



New Creation Teaching Ministry

PASTOR'S MONDAY STUDY GROUP NOTES

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The Doctrine and Power of Justification

Introduction: The Personal and Pastoral Approach to Justification

When we ask ourselves as persons, ‘What does justification mean to me?’ then the answers must be useful in discerning our understanding of the teaching. When, as pastors, we ask to what degree we teach this, and to what degree do the people of the congregations understand and appreciate justification, then it certainly tells us where we all are in regard to the power and effectiveness of our proclamation and the life of the congregation. Perhaps the strongest criterion of assessing where we are in life is our reception, response and living in the good of justification. Lacking this both persons and congregations are a long way from grace.

The Joy of Justification

It is an interesting fact of history that the doctrine of justification has, in one way or another, been argued over, perhaps more than any other doctrine. Today that controversy lies almost silent, as though it were virtually dead. It is true that we continue to argue about the nature of grace and the innate ability of the human will to make its response to the gospel, but justification seems to be shrugged off as a ‘mere forensic matter’, that is as a complicated legal argument that is better left alone. This shallow view of the theme has left us with a century of guilt and all its attendant sufferings and sorrow along with its sins and crimes. No less in this age do human beings try to justify themselves than in any other age. We are fairly ignorant of the true ways in which to deal with guilt.

The discovery—or re-discovery—in any age, of the truth and dynamics of justification has brought liberation of the human spirit. No one can assess how much time in our lives is occupied in justifying ourselves before God, others, and our own selves. The sheer joy of release from guilt, and the liberating power to live full lives is why we must again examine the Pauline doctrine of justification, especially as it is found in this Epistle.

The doctrine of justification can be said to have changed the world of the apostolic days and then the face of Europe from the time of the Reformers, and changes those situations where it is proclaimed clearly. What we are aiming to do is to understand Paul’s teaching on the subject. We find the doctrine set out patiently and fully in the Epistle to Romans but also clearly in the Epistle to the Galatians, and of course there are references to it in others of his Epistles. It is most evidently the basis for all his theological developments such as sanctification, and glorification. It is the

Epistle to the Romans which explores such elements. Whilst we will not confine ourselves to this Epistle we will mainly follow its argument.

Justification and Law

Justification has often been called a forensic or legal matter, and to some extent that is the case, though not wholly. Critics of Paul's doctrine have called it 'merely forensic' meaning that it is a matter more of legality rather than of the substance of heart and life transforming power. We shall see this is but a shallow view of the great Pauline teaching. What is most clear is that justification and law are inseparably linked. For the faithful Jew law figured very largely in his thinking, and indeed in all his life. Even so, it is a mistake to think that Paul had ever believed a person could be justified by works of the law of Israel, the law accredited to Moses¹.

It may be a little difficult to follow all the threads in at least the first eight chapters of this Epistle, for there is really none of these chapters in which the matter of law is not mentioned. A superficial reading of the text may miss this fact. We will find ourselves, time and again, referring to the law, as we seek to understand Paul references to justification by grace and by faith.

The Facts of Law and Judgement

Another factor linked with with law² and justification is that of judgement, and Paul certainly opens up these closely related elements. Law presupposes a judge and a judge presupposes judgement. Law would have no terrors if it did not relate to God's wrath upon those who disobey law. This is borne out by many passages in the first eight chapters. Justification has no meaning if it is not a declaration of acquittal from the guilt of the law, and the guilt of the law is directly related to judgement (cf. I 32; 2:12–16; 3:3:19–20).

The Meaning of Justification

If we were to trace the verb 'to justify' (Heb. *sadaq*) in the Old Testament, and in the New Testament (*dikaoo*) we would see it in its legal sense as 'to acquit' or 'to declare righteous' as against 'to judge' in the sense of 'to condemn'. This use can be seen in Deuteronomy 25:1–2,

If there is a dispute between men, and they come into court, and the judges decide between them, acquitting the innocent and condemning the guilty, then if the guilty man deserves to be beaten, the judge shall cause him to lie down and be beaten in his presence with a number of stripes in proportion to his offense,

and again in Romans 8:33, 'Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.' Abraham called God 'The judge of all the earth' (Gen. 18:25) and this is borne out by numerous references. He judges and condemns, or He judges and acquits.

¹ It is clear from Paul's reasoning in passages such as 1:18–32;2:12–16; 3:19f.;7:1–6, 8–12, 222; 8:2—amongst other passages—that the law is a constant point of reference for Paul in his argument for justification, and indeed for all his teaching.

² We will later be doing our next paper on 'Justification and the Law of God'.

That is, He condemns or justifies. He does this on the basis that he is the Law-giver, and the only one Who is competent to judge since this is His prerogative. We will see that He has wrath³ when His law is broken, and that His wrath issues in judgement (cf. Psalm 7:11; Isa. 5:16; 10:22; Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:5). To be justified before God, then, is no little thing. It means ‘there is no condemnation’ (Rom. 8:1) from Him to him who has faith in His grace.

Doubtless the meaning of any prominent word in the New Testament relates to its meaning or meanings in the Old Testament, especially if the Greek translation (the LXX) conveys its central meaning to the New Testament. In this essay we are not seeking to do a word study of the terms ‘just’, ‘righteous’, ‘justify’, ‘acquit’ and ‘vindicate’—all of which are linked and really the one. Rather, we are concerned to come directly to the New Testament use of justify and in particular to Paul’s use of it in Romans. In this Epistle Paul uses the verb almost exclusively to mean ‘to declare righteous’, i.e. to acquit of the charge of sin, and declare the accused as though he—or she—were innocent before the law. It does not mean that a person is innately righteous or even righteous in actions, but that so far as the law is concerned the accused person is righteous, i.e. has not anything to answer before the law. The implications of this declaration are many and are wonderful but we will not here pause to examine them.

Justification and the Universality of Sin

If we accept the biblical fact of the universality of God’s law⁴, then Paul’s statement of Romans 3:19, ‘Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world held accountable to God’ means the whole world is accountable to God where it has broken Divine, that is, universal law. In Romans 1:18–3:19 Paul has set out to show firstly that the Gentiles, and secondly that the Jews have all sinned. Hence he concludes in 3:23, ‘All have sinned and come short of the glory of God’. In Romans 5:12–21 he speaks in the universality of original sin, that is, of the sin of Adam. He says, ‘Therefore as sin entered into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned’ he does not mean the same thing as he does in 3:23. In 3:23 it is a fact of human existence that every person has sinned. In 5:12 it is that the world of humanity was in the loins of Adam—so to speak—and when he sinned they sinned. This is the solidary nature of humanity—all are in Adam, and all did sin with him in his sin. Paul, then, has argued in two ways for the universality of sin. Indeed, his Epistle proceeds on this principle. If all have sinned, then all will come under judgement, and since none can excuse himself—or herself—from the accusation all must be condemned. The power of justification lies in the fact that God justifies sinners who come to believe in Him.

We may now proceed with Paul’s argument regarding justification.

³ We will later be doing a paper on the ‘The Wrath of God’ i.

⁴ It can scarcely be denied that all cultures have law, but many do not accept the universality of a Divine law. Whilst Paul’s view of law is that it is universal, many would deny this. Romans 3:19–23 is part of Paul’s argument for the universal nature of God’s law. Here we are distinguishing between any culture having its laws, and the basic principle of law. Wherever there is law there will be an endeavour to justify oneself by observance of it. Even if a person is opposed to the law that obtains he will have a law of justifying himself even of it by vice and not virtue: so curious is the conscience driven by guilt or a sense of failure.

Paul's Teaching on Justification in the Epistle to the Romans

At the beginning of his Letter Paul speaks of his obligation and eagerness to preach the Gospel at Rome. Rome holds no awe or terror for him for he believes his message to be the power of God. In 1:16–17 he states,

For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live'.

For Paul, here, 'He who is righteous by faith shall live', is a quotation from Habakkuk 2:14 which means, 'He who is declared righteous by faith shall live'. In verse he has said that the gospel is God's power for everyone who has faith. In this way he commences his doctrine of justification by faith. In verse 18 he commences with the conjunction 'for', showing he is continuing his argument from the previous verses about the gospel and its power to save. In fact he is arguing from 1:18 to 3:19 the doctrine of the universality of sin. It would seem that 1:18–32 is such an argument, but that his Jewish readers may think he is only writing of the Gentiles⁵ as sinners. Hence Paul goes on in 2:1–3:23 to argue that Jews are included in the category of sinners.

It is in 3:19–20 that Paul shows the impossibility of sinners justifying themselves by works of the law. Some Jews may have admitted they were sinners, and yet have believed that by works of the law they could be justified. Later, in 10:2 Paul says of such, 'For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God [God justifying believing sinners], and seeking to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit to God's righteousness'. As we have noted justification by works of the law was not a doctrine of the Old Testament, but one developed by some in Israel. It is certainly not a Christian doctrine, but is held by many who call themselves Christians.

The key passage regarding justification is 3:21–31,

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

Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On the principle of works? No, but on the principle of faith. For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of their faith and the uncircumcised through their faith. Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

This passage is the *locus classicus* of justification. If we look at the detailed commentary we can follow it through. Here we simply need to see its general sense. Paul's argument is that there are two kinds of righteousness of God, the first being shown by the law and the second not being shown by the law but attested by it, as also

⁵ The word 'Gentiles' simply means 'nations' (*ethnoi*), but Jews used the term to designate non-Jewish people, and in fact all people outside of God. In Galatians 2:15 Paul narrows it down to the exclusive thought some Jews had that 'We ourselves, who are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners'. It could not have meant that Jews never sinned, but that the Gentiles were outside the covenant, and did not belong to God and were idolaters.

by the prophets. The righteousness shown by the law is what those under law understood, namely that God is righteous and makes demands of His people consistent with that law. It may well be argued that this is law which has been since creation, and is the ways of living in in creation, in conformity with its nature. In practice. The second kind of righteousness Paul refers to is is not *the* righteousness of God but *a* righteousness which is His, namely the righteousness whereby He acquits sinners on the grounds of Christ's propitiatory suffering for them. Thus justification is God's gift of grace given to sinners who believe God, believe in His Son and believe in the effectiveness of Christ's propitiatory sacrifice for them.

The self-justifying Jew would be shocked that God would justify Jews by their faith, and Gentiles through their faith. He would see it as undermining the law. 'No!' says Paul, 'Far from undermining the law it upholds it.' How? Because all the legal demands of the law are met in Christ's propitiating sacrifice. Apart from that sacrifice no human being could ever satisfy the judgemental demands of the law. Now these have all been met. Moreover, as Paul had previously said, the law and the prophets testified to this justifying righteousness of God. The law had never said a person could be justified by works of the law. Indeed, its sacrifices were there for the purposes of forgiving the penitent offerer.

We could argue thus, but there is no need for that. Paul's argument was that God 'justifies the ungodly' (4:5). This was not just an edict of God, but was based on the propitiation He, Himself, set forth in Christ (3:24). In passing we can see that had Paul not proved the universality of sin justification would have no point. Also we must see that justification is primarily by grace and then by faith. Faith apprehends what the work of grace which God had initiated. Justification is available for all as a gift of God.

Paul's Continued Exposition Regarding Justification by Faith

In Chapter Four, verses 1–25 Paul shows that justification was never by works of the law, but by grace. He quotes Abraham as a case in point. Genesis 15:6 had said, 'Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.' This act of faith took place before the giving of the law to Israel⁶. Paul shows that in the time of the law David was justified but not by works of the law. Grace justified him. The covenantal promise 'to Abraham and his descendants, that they should inherit the world, did not come through the law, but through the righteousness of faith,' i.e justifying faith. The law, Paul pointed out, brings wrath, for where no law exists there can be no wrath. Insisting that it was by faith that Abraham lived before God, Paul says the same principle obtains for us, and rounds it off by concluding that Christ 'was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification'. Thus the Atonement—the act of the Cross and Resurrection—was for forgiveness and justification.

Chapter Five takes us to the heart of life lived in justification. In 5:1—11 Paul develops what we might call 'the dynamics of justification', that is, that justification reconciles us to God, places us within continual grace, brings hope of glory to the heart and sets in motion a process that involves suffering that will issue in hope's fulfilment. In verses 6–11 he shows that the Cross is the basis for realised love, and that that love is of God

⁶ In Genesis 26:5 God said, 'Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes and my law.' It can easily be shown that there was a recognition of Divine law before a law was given to Israel. In Abraham's case his obedience also related to the covenant God had made with him.

and accomplishes reconciliation. The second part of chapter 5—verses 12–21—speaks of the human race having sinned in Adam’s disobedience, thus coming into the tyranny of sin and death. By contrast the obedience of Christ was what brought life to those who believe because they had Christ’s obedience accounted to them. This is summed up in verses 16 and 17,

And the free gift is not like the effect of that one man’s sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. If, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

That is, condemnation is put away, sin is defeated and death has no power. The justified ‘reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ’. So the argument gathers strength, and its outcome in the life of faith is delineated.

Chapter Six shows that sanctification arises from and based upon justification. The key verse is 7, ‘He who has died is justified from sin.’ Some translations have ‘freed from sin’, but it must be taken first in the legal sense: the person who has died with Christ has died legally, or penally to sin. Death is the penalty and the penalty has been paid. Christ died for the sinner: the sinner died with him. Now he cannot be condemned by the law.

What is most powerful in this chapter is that sin has lost its power, ‘Sin shall not have dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace’. Here grace primarily means that the guilt of law has been taken away. Sin’s power lies in guilt, therefore the power of holiness and obedience must lie in grace. Paul pursues this matter throughout the chapter.

Chapter Seven is primarily occupied with law. Paul, as a Jew and as an apostle, knew that he had to deal completely with the matter of the law for his compatriots were versed in it, and would brook no statement about the law which was not authentic. Commencing with the rigid, ruthless nature of the law—a human being lives under law all his or her life—the Apostle shows that there can never be a release from the law until that person dies. Well, one had died to the law in the death of Christ. One had also risen with him, the condemnation of the law being finished forever as we saw in 6:7, ‘He that has died [penally] is justified from sin’. Yet, having risen one now serves ‘not under the old written code, but in the new life of the Spirit. This must mean that one obeys God’s law by the ministry of the Spirit, and one is not keeping to law as a code, but as the way of life. One already has life (6:10, 23) but God’s law is the way of life⁷. We need not here look at Paul’s view of law for it does not immediately link with our theme of justification.

Chapter Eight has much to do with justification, linked with the work of the Spirit. Verses 1–4 firstly shows this,

⁷ As we see in our Essay on Law, God’s law was not primarily meant to be a source of death and tyranny, but being the outshining of the nature of God was meant to be the functional way of life and of holiness. Sin uses the law to gain power over a human being. Law is meant for life (Lev. 18:5; cf. Deut.10:12–13). To die to law is to die to its condemnation. To live to God is to live in and by His law, which, at heart, is the law of love.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

for whilst the term ‘justification’ is not used the principle is present. The ‘no condemnation’ arises from justification which is deliverance from ‘the law of sin and death’. We see a link with 7:6 about the justified person walking in and by the Spirit.

Secondly, in verses 9–13 we see this [justified] life as lived in the Spirit.

But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you.

So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh -- for if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live.

Verse 10, ‘But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness’⁸ can be rightly translated, ‘But if Christ is in you, though your bodies are doomed to death because of sin, the Spirit is life-giving through justification’. For Christ to be raised for our justification (4:25) is for us to be raised through justification as the Spirit brings it to us.

Breaking into the section of 8:28f. we come to Paul’s final pronouncement regarding justification, and here both the Father and the Son are those who work the matter of justification,

We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified. What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him? Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies; who is to condemn? Is it Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God,

for here Paul is saying that justification is the outcome of predestination, and the outcome of justification is glorification. It is God who has justified so that this is the end of the matter. All powers and forces which would accuse Man are faced with the unchanging decree of God that He has accounted righteous, by grace, sinners who have had faith in Him as the justifying God.

In *Chapter Nine* Paul again takes up the issue of justification by faith as against justification by works of the law. This is to show why Israel is out of kilter with God in the age we call ‘apostolic’. Verses 30–33 conclude his argument regarding this alienation.

⁸ The word ‘righteousness’ here can be rightly translated ‘justification’ as indeed is the case in 5:17 where it is ‘the free gift of righteousness’, that is, we are declared righteous by God.

What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, righteousness through faith; but that Israel who pursued the righteousness which is based on law did not succeed in fulfilling that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it through faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, as it is written,
"Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone that will make men stumble,
a rock that will make them fall;
and he who believes in him will not be put to shame."

Paul is saying that Israel wrongly had pursued righteousness based upon [works of the] law but that had not succeeded since it was not God's way of righteousness, for 'they did not pursue it by faith', especially since it had omitted the fact of Messiah.

Chapter 10 continues the argument of Israel's blindness to promise and the exercise of faith. In verses 1–4 he points out that Israel has sought to establish its own righteousness by works, but refused to submit to God's justifying righteous which is by way of Man's faith in Him and His atoning work,

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened. For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified.

Paul then goes on to say how simple is 'the word of faith', that is, the gospel. This word is present to faith, and does not require ingenious efforts to discover it.

In *Chapter Eleven* he continues the argument. In verses 5 and 6 he enunciates the powerful principle, 'So too at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would be no longer grace.' So Paul closes the argument by the end of the chapter and our survey of justification as a subject is completed. We can say that the rich chapters on Christian living that follow (12–16) have their basis in the realities of justification and sanctification especially when both arise from and are wedded to the power of the gospel.

Justification by Faith in Other Pauline Epistles

Letter to the Church at Philippi

One of the most significant passages in these Epistles is Philippians 3:1–10. We will quote from 7–11,

But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith; that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Here Paul is taking up the matter of ‘no confidence in the flesh’, i.e. in justifying oneself by works of the law. Paul has let go the things which were once dear to him as self-justifying elements and he is now warning his readers against taking the line of obtaining a righteousness (justification) by works of the law. He needs a righteousness but only that ‘which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith’. In this passage we see the great moral dynamic that comes from such justification, namely the elements of verse 10 in which Paul wishes to participate. As in Romans 8:10–11 so here; justification is with a view to resurrection (cf. Rom. 4:25). We need scarcely comment that some of the relational problems present in the Philippian church would have been obviated had a clear view of justification been present⁹.

Letter to the Churches in Galatia

In many ways this Letter could take up as much of our study as the Letter to the Romans. We could say that it is a Letter in which the praxis of justification, and the various elements of the work of the Cross related to it come in to view. It is this letter above all that shows the Apostle’s indignation at the invasion of legalism from Christian Jews from Jerusalem. The whole gospel was at stake. Indeed the future of the gospel was likewise in peril. If the ‘Judaizers’ had succeeded at Antioch and had carried the day with Paul and Barnabas in having Gentile converts forced to receive circumcision, then the gospel of grace was lost. Of course the gospel is not something that the Judaizers could destroy or that Paul could save! Justification is Christ himself in his work (Cor. 1:31), as it is the Father in justifying (Rom. 3:24–25), and is the Spirit liberating from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:1–4).

The heart of justification is found in 2:11–21. Here Peter is rebuked for dissembling before the Judaizers, and for being carried away by them. Paul puts the situation powerfully. Obviously Psalm 143:2 is in mind—amongst other Old Testament Scriptures—‘Enter not into judgement with thy servant; for no man living is righteous [justified]¹⁰ before thee.’ Paul tells Peter that as Jews understanding the Old Testament they all know Man is not justified by works of the law. On the road to justification through the awakening of the gospel, Jews—even Jews becoming justified—know that the gospel tells them that they—as Jews—are sinners. This was, of course, Paul’s argument in Romans 1:18–3:19, 23. So what difference was there ever between Jews and Gentiles in the matter of being sinners? As Jews become Christians they tore down the false idea of being justified by works of the law. Will they—Peter, Barnabas and the cursed Judaizers—rebuild that horrible old system? The law slew them when they came to to it on that basis, but in Christ’s death—in their co-crucifixion with Christ—they received the death of the law, but then were brought to life. Now they live by faith¹¹ in the Son of God. Justification has brought them into new life. If justification could be by law than Christ’s death was purposeless.

⁹ By this we mean that justification gives a clear conscience and makes for its continuance in this way. A troubled conscience always brings self-justification, which is self-proving and this accelerates competition, emulation—and so on. Hence the division in relationships which need not happen when justification clear the mind of legalism and guilt.

¹⁰ The AV has, ‘in thy sight shall no man living be justified’. Psalm 130:1–3 has the same picture of a law-court, ‘If thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, Lord, who can stand? But there is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared’.

¹¹ Galatians 2:20 can be rightly translated ‘I live by the faith of the Son of God’, or ‘I live by faith in the Son of God’. The former is the more correct exegesis. Perhaps Paul means Christ’s faithfulness in his act of the Cross. Simply, he might mean, ‘Faith does not arise from me but from Christ and faith I exercise rises from that faith’.

