by Jesus Christ, especially in the obedience of the Son in the Incarnation and the Atonement in which all three Members of the Godhead participate.
- (ii) The revelation of God as Father comes through the Son who is the ‘visible expression of the invisible God’. His *kenosis* reveals his love for humanity and the creation in the intention of salvation, for he, himself, is the true [unique] Son, as man. Ontological filiation is revealed by him demonstrating true father-son relationships for humanity (John 1:14, 18; 5:17ff, etc). He is also uniquely the covenant mediator, and as such is its continuing high-priest and in its worship ‘the servant in the sanctuary’ (Heb. 9:15, 7:22; 7:26; 8:2). In him is the new humanity, for he is the New Man (Eph. 2:15; cf. I Cor. 15:22; Col. 2:9). All in Christ are new creations (11 Cor. 5:17). This new humanity—as the new *covenantal* community—is the true family of God. It is growing towards its glorification as the ultimate family—kingdom of priest unto God and the new creation. Each member of the new humanity is daily being ‘renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator’. It is the community of worship.
- (iii) Jesus is the true man, the true human person, the unique one. If we wish to know what is Man—even beyond all the anthropological details the Scriptures combine to give us—then we find who Man is in the unique person of Jesus of Nazareth, son of Mary. We keep in mind that he was ‘made in the likeness of sinful flesh’², ‘yet without sin’. His unique humanity is not super-humanity but simply true humanity. We can observe for our own understanding and practice what he was, said and did for our own new way of life, especially in the relational realm. He disclosed that true life is ‘knowing the Father and the Son’ (John 17:3; 1 John 5:20), i.e. it is life that derives from relationships and is lived in the same, that is, ‘life is a matter of relationships’.
- (iv) In Christ as the ontological Son, the ontological Brother and the ontological Husband, all familial relations are revealed, and the praxis of Family is recreated or regenerated. This Son is not the Father nor is he love of *himself*, but is ‘the Son of His love’, and love alone explains the nature of Divine [functional] hierarchy (Eph. 4:6: cf. I Cor. 11:3). Christ is also the ontological Lord of the new community of faith. His atonement has won victory over all enemies of humanity by the taking of their guilts, and has set them in relational and

¹ We note that in the context of I John 4:8, 16 the statement ‘God is love,’ really means ‘the Father is love’, since God As love sends His Son into the world. The New Testament never speaks of the Son as love, nor the Spirit as love. The Son is ‘the Son of his love’ and the Spirit is the Spirit of love (Rom. 5:5; 15:30, etc.).

² Not in the *likeness* of flesh but in the likeness of sinful flesh; not in the likeness of flesh, but in actual flesh. ‘Likeness of sinful flesh’ must mean more than just being flesh; it must mean something like ‘taking upon him the weaknesses that come from Man having sinned, being *like* any person descended from the primal couple, ‘yet without sin’. (cf. Romans 8:1-3; Heb. 2:17; 4:15; 7:26.

functional liberty. Under continuing and indispensable grace the new relationships can obtain within the family of the church and its constituent families. The ontological order of 'family' is not confined to the redeemed community but the witness of the church gives grounds for hope for all society. As Son, Husband and Brother the Son incorporates true familial relationships under the Father.

- (v) The Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Son and brings revelation of the nature of the Holy Family and the human family which comes from the *Imago Dei*. The Spirit brings to believing persons adoption into God's Fatherhood³, and as the Spirit of love, unity and fellowship enables members of the community of Christ to live in true familial relationships. Under grace the gift of *agape* which opposes and displaces or regenerates *eros is* ministered by the Spirit continually⁴. This is much the same as saying the benefits of the Atonement, the Resurrection, Ascension and Session are continually mediated by the Spirit, who, with the Son is constantly in intercession for the saints and the agent in all Christian worship.
- (vi) the uniqueness of Jesus consists in the purpose and nature of his Incarnation. His *kenosis* was not an emptying of [his] deity but a revelation of the true nature of the Godhead, especially in the action of servanthood, which was redemption and the creation of the new order. Thus God is revealed as love, and love is the primary factor in all pastoral ministry, in all relational and vocational living.

It is upon all these things we base our praxis of marital and familial life and so of pastoral ministry.