As in Romans so in Galatians Paul then, points in Chapter 3 to the difference between promise and law. To rely on works of the law is to be under the curse. That curse Christ bore and destroyed, giving justification in its place. This was the fulfilment of promise of the covenant It not of law, for the covenant took place long before the law was given to Israel. If one asks why the law was given then the answer is twofold, (i) ‘because of transgressions’ (Rom. 4:15; 5:20; 7:13), that is, to multiply the transgressions and so the fullness of the curse, (ii) to shut up the sinner to faith, that is, there can be no other way of justification but by faith in the promise, the promise being fulfilled in Christ. Paul pursues what seems like a vendetta against the law, but it is against the heretics who preach justification by law. Hence his allegory in Galatians 3:21–31. Hagar is linked with Sinai, and also with Jerusalem whose children—of Paul’s time—were at that time in slavery, which was slavery to law. By contrast those born of the free woman—‘the Jerusalem above’, the truth Mother—are freed by justification. Paul devotes the remainder of the Epistle to talking about living by faith and living by law, that is, living in the Spirit or living in the flesh, the latter producing the works of the flesh which were really ‘law works’. Living in the Spirit brought forth the fruit of the Spirit, which were the true works of the true law, ‘the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus’.

We do not say Paul saved the gospel, for that would be saying that he saved Christ our justification, that he saved the Justifier Who is God, and that he saved the justifying Holy Spirit. No: but as the authentic Apostle he defended and proclaimed the message of justification. This is the gospel he preached and if anyone preaches another gospel than that one, then he is anathema.

Conclusion to the Matter of Justification

Some have seen the whole of the Roman Epistle as a theodicy, that is the justification of God in the light of the many happenings in history which seem to show that God has failed. Unconsciously Romans may be a theodicy and especially so in chapters 9–11 where Paul takes up the difficult subject of the nations and God’s predestinating purposes for Israel and the Gentiles. Romans has been seen as ‘the book of righteousness’, that is, of justifying righteousness in the first eight chapters, righteousness amongst the nation in history in chapters nine to eleven, and the personal righteousness in which persons and the church should live, though only through love (*agape*). This over-arching righteousness of God is awesome and, rightly understood, gives us the revelation of God which all human beings must come to for true salvation.

Other Pauline Epistles show the dreadful danger that results when it in any way departs from God’s justifying righteousness. The whole vast work of the Incarnation, of the Cross and the Resurrection is put into jeopardy when the doctrine of law as God’s mean of justification is brought forward as though it were the true gospel. So, too, are the true fruits of grace out in danger. In fact, the very revelation of God is at risk, hence our mind in the Essay is primarily on God’s declaration of righteousness regarding the believing sinner. We cannot compute the enormous power of such a doctrine, with such a happening in a person’s life, let alone in the life and history of the world. It is not only that in no other faith is such a teaching to be found but

the understanding and experience of justification is extraordinary in its implications as well as its ramifications. The liberation of the sinner from the penalty of his sins may be a rich relief, and bring peace of an unusual nature, but it is the *difference* that justification makes not only in a person but in a community that is so remarkable and so profound. An unjustified person is in the tyranny of law and conscience even though he—or she—may deny that. As forgiveness and justification are inseparably tied together so an unforgiven and unjustified person is never to be trusted, All who live in the dynamics of guilt Are unreliable. Pride has its roots in self-achievement, and that is a driving force that causes much pain in this world.

Pastorally we have a high and solemn responsibility to know, preach and teach this great doctrine, yet not as a doctrine only in the noetic sense, but as one in the living personal sense, one to which we witness by our lives and verbalised utterances. To give way to current thinking or to fall for the bewitchment of being successful, proving ourselves, justifying our ministries, and expanding our churches is to become—whether we realise it or not—*anathema!*

The dynamics of grace are vast in their power and achievement. Justification is a doctrine and a reality every human being needs to discover and to experience. No wonder Paul felt obligated to preach it everywhere. No wonder he saw it as the power of God.

God's Law and Christ's Justification

Law in Creation and Covenant

The Matter of Law at Creation

Genesis 1:14–18 shows us that there is *rule* in the creation. The sun, moon and stars rule. The conclusion is that rule is good for creation, and essential (cf. Psa. 148:5–6; Jer. 31:35, 36). Rule was prior to the fall of Man. Naturally we look at the word 'rule' from a post-fall position and our view is prejudiced. Rule and function are inseparable. No overt law was given at creation unless the mandate of 1:28f. is considered so. The prohibition against eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil may be seen as a commandment but it was intended to prevent the horrific result that followed disobedience. It may well be argued that a law against divorce is innate in creation when we look at the 'from the beginning' and 'from the beginning it was not so' of Matthew 19:1–9 and Mark 10:1–9. Also Genesis 2:3 coupled with Deuteronomy 5:13–14 could imply a command concerning the Sabbath of the seventh day.

Whilst Paul seems to say there was no law from Adam to Moses (Rom. 5: 12–13)¹ he is specifically speaking of the Jewish covenantal law. The incident of Abraham, Sarah and Pharaoh (Gen. 12:15ff.) and of Abraham, Sarah and Abimelech (Gen. 20:2ff.) shows that other cultures had a moral law. Genesis 26:5 shows God saying, 'Because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments and my statutes . . .' Abraham knew the matter of law. Of course Genesis 15:6 says God accounted him righteous because of faith, and righteousness has no meaning apart from law, since is a forensic term. Paul's exposition of the relationship of Jews and Gentiles to law in Romans 2:12–16² shows that Paul sees the *principle* of law as being universal. No one ought to debate that fact.

¹ It is important that we understand Paul's use of the term 'law'. He speaks to Jews generally in relation to the law of Moses. In 4:8–10 he appears to be talking of a law that pagans knew—the dominating law of the 'elemental spirits'. Then he often refers to law as that principle by which the conscience works, so that whether Mosaic, pagan or simply some rudimentary understanding that a human being cannot exist without law. Thus any law is *the* law to the person who is Jew, cultic pagan or even aimless. For them all that law presents the same principle, 'Keep me and be justified'. It is not always possible to know for sure which law Paul is referring to, but Romans 2:12–16 may refer in particular to the law given by Moses but yet it seems to say that it is possible, universally, to recognise the creational law of God and in seeking to obey it, and so be as one who works towards the goodness of God.

² Of course Paul is not arguing in this passage that the Gentiles have a law. He presupposes this as, in any case, it was an historic fact. What he is discussing is a Gentile who keeps the substance of the Mosaic law, saying they will be accounted as a Jew who does the same thing (cf. Rom. 2:25–29).

Note: Sometimes we speak of the ‘the laws of nature’ as though ‘Nature’ is personal, a hypostasis, and has arranged certain ‘natural laws’. Biblically, God fixes these laws (Psa. 148:5–6; Jer. 31:35, 36). Often we speak of ‘natural law’ when we should speak of ‘creational law’, that is, the law God has placed for Man to obey. It may be argued that because of the nature of creation, including rational creatures such as Man and celestial beings, that some of these laws take into consideration the fall of Man and angels. It may not be argued that law was necessitated by the fall. Man made in the image of God reflects the Divine attributes (so-called) of love, truth, goodness, righteousness and holiness. These cannot be seen to have reality apart from law. What we do not mean is that there has been, even before time, a set structure called ‘the law’ which is immutable, inexorable, death-dealing, heavily legal and the like. As we shall see it is not a law *from* God but the law *of* God. It is not an entity apart from God³.

The Covenantal Law of Israel

Romans 9:4 speaks of the law as being a gift of God to Israel. Much is made of this law given at Sinai. Deuteronomy is a book virtually given over to it, and 33:1–5 speaks of the giving in poetic language,

This is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death. He said,

"The LORD came from Sinai,
and dawned from Se'ir upon us;
he shone forth from Mount Paran,
he came from the ten thousands of holy ones,
with flaming fire at his right hand.
Yea, he loved his people;
all those consecrated to him were in his hand;
so they followed in
thy steps, receiving direction from thee,
when Moses commanded us a law,
as a possession for the assembly of Jacob.
Thus the LORD became king in Jesh'urun,
when the heads of the people were gathered,
all the tribes of Israel together.

In Exodus 24 the covenant was made with God, and people swore to keep ‘all the words of the this book’. The heart of it all, but impregnating and rationalising all rituals and sanitation principles was the Decalogue or Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:1–17; Deut. 5:6–21). These commandments may approximate, if not wholly comport with, what we have called ‘creational law’⁴. We need to note that the introduction to the 10 commandments is one of grace. God has delivered them from Egypt and established them as a nation, bringing them into Canaan as their possession, therefore they must—out of liberation from bondage—keep His law.

³ See my Living Faith Study No. 28, entitled ‘The True Nature of Law’ (NCPI,

⁴ If they do comport with creational law, then when Paul makes reference to ‘law’ this may be what he generally has in mind.

The *quality* of the law is spoken of in Deuteronomy 4:5–8 and 10:12–15—amongst innumerable other passages,

Behold, I have taught you statutes and ordinances, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land which you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them; for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that has statutes and ordinances so righteous as all this law which I set before you this day?

And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I command you this day for your good? Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it; yet the LORD set his heart in love upon your fathers and chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as at this day.

The Law has within it at least 3 codes which commentators have deduced, namely

- (i) *The Covenant Code*: Exodus 20:22–23:33,
- (ii) *The Holiness Code*: Leviticus chapters 17–26,
- (iii) *The Deuteronomic Code*: Chapters 12–26.

We may also speak of *the rituals of sacrifice* which we find in Leviticus chapter 1–9. The *curse of the Law* and *the blessing of the Law* were outlined in Deuteronomy chapters 27–29. Israel at Gerizim was the mountain of blessing and Ebal the mountain of cursing, and Israel bound itself to the curse by affirming the various curses. Much of the Old Testament can be described as the outworking of the cursing and the blessing in conformity with the covenant God had made with Israel. The destruction of the ten tribes first, and then the tribes of Judah and Benjamin—the Northern and the Southern Kingdoms was in conformity with the principles of blessing and cursing.

The beauty, wonder, glory and richness of the law indicated in Deuteronomy 4:6–8; 10:12–13 are shown wonderfully in Psalms 1, 19 and 119.

Law in the New Testament

This requires a long and detailed study, and we shall not enter here into such.

Jesus and the Law⁵

We can distil the following from the Gospels.

- (i) *Jesus in no way denigrated law*: he insisted that it must be fulfilled. So, 'Think not I have come to abolish the law and the prophets. I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them.' 'It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one dot of the law to be made void.' 'Whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in

⁵ John 1:17 says, 'For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ'. Law And grace here must not be seen as opposites, but at the most as contrasts. John would not denigrate the law in the face of grace. The giving of the law was a great event in Israel. The coming of the Son was a greater event, but did not necessarily outmode law. In one sense Jesus Christ can be said to have been 'the law made flesh', if we rightly understand what we have said. The Sermon on the Mount and the life Jesus lived consistently with it show us the true nature of law, as well as of grace.

the kingdom of heaven.' He told the rich young ruler that if he kept the commandments he would have eternal life.

- (ii) Jesus did not bring a higher law—as such—but an interpretation of the law which raised it higher than that presented by the lawyers, scribes and Pharisees. He said, 'Except your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.' He told listeners, 'The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat; so practice and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do; for they preach but do not practice.' The Sermon on the Mount has (a) 'It was said to you of old', and (b) 'but I say to you' which was the truth of the law. In passing we may note that Jesus taught law and that the 'law-folk' such as the scribes, lawyers and Pharisees were appalled.
- (iii) All law in Jesus' view had—and has—to do with the Kingdom of God [of heaven]. Just as in Israel it had to do with covenant, and Israel was a theocracy, so in Jesus' teaching. This is clear in the Sermon on the Mount.
- (iv) *Paul's Epistles speak of 'the law of Christ'* (I Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2). This could refer to (a) the commands which Jesus gave (cf. John 13:34; 14:15; 15:12–13; Matt. 28:19–20; Acts 1:2), (b) the law which Jesus followed and fulfilled in his flesh, (c) the law of love (Rom. 13:8–10; Gal. 5:13–14; cf. James 1:22–25; 2:8, 12) which was virtually the Decalogue which Jesus summarised as love to God and love to one's neighbour.

The Law in Paul's Epistles

We come now to the heart of our Study, which is Paul's view and use of law. We first need to look at Paul generally as a man of law, and then specifically to his use of the law. The following will simply introduce us to him and his view of law.

Paul, the Man of Law

One of the confusions of history, especially in historical theology and church history is that some theologians have seen Paul as an enemy of the law. Antinomians⁶ have read Paul as though he successfully banished law as a principle of living, whilst nomists—strict observers of the law—have seen him in the light of their nomianism as nomistic. The antinomian sees himself free of obedience to any law whilst the nomist is bound by the law in every department of his life.

Paul was undoubtedly a great scholar in respect to the law of God. Far from seeing law as the enemy of Man he saw it as something to be delighted in 'after the inner man'. The condemnation of the law he certainly saw as a great enemy of the sinner. It was one of the tyrants under whom the sinner lives. The law is always binding whilst a person lives. Yet he saw the gospel as liberating a believing person

⁶ An antinomian is literally one against law, but then so is an anarchist. The antinomian believes that a person, through grace, was no longer under law, that the law in fact had been finished. He is jealous of his freedom from legalism but can fall into the heresy of disregarding the law of God, and of failing to walk in holiness. The 'nomist' is 'the law-person', one who seeks to be meticulous in obedience but may have a deficient view of justification from the condemnation of the law.

from the law as ‘the law of sin and death’⁷. The terror of law as related to sin and death was thus dissolved for him.

Some would see his exposition of the law of love to indicate that ‘the old law’ had gone and ‘the new law’ had come. Whilst there may be an element of truth in this idea it is certainly not the whole truth.

We must say that Paul was a man of law from beginning to end, and that he was, at the same time, no less a man of grace. We have to say that Paul wrote his Roman Epistle as an apostle—one to whom God had revealed the mystery of the gospel. At the same time he was a man schooled in the Old Testament and its themes. For him the old and the new meshed together and were of the one piece. Paul is not working out his system of law and grace in Romans: he is teaching what he has already known.

His revelation of law is no less powerful than his disclosure of grace. Indeed, the two could not be found apart nor understood as separate and unrelated entities. Given all this to be true, the fact from which Paul never wavered was that a person can never come to justification by the works of the law. A person must be justified before the law, but never by it. Nor could a person having been justified by grace, then move on and become righteous before God by fulfilling the law. Justification must first be by grace⁸—God’s grace in Christ’s act of propitiation—and then appropriated by faith, faith in the propitiating act of Christ. Paul’s words of Philippians 3:8–9, ‘For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.’ The key thought here is, ‘not having a righteousness of my own, based on law’.

Paul’s View of the Law⁹

An introductory statement of Paul’s view of law in I Timothy 1:8–11.

Now we know that the law is good, if any one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, immoral persons, sodomites, kidnappers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the glorious gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

Here Paul is saying that for one who has understanding of the law the law is good¹⁰ (*kalos* and not *agathos*), that is, it has a fine quality and beauty. Primarily it is to

⁷ The law is called ‘the law of sin and death’ in Romans 8:2. Whilst the law was for life (Gal. 3:12; cf. Lev.18:5) yet transgression of the law brought death when a person sinned, and in this sense the law is to the sinner ‘the law of sin and death’. Law does not *cause* sin but sin uses the law for its own purposes (Rom. 7:7–11)

⁸ Justification by grace as Paul sets it out in 3:24 *et al*, has nothing to do with the medieval doctrine of an infusion of grace into the soul by means of which one could come to righteousness. The doctrine of imputed righteousness stands firm for justification. To say that it is imparted righteousness—both imputed and imparted by grace—is to go contrary to Paul’s doctrine of justification. It is to destroy the whole doctrine of justification.

⁹ We have to realise that Paul was not simply a theologian working through certain dogma. He may have done that indeed, but his understanding of the gospel came from his meeting with Christ. The law and sin became clearly apparent to him from this meeting, whatever his views may previously have been. He had thought himself to alive apart from law, that touching the righteousness of the law that he was blameless but the gospel showed him the true nature of sin and law, and his own being as ‘the foremost of sinners’, hence he saw the radical nature of grace quite vividly.

¹⁰ In Romans 7:12, 13 Paul uses the term good (*agathe*) to speak of the moral goodness of the law, rather than *kalos* which shows its excellence and beauty (I Tim. 1:8)

restrain evil people, or make them aware of their crimes. This passage does not lead us much into the things we find in Romans and Galatians.

The Law of Sin and Death

In Romans 8:2 Paul calls the law ‘the law of sin and death’. It is this because the law ‘was added because of transgressions’ (Gal. 3:21). That is, ‘by the law is the *knowledge* of sin’ (Rom. 3:20) and the law arouses passions and sin (Rom. 7:5), ‘While we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death’. So, then, the law increases sin (cf. Rom. 7:8): thus it is ‘the law of sin’ in that sin is recognised, operative and extended. It is ‘the law of death’ because ‘apart from the law sin lies dead . . . but when the law [commandment] came, sin revived and I died’ (Rom. 7:8, 9). So then the law which is in itself ‘holy and just and good’ (Rom. 7:12) and ‘spiritual’ (Rom. 7:14), becomes for all sinners ‘the law of sin and death’ although it is of itself ‘good’ (*kalos* and *agathos*).

At this point we need to note two things in regard to the law being a killer.

(i) In Romans 7:9, 11, Paul said, ‘I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came sin revived and I died. . . For sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.’ He must mean that when the law fully came to Paul who must have thought he was fully obeying the law (cf. Phil. 3:6) then sin came to life and Paul came under death. Indeed he was always under death, but it was now evident to him that he was in a deathly state and was destined for death.

(ii) Galatians 2:19 states, ‘For I through the law, died to the law, that I might live to God’. Paul may have meant many things by this, such as, ‘I as a Jew have discovered the nature of the law as a means of enlarging sin, as death dealing, as showing me I am a sinner, as bringing me under wrath and the curse, and so I sever my relationship with the law as a means of my justifying myself, and I turn to live directly to go, and not through law’, or, ‘I am killed by the law in order that by His grace I may live unto him. I am killed in my co-crucifixion with him—that crucifixion of grace, and so I live to God now, in Jesus Christ the Risen One’. If these two are what Paul means then the law only kills one to itself in order that that one may come to Christ. In this sense it is a schoolmaster which leads us to Christ, although it cannot itself give life.

The Law is the Law that Brings Wrath

In Romans 4:15 Paul says, ‘For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression’. The law brings wrath because it is the lever sin uses to manipulate men and women into sin. Sin brings the judgement of wrath, the wrath of judgement. Romans 1:18–32 shows that God’s wrath is operative in His giving Man up to the dreadful guilt of his sin, with all its disturbing and horrific components. As guilt increases so does sin and so does wrath. This is much the same as Paul’s thought in Galatians 3:10, ‘For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be every one who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law and do them.” ‘ The curse can be seen from Deuteronomy 27:29—the curses at Mt. Ebal, and also in the way in which the curses works itself out in the following chapters of Deuteronomy, yet it is the same as Romans 1:18–32, that is the guilt of sin working in the conscience. It brings a terrible state of experienced misery, that is of ‘sin and death’.

Luther sums up the law in the following way,

The Law of the letter is everything written with letters . . .
This is the Law of works, the old Law, the Law of Moses, the Law of the Flesh, the Law of sin, the Law of wrath, the Law of death. It condemns everything, makes all men guilty, increases lusts, and slays; and the more spiritual it is, the more it does so . . .¹¹

The Law Cannot Bring Life

In Galatians 3:21 Paul said, 'if a law had been given which could make alive, then righteousness would indeed be by the law'. So then the 'law of sin and death' cannot 'make alive'. That it is meant for life and not for death is seen in Galatians 3:12 (cf. Lev. 18:5) but whilst it is life-giving for those who are already alive it cannot 'make alive'. In Romans 8:3 Paul said, 'For God has done what the law, *weakened by the flesh*, could not do'. In Romans 7:10 Paul referred to Leviticus 18:5 when he said, 'the very commandment which promised life proved to be death for me'.

Here we might add that not only the law cannot bring life but it can make null and void the promise and faith. Romans 4:13 states, 'The promise to Abraham and his descendants, that they should inherit the world, did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be heirs, faith is null and the promise is void'. The law is 'weakened by the flesh' in aiding Man to obey it and fulfil its just requirement, but when Christ and his Spirit aid Man to do so then a new era has opened up in each believing heart, and the Law is Man's most wonderful friend and to live in it is to have life continually.

Man In Sin and Under the Law

We now have to pause and seek to understand the human race in sin and under the law, that is its existential relationship with God, with creation, and with itself in the sense of its interrelationships as a race, and the relationship of each person with his or herself. When, in such a Study as ours, we get into lecture mode, or theological mode we are apt to treat our material noetically, and not existentially, and so not enter in depth into the experiential nature and mode of life. We have therefore, to think in terms of the state of Man in his alienation from God, his fear and dread of God as the primal couple had in the garden after their defection from God. We need to understand the nature of Man not knowing God in all His holiness and love, but the great and slavish fear of God, the anger he has towards God, the passionate attachment to the idols, the devotion to his own ego, the vast worldwide nature of rebellious flesh, and in the light of all this the fragmented and often vicious nature of human relationships and all of this before the Law. Anyone standing before a magistrate or judge under indictment will know something of the uneasiness and dread this brings. Human flesh sees the Law as a ruthless, inexorable, death-dealing thing. Man detaches the Law from God, and if he should think of it as one with God then the dread is no less. Detached from God the Law appears to be an entity which is bent upon dooming the accused and bringing him or her to terrible retribution and punishment, even punishment that is not wholly deserved.

Unless we have a sense of these elements we cannot understand Man-under-Law. The guilt and its dynamic components bring misery immeasurable along with the loneliness sin brings to the human spirit, this being coupled with the tyranny of the

¹¹ LCC 27, 35.

relentless conscience. So the Law works its dreadful works. Moses accuses. The Judge accuses. The conscience accuses. By the Law comes knowledge of sin, of wrath, and of death. That knowledge is an experienced dread—the dread of death and eternal doom. Yet the working of all this is to bring the sinner to the feet of God in deep repentance. This work of the Law is ineffective until the gospel is preached, until God's holiness is seen, until His righteousness terrifies the accused yet brings him hope in the grace of Christ crucified, in the love of the Father who sets forth His Son as a propitiation through faith in his blood.

The Law and Justification

The Law and Promise

We are always tempted to think that the law is against the gospel, that law is against grace. What we have to keep in mind that although these two are contrasts they are not opposites. Primarily the law is 'the law of God' and to go against it is to be in the flesh, as Romans 8:5–8 shows. To use it to justify oneself is to misuse it and it will backfire. Galatians 5:16–21 shows that to be use the law this way is to move into the works of the flesh. As we will see the law is in the service of the gospel in that it shows Man cannot justify himself by doing its works—so-called, so that he is shut up to faith, and that faith is not in the law as such but in the promise of God.

Paul shows clearly in Romans 4:1–25 that the covenantal promise to Abraham preceded the giving of the law through Moses and Israel. Genesis 15:6 shows Abraham was justified by faith. This has ever been the case, and a study of the people of God in Hebrews 11 shows that the people of God were this by faith, and of course faith in the grace of God. As Romans 4:13–15 (cf. Gal. 3:21) shows, the law brings wrath.

The promise to Abraham and his descendants, that they should inherit the world, did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.

In Galatians 3:1–26 Paul shows that his readers received everything by faith and nothing by law. They were the children of Abraham according to the Spirit, by faith. The promise preceded the law, was received by faith and the law could not nullify it. The law was added to show sinfulness and so to shut up to faith, law-way being impotent to bring justification and salvation, since only grace-way or faith-way could do that. The law, then served in that it brought man into a state of sin and wrath—the curse—and so it acted as custodian or pedagogue (schoolmaster) to bring us to Christ. The pedagogue did not teach, but brought the child to the teacher. In part it trained the child, but only in the sense that it kept the child in bondage for the sake of the parents for whom it was a 'minder'

We may conclude then that without the law the gospel could not be preached and the promise would not be fulfilled. We must keep in mind that the law is the law of God and not a law on its own, and that God uses it as He will.

Jesus' Use of the Law to Shut up to Faith

Jesus came preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God demanding repentance for sins and faith in the gospel. If we think of the gospel as 'good news for bad people' and 'bad news for good people', then we can see these principles being outworked by Jesus in his life and teaching. He taught bad people of God's love and forgiveness, but then never played down law as we see above. Pastorally we sometimes play down law and devise a 'soft grace' which virtually ignores law, just as some preach a 'hard grace' which is little more than justification by works of the law or nomistic addiction to law. He ate with sinners when the social and moral mores of the day demanded he should separate himself from them. The stories of Zacheaus, Matthew, various women who were sinners, the thief on the cross, and the Jewish taxgatherer sinner in the court of the Gentiles in the temple, tell us that where there was repentance and faith in the God Who forgives and justifies that a sinner would go down to his or her house justified rather than a self-righteous Pharisee.

For those who thought themselves 'good people' Jesus had many rebukes. The Sermon on the Mount was the most powerful preaching of the law this world has known, and the reaction from this and similar preaching eventually led to Jesus' death. The 'good people' hated him viciously, and he was very strong in his denunciations of false righteousness. Matthew 23 was a denunciation at the time of the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees, and of Israel as a whole in its destruction of the prophets.

There can be no doubt that Jesus thought of himself as the one to be offered up for the sins of the people. We will not enter into this vast subject here but the words of the last supper indicate that: his blood was to be shed for the remission of sins. We say, then, that the work of the law was to 'rouse passions', 'increase the transgression', 'bring wrath', 'give sin power', 'exacerbate the sinner to sin exceedingly', to 'bring the curse' and 'to kill'. Thus the law set up the situation for grace to be seen as grace. The law was there to *give knowledge* of sin, in its elements theological, psychological and existential. The Holy Spirit would to *convict* of 'sin, righteousness and judgement' following the Atonement and the Ascension. Showing that works of the law could not justify the person the law thus shut up its adherents to faith—there being no other way to true justification—and so acted as a pedagogue to bring to Christ¹². Of course, what we have to keep in mind is that not all allow this work of the law: they resist the pedagogue in order to go their own way. To be terrified by the law is one thing, especially if it leads to true fear of God. To be careless about the law and come to no fear of God will lead to despising grace.

The Law and Propitiation

In Leviticus we find that the sacrifices cleansed from sin and the offerers were forgiven their sins. In this sense the Mosaic law made provision for propitiation. The writer of Hebrews discusses this matter, and concludes that only the blood of Christ can be truly efficacious. God's wrath can only be dealt with by propitiation. Propitiation is the gift of God (Lev. 17:11). Christ was the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. He was to offer his life a ransom for many. He was to give his flesh for the life of the

¹² J.R. Loeschhen (*Wrestling with Luther*, Concordia, 1976, p. 65), says, 'The law becomes opposed to the gospel only when it is misused. ' He quotes The Library of Christian Classics volumes on Luther. In LCC 26, 42, 'In its proper use the Law ought to support the promises and grace. If it conflicts with these, it is no longer the holy Law of God; then it is a false and diabolical doctrine that produces only despair, and therefore must be repudiated and excommunicated'.

world, his blood for the remission of sins. This the Gospels tell us. The Epistles open up the matter of the propitiatory act. God sets forth the action of propitiation: it is not conceived and fulfilled by Christ only. It is an act for the forgiveness of sins and the justification of the ungodly. On the cross 'the handwriting of ordinances that was against us was nailed to his cross' so that all failure before the law and all transgression of it was judged, in Christ's flesh. He was made to be sin for us: he bore our sins in his body on the tree: he suffered the just for the unjust, to bring us to God and so declare us justified. In that cross the sinner was killed by the law, before the law. He died his death in Christ as he died with him, so that 'we judge that if one died for all, then did all die'. Christ not only died for sins but was raised for our justification. When he died we died, suffering death for sin, for 'he that has died is justified from sin'. When he rose, we rose and took up the reality and fruits of justification. The wrath was borne, the penalty paid, the law satisfied by Christ's obedience and by receiving the judgment of the law so that no further demand could ever be made, thus believers have 'died to the law by the body of Christ'. The union with law and sin is broken to be replaced by union with Christ.

The law is meticulous in its demands, and if there were any deficiency in Christ's propitiatory act then justification would be impossible. The guarantee of the rightness of the propitiation is that God set it forth, and not even Christ (Rom. 3:24–25; I John 4:10; cf. Heb. 2:17; I John 2:2). In Romans 3:21–31 Paul runs the whole gamut of the righteousness of God which justifies sinners who have faith in Christ and his death.

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction; since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus. Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On the principle of works? No, but on the principle of faith. For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of their faith and the uncircumcised through their faith. Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

When we have pondered this passage we find that God has in no way subverted His holy law in setting for the act of propitiation. The claim to be justified by works of the law is refuted and justification by grace—grace that inspires faith—brings justification by faith when the person responds. So the law is vindicated in its judgements and the person is justified by God's grace and the faith inspired. In this way the law is upheld. This propitiation is not for Jews only but also for Gentiles since God is one, that is, He is the God of both Jews and Gentiles.

The Justified Person and the Law of God

Rightly speaking this section of our Study belongs to another paper 'Justification and Sanctification' in which we examine the place of God's law in the believer's life. We make the following brief comments in order to round off the Study but they do not adequately state the whole case.

- (i) Paul in Romans 7:22 says, 'I delight in the law of God in my inmost self.'
- (ii) In Romans 8:4 he speaks of Christ's work on the cross 'in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.'
- (iii) In Romans 7:6 he says, 'But now we are discharged from from the law, dead to that which held us captive so that we might serve not under the written code but in the new life of the Spirit'.
- (iv) It is evident from Romans 7:13–25 that Paul wishes to do the good and not evil, and that in some way this is linked with fulfilling the law in which he delights in his inmost self. He finds, of course, that he cannot *of himself* fulfil that good desire. The 'law of his mind' is all for it. 'The law of sin which dwells in his members' prevents him from so doing¹³.
- (v) In Romans 13:8–10 and Galatians 5:14 Paul sums up the Decalogue as love to one's neighbour or 'by love being servants of one another'.
- (vi) We need to notice that the law is not given as a body of commands we must obey. Rather as we walk in love and the Spirit we fulfil the just requirement of the law, we produce the fruit of the Spirit—against which is no law (Gal. 5:22). The love of God has already been poured into our heart (Rom. 5:5). Jesus said that if we loved him we would keep his commandments (John 14:15). He gave commandments (John 13:34; 15:12; Matt 28:19–20; Acts 1:1–2) and these were to be passed on¹⁴. Paul said Christ's love constrained him (II Cor. 5:14). John said God's commands are not heavy (I John 5:3) and said the test of God's love in us was whether we keep His commandments (I John 2:3–6). In the Book of the revelation God's servants—true believers—are those 'who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus' (12:17; 14:12).
- (vii) We have to keep in mind the meaning of 'the law of Christ' in I Corinthians 9:21 and Galatians 6:2. This has been explained as (a) the law Christ gave such as the law of love, the commandments he gave, even including the Sermon on the Mount, (b) the law he obeyed, his obedience being an active obeying of the law, which, as we have seen, he would not in any way abrogate, (c) the law as it has come through to us by the gospel, almost 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus', (d) the law of love, the Decalogue as Christ summed it up in the double commandment of love to God and neighbour. When all of these are analysed they seem almost to amount to the same thing—the law of God.
- (viii) We need to keep in mind Paul's view of God's holy law. It is 'holy, just, and good' (Rom. 7:12–13). It is spiritual (Rom. 7:14). When it is served in the new

¹³ All of this has caused scholars to debate whether Romans 7:13–25 is Paul before conversion, or Paul in a state of spiritual barrenness, or whether it does not refer to Paul at all, but to an unconverted person, or some converted person who has come into spiritual difficulties. It is certainly one who delights in God's law after the inmost person, so he must be converted. He cannot be simply backslidden since he is always seeking to do good, and always seeking not to do evil. When we ask ourselves how different are we *of ourselves* then we might find ourselves one with the person of this passage. Can we *of ourselves* do good or desist from evil? Do we have a law of the mind which wants to do good, and does some law of principle operate in us which is powerful and defeats our true desires? Of course *in Christ* and *in the Spirit* we can overcome evil, and do good and desist from evil. Of ourselves we will be always overcome: *of Christ* and *of the Spirit* we need not be overcome. Is Paul really trying to keep the law himself when he is not asked—as such—to do that?

¹⁴ In these we certainly can include the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount, as well as the innumerable ones Jesus gave at other times.

life of the Spirit it is not as the old law, but as one which is new (Rom. 7:6). Again, it is 'good if any one uses it lawfully'.

There is enough material here to help us see that the justified person certainly fulfils the law, but not in order to be justified since he or she is already justified. The justified person is also sanctified (cf. I Cor. 6:11) so that the law is not kept in order to become holy, but because one is already holy. Fulfilling the law may well be the way *of* holiness but it is not the way *to* holiness.

Conclusion to the Study

In this study we have seen the enormous power of the law, especially in the case of the sinner, power to bring him—or her—into the deepening experience of sin, wrath, passion, bondage, guilt, and so on. The more a person tries to use the law for self-justification the worse the state of that person becomes. Even so, the law exposes sin, brings knowledge of sin to the sinner, closes off any way to self-justification, shutting that person up to faith, and so is a pedagogue to bring the sinner to Christ. We have seen how closely 'flesh' and 'law' are linked.

What we have to learn is that just *preaching* law will not have the effects we have spoken of above. It is preaching the gospel which brings law to the fore. Preaching law may bring remorse and dreadful sensings of guilt, but it will not be until Christ crucified is preached that true knowledge of sin will come. God is seen primarily in Christ crucified. Preaching justification as such will not bring justification, but preaching the cross, i.e. Christ crucified will. Only then will the law be seen in its true state, and not in its work of rousing sin, bringing transgressions into view, bringing wrath—and so on.

In our next Study we will see that justification and sanctification are in the one 'bundle'. The problem believers have is 'being entangled again in the yoke of bondage'. That is, having sinned or failed they will see to reinstate themselves by 'works of the law'. Thus they come back to the law syndrome, and go through the agonies until the law brings them back to Christ. That is why we must always reckon on the grace of God, His gift of justification and so maintain our total freedom in Christ.

The law then is beautiful, wonderful, holy and spiritual. In the face of the law justification by grace and faith is a marvellous gift of God, and its freedom is indescribable

The Law, Justification and Sanctification—I

The Principle of Sanctification

It is a common error made by some readers of the Scriptures that sanctification is a matter, experience or process which follows the coming into justification by faith. An examination of certain texts will show this is not entirely the case. God's *intention* for our holiness was made prior to creation (cf. Eph. 1:3–4; I Pet. 1:2; cf. II Thess. 2:13–14), and the *action* of sanctification in I Corinthians 6:11 places it before justification in the order¹ Paul uses—'But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God'. This is also the order in I Peter 1:2 and II Thessalonians 2:13–14.

We need to see that roughly speaking sanctification is

- (i) God's inclusion into His holy people of those who believe on Jesus Christ . This is seen in Exodus 19:5–6 of making Israel His holy covenant people, its New Testament parallel being I Peter 2:9–10 (cf. Acts 2:38–42),
- (ii) God's grace in helping His people to live holy lives consonant with their being 'called to be saints'²—as Paul uses the phrase in I Corinthians 1:2. Sanctification embraces the idea of being given the category of 'holy people', as also the consequent process of living holy lives. There is a *crisis* by which persons believe and are accounted as holy, a *process* by which, and in which, there is the living of a holy life, and there is a *climax* by which the sanctification is complete and which is really the glorification of the person. The last is really an eschatological matter³.

¹ I am aware that the *order salutis*—the order of salvation has been a matter of great debate amongst theologians. The order that Paul gives in I Corinthians 11 is washing, sanctification, justification. The Reformers debated whether repentance preceded or followed faith. It seems that all the elements of coming to salvation such as the knowledge of sin, the conviction of sin, repentance, faith, converting, forgiveness, purification from sins, justification, sanctification (in the sense of becoming saints by calling) and adoption are all part of the one 'salvation complex' and we cannot really dogmatically trace an order in them, especially one which is chronological.

² The matters are taken up and examined in 3 of my writings, *The Splendour of Holiness*, CTS 7, *The Doctrine of Christian Holiness* and 'Living Faith Study 6' *Sanctification: the Doctrine of Christian Holiness*, all published by NCPI. Our present Study does not seek to cover all aspects of Sanctification, but those relating to Law and Justification.

³ If we leave out the matter of the Kingdom of God from our thinking, and forget that God has translated us from the powers of darkness into the Kingdom of His dear Son then we are not seeing the immense power (I Cor. 4:20) for the living of holy lives. We are not seeing the King in his union with us and us with him, and we are failing to realise that this Kingdom is 'righteousness, joy and peace in the Holy Spirit'. That is, the living out of life in the Kingdom is in accordance with its law or its principles set down in the Sermon on the Mount.

Sanctification Indispensable to Ultimate Salvation

When we say that sanctification is indispensable to ultimate salvation we do not mean sanctification is to be obtained any more than justification is to be obtained. Both come gift wise, by grace, to be received by faith, and both are inseparable the one from the other. We are not freed from the bondage of law to enter into another law exercise such as we have been freed from by grace, through faith. Even so, the faith of salvation includes the gift of sanctification⁴.

Jesus told Paul at the time of his experience of the vision on the road to Damascus (Acts 26:16–18),

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

The phrase, 'sanctified by faith in me' is important. It links with Acts 20:32, 'And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are *sanctified*'. Here the 'by faith' is missing but Acts 15:8–9 seems to supply this, 'And God who knows the heart bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us; and he made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts *by faith*'. Sanctification at least in two parts of its Goodwood work is essential for salvation, the first element being cleansing—without which none can be holy—and the second is God's sovereign choice of His elect and His incorporation of them into His people (cf. I Cor. 1:2, 9; 6:11; Ephes. 1:3–4; I Pet. 2:9–10; II Thess. 2:13–14). The third element—the Manward one—is practical exercises of holiness in godly living. When Jesus said, 'Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God', he was surely implying the obverse also. The writer of Hebrews exhorted, 'Strive for peace with all men, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord'. Revelation 21:27 says of the ultimate Holy City that 'nothing unclean shall enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood,' and speaks of the intractable will of evil doers, 'Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy be filthy . . . Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay ever one for what he has done'.

Holiness a Primary Factor of True Human Living

In Ephesians 1:3–4 Paul places God's plan for our holiness as primary, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 1:4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him'. Colossians 1:22 continues this theme of God's object for His saints, 'he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him'. Psalm 24:3–6 asks who it is that receives the blessing from the Lord.

⁴ A concordance will show the exhortations to holiness of living as well as the use of the indicative to indicate our sanctification, our being called to holiness, our being saints, our receiving of sanctification as a gift, and on the basis of these latter references the exhortations to a life of holiness as well as the eschatological nature of holiness and its assured goal (the telos) are given.

Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD?
And who shall stand in his holy place?
He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who does not lift up his soul to what is false,
and does not swear deceitfully.
He will receive blessing from the LORD,
and vindication from the God of his salvation.

‘Holiness unto the Lord’ is a great theme both of the Old and New Testaments, and so we see the necessity of taking up the theme of sanctification. Israel was exhorted to be holy, and both Exodus 19:5–6 (cf. I Pet. 2:9–10) and Leviticus 11:44—among many other exhortations—bear this out. . ‘The principle of ‘Be ye holy for I am holy,’ or, ‘You will be hold for I am holy’ was said to a people who were to ‘worship the Lord in the beauty [splendour] of holiness’ (I Chron. 16:29; Psalm 29:2; 99:3). The holiness of the people came from God for He was ‘the Holy One of Israel your Redeemer’ (cf. Isa. 41:14; 43: 3, 4; 43:14; 48:17’). His holiness which Israel knew as elective was always redemptive.

Fear not, you worm Jacob,
you men of Israel!
I will help you, says the LORD;
your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.

His righteousness was no less redemptive (Isa. 46:13;cf. 51:5 (AV⁵).

I bring near my deliverance, it is not far off,
and my salvation will not tarry;
I will put salvation in Zion,
for Israel my glory.

The Law, Covenant and Holiness in Israel

It is obvious we cannot cover this vast subject in a few paragraphs. Even so, Isaiah 5:16 gives us a clue as to the nature or action of holiness. It says, ‘But the Lord of hosts is exalted in justice, and the holy God shows himself holy in righteousness’. The *NIV* has, ‘the holy God will show himself holy by his righteousness’. In Deuteronomy 4:8 Moses asks, ‘And what great nation is there, that has statutes and ordinances so righteous all this law which I set before you this day?’ Whilst Paul rightly shows the uses of the law which we saw in our last paper, namely,

- (i) it proves to be the law of sin and death,
- (ii) it brings wrath,
- (iii) those under it are under the curse,
- (iv) it finally slays us,
- (v) and it cannot bring life⁶, we must not think that in these situations Paul is speaking about the true nature of the law, that is, of it as showing God’s righteousness, and the way of righteousness for Man for Paul is speaking to those caught in the

⁵ The term ‘deliverance (*RSV*) is ‘righteousness’ in the *AV*.