The Praxis of Marriage and Family

If we assume that there was a fall of humanity as in Genesis three, and if we recognise a change in relationships between God and the primal couple, as also between themselves, and if we see a human person's relationship to his or her own self altered by original sin, then we have a key to the problems human beings have maritally, familially and societally—a problem Paul has explained and worked out in Romans 1:18-32. Jesus himself had a realistic view of fallen humanity (John 2: 23-25; Mark 7:2-23) and Matthew 19:8 and Matthew 7:11 gives us the mind of Jesus towards sinful humanity—the recognition of where it is now with knowledge of the ontological norm.

- (i) Familial relationships commence with coming to the Father by the Son (John 14: 16; Heb. 2: 10) and the Spirit (Gal. 4:4-6; Rom. 8:14-17). Israel had this adoption as a gift (Rom. 9:4; cf. Deut. 14: 1; Hosea 2: 10:11: 1, etc.), and adoption is a gift to the new covenant community of Christ. Sonship is for all—non-gendered and

³ In baptism the candidate puts on Christ. Christ is the Son and the sons are in the Son. Thus the Son inducts them into relationship with the Triune Godhead, since they are baptised into the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. From this point every believer dwells in God and God dwells in him/her.

⁴ According to Anders Nygren and Karl Barth the word *eros* is used to describe not merely sexual love but love of a high order. Even so, *eros* is a love that gives in order to get, but *agape* is love that gives without seeking a return other than the betterment of its object. All forms of love must have had their origin in *agape* when Man was unfallen. Technically *eros* is not regenerated, but Man is and so his former *eros* is replaced by *agape*. Sexual love often called *eros* is pure *agape* when the love of God comes to Man through redemption.

eschatological⁵—and so the relations between parents and children is established through the uniqueness of Jesus as *the* Son. Brother- sister-hood is also established by Christ as the archetypal, fontal Brother. This brother-sister relationship is essential for the new Family and its constituent families.

- (ii) 'The uniqueness of Jesus helps us in the matter of marital relationships, especially as they have been marred by the fall. Christ is uniquely Husband, the archetypal, fontal Husband from which comes the ectypal husband. God was Husband to Israel (Isa. 54:5-6; Jer. 31:31; Ezek. ch. 16; Hos. 2:19), and the Son is Husband to the church. Being Husband cannot obtain apart from the Wife-the church-and so the Husband can only be understood in the light of the Wife and the Wife in the light of the Husband. Such is a 'mystery' one of the reasons being that the Husband-Wife matter is eschatological, and we must read back from it to the present as we must also bring forward our understand of man-wife from the unfallen primal created pair. Together we can form a paradigm for present marital relationships provided they are all seen as *being under grace*, and our praxis is a grace *one*.⁶ The material of Ephesians 5:21-32 shows us the practical pattern of the relationships and practice of the husband and wife when they penetrate this 'mystery'. Revelation 19:6-9, 21:1-21 show the nature of the archetypal marriage and its ongoing relationship and praxis. All of this understanding and its application cannot be worked out apart from love- agape. This love must be manifested by those exercising pastoral ministry.
- (iii) Relationships within the community of Christ arise out of the Father, the Son and the Spirit in their tri-unity. As we have seen, it is through the Son first and then through the Spirit that we are brought into these. Paramount is the gift of the forgiveness of all sins through the Atonement. Jesus had a unique authority to forgive sins, but this was sealed via the Atonement. Forgiveness of sins brings the revelation of God's love and so love comes to us by the Spirit (Rom. 5:5). Forgiveness of sins is the most difficult of all doctrines to teach but perhaps the most dynamic. The form of it and not the *substance* seems to get to people, and the reality of forgiveness evades them. God's forgiveness-when received-heals human relationships with God and others, thus dealing with the guilts which divide the people from God and from one another. Being forgiven brings forgiveness and clearance of old guilts, angers, resentments, hurts wounds, and establishes relationships in a new way. This happened *par excellence* at Pentecost where the community was transformed by the revelation of Jesus through the Spirit (cf. John 15:12-15). Along with forgiveness and closely related to it is justification by grace, through faith. This clears humanity of guilt in the face of law. This frees the human spirit from the guilt-driven necessity for self-justification in all situations. Once justified, the person never again has to justify himself or herself. Forgiveness and justification wrought by Jesus emancipate his people into relational and vocational liberty.