⁶ There are numerous references in the O.T. which show that the law is the way of living life and in that sense it is life-giving, but Galatians 3:21 says, ‘if a law had been given which could *make alive*, then righteousness would indeed be by the law’. He does not mean that keeping the law is not righteousness, but Israel had tried to keep the law by its own efforts, assuming it could have righteousness (justification) by the works of the law (Gal. 2:16–21). Romans 8:1–4 speaks of being freed from law’s condemnation in order to ‘fulfil the just requirements (*dikioma*) of the law’. As this Essay proceeds we will develop that principle.

principle and practice of nomism, and not in heart obedience to the law, obedience which springs from faith. He shows that in the end the law shuts Man up to faith, thus leading him to Christ. There is nothing wrong with the law: indeed, to the contrary! In Romans 7 he says it is 'holy', 'just', 'good' and 'spiritual'.

We take our point from Isaiah 5:16 'the holy God shows himself holy in righteousness'. The context of the verse shows that this refers primarily to His acts of judgement for God judges Israel⁷ where it does not keep His law and thereby evidences His holiness⁸. If He were not to do so then His righteousness would be *non est*, as well as His holiness. Yet this does not cover all His righteousness and His holiness—whatever they may be—for they are His innate Being and also have ethical conotation. Man, made in the image of God thus reflects His righteousness and holiness (Gen. 1:26–27; cf. Ephes. 4:24; Col. 3:10).

The Law Rooted in The Nature of God and in His Covenant and in Faith

The Law Before Moses

Lest we should think that the principle of law was introduced only to Israel we refer back again to the cases of Abimelech, Pharaoh and Abraham where moral law of an important kind was known to both kings. Genesis 17:1–2 records, 'When Abraham was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly.' Acts 7:2 reports, 'The God of glory appeared unto Abraham, when he lived in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran'. Abraham's revelation of God is important, and of course the promise of covenant is linked with God's command for his obedience. Genesis 26:5 has '. . . Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes and my laws'. Much then was known of law and obedience to Abraham, long before the time of Moses. Romans 2:12–16 seems to point to the fact that the Gentiles could have knowledge of the law of God and obey it according to their understanding, and such obedience would be counted as valid.

The Law for Israel was Only for Faith and for Life by Faith

For Israel the law was rooted in God, the God of covenant Whom they knew at least enough to have faith in Him—if they would. In both Deuteronomy 5:6 and Exodus 20:2 there is the introduction to the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments, 'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.' This declaration of their liberation from Egypt because of the covenant made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Exod. 2:24) was His revelation of Himself to His people. 'I am the Lord your God' meant He was their God, and their life was rooted in Him, in His nature, His righteousness. It was really a relational situation, 'I am, therefore you are, and you should now proceed along the lines of the 'ten words', the words I have uttered to *you*.' Thus the law was to be obeyed *by faith*, that is faith in the

⁷ He also judges the unrighteousness of the other nations.

⁸ In His judgements He also effects a return to righteousness of Israel and in Israel because His judgements restore the nation and the people who have sinned, so that His holiness is restorative in mercy and not accusatory and destructive, especially where there is repentance on the part of the nation.

covenant God, especially as He had been revealed in His acts, and then in the showing of His glory in Exodus 34:6–7, where the merciful, gracious and loving elements of His nature were disclosed. That was the principle, *only faith in Him*, precluding any nomistic conformity to a legal code, as such.

What must be seen is that the law was given to them *for life* (Lev. 18:5; Nehemiah 9:29; Ezek. 20:11, 13, 21; Romans 10:5; cf. Matt 19:16–22), but that life had already been given to them by the covenant, and so the law was virtually *the way of life*, the way covenant was lived. Certainly James can refer to this obedience in faith—the true expectation of covenant—in saying, ‘You show me you faith apart from works, and I by my works will show you my faith’ (2:18; cf. 1:22–25; 2:8–13). In Habakkuk 2:4 the prophet teaches, ‘Behold, he whose soul is not upright in him shall fail, but the righteous shall live by his faith,’ and whatever the uses of this verse in the New Testament it means—in its original context—that the man who lived by faith obeyed the law by *faith*, for to have faith in God was to obey God’s law for its own sake, and with no self-justification in mind. The contrast of the arrogant person and the trustful one is given in Jeremiah 17:5–6 (Psa. 1:4–6) and 17:7–8 (cf. Psalm 1:1–3).

Covenant and the ‘Ten Words’

The ‘ten words’ were heard on Sinai (Deut. 4:12–14) by the people, ‘Then the Lord spoke to you out of the midst of the fire; you heard the sound of the words; but saw no form; there was only a voice. And he declared to you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, that is the ten commandments [words], and he wrote them upon two tables of stone. And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and ordinances, that you might do them in the land which you are going over to possess.’ If we take verse 13 on its own—‘And he declared to you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, that is the ten commandments [words]’—then the covenant was forged on those ‘ten words’ and that was the law, even though we see the extension of these words in the wider ‘statutes and ordinances’ given in the various ‘codes’ we recorded in our last Study (‘The Law has within it at least 3 codes which commentators have deduced, namely

- (i) *The Covenant Code*: Exodus 20:22–23:33,
- (ii) *The Holiness Code*: Leviticus chapters 17–26,
- (iii) *The Deuteronomic Code*: Chapters 12–26. We may also speak of *the rituals of sacrifice* which we find in Leviticus chapter 1–9’).

The Law Rooted in the Nature and Person of the Living God

Otto Weber comments⁹,

The law characterises life in the covenant as life in obedience and thus as historical life. The fundamental “I am” of the decalogue is inseparable from the corresponding ‘Thou shalt’ of the commandments. If the ‘I am’ were isolated, then Yahweh would no longer be acknowledged as the Lord who commands in his grace, nor the covenant the gift which obligates: the covenant with Yahweh would have become Israel’s own possession and would have thus been broken. If the ‘Thou shalt’ were isolated, then the commandments would have become abstract statements of norms which would be subject to ethical investigation. Everything depends on ‘I am’. Historically we see that in Israel both the social and legal order deteriorated when Yahweh was made into an idol or his sole lordship denied in practice. But this ‘I am’ is never separate from the ‘Thou shalt’. The prophets, as defenders of the pure ‘I am’ of the God of Israel, were as such, the attackers of the legal, moral and social decay in Israel.

⁹Foundations of Dogmatics Volume 1 (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1998) p.295.

In all of this matter of covenant and law there is no question raised that obedience shall be other than by faith, and certainly self-justification by doing works of the law is totally absent, even as a concept. At the same time there is no question that the ‘ten words’ and their concomitant ‘statutes and ordinances’ were in the imperative, albeit given on the basis of liberating love and continuing grace (*chesed*)¹⁰. This section regarding the law can be summed up by the passages quoted in our last Study.

Behold, I have taught you statutes and ordinances, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land which you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them; for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that has statutes and ordinances so righteous as all this law which I set before you this day?

And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I command you this day for your good? Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it; yet the LORD set his heart in love upon your fathers and chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as at this day.

If we still doubt the constraint and ability to be obedience in the fashion required by God then Deuteronomy 30:6¹¹ is helpful, ‘The Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul that you may live’.

Law, Justification and Sanctification in the New Testament

Law Dynamic, Functional and not Merely Prescriptive

When it comes to justification and sanctification in the New Testament what must be avoided is the fallacy of seeing the law as simply being prescriptive, and attempting to keep its statutes and ordinances in order to prove ourselves righteous and to live holy lives after the manner of Isaiah 5:16, ‘showing ourselves holy in [acts of] righteousness’. Paul’s statement of Romans 10:2–3 of Israel, ‘. . . they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened. For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness’, tells us to avoid that way of attempting ‘legal (nomistic) holiness’ and ‘legal (nomistic) righteousness’ both of which are an illusion. The problem in Israel would have been that the matter of the fall—in Adam—was ignored and that some thought they had the

¹⁰ The heart of Man is deceitful and corrupt (Jer. 17:9), and so it acts against prescription. Why should prescription be opposed and discredited as a way of life? Human autonomy dislikes prescriptions, yet prescriptions are necessarily a large part of human living. The writers of the Psalms 1, 19 and 119 simply love prescriptions, not because they are legalists, but because they share the nature of God in following these prescriptions, in finding their way richly in life by use of them.

¹¹ This passage, by the way speaks of restoring circumcision of the heart when the covenant people have erred and have been punished. The original circumcision of the heart took place when Israel and God covenanted together (cf. Deut. 4:1ff; Exod. 24:1ff.).

capacity to keep the law without being dependent upon God's help, His grace and His love¹². This made for an autonomous attempt to be righteous and holy.

As we have already indicated, justification and sanctification are together and inseparable, whilst they are never merged so that each loses its identity in the other. Both come to Man by faith from the God Who declares and makes righteous, and Man as ever, is called upon to have the responsive obedience of faith and love. As we will see, righteousness and holiness are linked with the law of God; with love of it and obedience to it. In Luke 1:70–75 the promise of holiness and righteousness are based in covenant,

as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,
that we should be saved from our enemies,
and from the hand of all who hate us;
to perform the mercy promised to our fathers,
and to remember his holy covenant,
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.

This practical holiness and righteousness are really of the same covenant given to Abraham, repeated in special form to Israel, and now fulfilled in Christ who is 'the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified'. It was just that many in Israel in their seeking to keep the law did it not in faith in the living God and in union with Him, but believed it was only and wholly prescriptive and that they were competent to fulfil it, and so had as their goal self-justification, i.e. by 'works of the law'. Just as antinomians show their faith by *not* having works—their faith thereby being empty—so the Jewish nomists showed their works without faith—their faith being only in themselves and their works, the latter not proceeding from God.

The Power of Justification for Sanctification

Christ the End of the Law

We need first of all to see that 'Christ is the end of the law, that everyone who has faith may be justified'. What does it mean to say that 'Christ is the end of the law'. This shortened, unqualified statement certainly does not stand on its own: Christ is not the end of the law! Put succinctly we could say, 'Christ is the meaning of the law. He is its goal¹³. He is its true point of reference. Romans 5:12–21 speaks of his obedience, which we know from Philippians 2:8 was up to the death of the cross, and beyond it. He did not come to abrogate the law but to obey it, and he delighted to do the Father's will. Only when the cross and resurrection were completed could it be apparent that he was the fulfilment of the law. He not only rendered God 'active obedience' throughout his life but also 'passive obedience' in his death and resurrection, and allowed 'the handwriting or ordinances which we had infringed to be nailed to his cross' (Col. 2:14) and so fulfilled the legal-penal demands of the law—demands of judgement,—thus

¹² Some Jewish writers and teachers today deny there was a fall, and strongly object to Paul's argument in Romans 5:12ff.

¹³ Here see Weber (op. cit.) pp. 297–304.

upholding it whilst emancipating us from the condemnation which he himself bore in his propitiatory sacrifice. In this sense he was the fulfilment of the law. At the same time he put to an end to the mistaken way of trying to obtain justification by works of the law. Never again should this system be espoused and practised now that he had shown it to be erroneous and ineffective.

Christ as the Fulfiller of the Law is as the Law Incarnate

All of this fulfilment is the basis for sanctification, and we will shortly explore how this is so. Even so, Christ is the fulfilment of the law in that *in* him we can now have fulfilled *in* us ‘the righteous requirement (*dikaioma*)¹⁴ of the law’. In one sense Christ is the living law, the true meaning of union with God, the proper way to be at one with His will and to do the acts of righteousness which are holiness. Of course *none* of this is with a view *to* justification. Rather, it springs *from* justification: it is the way of the justified life—as we are about to see. Because of Christ the law cannot be used by sin in any final way¹⁵.

Again, it is ‘Christ in us’, ‘us in Christ’¹⁶ which brings the power of Christ to work in our sanctification. We will first look at this principle in Romans chapter six, and then proceed to chapter eight where it is set out in somewhat different form, but is the same principle¹⁷.

Romans Six, Justification and Sanctification

Grace Abounding Brings Life Abounding

In Romans 5:15–17 Paul has spoken of the tremendous surge that comes in life because of Christ’s justification. Verse 17 shows this.

If, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

There can be no doubt that the passage refers to life in the present, albeit it is eschatological: one can now ‘reign in life’, liberated from sin and death—those two tyrants which entered the world (*kosmos*) by one Man, Adam. This leads on to the important first section of chapter 6.

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism

¹⁴ See also 1:32; 2:26; 8:4; cf. 5:16, 18. *Dikaioma* is the righteous demand of the law and so the true righteousness exercised within the law.

¹⁵ By ‘final way’ we mean that the law is still used by sin in the case of unredeemed Man, since the law’s task is to show sin as ‘exceeding sinful’, to bring wrath, the curse and the knowledge of sin, and then shut Man up to faith and Messiah until he is redeemed. In a secondary sense this system operates when believers—as sometimes happens—revert to self-justification by works of the law. In one sense they are again shut up to faith and to Christ until they abandon their foolish reversion to ‘law-way’.

¹⁶ We need to see that ‘Christ in us’ and ‘us in Christ’ is the whole of our life, but at the same time is synonymous with ‘the Spirit in us’ and ‘us in the Spirit’ (cf. Rom. 8:9–11; Eph. 3:26).

¹⁷ Here refer to our last section in the previous Study (pp. 10–12) under the heading ‘The Justified Person and the Law of God’.

into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

No matter how much sin abounded, grace abounded surpassingly (5: 20–21). So then being brought into this state and situation of ‘reigning in life’ sin would now be abhorrent to the person baptised into Christ. The outrageous experience under sin and law had been replaced by the freedom from the law actions which brought the misery of guilt-bondage. The judgement of all sin had taken place at the cross, and in this sense the believer had been judged, had been killed, and had risen again. The key verse is verse 7, ‘He who has died is justified from sin’. Thus Paul says (verse 10-11) in regard to those justified,

The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

As in Galatians 2:19–20, so here, ‘I through the law died to the law that I might live unto God.’ Having been crucified the person is now risen and lives his life in faith in the Son of God. The Son of God *is* his life. The legal or penal claims of the law have been dissolved. The person is free from law as a way of justification and also as a way of sanctification. Otto Weber (op. cit. p. 431) remarks,

The imputation [of justification] means that the Christian never has an endless process of sanctification ahead which must be traversed in order to arrive at holiness. Those who have the imputed righteousness may know that they have arrived. The ultimate goal has been given. Such people would know, of course, this this is a not a goal one has attained but one always granted anew for the sake of Christ.

Justification is Powerful Within the Life of the Justifier

The believer is now into the life of Christ; participating in it. This state, Paul tells us in Romans 6:11 (cf. Gal. 2:19), is one of already being dead to sin and of being alive to God. For this reason sin must not be allowed to reign¹⁸ in our mortal bodies. The reason that it will have no dominion over the person is because that one is not under law, but under grace. He means that when one was in ‘law-way’ one was in guilt, since *the power of sin lies in guilt*. This is verified by I Corinthians 15: 55–56, ‘the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law’. Without us being under the law sin has no power, no leverage and since we have died to the law (Rom. 6:7; 7:4) then the power of sin has been broken.

Whilst we say these all important things we may be tempted to pass them over because we have simply worked them out as a theological proposition. We need to keep a number of things in mind,

- (i) this is not merely a proposition but a revelation: sin has been defeated so that ‘we reign in life by one Christ Jesus’,
- (ii) it is the ‘in’ or ‘by’ Christ Jesus which is the key: strictly speaking we do not live in justification as an entity but in the Justifier, Jesus Christ. He is made unto us ‘our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification and redemption’ (I Cor. 1:30–31). Reality only obtains in the ‘*in Christ*’ situation.

¹⁸ Paul does not say that sin does not *dwell* in our mortal bodies (cf. Rom. 7:17, 20). He does say, however, that it is not to be allowed to *reign* in these bodies.

Because of Justification and Living in the Justifier an Act of Yielding the Will is Demanded

A decisive action of the believer's will must take place as the result of his having been justified for in 6:12 onwards the indicative has given place to the imperative,

Do not yield your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but yield yourselves to God as men who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Paul then discusses the fact that we have not been created to be free agents, and that we are not free standing in the business of life. We are *either* slaves of God *or* slaves of sin, *either* slaves of righteousness *or* slaves of unrighteousness.

Do you not know that if you yield yourselves to any one as obedient slaves¹⁹, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once yielded your members to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now yield your members to righteousness for sanctification.

There is, then, an action of the will, a response to the work of grace, and there is now a yielding of the members 'to righteousness for sanctification'. C. K. Barrett (*ad. loc.*) translates the latter part of verse 19 'so now offer your members to righteousness as its slaves (the result of this will be sanctification)'. Notice here that acting as slaves in the service of righteousness is not of itself sanctification but sanctification is the outcome of that service. Thus verse 22, 'But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the return you get (*ton karpon*: "the fruit") is sanctification and its end, eternal life'. Whilst being in the service of righteousness may be termed 'living in justification' it does involve the active use of our members in what we might call 'practical acts of righteousness' the outcome of which is sanctification. Whilst it is true that in our baptism into Christ we have come into the *sphere* of holiness (cf. I Pet. 2:9–10; I Cr. 6:11; I Thess 4:7; II Tim. 1:9), yet sanctification is not confined to a status or a position, but involves the action of righteousness. This could seem at first sight to be a re-starting of the cycle of law prescriptions—as acts of righteousness—and thus a reverting to nomism, but this will not happen if we remember that Christ is the end of the law, and that the law is now Christ himself in action²⁰, and we in that action of Christ, by Christ, in which case the sight of law as mere prescriptions fades, and its true nature and its dynamics become manifest in the yielding of our members to righteousness for sanctification²¹. Whilst there is always the danger of becoming nomistic in our thinking and endeavours in being slaves to

¹⁹ If the matter of new life in Christ were simply law-keeping, ordinance observing, then that would be old nomism in new clothing, but being slaves has in view serving—the serving of God and righteousness, with a view to some goal (*telos*): see Romans 1:1; I Corinthians 1:1; II Corinthians 4:5.

²⁰ Our next Section takes up Romans 8:1–8 and so the statement 'the law is now Christ himself in action' will, hopefully, be explicated.

²¹ E. Kasemann (*ad. loc.* pp. 183–184) says, 'Sanctification means a being for God manifesting itself bodily in the secular world and in face of temptation . . . The holy person is the one upon whom God looks and who stands in the presence of Christ. But his sanctification means that the world around perceives the service of God in earthly secularity reflected in his bodily (social) expressions of life, as in a mirror, and it thus catches a glimpse of the God who looks on His creature'.

righteousness, yet this danger must not frighten us away from such acts which bring ‘its fruit sanctification and its end, eternal life’.

Conclusion to our Study ‘The Law, Justification and Sanctification—I’

In this Study we have begun to see some of the power of justification in regard to the reality of sanctification. The dangers of nomism and antinomianism are highlighted when in the first case sanctification is not seen as a grace-gift of God, and as inseparably one with justification, although it is a entity not to be merged with justification. In the second case it opposes the license and lawlessness of antinomianism. Much of the pastoral ministry of the church today—as in other ages also—has to face these two extremes and bring on the one hand freedom from law as a way of self-justification, and on the other a love and delight in the law so that the nature of God as the Righteous and Holy One is worked out in daily living. We need to have a biblical understanding of God’s righteousness and His holiness so that we who have been made—and are—in His image may know the delight of true living, and be prepared for the onslaughts of evil on this righteous and holy walk by deceit, seduction and threatening.

Most of all, we need to bring the present power of justification and the Justifier to our human situation. It is apparent that so little is known of the freedom of God and the liberty He gives to us. We need to penetrate even more deeply into the work of the Cross to see its totality both for justification and sanctification. The many personal and pastoral problems we have arise from a deficient view of justification and so of sanctification also. In trying to amend what does not need to be amended we are led into by-paths and so the power of justification is not focal and primary for us. The law, justification and sanctification are so tied in together that they inseparable.

The Law, Justification and Sanctification—II

The Doctrine of Sanctification in the Pauline Letters

Paul's Approach to Sanctification in Romans 6

We have seen in our last Study that in Romans 6 Paul speaks of the life of holiness as stemming from the work of Christ in his death and resurrection, and our being baptised into those two events which are in reality the one. Baptism has brought us to the point where we 'walk in newness of life' a statement which seems to accord with 7:6 that we 'serve in the newness of the Spirit'. We saw that there was, through baptism into Christ, a deliberate yielding of one's members unto God with a view to the obedience that leads to righteousness. Having become obedient from the heart to 'the form of teaching' to which we were entrusted, we are now slaves of the righteousness which leads to sanctification. We saw that sin is robbed of its power by justification, and that having been freed from sin and enslaved unto God the advantage we get is sanctification with its end eternal life (v. 22).

Paul's Approach to Sanctification in Romans 7

Keeping in mind Romans 1:7, 'called to be saints', we are faced with the seeming problem which confronts us in Romans 7. Paul shows us that all human beings are continually under law—'the law of the husband'—until the husband dies. The husband will never die: hence the law will never cease to hold a person in bondage. We can only escape the law by ourselves dying, and this we have done in Christ's crucifixion, thus being freed from law. That freedom does not bring us into a state of lawlessness, but into a state where we serve (*doulein*: 'are slaves') 'in the new life of the Spirit (7:6). In this state we are united with Christ.

From verses 7 to 11 Paul shows what it once meant to be living under law, the law by which sin had its power. He concludes in verse 12 that the law, though the inadvertent agent of sin, is 'holy and just and good'. In verses 13 to 25 Paul shows how helpless is a person—even a Christian person—to obey the law of God and so desist from sin and accomplish good, for neither is possible. In his own powers he sins and does not do good. His conclusion is that whilst he delights in the law of God after the inward man (cf. Psa. 1:1f.) yet when he would do good sin is always dynamically present to overrule him. He has a mind (*nous*) to serve God's law, but another powerful law—the law of sin—is stronger *of itself* than the law of the mind is *of itself*.

In chapter seven, especially in verses 13 to 25 the apostle is showing that he wishes to obey the law but can only serve it on intention and not in powerful acts. It is interesting to us that he still wishes to obey the law when all the time he knows what

we have seen, namely that the law is death-dealing (7:9; Gal. 2:19) that it is utilised by sin to increase acts of sin, that it brings wrath (4:18) and 'increases the trespass (Gal. 3:19) and brings us under the curse (Gal. 3:10). Paul does not criticise the law for its effects on the sinner, but shows that our trying to keep the law—of ourselves is not possible. Here there is no question of self-justification but of obedience to the law for its own sake. Paul delights in the law of God in his inmost self, and this is in itself the proof of a miracle for delight in God's law is not the delight a sinner knows.

Paul's conclusion is that sin, *of itself*, is stronger than he, Paul, is *of himself*. That is why Paul wants deliverance from the 'body of death'. Does he mean—as in 8:10—that this body is doomed to die and he wishes to be free from it, or does he mean that he finds it difficult to live with the deathful body in which sin always triumphs over him? Does he, perhaps mean by 'this body of death' the whole *corpus* of sin which invades and torments him? Whatever he means contains a heavy distaste for living with sin which always defeats him when his great desire is to fulfil the law.

Paul on Sanctification in Romans 8:1–13

A Summary of Paul's Thinking in This Passage

In Romans 8:1–13 Paul is discussing the freedom of the believer from the bondage of the law's condemnation. Freed from such condemnation by the work of the cross, the person is now enabled to fulfil the 'just requirement' of the law. In 7:6 he is shown to be able to serve 'in the newness of the Spirit' and so it is this 'law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus' which now enables fulfilment. One has to have 'the mind of the Spirit'; one must set one's mind on the Spirit and walk in the Spirit. He who walks in the flesh can only know death; to have the mind-set of the flesh is death. Even so, the believer is not in the realm of the flesh or under its deathful domination. One is in the Spirit because Christ and the Spirit dwell in him. There is no tyranny the flesh can exercise for it has been defeated at the cross (cf. Gal. 5:24). All deeds of the body which are pointed towards fleshly acts can be put to death by the Spirit in whom one walks. Thus such mortification these bodily deeds results in vivification, the flow of the new life.

Note: In this Study we are presented a detailed exegesis of the text with comments aimed at clarifying the matter of sanctification. It is not essential to read all the footnotes, but in some cases reading of them is essential. The text of verses 1–13 is included to save time in looking it up separately.

1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death. 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7 For the mind

that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot; 8:8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

9 But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. 10 But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness. 11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you.

12 So then, brethren, we are debtors not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live.

The statement of verse 1, 'There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus', could be linked to 7:1–6¹ for it would carry on naturally from there since that passage speaks of a person always being under law, but then released from such legal bondage to the law of the husband by the death of Christ—'discharged from the law' so that the person may now be married to Christ 'to bear fruit for God'. Once a slave under the old written code, the person is now a slave 'in the new life of the Spirit'². Thus the statement of 'no condemnation' would make sense. At the same time it seems natural to follow on from the text of chapter 7, so that the plain statement of 25b that one is a slave to the law of God with the mind, to the law of sin with the flesh, shows nothing has changed in one's justification. Thus verse 2 fits both 7:6 and 7:25b, that is, one is set free from the law of sin and death. The law of sin and death is 'the written code' which although in itself was 'holy', 'just', 'good' and 'spiritual' (7:12, 13, 14; cf. I Tim. 1:8) yet became the law of sin for two reasons,

- (i) the person wishing to justify himself by means of it was sinning since this autonomous act was sinful, being of the human ego and not of God (Gal. 3:10–11; cf. Lev. 18:5), and
- (ii) the transgressing of the precepts of the law (cf. Gal. 3:10; cf. Deut. 27:26) was the occasion of sinning³. It became the law of death to him since the outcome of sin is death. In 7:13 sin works death in the person by means of the law, and in 7:5, 10 and Galatians 2:19 Paul speaks of dying by the law.

Even so, we are now in Christ and in him there is no condemnation. How then, does this happen to be? It is because—verse 2—'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set us free from the law of sin and death'. What is the 'law of the Spirit of life'? Since this law of the Spirit (*nomos*) obtains only 'in Christ Jesus', then it must be the gospel as brought to us by the Spirit. Just as in 7:6 we were 'discharged from the law'—being unable to discharge ourselves—so here this 'law of the Spirit' set us free for we could not set ourselves free⁴. So then, the law of the Spirit is the Spirit taking the gospel and setting us free from law-bondage by means of that gospel. Yet the Spirit

¹ A number of commentators see Romans 8:1 following on from 7:1–6 whilst others see it as following on from 7:25b. Kasemann sees 25b as a dogma, and thus 8:1a also a dogma. At the same time 'a slave to the law of God' (25b) is the same as 7:6 'a slave in the new life of the Spirit'.

² This is the thrust of the NRSV. The person exchanges slavery to the law—'the written code'—for slavery in the new life of the Spirit. One is a slave either of the written code of the law or in the new life of the Spirit. RSV has 'we serve in the new life of the Spirit'.

³ In Romans 7:9 (cf. Phil. 3:6) Paul shows he had deluded himself into believing he had kept the law. It seems that the law against coveting (Rom. 7:7) had unseated Paul when it really 'came' to him.

⁴ II Corinthians 3:6 is appropriate here, 'God . . . has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life' (NRSV). The Spirit takes us from the Mosaic covenant (the law) to the new covenant and gives us life in this new aeon or dispensation of grace. The Spirit gives life. Later (verse 17) Paul adds, 'where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom'.

not only sets us free *from* the law as a death-dealing regime but liberates us *into* a new law which is not the gospel⁵, but himself comes to us via the gospel. We are thus emancipated from again attempting self-justifying action through the ‘written code’, because we live life freely in the Spirit and in Christ⁶. It is difficult to conceive of a ‘new law’ for it might seem merely an exchange for the old one⁷, so that we may soon set about justifying ourselves by a new law when in fact there is no new law. It is the law or command of God called ‘the law of God’ (8:7) and ‘the law of Christ’ (I Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2), and both of these comport with ‘the law of the Spirit of life’⁸. What is primary in this verse is that believers have come into a new aeon, a new era, a new way of living, utter freedom from nomistic burdens, self-justifying pressures and all of it by the presence and action of the Spirit, and all of it ‘in Christ’. ‘In Christ’ is the only place and situation in which the Spirit works.

Verses 3–4 take us on further for whilst the law could not do what it would do because of human fleshliness, God was able to so do by sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. That is, God judged sin in Christ’s flesh and so judged it in ours at the same time (II Or. 5:14b; 5:21; cf. Gal. 2:20)⁹ in order that being set free from condemnation ‘the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us’. What was it that the law could not do? It could not assist us to attain to that place where we could

⁵ Law and gospel are separate entities, but not unrelated ones. Whilst they must never be merged so that they are considered to be the one, yet they must not be opposed the one to the other. They are contrastive but not opposites. Paul makes it clear that it is our *view* of the law as sinners which makes us hostile to it, or causes us to believe we can—and do—keep it. In Galatians 3:19–23 Paul shows that the law was added *after* the covenantal promises given to Abraham and one reason was to increase the transgression (cf. Rom. 4:15 where the law brings wrath). The law could not bring life to the nomist, but God uses the law to imprison all under the power of sin so that the way of faith is shown to be the only way of coming to life, that is, to justification. With the coming of faith there is no longer any point in seeking to use law for self-justification. Thus the law leads to Christ so that it is not an enemy but a custodian or disciplinarian whose aim is to lead us to Christ. Romans 8:3 (cf. 2:26) suggests that the law did want to help us to do something, namely fulfil the ‘just requirement’ it had demanded.

⁶ This does not mean that we are insured from ever attempting self-justifying actions. We will be tempted to turn to the flesh and set about using the law again as a means of this self-justification. That was the heresy which the Judaizers taught the Galatians, and Paul called it a falling away from grace (Gal. 5:4). He describes the conflict of the flesh and the Spirit in Galatians 5:16–24. The secret of not returning to nomism is to go on being filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18), to be ‘aglow with the Spirit’ (Rom. 12:11), and always to walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 18, 25–26).

⁷ It is clear that the Reformers—both Calvinistic and Lutheran—are so aware of the perils of setting about a new law in a nomistic way, that they would prefer to see ‘the law of the Spirit’ regarded just as another principle, one in addition to, but other than, the ‘laws’ mentioned in 7:21 ‘the law of the mind’ which is good, and ‘the law in my members’ which is not. Some commentators refuse to identify this ‘law of the Spirit’ with that mentioned in Ezekiel 36:24–28, and the law written on the heart and the inward parts as being that of Jeremiah 31:31–34 but a combining of these two prophecies seem irresistible. Even so, the law of the Spirit is not only the liberating power of the Spirit, but the constraining and motivating power for the new community of Christ.

⁸ As we have commented, ‘the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus’ is the principle of the Spirit—the principle of the gospel administered by the Spirit so that we are set free from the condemnation of the law of sin and death. At the same time it cannot be divorced from its outcome, namely the just requirement of the law (*dikaïoma*) being fulfilled in us. Thus we may conclude that God’s law, Christ’s law and the Spirit’s law are all of the one piece. This means the law is Trinitarian, issuing from the nature of God, in which case the law as love opens up a great vein of the origin of the law of God, rooted as it would be in Him as *Agape*.

⁹ In verse 3 we are faced with the wonder of the incarnation and the Son’s identification with us who are of sinful flesh. He did not come in sinful flesh, but in its *likeness*, yet he did not come in the *likeness* of human flesh but in true human flesh. Being ‘without sin’ does not mean he was not human flesh: he was. The wonder of his becoming human and remaining for ever in human flesh is the glory of him and the Father, his Sender. As his flesh is now glorified so will ours also be. John 1:14; Philippians 2:5–8; and Hebrews 2:14–18 all describe the wonder of the incarnation and whilst we extol the humility and love of the Son, we adore the goal of his becoming flesh—our redemption—and are humbly grateful for the love of the Father in not withholding His Son.

have the ‘just requirement’ of the law *fulfilled* in us. Of course the law could not so judge sin that it could set us free since only God in Christ could do that. Christ received our condemnation in his flesh, so that now, in the presence of the Spirit and by his power ‘the just requirement of the law can be fulfilled in us’¹⁰. Note that we do not, unaided, fulfil the just requirement of the law. We are not freed from law’s condemnation so that we may, *ourselves*, fulfil the just requirement of the law. We must realise that we are never put on to fulfil the law *from* or *of* ourselves. Romans 7:13–25 reminds of the impossibility of such fulfilment. Even so, the ‘just requirement’ of the law stands to be fulfilled. It is fulfilled by us when God is working within us as in I Corinthians 15:10; II Corinthians 3:5–6; Ephesians 1:19; Philippians 2:12–13; I Thessalonians 2:13 Hebrews 13:21¹¹.

What, then, is ‘the just requirement of the law’ (*to dikaioma tou nomou*)?¹² The term is used in 2:26 in the plural (*ta dikaiomata*) and in 8:4 in the singular where it may embrace all the ordinances or precepts thus being ‘the rights of the divine will which had been originally manifested in the law’. Note also in 3:31 that Paul says we do not overthrow the law by faith, but we uphold, i.e. establish it by faith¹³. When we see it as

¹⁰ Some scholars would see this as a forensic statement, that the legal demands of the law were fulfilled in Christ’s death *for* us, but the verse is really saying *in* us, so that whilst it is true Christ has fulfilled such legal-penal demands of the law (cf. Col. 2:14–15; 2:15) yet this verse takes us on further. Barth in his *Shorter Commentary on Romans*, pp. 90–91 says, ‘In him God’s Law stands *before* us and powerfully *over* us, in its pure and true form: a single irresistible offer and command of God’s grace to us who have been put to death with and now live with him. To begin with him—because he made a beginning with us—“to be in Christ” simply means to be bound by the pure and true Law of God established and made effective in him; to be *compelled* and *allowed* to accept the offer of God’s grace and to be obedient to the command of God’s grace, which has appeared in him; as men who were dead and have been brought to life by him. That is “to walk after the Spirit” and no longer after the flesh. The fulfilment of the Law is therefore achieved in them who walk after the Spirit. For “to walk after the Spirit” is nothing but to become obedient to God’s grace which has appeared with compelling power in Jesus Christ. In all that follows and in the whole of this chapter we must remember that by the “Spirit” Paul means nothing but the validity and the power of the Law of grace established by the sending of the Son of God over those who believe in him, because he has died and risen for them.’

¹¹ In nomistic endeavour there is monergism. If the law is fulfilled in us by our union with God then we are not faced with fulfilling it from ourselves or even in cooperation with God (synergism). The power lies in God and His word abiding in us, as also it lies in the will of God with which we become one (cf. Eph. 5:17; Rom. 12:2). Since the law is of the Father, of the Son and of the Spirit, then it is Trinitarian in origin and substance, so that the abiding of the Father, the Son and the Spirit will energeise us (Eph. 1:19; Phil. 2:13; I Thess. 2:13) as they live in us (John 14:15–23; 15:1–8; Gal. 2:20; I John 3:24; 4:13) in order that we can do His will.

¹² Kasemann (p. 218) explains, ‘As he releases us from the dominion of the powers, the Spirit evokes the new obedience and thus establishes the rights of the divine will which had been originally manifested in the law’. Here we must guard against any thought that God’s will is *per se* legislation, that it is locked up in law, and locked off from His salvific work or contrary to it. The law is His law, emanating from Him, having no existence of its own, no being apart from Him. Psalms 1, 19 and 119 powerfully assert the law is essentially of God. The Reformed view (especially, sometimes the Lutheran) often comes close to viewing the law only as a lethal entity that lacks functional usefulness and beauty and the nature of moral (functional) glory.

¹³ The question arises as to whether the law was ever kept by anything *but* faith. Surely God’s covenant with Israel was with a people whom God had already justified. If Abraham believed Him and was justified, then no less were covenant believers—the spiritual children of Abraham—also justified. Thus to seek to justify oneself by works of the law would be have been pointless to the covenant-person. Doubtless this has always been a fleshly endeavour of those who do not have true faith in God, but we must never say that the ‘just requirement of the law’ was a requirement to do the works of the law as a means of self-justification. As in the new covenant, so in the Mosaic covenant, nothing could be accomplished but by faith: the question of self-justification never arises. It would be interesting to inquire whether the prescribed sacrifices could be called soteriological or whether they should be regarded as restorative within the covenant.

‘the law of God’ and not just ‘the law’¹⁴, it is because the Spirit has shown us the true nature of the law in its thrust and essence. Of course the law comes as an imperative but then an imperative within a relationship. As in Deuteronomy 4:12–14, it is the ‘words spoken’, that is, spoken personally and directly to His covenant people¹⁵. Law that is segregated from God but retains the title ‘the law of God’ is delusive. We only live within the context of a relationship. Thus Barth (*Shorter Commentary*, p. 90; cf. footnote 10 for fuller text) says ‘And with him [Christ] we now live another life, a new life. In Him God’s Law stands *before* us and powerfully *over* us in its pure and true form: a single irresistible offer and command of God’s grace to us who have been put to death with him and now live in him’. . . “to be in Christ” simply means to be bound by the pure and true Law of God established and made effective in him’. ‘In Christ’ and ‘in the Spirit’ must mean ‘in God’ and that relationship, as we have said is the true context for living obedience.

God’s *purpose* of the *dikaioma* of the law being fulfilled in us—and not just *by* us—was effected by the incarnation and the Cross, our sin having been judged in Christ’s flesh. In verse four God’s *way* of the *dikaioma* being fulfilled *in* us is to have us ‘walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit’¹⁶. That is, we now view the law through the Spirit and are motivated and constrained to obey it through the Spirit¹⁷. This principle certainly accords with the reality of Ezekiel 36:24–28 where God promised to take out the stony heart—Man’s rebellious and sinful heart—and replace it with a new organ of life. In Romans 8:1–4 we see that this new heart does not obey the law for purposes of self-justification, but because it is God’s law now known ‘in the inward parts’ (cf. Rom. 7:22), for Jeremiah 31:33 prophesied, ‘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’¹⁸. Ezekiel 36:27¹⁹ makes it clear that the new covenant people

¹⁴ It is when the human ego sees the law as separate from God, as though it were an entity in itself, that the person has problems. The law is the law *of* God, and not even the law *from* God. The conscience of a person will exercise a dreadful tyranny through this law which seems to be a hypostasis in itself. There is no entity called ‘the law’. Obedience is always in a relationship with God—the relationship of faith.

¹⁵ Cranfield (ad loc) says, ‘By *dikaioma* is meant here not “righteousness”, “act of righteousness” as in 5:218b , nor “justification” as in 5:16 . . . but “requirement”, “righteous requirement” as in 2:26. The use of the singular is significant. It brings out the fact that the law’s requirements are essentially a unity, the plurality of commandments being not a confusing conglomeration but a recognisable and intelligible whole, the fatherly will of God’s purpose for His children’.

¹⁶ John Murray (p. 284) says, ‘The Spirit is the Holy Spirit (vs. 2) and the contrast means that the directing power in their lives is not the flesh but the Holy Spirit. It is by the indwelling and direction of the Holy Spirit that the ordinance of the law comes to its fulfilment in the believer, and by the operation of grace there is no antinomy between the law as demanding and the Holy Spirit as energising—“the law is Spiritual” (7:14)’.

¹⁷ Again, we are faced with the danger of a nomism, which, whilst it does not see obedience to the law as necessary for obtaining justification—since one has already been justified by faith—yet it sees obedience as necessary for retaining, sustaining, and maintaining justification, in which case it has moved out of the obedience of faith, the principle of Genesis 15:6; Habakkuk 2:5 and Romans 1:16–17; 3:24; 5:1 and Galatians 2:16–21. Even so, a healthy dread of this kind of nomism should not turn us into antinomians, nor make us reject obedience because of the dangers of human pride. Romans 7:13–225 always remains as a reminder that we cannot keep God’s law, *of ourselves*.

¹⁸ Here we should note that in Jeremiah 31:31–34 the new covenant people *know* God. That is, as they know Him so they know the law, and so obedience is carried out in faith, and not as an exercise of the human ego, the flesh of fallen humanity. They come to know the law because it is implanted in the heart, but the introduction to that implanting is ‘I will forgive their sins and their iniquity I will remember now more’.

¹⁹ Kasemann commenting on 8:2 says of the ‘the law of the Spirit’ that ‘allusions to Jeremiah and Ezekiel . . . are not to be seen in the verse even if it may be subsequently understood as an echo of them’. It would seem that in fact the law of the Spirit is that of Ezekiel 36:24–28 and Jeremiah 31:31–34, each being a commentary on the other, and both being conflated especially as they pertain to the new covenant. Jesus’ reference to Jeremiah 31:31–34 and the use of it by the writer to the Hebrews should confirm this application.

would be given a new spirit through the Spirit, ‘And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances’—that is, the *dikaïoma* of God’s law. Thus as new covenant people we are now inspired by the Spirit to love God and obey that law²⁰. We are no longer to walk after the flesh, but only after the Spirit²¹. This, of course, is a new way of life for us.

At first glance verses 5–8 may seem simply to be a comment by Paul upon the *facts* of having the mind of the Spirit or the mind of the flesh, but surely Paul is saying in these four verses that those who have the mind of the Spirit have the *dikaïoma* of the law fulfilled in themselves. The man with the mind-set of the flesh is ‘hostile to God’. The flesh ‘does not submit to God’s law, indeed it cannot’ so that ‘those who are in the flesh cannot please God’. It should be seen then that submitting to God’s law has not been done away with in and by justification. To refuse to obey the law means we have ‘the mind of the flesh’. Since the antinomian will not obey the law because he claims to be dead to it²² then he must have ‘the mind of the flesh’. The nomist would appear to be obeying the law but since he/she uses it for self-justification then that person is not really obeying it.. Who are those (verse 8) who please God? They are those (verse 7) *who submit to God’s law*. Thus walking according to the Spirit is life and peace because the rebellion of the flesh, and the conflicts of legalism have given way to a new freedom (II Cor. 3:17; cf. Gal. 5:1). Such were of the nature of death. The new freedom of the Spirit brings ‘life and peace’ which are not merely subjective states of feeling but are the objective gifts of justification and sanctification so that any subjectivity that is valid is based in the objectivity of grace. To have the mind of the Spirit is to live the new way of life. What we have to understand is that there are two categories, the first being the life of the Spirit and the second being existence within the realm of the flesh. A person lives in either one of these categories but not in both. Paul is not speaking of a believer who changes positions from one to the other. The believer belongs to the Spirit. The one who belongs to the flesh is outside of Christ. The flesh is the realm of the natural man²³. At the same time the flesh is still with the believer as his constant enemy. He, as the new man in Christ is not of that flesh. Christ and not the flesh is his habitat. The ‘flesh’ or ‘the old man’ are never absent but the believer has spurned the fleshly mind of the old Adam.