⁵ The New Testament speaks of 'the spirit of sonship', 'the liberty of the children of God', and of Christ being 'the first-born among many brethren'-all of which are eschatological.

⁶ In a sinful world we need grace to live as closely as possible to what is authentic, that is, ontological. Reference to ontology may be helpful but can drive us by a tyrannical perfectionism. Generally speaking we live in devised systems, systems conditioned by grace, so that the conscience does not become a tyrant, yet we can remain loyal to what is authentic.

(iv) The drive, constraint and motivation for all living is the triad of faith, hope and love. This the pastor must see very clearly. **None of the triad works** apart from the other two. Jesus as Messiah is the Eschatological Man—the New Humanity. He gives hope for the future. Marriage is a **prophetic foretaste** and sign of the Eschatological Marriage of the Bride and the Lamb. In the New Man all now by hope participate in ultimate glorification and so live in hope. In Messiah the plan and counsel of God will be fulfilled of the unification, reconciliation and filling up of all things. Relationships cannot exist without hope, any more than without love which ‘believes all things’ and ‘hopes all things’. This is a valuable pastoral insight. All ethical living is by faith, hope and love, as also is all worship.

The Application of the Uniqueness of Jesus to the Relational Situation

There is no pastoral ministry without proclamation of the word. It is always ‘the word of Christ’ or ‘the preaching of Christ’ (Rom. 10:17), ‘the word which he sent to Israel, preaching good news by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), the word which was proclaimed . . .’ It is out of this proclaimed word that all that Jesus wrought comes to the believing hearer. In practice most pastoral ministry arises from this proclamation of ‘the mystery of Christ, ‘the mystery of the gospel’, the mystery of godliness’. Pastors are ‘stewards of the mysteries of God’ and knowledge of these is essential to proper living. Members of the community are moved by the liberating word. Often they come to the pastor and inquire further, bringing their human problems-relational and vocational. The theology of the unique Jesus has then to be explained and applied. The adverse image of God which most have, and from which relational difficulties arise, has to be changed by revelation through the ‘the word of Christ’ of the Father as Father, and as the Father of love, and the Father who is love. The parental images will then change, and with them the marital images and the familial images. When forgiveness comes into all these relation and self-justificatory techniques are dropped then marital and familial relationships know emancipation from hurt, resentment, pride, anger and hate. The knowledge of the Atonement where the Servant Jesus ‘bore our griefs and carried our sorrows’ and where ‘by his stripes we were healed’ will bring the untangling of complicated relationships and the healing of the old wounds.

All true pastors know the church—the local community of Christ—to be *the* healing community. There is life in its dynamics of worship, unity, fellowship and love. It is a community under grace for it needs grace. Faulty as it is, its core is a healthy one and its therapy the highest the pastor and people can hope for in a sinful world. ‘Great grace’ is always upon this community (Acts 4:33) and the pastor cannot minister apart from it. All person -to-person ministry is lacking where there is no community context. The community of Christ is therapeutic because of its love and its worship, all of which is by means of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion: the Uniqueness of Jesus the Basis of all Pastoral Ministry

Inadequately as the above has been spelt out, we can see that but for the Incarnation the people of God and the children of His family⁷ would have lacked the ministry of the

⁷ 1 John 3:10-11 indicates that the children (family) of God has always obtained, at least from the time of Abel. Likewise Hebrews 11:4ff. indicates that from the time of Abel the people of faith, i.e. the people of God, have always obtained. Even so, the great covenantal community lacked full revelation of God’s Fatherhood, Christ’s Sonship, Brotherhood and Husbandhood and so the immediacy and heightened intimacy that came with

word and the sacraments, and the pastoral ministry which can be exercised today. The unique Jesus, with his salvific victory and his revelation of God as Father has brought the new community into being, that community which is the reflection and expression of the Divine Society the Triune God. The wonder is that the very relations that obtain in the Godhead are the source of all human relationships and so set their modes. This we would never had known but for the ministry of the unique man, Jesus. The eschatological outcome means that ultimately all the people of God will be inducted into the mystery of the Triune Society and will **be in fellowship with the** Godhead, and partakers in the Divine nature, even beyond the present fellowship they have with the Father and the Son, through the Spirit. At the present time our lives are hid with Christ in God, but 'When Christ who is our life appears, then shall we appear with him in glory'. This is the greatest insight and most powerful of all pastoral applications

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