²⁰ If, for the moment, we depart from considering this Pauline principle of having the law fulfilled in us, and look at the Johannine teaching in relation to God’s commandments, then we are presented with a strong insistence upon (i) fulfilling the commands of Christ (e.g. John 14:15–23; cf. 13:34; 15:10–14), and (ii) fulfilling the commands of God, I John 2:3–8; 3:21–24; 4:21; 5:2–3; II John 4–6. In the Revelation the saints and servants of God are ‘those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus’(12:17) and ‘those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus’(14:17). Some ancient authorities insert ‘do his commandments’ in 22:14.

²¹ Barth in his earlier and longer commentary *The Epistle to the Romans* (Oxford, 1968) says on page 282, ‘At the incredible point where we discover the question mark which is set against us—set against us by One that we are not—we encounter eternity; united with Christ, we are apprehended and known by God, and we possess the possibility, the impossible possibility of walking *after the Spirit*.’ Barth thus shows us the possibility which is radical, but which we miss as being so because of familiarity with the text and not the reality.

²² The true believer is certainly dead to the law (Rom. 7:6) as a way of self justification but he now serves ‘not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit’. Being freed from the law’s condemnation the person obeys in the new life of the Spirit. This, we repeat, is the essence of Romans 8:1–11.

²³ In Galatians 5:16–26 the situation is somewhat different. The flesh and the Spirit contend continually for the will of the believing person. These two are not the flesh and spirit of the person, but two entities which exist independently of the subject who—as a justified person—must will on each occasion to opt for the Spirit, be under him, and be led by him, in which case the flesh cannot dominate him. Verse 24 makes it clear that the person does not belong to the flesh for ‘those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires’.

Verses 9–11 describe the new and continuing condition of the believer. This person is not in the flesh but is in the Spirit for the Spirit dwells in him²⁴. The ‘flesh’ is a principle dominating the person whose ego determines what he will do, or attempt to do. Now the Spirit is the Lord and enabler of the new person. The miracle of the change from the ‘natural man’ (I Cor. 2:14) to ‘the spiritual man’ has taken place. Not to have the Spirit means not to belong to God. To have the Spirit is at the same time to have Christ dwell within (cf. Gal. 2:20; II Cor. 13:5; Col. 1:27). To have the mind of the Spirit is life, but to set the mind on the flesh is death (v.6). So in verse 10 to have Christ within means we will never be abandoned to death. Because of sin—sin in Adam (5:12) and the sin we have committed in that entail—our bodies are doomed to death, but in Christ ‘the spirit is life because of righteousness’²⁵. The meaning is ‘the Spirit is life-giving, that is in resurrecting us because of the redemptive power of justification’. The Spirit will not raise believers from the dead of himself, but through the victory of Christ’s work on the cross (cf. I Corinthians 15: 55–57). We note in verse 11 that God—the Father (cf. 6:4)—was the Initiator of Christ’s resurrection so it He Who will ‘give life to your mortal bodies all through His Spirit’. This assurance is rich, and it is strengthened by the fact that the act will be by the Spirit ‘which dwells in you’. The present indwelling of the Spirit is our guarantee that we will never be left alone and abandoned to death²⁶. II Corinthians 1:22 says, ‘He has put his seal upon us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee’. Likewise Ephesians 1:21 and 4:30 show the Spirit as sealing us for the day of redemption. Romans 8:23 speaks of this ‘redemption of our bodies’ as our ‘adoption as sons’. This is in the context of the Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of hope [of the resurrection and glorification] and of sonship.

So then, any seeming obligation to the flesh—to do the works of the flesh because of the fear of death—is wholly dissolved. This is Paul’s point to verses 12–13. The person who sets his mind on the things of the flesh (verses 5–7) is one who is doomed to death because of sin, but has no life-giving power because of being in the flesh and so absent from the justifying Spirit (v. 10). Hence such a person will seek to preserve his life, and this will always to the be detriment of others for all actions will be ‘the works of the flesh’. The flesh is intent on preserving itself against all others. The person of the Spirit will be expressing fulfilment of the law in the ‘fruit of the Spirit’. ‘The deeds of the body’ may appear to be the beginning of ‘the works of the flesh’ but since they are the deeds of the body²⁷ and not yet the (completed) works of the flesh, they can be put to death by the believer through the Spirit in the sense that mortification thus brings vivification (cf. Col. 3:5–11).

²⁴ The Apostolic understanding from Pentecost onwards was that the Holy Spirit dwells in the believer and in all the community of Christ. See John 14:16; Acts 2:4; II Corinthians 1:21; Ephesians 1:13–14; I Timothy 1:14; I John 3:24; 4:13; cf. James 4:5.

²⁵ Luther translates 8:10b in this way. See his Commentary on Romans page 104. John Murray (p. 289) makes a similar translation as against the RSV ‘your spirits are alive because of righteousness’. The NRSV agrees with Luther and Murray.

²⁶ Psalm 16:9–10 (quoted by Peter in Acts 2:26–27 and by Paul in Acts 13:35 pertains as much to the Christian as to Christ. At no point is the justified believer abandoned to death for the Spirit dwelling in him remains with him, ensuring his departing to be with Christ (Phil. 1:23) and his physical resurrection at the last day. The motivating power of this reality and the presence of the Spirit combine to give experimental victory over the fear of the death, and over ‘the deeds of the body’ (v.13).

²⁷ What we must keep in mind is that the acts of the body are not *per se* fleshly. The body is not evil, and its ‘natural’ deeds—such as eating, drinking, etc.—are not evil. It is only when they run to excess that the bodily act becomes a fleshly act. Our confusion often lies in the word ‘flesh’ which sometimes has evil connotation and sometimes simply means ‘body, or ‘having human *being*’. For this reason ‘the deeds of the body’ should not be translated ‘the deeds of the flesh’.

When we look in verse 12 at Paul's point of no obligation to live to the flesh (cf. Gal. 5:24) we may miss the completion of his statement which is the obverse of the 'no obligation' statement, and would have gone something like this had Paul not left it merely to be inferred, namely, 'So then, brethren, we are debtors to the Spirit to live according to the Spirit, for if you live according to the Spirit you will never die.' Verse 13 then follows on naturally.

Conclusion: A Summary of Paul's Thinking on Sanctification in Romans Chapters 6–8

Freedom from the penalty and condemnation of law removes the power of sin in Romans 6, for where there is no guilt, sin has no power. Even so the law is not abrogated. In Romans 7:6 it is served 'in the newness of the Spirit'. In 7:13–25 Paul shows the exercise of trying in one's own strength to keep the law one has come to love. Such an exercise cannot be successful since sin of itself is more powerful than the believer is of himself. Romans 8 shows that when the law of the Spirit of life liberates a person from condemnation, then the active law or principle of the Spirit enables one to fulfil the just requirement of the law. The life of the Spirit, the mind, leading and enablement of the Spirit is so powerful and rich that the old nomist view of law is dissolved. The new world of true obedience opens up so that, as was the case with writers of Psalms 1, 19 and 119, the believer delights in the law of God after the inward person, and is wonderfully occupied with its just requirement being fulfilled in him. This fulfilment is not initiated by him, but by the indwelling Spirit, the indwelling Christ and the indwelling Father.

It is not too much to say that Galatians 5:16–26 is commentary on what we find in Romans 8:1–13. The fulfilling of the law really issues as 'the fruit of the Spirit'. Against such there is no law. The law does not forbid this since it is its very fulfilment. What we yet need to treat is the new view of law that the justified person has through justification and the gift of the Spirit. Life in the Spirit as also life in the law of the Spirit. Love of the law which is no less love of God is the new way of life as the *dikaionoma* of the law is [being] fulfilled in us..

Prescript to the Study ‘The Law, Justification and Sanctification-III

It is some months (April) since we began the subject of sanctification and we really need to go back to what was said there, prior to this present Study, to refresh ourselves in the extreme importance of the theme. The following revision and additions will be helpful. I would also hope we would use LFS6, *Sanctification: the Doctrine of Christian Holiness*, CTS 7, *The Doctrine of Christian Holiness and The Splendour of Holiness* (all NCM) in addition to other works available on Christian holiness and sanctification.

- (i) God is holy. Man by creation in the image of God was holy and must be holy. If eschatologically he is unholy he will be outside the Holy City (Gen. 1:26ff ; Rev. 21:27; 22:11).
- (ii) God’s law is holy (Rom. 7:12). Violation of the law is violation of God’s holiness. The effects and judgement of this defilement cannot be computed.
- (iii) The law was given afresh in the context of covenant. Its grace was to enable those under it to be holy as God is holy (Lev. 11:44). The Covenant God of Israel was the Holy One, their Redeemer.
- (iv) God’s plan for holiness was before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:3-4). His intent is to bring His people to eschatological holiness (Phil. 1:10; 2:15; Col. 1:22; 1 Thess. 3:13; 5:23; Rev. 21:27; 22:11).
- (v) Holiness is indispensable to ultimate salvation (Matt. 5:8; Heb. 12:14; cf. Rev. 21:27; 22:11).
- (vi) The act of redemption brings purification and sanctification (1 Cor. 6:11; II Thess. 2:13-14; Heb. 10:10~22; cf. I Pet. 1:2).
- (vii) Whilst Israel was God’s holy people, this privilege and calling came to include the believers of all nations (I Pet. 2:9-10; Acts 15: 8-9, cf. 10:15).
- (viii) Sanctification is by faith, and therefore a gift (Acts 15:8-9; 20:32; 26:16-18; cf. Rev. 7:14). It is not a gift apart from Christ for Christ is made unto us to be our sanctification (1 Cor. 1:21).
- (ix) Man is intended to be the holy image of the holy God. Only by the grace of salvation can he come under ‘the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus’ and so be holy by the just requirements of the law being fulfilled in him (Rom. 8:1-4). Only those who fulfil the law can please God (Rom. 8:8).

These points should be sufficient to help us now enter our Study of the following pages. Even so, we should not fail to see the pastoral importance of the theme, especially for these days when the deceit of sin has entered into the lives of many in the churches.

The Law, Justification and Sanctification—III

A Reminder Note

In our pursuit of the nature of the gospel we have been studying the Law, Justification and Sanctification. Our aim has been to see the simple matter of the life-transforming good news of Christ so that we might better preach the word of life. Law, Justification and Sanctification take us on wide investigation, for the materials are profuse. Hence we may lose sight of the wood for the trees and the trees for sight of the wood. Even so it is good for us to examine these matters which occupied the apostolic writers, the apostolic and early church fathers, the Reformers both Calvinistic and Lutheran, the Puritans who followed in their stead, and the Evangelicals who succeeded them. The problem with all has been the matter of the Law, and we must come to terms with that. It has at the same time been the matter of espousing the sanctification of the believer as being monergistic or synergistic. Most would hold that God's gratuitous act of justification was—and is—monergistic. Likewise most would hold that the work of God in sanctification—in consecrating the justified as a gift—is likewise monergistic. It is in the matter of living out a holy life that some have claimed this practical living to be synergistic, i.e. God and Man together, or Man cooperating with God. We need to see, time and again, that whilst the redeemed person aligns his *will* with God's will nevertheless the energising power for obedience¹ is always God's and never that of the believer. Thus, if it is the law of God that Man keeps in practical holiness then it is never out of any innate moral power he may consider himself to possess. If we can agree with these things and keep them in mind then we will avoid the twin dangers of nomism and antinomianism. The pastoral power of this understanding cannot be exaggerated. It is in the matter of holiness of life that the flock experiences so much pain and despair, or proper delight and true freedom.

Other Elements of Paul on The Matter of Sanctification

Other Pauline Epistles Regarding Christian Sanctification

¹ We have noted before that in such passages as Romans 8:37; Galatians 2:20; 5:16–18; Ephesians 1:19; 3:16; Philippians 1: 6; 2:12–13; 4:13; I Thessalonians 5:24; II Thessalonians 2:13–14 that God, and not Man, is the One Who energises for holiness and fruitfulness of life. The believer indwelling God and God indwelling the believer is the whole matter of for such holiness.

Perhaps even more so than in the Book of Romans², Paul in **the Letter to the Galatians** is speaking about the work of the law in the life of the sinner. The Epistle is a warning against going back to the law as a means of self-justification. At worst the law brings one under the curse, delineating sin and at best is a pedagogue to bring us to Christ. Of itself it cannot justify. Through the law one dies to the law, is crucified with Christ and is freed from law as a way of self-justification.

The passage of 5:16–25 does move into discussion of sanctification. When the Spirit becomes the gift of God by faith (3:1–3) then one walks by the Spirit (5:16, 25, 26) and so is not under the law. To be under the law is to produce ‘the works of the flesh’. The works of the flesh ensure one will not enter the kingdom of God. When one works in and by the Spirit then that one bears the fruit of the Spirit because one is not *under* the law, but *in* it. It is the law seen in a different light altogether. In regard to this Otto Weber³ remarks,

. . . it is a commonly held Reformation doctrine that good works grow as the ‘fruit’ of faith, and thus of the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:22). ‘Good works’ are not the kind of accomplishments which somehow occur to us. They are structured along the lines of God’s law. The only reason they are ‘good’ is that God accepts them as such, and he does so for the sake of the ‘doer’. The ‘fruit of the Spirit’ is not opposed to the law (Gal. 5:23). The good work, which is totally useless for our salvation, is our natural behaviour, so to speak, within salvation. It does not happen by virtue of the law, in the sense that it would be an accomplishment. But it does happen ‘in the law’ (*in lege*). It is God’s desire that we be ‘appointed to live for the praise of his glory’ (Eph. 1:12). The intention of his free grace is to find a response in us. Thus we find in the New Testament what Karl Barth calls the ‘praise of works’ (CD, IV,2, pp. 322ff.). God is not a harsh, surly dictator; rather he permits that which is done as ‘work’ in faith to stand as such. Lutheran theology has never succeeded in integrating this ‘praise of works’ into its system, because it has always connected the ‘law’ and ‘condemnation’ with each other, and transformed the good, gracious, helpful, and acknowledging command into the rigidity of ‘law’. Nevertheless it has discussed ‘good works’ (*Treatise on Good Works* (AE, XLIV, 23)⁴ and it could only do so when it really accepted in practice what was not always contained in its approach, that God’s good command does not just condemn us but also accepts us in Jesus Christ’.

This living and working in the Spirit means—as in Romans 8—that we do not do works under the law but from ‘the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus’, so that we do not have ‘the mind of the flesh’. Galatians 5:24 says ‘And those who belong to Jesus Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. This crucifying means (i) the objective crucifixion of the flesh by Christ, and (b) the existential crucifixion of the flesh by the believer. That is, through the law he has died to the law

² We do not mean that our examination of Romans has exhausted the subject of sanctification. For example the subject does not finished—as we have—at 8:13. Life in the Spirit is always sanctification of life, and the remainder of chapter 8 takes this up. The sanctification of the Gentiles and of Israel is discussed in chapters 9–11, and since obedience is at the heart of sanctification, believers are warned against such disobedience as separated Israel from the olive tree. Further, the mode of life of the community of Christ as set out in chapters 13–16 is still pursuing the matter of sanctification, though not in a formal way. Paul never leaves the twin subjects—justification and sanctification—though he does not seem to treat them thematically—as such.

³ *Foundation of Dogmatics*, Vol. II, pp. 396, 397).

⁴ Note also Luther’s treatment in *The Liberty of a Christian* in which Luther deals with good works under the headings, ‘Piety of Faith Precedes Piety of Works’, ‘The Doctrines of Good Works’ and ‘Works of love’. His point is that only a good tree brings forth good fruit, and that ‘a Christian lives not in himself but in Christ and his neighbour; in Christ by faith and in his neighbour by love’.

(2:19⁵) and so to the flesh (cf. 5:18). Thus it is that within the objective sanctification by God of the believer, existential sanctification proceeds as obedience issues from ‘the law of the Spirit’.

It is in this Galatian Epistle that Paul speaks of fulfilling ‘the law of Christ’ (6:2) and enjoins sowing to the Spirit that which will reap eternal life (6:7–8), and the doing of good to all men (6:10). These are surely the actions and fruits of sanctification.

The **Pauline Letter to the Colossians**⁶ takes up sanctification in a most practical way. We will select the third chapter for consideration. In this chapter the writer assumes what is explicated more fully in Romans 6 that the believer has been crucified with Christ, buried with him, and raised again, and he builds on this faith basis. The key to the action which enjoined following this objective fact is ‘For you have died and your life is hid with Christ in God’. On this basis the believer’s life is as hidden as is Christ’s—in God. This hiddenness speaks of all life being lived in faith (cf. Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:20), and it leads on to verse 5 where the action of **mortification**⁷ commences, that is the putting to death of things of the flesh such as ‘fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness which is idolatry’. The apostle is giving the indicative of Christ’s work and the believer life in Christ, but then he opens up with the imperative, since the will of the hearer must be responsive to the command of God. Paul is saying (as in Galatians 5:24) that the believer has died to these fleshly things and so must consider them, by faith, to be dead, and to live as one who is dead to them (cf. Rom. 6:1–11). Doubtless Romans 8:13 is presupposed, that is, that practical mortification is by means of the Spirit (‘the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus’).

A form of mortification is the ‘**putting away**’ of such things as ‘anger, wrath, malice, slander and foul talk’. It is also the causing to cease of such things, e.g. ‘Do not lie to one another’. The basis of such mortification, such putting away and such causing to cease is that the readers have long ago put off the old Adamic nature and its works, and have put on the new humanity which is dynamically ‘being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator’. The former way of life with its energising by evil has been exchanged for the new way of life with its energising by God. Verse 11 speaks of the new environment by contrast with the old: it is where ‘Christ is all, and in all’. Thus putting away and mortifying all that is evil and would become the life of the believer requires the will to destroy it but the life that is ‘hid with Christ in God’ and where ‘Christ is all, and in all’. Hence the energising destroys any thought of synergism.

Likewise in **vivification** where the action of ‘putting on’ that which is good the living of practical holiness is really the living out of the law of God, of Christ, of the Spirit, for the things which are to be put to death and to be put off are recognisable only by the law. Likewise the good things are also recognisable by the law. The remainder of the chapter follows logically from mortification and vivification always keeping in mind the life hidden in Christ (v.3), ‘the peace of Christ’ (v.15), ‘the word of Christ’ (v.16), and the fact that everything is done ‘in the name of the Lord Jesus’ (v.17) and that worship of the Father is through him (v.17). This active defeat of the

⁵ Here Paul may incorporate two ideas, (i) as in Romans 7:9–10 that he was legally slain, and (ii) that he became disillusioned in seeing the law as a means of self-justification by doing its works.

⁶ Some do not see this Letter as from Paul’s hand but from the hand of one his disciples. In any case it is ‘Pauline’.

⁷ The section ‘Sanctification’ in Heinrich Heppes’s *Reformed Dogmatics* (Allen and Unwin, London, 1950) on pages 565–580 has excellent material on mortification and vivification, especially on pages 571–574..

flesh brings with it vital life for the believer, and participation in Christ's own holy life so that life for us in his vicarious humanity is always assured, and though often a battle it is always richly purposive⁸. We know that he, for his part, is ever interceding for us and that we live because of this intercession (Rom. 8:34).

There is an emphasis on practical holiness in **I Thessalonians**. In 4:1–8 Paul speaks of our holiness as the outcome of the calling of God (cf. I Thess. 2:13–14) and therefore practical holiness regarding chastity and action in marriage should comport with such given sanctification. Again in **II Timothy** (2:20–22) the apostle calls for maintaining purity by shunning evil in its fleshly forms. In **Titus** Paul gives the key to holiness of life. In 1:15 he says, 'To the pure in heart all things are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure; their very minds are corrupted'. In 2:11–14 (cf. 3:4–7) Paul shows that purity of life flows from the discipline ('teaching', 'instruction') of grace. God's aim in Christ is to 'redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds'. Paul had dealt with this matter in **II Corinthians** for in 6:14–7:1 he had quoted from Isaiah 52:11 and Hosea 1:10 and both aspects of calling—gratuitous sanctification and practical holiness by mortification—were used because the people were to be a holy community.

Worth noting in Pauline teaching is the fact that love and holiness are linked⁹. In Philippians 1:9–11 he prays, 'And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge all discernment so that you may approve what is excellent and may be pure and blameless for the day of Jesus Christ, filled with the fruits of righteousness which come through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God'. Here the eschatological outcome of holiness is related to the present action of love. Likewise in I Thessalonians 3:12–13 he has the same principle in mind, 'May the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all men, as we do to you, so that he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints'.

Conclusion to the Pauline Doctrines of Law, Justification and Sanctification

Our purpose in these last few papers has been to present the doctrines of Law, Justification and Sanctification from the Pauline point of view. Other New Testament writers also take up these themes, but our purpose in these Studies has been to show that whilst justification is by grace and received through faith, that the law is not thereby abrogated and that sanctification which is no less gratuitous than justification is somehow still linked with the law. We have sought to show that law-keeping is not of itself the way to sanctification. Such law-keeping would then be the same as the old system of justification by works of the law. We are not justified by being sanctified for both justification and sanctification are gifts of God to faith. There is a transformation which comes in the *ordo salutis* which gives us a totally new view of law. It is this we will attempt to see in our next Study, *The Glory of the Law of the Triune God*.

Meanwhile we leave aside the other New Testament materials of 'Hebrews', the Petrine and Johannine Epistles which particularly relate to sanctification.

⁸ Paul having said God's teleological purpose before time was that we should be 'holy and blameless before him' reiterates the matter of this condition as though it is of great importance. See Ephesians 1:3f.; Philippians 1:10; Colossians 1:22; I Thessalonians 5:23–24.

⁹ Luther in his book *The Liberty of a Christian* under the headings of "Works of Love" quotes Galatians 5:6 ('faith working through love') and Philippians 2:1-4 (mutual loving and care by the brethren) in regard to true works. For Luther works of faith done in love are authentic works, though never means of justification.

Some Preliminary Thoughts on the Law of the Triune God

- (a) It is the law of God, and not simply the law *from* God.
- (b) In the N.T. as well as the O.T. he who obeys the law pleases God (Rom. 8:8).
- (c) ‘The law of God is the will of God for all human beings, not just for morality-as such-but for being truly human. *Explanation:* Man is made in the image of God, therefore lie will be truly human when he lives in the law of God.
- (d) The law is that of the Triune God. In the N.T. there is (i) ‘the law of God’ (Rom. 8:1-8), (ii) ‘the law of Christ’ (I Cor. 9:21; Gal. G:2), and (iii) ‘the law of the Spirit’ (Rom. 1:4. Thus this is the law that *is in extra* to the Godhead. Its *ad extra* expression is God’s including Man by creating him in His image. It has been said that the law is the preceptual image of God (J. A. Motyer).
- (e) The law of God does not adapt to the mores of fallen humanity, nor does it ameliorate its demands. God may have mercy when that law is infringed, but ultimately His mercy will never be incongruous with His holiness, righteousness, truth, goodness and love. This is the history of redemption through sacrifice. The law is always upheld.
- (f) It is impossible for a human being to realise the enormous violation of the nature of God when he/she breaks the law. That is why there is ‘the mystery of iniquity’: understanding must come by revelation.
- (g) Law which comes to Man in the context of covenant issues from grace, and is administered in grace. Grace provisions are made for law infractions. The law is enjoyed when there is ‘obedience from the heart’. This joy is seen in many parts of the O.T., especially in the Psalms. Israel enjoyed *shalom* when it was obedient. The land would ‘vomit out’ the disobedient. Judgements were stated in the law, just as provisions for were made for forgiveness. Old Testament judgements which seem severe were already foretold.
- (h) Whilst the law was ever ‘for life’ the having of life is presupposed by covenant: the law was not for giving life-that was the gift of covenant. For the richness of law lived before God examine the terms ‘law’, ‘commandments’, ‘statutes’, ‘testimonies’, ‘way’, ‘word’ and the like. *Torah* was instruction, direction, giving of understanding. The Greek word *nomos* and the Latin word *lex* carry their cultural emphases with them, and need to be amended by covenant understanding.
- (i) In the N.T. Epistles it often seems that law is a matter of dread, and its exercises on sinful people of a harsh nature, such as the working of wrath, the delineating of sin, the arousal of passions-and so on. Whilst Paul, in particular, emphasizes these matters lie is portraying the dark or judgemental side of law, but we can say that this is virtually the dark and judgemental side of God on sin. We repeat: no human being can understand the enormity of his/her disobedience, the infraction of law and the violation of the nature of God.

- (j) 'The law came by Moses but grace and truth by Jesus Christ' is not intended to be a statement of opposites. Grace is restorative of disobedience and its consequences. Christ's grace was to do this (Titus 2:11-14; 3:3 7).
- (k) In the Sermon on the Mount Christ pointed to the essential truth of God's law. He took it upon himself to be as the trite Moses. His 'Every one who hears these words of mine' (Matt. 7:24-27), means there is the proclamation and establishment of true law in and through him. It is this law he will not abrogate (Matt. 5:17-20) for precisely it is the law of the Triune Godhead. This is part of the meaning of Romans 10:4 that Christ is the telos of the law for every one who has faith.
- (l) That this is the law of love is made clear in the O.T. and the N.T., by Moses in the O.T. and by Christ, Paul and James in the N.T. This, then, is the preceptual image which Man fulfils in line with being the image of God. To do this lie needs regeneration to true humanity (II Cor. 5:15-17). Colossians 3:9-10 is a commentary on this event and its outcome.
- (m) We can now speak of 'Christ's torah' in the sense that in him is whole counsel of God fulfilled, demonstrated and proclaimed, demanding new, obedience through the Spirit. This is the law of God, the law of Christ and the law of the Spirit operating as one. , ,
- (n) Christ thought his commands were significant (John 13:34; 14:15-23; Matt. 7:24ff.; 28:19-20; Acts 1:2). In the Book of the Revelation it is those who 'hold the testimony of Jesus and keep the commandments of God' who are the true witnesses.

The Law and All Its Glory—Torah in the O.T.

Settling the Matter of the Law

In our previous three Studies we have looked at the law in relation to justification and sanctification, noting the various statements regarding the law within the Pauline Epistles. We have also taken note of the varied attitudes to the law that exist throughout all the Epistles, and later in historical theology. We have seen the two extremes of viewing the law, namely nomism and antinomianism, both of which are not biblical. Theologians in their evaluations of the term law (*nomos*) seemed to have arrived at different conclusions regarding the law and we here state some elements of these.

Law as From Always: Is Law Perpetual?

Was there always a law, and was it the law of God? The innate bias against law that is in all human creatures cannot wholly prevent us from at least examining the nature of law, and its historicity. We are even interested in that which we do not like. It seems essential for us to ‘find out the end from the beginning’², since we have a sense of things not confined to the three dimensions and the five senses. So we ask ourselves, ‘Was law always there—from the beginning of creation?’ That law is a universal element we do not deny. All cultures have their law and laws.

Paul says in Romans 5:12-14 that prior to the law given to Moses that sin was in the world, but ‘that sin is not counted where there is no law’. He was surely not saying that no law existed before Moses, but that rather the law *as* given to Moses was not explicitly present. He was pointing to the fact of what we call ‘original sin’, saying that death reigned as a result of that. Genesis 1:14–18 shows there was a ‘ruling’ principle prior to Man’s creation and where ruling is, so is law. This might be called ‘a fixed principle’ of creation (Psa. 148: 5–6; Jer. 31:36; cf. Gen. 1:14–19). Creation is shown to be under the lordly stewardship of Man (Gen. 1:28; Psa. 8:3ff.).

We might say that the first command given to Man was that of the creational mandate (Gen. 1:28; cf. 9:1–7). Some commentators suggest that this was not in the legal sense, but as a direction for living. The second command would appear to be the prohibition against eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and this was not a restrictive law, so much as a command given for Man’s protection.

¹ Because we have not been able to complete our previous Monday Studies on time there is no nominated Study for July, 1993. What would have been the July Study is now the August one.

² In Ecclesiastes 3:11 the author wrote, He has made everything beautiful in its own time; also he has put eternity into man’s mind yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end’.

We now ask the further question, ‘Did the primal couple know what has been called, “the law of God”?’ This is a wide-reaching term capable of many meanings. It can mean ‘the law which *is* God’, that is, the law *of* His own Triune Being’, or ‘the law *from* God’, that is, a law He has devised for Man, and almost certainly along the line of true creational functionality, which He has given to Man so that he might act in harmony with the creation. In a third concept of law some suggest that the law was introduced as a result of the fall of Man, a law designed to keep man within certain limits of moral behaviour. In the first case the law of God would be the expression of His own being which was given to Man that he might live similarly, that is along such lines as does the Triune God because he, Man, was in the image of God. In the second case the law would be ‘natural’, that is, it would direct humanity along the lines of creational functionality. In the third case it would be a form of demand or legislation intended to curb evil in its moderate and outrageous forms.

The facts of history are that we can trace many laws, laws that belong to cultures, and often linked primarily with the cultures’ deities. When we ask what was law in the minds of the primeval couple, we have to say we do not know. Living in innocence and so without guilt, in union with the Creator and one another, the two would have known principles of life yet such principles might have constituted unconscious knowledge. They just would have had the mind of God, and that would have been enough. The law in that case would not have appeared in dark and difficult mode, but as a simple form regarding their relationships, behaviour and conduct.

That created humanity, even though fallen, knew of law is clear. The consciences of Pharaoh and Abimelech troubled them when the possibility of contracted adultery became clear. To speak of the evil of antediluvian Man (cf. Gen. 6:5) makes no sense if there was no law extant. In Genesis 26:5 it is said, ‘Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes and my laws’. What were these elements but those of God’s law, i.e. ‘my laws’.

This brings us to the question of what has been called ‘natural law’. To understand this Romans 2:12–16 should be looked at clearly.

Creational, Contractual and Functional or Natural Law

The Creational Covenant or Contract

Some theologians see an implicit contract in the first three chapters of Genesis. Almost certainly the writer or writers who wrote these chapters already understood the Noahic, Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants, but no explicit covenant is here mentioned. I am one of those who believe that creation was a gift of God to the created, and that it was not contractual. As ‘a faithful Creator’ (I Pet. 4:19) God would uphold His creation³. It seems to me that where creation is a gift we have a wonderful view of God. If God implied the obligation of obedience, then it was on the basis of the gift of creation and union with Him and not on the basis of grace.

Obviously the word ‘grace’ is understood variously. I see it as restorative where the condition and situation of Man and creation need salvation and renewal. Grace, of

³ I certainly recognise that most theologians think of creation as of grace, but then the Old testament words of *charis* and *chen*—generally translated as ‘loving kindness’ and ‘favour’—seem to me to be related to God’s treatment of sinful man in restorative and helpful acts. The New Testament concept of grace (*charis*) seems to be almost a compound of *chesed* and *chen*. In fact it more than that. Theologians such as Karl Barth speaks of ‘the grace of creation’ but I wonder whether it is not more correct to speak of God’s intention in grace, before the act of creation, to redeem fallen Man and so that act of creation must be understood in the light of this intention rather than as an act of grace itself.

course, is God's free act in regard to this redemptive, restorative work. The intention of God as set out in Ephesians 1:3–14 and other Scriptures shows Him to be 'the God of all grace' (I Pet. 5:10) from eternity, but I question whether that means the creation itself was an act of grace even though in God's intention it was 'with a view to' grace. It seems to me that there is something of incredible glory in the thought that He created for the sheer wonder and freedom of Himself, that which is the perpetual wonder and His free gift to all creation⁴. If the question of meriting, or not meriting does not arise then the freedom of unfallen created Man is inexpressibly beautiful. To be in the image of God because the Triune God took thought along those lines may well be the primary object of true meditation.

Unilateral Covenants and Their Laws

The covenant of God with Noah shows that He would not destroy creation and its seasonal rhythms by a further flood, and so was a covenant of perpetual providential grace. Likewise, with the promise of inheritance given to Abraham, there was grace in that covenant made unilaterally by God. Whilst law was certainly related to the Mosaic covenant, we must be careful not to read certain statements as meaning to imply, 'I will work in grace towards you **if** you do thus and thus'. Rather, 'Because I work in covenant love and grace towards you it is proper than you should respond in obedience'⁵. This is certainly the thrust of the New Covenant, as we will see later in a more extended treatment. The promise of obedience was not lacking from Israel's side (Exod. 24), but it must be seen as a response to God's grace in delivering them from Egypt (cf. Exod. 20:1–2; Deut. 5:6–7).

Covenant is in Relational Union and Communion With God

We note that in the New Testament believers are looked upon as sons of the Father, and in this way work with Him. It is also true to say that under the New Covenant believers are the children, sons of the Father, working with Him as He with them. No covenant is made by **GOD** with His People which is other than unilateral⁶, in which case it can scarcely be called a contractual covenant. If we are children then we will work in familial relationship with the Father. This also was to have been the case in the Mosaic covenant since Israel was God's son (Exod. 4:22), and Israelites were 'sons of God' (Deut. 14:1–2). Coming to see law related to the Covenant with Israel, and the New Covenant is not a difficult task. Of course the law of God related to, and was contained within covenant. Only when misguided Israelites saw law as a way of self-justification does the law take on a forbidding countenance. Only then does it 'work wrath' 'arouse sinful passions', 'delineate sin', 'bring the whole world to be guilty before God', 'kill the offender' and—at the last—mercifully become 'a

⁴ We often think of Man as being primary in creation, forgetting all other elements celestial and terrestrial. This is a false view of Man as it is of the entire creation. Man is but part of that creation. Ultimately all creation will be glorified.

⁵ We will later expand this matter of covenant grace, law and human response in a later Essay. It might appear at first sight that God's covenant with Israel was contractual. The initiation of the covenant was of grace. The outworking of it was linked with law, but then that law was a gift (Rom. 9:4). It is this point we need to develop.

⁶ Later we will discuss the matter of keeping God's law and commandments and whether such obedience is monergistic (of God only) or synergistic (of the combined working of God and Man). Here we observe that if synergistic then Man has a part in his own redemption and his holy way of life.

schoolmaster to bring us to Christ'. The full revelation of this 'lethal' aspect of the law awaited Christ's coming and the apostolic exposition of it.

The Natural, Functional Law

We need to enquire whether or not there has always been a law extant in history. This law is said to exist by some who call it 'natural'. Here Romans 2:12–16 needs to be examined.

All who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. 13 For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. 14 When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law 15 They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them 16 on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

We need to be careful in our exegesis of this passage. Some have taken it to mean without qualification that all Gentiles have *the* law, or *a* law written on their hearts and, although this may well be the case, it is not exactly what Paul is saying. Certainly 'without the law' (v.12) must mean at least 'without the Mosaic law'. It has been argued that Paul is really referring to Christian Gentiles but this seems to be an inventive way out of the problem. Paul is saying that irrespective of whether those under discussion are Jews and Gentiles it boils down to the doing or practice of things contained in the law and not just possessing and reading the law as the Jews did.

When verse 14 says, 'do *by nature* what the law requires' we cannot claim that all Gentiles have this law. In fact it may be argued that *none* has it, but that some Gentiles actually do things the law requires (cf. 2:25–29) without even knowing they are doing things of the Mosaic law. Verse 15 does not say *the law* is written on (or, 'in', *en*) their hearts, but 'what the law *requires*' is written in their hearts⁷. At the point of action they come to see this requirement, and in a sense discover it to themselves. They then either do it, or do not do it, and in respect of this their conscience acts out its judicial capacity. The question then arises, 'How are these *requirements* present in their hearts?' and the answer must be that something is already implanted in their hearts, the *something* which they now consciously recognise. This must mean that the Gentiles apart from the Jewish law confront themselves with some things of God's law, so that they are not against law, or without law but have a sense of God's law without knowing its as the law of Moses. When we say 'a sense of God's law' we do not mean that the whole of that law is consciously present and known to them, but that some of its requirements are known, and are carried out by some Gentiles.

We need now to go back to 'they do by nature what the law requires'. 'By nature' (*phusei*) is a phrase on which some build the idea of 'natural law'. They assert that folk 'naturally' understand what is right and attempt to do it. If there is a biblical doctrine of 'natural law' then it is that universally there is a moral consciousness of God's law. Some scholars say this can be known without the revelation of the

⁷ It might be reasonably argued that 'what the law requires' equals the law. Romans 2:26 reasons that if a non-Jew 'keeps the precepts of the law' (*ta dikaiomata tou nomou*) then he is virtually as a Jew, as one who keeps the law. Perhaps Paul is speaking hypothetically here, but if not then he seems to believe that there are those who understand the *dikaiomata* (ordinances) of the law, in which case 2:14 could amount to 'the law written on (in) their hearts'.

Scriptures, and Roman Catholic scholars with Thomas Aquinas as their basis follow the line that God's law is generally known and ought to be obeyed, even without the need of revelation.

Perhaps it is better to drop the term 'natural law' and use the term 'creational law'. In Romans 1:18 Paul speaks of the wicked suppressing the truth, in 1:26–27 of men and women having 'unnatural relations', indicating that what is 'natural' and 'unnatural' is known. 'Suppressing the truth' (v.18) seems to infer knowledge of the truth. Likewise 1:32 speaks of sinners 'knowing God's decree'. If we recognise that when God had created all things He saw they were 'very good' (Gen. 1:31), then we can say that they were functionally good, and such functionality equals total morality⁸. With the fall came loss of will to do God's will. All things would be seen from the point of view of Man's autonomy. Hence the law would be known, but opposed, and so a keen loss of the sense of it would ensue. In this sense human beings both know and do not (will not) know the law. Nevertheless its requirements are known, but such knowledge is debased.

Because of the ontological order of things, creational law must obtain, and it must always confront humanity in all its cultures and religions. Having said this, we may not claim that a law whose requirements are 'written in the hearts' of non-covenantal people equals the *new*⁹ law of Jeremiah 31:31–34, and the new understanding of law implanted in the heart by God's visitation with His regenerating Spirit as in Ezekiel 36:24–28; cf. 37:1–14). If we see a creational law as the ontological order of things then we can recognise that Man is really 'a law creature' no matter how much he may disobey that law.

Finally, we need to see that if there is an ontological order of law, then it cannot be divorced from relationality. Man in the image of God is relationally united with Him. Law essentially has to do with relationality and is not to be confused with forensic legislation. This latter element seems to show itself when the law is disobeyed. Thus Paul says, 'The law is good if one uses it lawfully, understanding this that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient.' Are we permitted then to claim that the unfallen primal couple lived in an innocence of law as a legal entity, and that their relationship with God was without that consciousness of law which makes post-fall Man live in constant uneasiness because of his conscience which has—perforce—come into action?

Summary of Law From the Beginning

⁸ Likewise Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, 'You have made everything beautiful in its own time'. The word beautiful can be translated as 'suitable', 'functional' or 'functional' so that in the light of Genesis 1:31 everything is 'very good', that is, functionally good.

⁹ It is doubtful whether we can equate the law of Moses with the—so-called—law of the New Covenant. The writer of Hebrews certainly points to the *dikaioma* of the Mosaic law (9:2; 9:10) but he elevates the new covenant above the old, and speaks of the old having only a shadow of the reality that has come with the Mediator Christ. Thus the new ordinances of the New Covenant far transcend the old. In this sense the law must be radically renewed. Probably we should say that the understanding of the law of God is thus radically renewed in those who have been redeemed. At the same time it would be wrong to reject the 'old' law as though 'the shadow' and 'the reality' were not of the one piece. If the law of Moses was only a shadow of things to come, it was, nevertheless, a dynamic shadow!

The Law Relational in God and Man, and Not Just Legislation

If we follow my thesis that the divine law is ‘the law of God’ then we will mean it is not simply the law *from* God to Man—though it *is* that—but that it is the law that obtains *in* God, or ‘the law of the Trinity’¹⁰, the law of the nature of God. Man being made in the image of God would have this law innately present and so to be echoed by him, that is, outworked and manifested in his life. In this sense the law has always—and must always—obtain. From the manward point of view we could call this ‘creational law’ for it is here that Man meets it, and we may say it fits his unfallen conscience so that he lives in it by nature.¹¹ As we have said above, this is not to be confused with the theological idea of ‘natural law’, which is ‘A moral order divinely implanted in mankind and accessible to all persons through human reason’.¹² I use the term ‘creational law’ to distinguish it from the theological idea of natural law, though, in effect, it may in some elements seem to be one with it.

What we have to avoid is thinking of the law as a code or a set of laws set out by God for Man, being in itself an eternal theological entity, in no way inherent in God, but detached from Him, and constantly confronting Man as a block of legislation. Of course, where a person is a sinner, this is precisely how it will appear to him or her.

‘From the Beginning’

That law is from the beginning is linked with Jesus’ statement regarding divorce that ‘from the beginning it was not so’. This could also obtain in Genesis 2:1–3 of the law of the Sabbath. The fact that creation was made ‘functionally good’ (Gen. 1:31) would mean that law was primarily a functional matter rather than a legislative code. The creational mandate of Genesis 1:28f. was preceded by God’s blessing and the mandate contained the program for the human race. The command of Genesis 2:16–17 was certainly law and contained the idea of choice between the law’s blessing and cursing, and this principle of both blessing and cursing is found in all law. Ideas of moral law are certainly found in the prehistory account of Genesis chapters 1–11, or the sin of Man and the judgement of the Flood would make no sense¹³. Likewise in the patriarchal times there was—as we have mentioned—moral sense linked with judgement in the cases of Pharaoh (Gen. 12) and Abimelech (Gen. 20) in regard to Abraham’s wife, Sarah. Of Abraham himself God said, ‘Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes and my laws’ (Gen. 26:5) so that Abraham and the other patriarchs knew law. Paul’s statement of Romans 5:13 must

¹⁰ By ‘the law of the Trinity’ we simply mean that life and action that obtains in the fellowship of the Triune God, the life of the Three Persons in unity. We may use the term ‘law’ or ‘principle’ for that. It is out of this that the law of God flows to Man, but, later, we will have occasion to enlarge on this matter.

¹¹ In I John 2:7 John says, Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment which you had from the beginning: the old commandment is the word that you have heard’. What is ‘the old commandment’ and what is ‘from the beginning’? Is it the old commandments (*entole*) of Leviticus 19:18 or is the beginning the time of creation (cf. Job 38:7). Is love as law inherent in creation? These are reasonable questions., especially in the light of the comments on the law by Jesus, Paul and James.

¹² J. Van Egan in an article ‘Natural Law’ in *The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* p.751 (ed. W.A. Elwell, Baker, 1984). William Hordern in Alan Richardson’s *A Dictionary of Christian Theology* (SCM, 1969) p. says, ‘Man by his own reason can gain considerable knowledge of the ethically good without any reference to God’s revelation’.

¹³ Note that Paul takes up the idea of man’s sinfulness in Romans 1:18–32. For Paul it is clear that ‘where there is no law there is no transgression’, hence the term ‘lawlessness’ (*anomia*) has meaning.

mean that no *Mosaic* law obtained from creation to the time of Moses. Creational law has always obtained¹⁴.

Covenantal Law: the Glory of *Torah*

The Context of the Mosaic Law

We cannot begin to discuss God's law in Israel apart from the context and surround in which it was extant and operative, for in Romans 9:4 Paul says, 'They are Israelites, and to them belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ. God who is over all be blessed for ever.' When we think on these things we see what a blessed people was Israel, and the thought of them laboriously applying themselves to legislated law is a false and deficient one. In all the glories given them, the law was one supported one in its context of adoption, glory and worship. If we take the description of the giving of the law in Deuteronomy 33:1–5 then it was indeed the 'royal law' the law of the King of Israel, the King of the entire creation.

The Personal Giving of Law in God in Covenant

Leaving aside the critical questions of the development of Israel's law¹⁵ it is clear that the people of Israel were the people of God, and this in the unilateral covenant of grace. Israel belonged to God and He spoke to the people His Ten Words (Deut. 4:12-14),

Then the Lord spoke to you out of the midst of the fire: you heard the sound of words, but saw no form; there was only a voice. And he declared to you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, that is, the ten commandments [lit. 'the ten words']; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone. And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and ordinances, that you might do them in the land which you are going over to possess.

Without going into detail about the various ordinances and statutes we need to see that the 'Ten Words' are the heart of all covenant law¹⁶. The main word for law was *torah* and it had a history from the time of the making of the covenant to the days of the New Testament. This we cannot develop here but what we do with are the ideas contained in *torah*, the primary of which are 'instruction', 'teaching' and 'guidance'. When *torah* is translated by *nomos* (Greek: see the Septuagint) and *lex* (Latin: see the Vulgate) it tends to take on the colour of the new language, so that we may think of law as primarily legislation, and even though it may include that, yet that is not the main emphasis. We need to see the uses of *torah* in the Pentateuch, the Former and Latter Prophets,

¹⁴ We do not here take up the idea of creational law as related to creation itself, but the link between human lawlessness and transgression and the state of the material creation is certainly a theme of Old Testament teaching. This is a vast subject on its own, and should be followed up.

¹⁵ These are dealt with well in James A. Sanders' *Torah and Canon* (Fortress Press, 1972) and articles in the one volume Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Eerdmans, 1985, pp. 646–655), and Colin Brown's *The New International Dictionary of the New Testament* (Paternoster, 1976, Vol. II. pp. 438–451).

¹⁶ In previous Studies on this theme of law we have seen that God spoke to His people. He was in communication with them, relationally. So the law must be understood by the 'I am the Lord your God and you are my people', for to look at law outside this personal relationship and direct speech is to fail to understand it.

the Psalms and the Wisdom books. From perusing these we gather the rich meaning of *torah*. James A. Sanders (*Torah and Canon*, Fortress, 1972, pp 2–3) says

The larger sense [Old Testament revelation generally] of the word Torah is older. Within the Old Testament use it denotes bodies of instruction or teachings of priests, prophets and sages, and even of parental advice to children; but it appears that the oldest and most common meaning is something approximate to what we mean by the word ‘revelation’. Priestly and prophetic oracles of the oldest vintage are called torahs. And in the case of the prophets, whole collections of oracles or systems of thought (as in Isaiah) are called torahs. . . . Recognising the non legalistic aspect of the use of the word Torah is an aid to understanding how even the Pentateuch is basically a narrative, a story, rather than a code of law. A growing emphasis on the Pentateuch or Torah as a revealed set of laws forever binding—even when the social, political and cultic institutions in which they were originally operated were destroyed or significantly were transformed—is in a sense the history of the origins and development of postexilic (after 540 B.C.) Judaism.

If we see *torah* only as an inflexible set of rules we will surely miss its true nature. That facts that Moses told the people, ‘And the Lord commanded me that time to teach you statutes and ordinances, that you might do them in the land which you are going over to possess,’ must mean (a) that they did not necessarily practice all—if any—of these statutes prior to going to the land, and that (b) these elements might change with change of location, such as in the Exile. It is good, then, to see how the *torah* was taught by parents (Deut. 6:4–9) interpreted by priests (Jer. 18:18; Ezra 7:6, 10¹⁷; cf. Neh. 8:2ff.) and prophets, e.g. Micah 6:8 where the law is known to all, and Amos 2:4ff. and Isa. 1:27–28 where Israel is in apostasy to the law. The prophets do not make new law-demands but new demands concerning the *torah*. The prophets even predict the law will spread to the Gentiles (Isa. 2:1–1–4; Micah 4:1–3). Israel’s punishments in breaking the law were already mentioned in the Deuteronomic code, and so no judgements of God are ‘unlawful’, that is, arbitrary. The blessings and the cursings of the law are overtly stated. All of this is, then, *torah*. Calvin, commenting on Psalm 119:153 (‘Look on my affliction and deliver me, for I do not forget thy law’) says, ‘Under this one word—’law”—there is no doubt but that David comprehended the sum of all the doctrine which God gave to his church’. In that sense all that God commands, and to which He calls in covenant is *torah*. We might add to Calvin that where *torah* is *dabar*—’Thy word is very pure: therefore they servant loveth it’ (Psa. 119:140, AV)—then certainty comes to the lover of the law.

Coming to Know God’s True Law

That law was given in grace as the preamble to the stating of the ‘Ten Words’ is found in Deuteronomy 5:6 and Exodus 20:2 show. This preamble is filled out when we look at all the saving acts of God for His people in delivering them from being slave race in Egypt to a free people in Canaan. The Feast of the Passover was intended to be a dynamic reminder of grace which preceded the giving of the law. Nor did the giving of the law in any way neutralise or cancel grace, since the whole *torah* contained within

¹⁷ ‘For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach his statutes and ordinances in Israel’.

itself the sacrificial system which was the way of grace for sinning members of the covenant.

Law is Covenant Story

We better understand the law of the Mosaic covenant when we see it as ‘story’, since it grew out the events of the story of the covenant with the fathers (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob). Deuteronomy 4:5–14 makes the points that ‘your wisdom and your understanding’ will come from *doing* the law, and the nations around will say, “For what great nation is there that has a God so near to it as the Lord our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there that has statutes and ordinances so righteous as all this law which I set before you this day?”¹⁸

Walter Brueggemann in his book *The Creative Word* (Fortress Press, 1982) points out in a chapter entitled ‘The Disclosure of Binding’ (pp. 14–39) that the knowledge of the law came to children when they asked questions and the answers were given (Exod. 12:26; 13:8; 13:14; Deut. 6:20–21; Josh. 4:6; 4:21). The story—or stories of Israel—constituted the answers to the questions. This was a rich way of pedagogy or teaching. The rituals of the feasts were also stories that taught. Thus the law was related to Israel’s daily living, and was authoritative, not because it was a set of legislation but brought the harmony which accorded with the functional and moral way of life. The modern idea of ‘situational ethics’ or working our way through ethical situations by a sense of what is ‘good’ or ‘not good’ was foreign to those under law. They had the assurance being properly directed. Whilst their knowledge of the law was existential, yet their decision regarding what they should do was not.

The Psalms and the Law

Certainly Psalms 1, 19 and 119 show that men and women under the covenant loved the law of God. We could say that the law being functional human beings would be more at ease in obeying than disobeying it. In the latter case they would be ‘going against the grain’, living life perversely.

If we would be attracted by the law as the mind and will of God for His people with whom He was in communion, then the reading of Psalms 1, 19 and 119 will indeed be a good aide. Just to love God with all one’s being, is surely to walk in His law¹⁸. We come to know the *torah* of God and desire to live by it. Another way to know the law and love it is to see the attitude of the New Testament writers to it. This we will later proceed to do, but the O.T. accounts of blessings received in Israel when it obeyed and cursings when it did not, tell us of the dynamic nature of law. It is primarily relational (a) towards God, and (b) towards others, and all the creation as one meets it. We will now try to extract some of the matter of law-love and law-obedience by looking at the three classic Psalms connected with the law, namely 1, 19 and 119. These are not the only ‘law Psalms’ (cf. Psalm 37), and they are also about wisdom as they are about law.

¹⁸ J.A. Motyer says (*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Baker, 1984, article on ‘Law’ pp. 623–625), ‘Man is the living, personal image of God; the law is the written preceptual image of God’ (op. cit. p. 624). By this he means that Man is fulfilling his true image by obedience to the law, and such is really obedience to God, yet it is also more in that Man is acting according to the image in which God has made him (cf. Col. 3:9–10). This explains the joy of obeying the law, for the person is thus being renewed in knowledge after the image of Him Who created him’.

Psalm 1:1–3

In this Psalm we recognise the person of Romans 7:22 who delights in the law of God after the inward man'. Meditation¹⁹ is a great theme of Scripture and in Psalm 1 the man meditates day and night, doing what James calls 'looking into', i.e. gazing earnestly and thoughtfully into this perfect law of liberty (1:25). The meditator draws his life from a subterranean supply, and is continually fruitful. The 'subterranean supply' is, of course, God. Psalms 19 and 119 reveal what is this great source of life—God Himself in His covenant action towards His people, His true worshippers. This man of the law seems to live in an ideal situation whereas the Psalmist of 119 has elements of oppression and persecution which come upon him from his enemies, and here and in reading him we hear traces of laments.

Psalm 19:7–14

Here we have the words 'law', 'testimony', 'precepts', 'commandment', and 'ordinances' all virtually synonyms, and which we will examine more particularly in Psalm 119, below. The law is the second section of this Psalm, the first being about the creation in which it is set and to which it relates for its 'speech' (*millah*) goes out to the end of the earth (cf. Rom. 10:18: *rhema*).

The law revives (restores) the soul, makes wise the simple (foolish person), is upright and rejoices the heart, is pure, enlightening the eyes. All of this reminds us the *torah* is not confined to a set of rules, but God's way of life for the true members of the covenant. All the elements of the law are sweeter than much fine honey, and 'in keeping of them there is great reward'—an important factor, though in no way a means of self-justification. This reward is inherent in the practice of the ordinances (cf. Deut. 10:13). The law-lover knows the dynamics of the law for bringing out the nature of sins and errors, and applies to God for power over evil, and for the joy of blamelessness. Such thoughts are his meditations—doubtless by day and by night—and he prays that they be acceptable to God. A most joyous Psalm!

Psalm 119

This is the doyen of all law-psalms²⁰ and has drawn forth many devotional and practical treatments²¹. As in Psalm 19 there are many terms which are almost synonymous for the word 'law' or 'torah' which is itself used 14 times in the Psalm we are studying.

¹⁹ Meditation is a theme made much of in Scripture. See my *The Christian Meditator* (NCPI, 1986) which speaks of the Hebrew modes of meditation and the objects of the same, namely God, His Law and His works, along with the prayer that such meditation be acceptable.

²⁰ Artur Weiser *The Psalms* (SCM, 1962, p. 740) writes, The statements concerning persecution and oppression (vv. 61, 78, 84ff., 110, etc.) are to be taken seriously; and it is only if we understand them as being at the root of the poet's utterances that we can apprehend the strength and comfort which God's word and his law impart to the life of the poet. They mean so much to him who has been brought low through suffering and has been enlightened by law . . . It is possible to deduce from the psalm as fully fledged 'theology' of the law, in both its theoretical and practical aspects.'

²¹ See C.H. Spurgeon's treatment of this Psalm in his 'Treasury of David', also that of Charles Bridges (*Psalm 119*, New Edition, Banner of Truth, 1974, first published in 1927). In his sermons on Psalm 119 (verse 153) Calvin observed, 'Under this one word—'law"—there is no doubt but that David comprehended the sum of all the doctrine which God gave to his church'. This is an important observation for it may also mean that all the doctrine which God gives to His church—including the gospel and the New Testament laws and commands—are likewise the true Torah. To say this is not so to mingle law and gospel that they are indistinguishable theologically but to say that all are Torah in the sense of being the will of God for Man.

Law (*torah*): we have discussed this word at some length yet it has a long history that we have not as yet covered. The following synonyms relate to it, but its general meanings of *torah* are ‘show’, ‘indicate’, ‘direct’, and ‘teach’.

Way (*dehrek*): a road; course of action; a manner of life. God’s moral demands on covenant people which comport with His nature.

Testimony (*edah, eduth*): witness; testimony. God acts, doing works, and these are His testimonies. The word also has the sense of the sense of ‘covenant stipulations’ (cf. Psa. 132:12). The ark is called ‘the ark of the testimony’ (Exod. 25:22) because it contained the ‘testimony’ or tablets of the law that constituted the basic covenant formulation. It is an intelligible corpus of truth, which, when we ponder it, will show us how to live.

Precept (*piqqud*): orders, precepts, mandate; commandment; statute. Rules for living that fit with the covenant. See Psalm 19:8; 103 :18).

Statutes (*choq*): decreed limit; portion; decree; commandment, ordinance; custom. Commands written down for permanent observance.

Commandment (*mitsvah*): commandment; law; precept; ordinance. Such as we find in the Deuteronomic instructions involving God’s *personal will* for His people. ‘A specific instruction from God to be obeyed rather than a special law to be observed’ (R.K. Harrison, ISBE, Eerdmans, Vol. III, p. 77).

Judgements (*mishpat*): a law; ordinances; a divine decree, but with the idea of judging in accordance with these, rendering true justice, so ‘just rulings’. See also English translation ‘ordinances’ (*mishpat*) rule or rulings of law; command; decree.

Word (*dabar*): in this case the word refers to God’s word which was His communication of His covenant will to His people (Exod. 34:1, 28; Deut. 4:13), and having the idea of the *revelatory* nature of the commands given²². In Deuteronomy 4:13 ‘ten commandments’ should be ‘ten words’—God speaking directly to His people that being a revelation of Himself. Notice the use of *dabar* is in verses **9, 16, 17, 25, 28, 42, 43, 49, 57, 65, 74, 81, 89, 101, 105, 107, 114, 130, 139, 147; 160, 161, 169.** (23 times).

Conclusion to the Words used for Law, Especially in Psalm 119

If we consider these synonyms we see they dovetail together and make a body of truth that is directive, hortatory, explanatory, enlightening, revelatory and which declares the will of God for Man. Remembering man is the image of God then it means that image can be given the action of life to fill out and accomplish the will of God and so also its own image.

The Substance of Psalm 119

A commentary on this Psalm demands much space and time. What we can detect sensibly are,

²² Perhaps something of a parallel to the idea given by Paul in I Corinthians 4:1 where he speaks of the servants of Christ being ‘stewards of the mysteries of God’. The mystery (*mysterion*) is something intelligible to the reader, but now known except through the Spirit (I Cor. 2:14). Thus *dabar* (*logos*) is always dynamic and never static. We tend to think of law as static, an observance rather than a sharing in the ongoing dynamic will of God.

It is a psalm of beatitudes for those who walk in the law of the Lord (1,2, 56). God's 'Torah' is a constant delight to those who love it (14, 16, 24, 35, 47, 77, 92, 143, 174). This delight is indispensable, without it, in affliction, the Psalmist would perish.

It spells out the necessity of following God's law, statutes, precepts and commandments (4). This seems to be the one verse which speaks of the law as being commanded so it is not 'a law laid down'—as such—but all its statutes (etc.) constitute the way of life of the covenant members (105). There is an almost involuntary delight in obedience (32, 45) for the Psalmist *loves* the law (47, 48, 113). To him the whole earth is full of the love of the Lord (64). The reason for all this is that 'Your promise is well tried, and your servant loves it' (v.140) which in the AV is 'Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.'

Law-keeping is a preventative against sinning (9ff.), therefore knowing the law is essential, and even laying it up in the heart a continuing necessity. All his observance is from the heart (34–36) but this requires the gift of understanding, the leading of God, and His power to incline the heart of the Psalmist to the law.

Keeping the law will draw forth the hatred and enmity of others who do not keep it (51ff., 85ff., 95f., 110ff.). They will go to any lengths to destroy the godly person.

the godly person will know times of dryness ('my soul cleaves to the dust', 25f.) and so always needs—and asks for—the word (*dabar*) of God to make things real to faith, and to bring freshness to his spirit. The word brings life even in the midst of affliction (107). This *dabar* is eternal, immutable and God is as His word (89–91).

The law is the wisdom God teaches. In verses 98–100 The Psalmist says, Thy commandments make me wiser than my enemies. . . I have more understanding than all my teachers. . . I understand more than the aged,' all because he meditates on the law and keeps its precepts. Wisdom is knowing God's will and doing it immediately.

The Psalmist does not think of God apart from His law and all His action is part of 'Torah'. So God afflicts in order to restore and vivify (67-72). In verse 120 he says 'My flesh trembles for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgements,' yet he is anxious for God to visit him with every judgement He has warned He will give.

We could go on with other descriptive details but our main point is made—true covenant members loved the law of the Lord and saw it as a source of life, as *the* way of living. We must remind ourselves that all such obedience was worked out in relation with the covenant God.

Conclusion to our Study of Torah of Israel

In actual fact, our Study has been rather sketchy²³ for we have not followed the history of Torah in the life of Israel from the time of the Exodus to the time of the final Exile, nor have we given much coverage to the judgements which came to Israel for breaking the *torah*, as also the blessings which came with repentance. Certainly we have scarcely touched upon the ceremonial, hygienic and sacrificial elements of the Torah. In one sense all Israel's history relates to its attitude to the law. What we have established is that the principle of law has always obtained and by nature of the case always will.

²³ There are numerous treatments of the Torah in Bible and Theological dictionaries, and a vast number of books have been written. I am presently working on a volume under the title 'The Glory of God's Law'. It might be useful for readers to take up my Living Faith Study No. 28 *The True Nature of Law*, which might prove helpful.

There has always been ‘a *torah* of God’ extant in the world, whether it has been for covenant people or not. The term ‘moral law’ has often been given to this *torah*. It simply means that lawlessness is not functionally possible to be sustained in any culture. Even so, we cannot have a full view of the glory of the law until we come to the New Testament. There we find a fascinating exposition of law under the statements of ‘the law of God’, ‘the law of Christ’ and ‘the law of the Spirit’. These we will examine in our next paper.

The Law and All Its Glory—II : Law in the New Testament

Introductory Note to this Study

(i) *In the April Study entitled 'The Law, Justification, and Sanctification—I' we covered something of Law in the O.T. and, more fully, Law in the N.T. under the following section headings,*

Old Testament

The Law Rooted in the Nature of God and in His Covenant and in Faith. The Law Before Moses The Law for Israel was Only for Faith and the Life of Faith. Covenant and the 'Ten Words' The Law Rooted in the Nature and Person of the Living God. Law, Dynamic, Functional and not Merely Prescriptive.

New Testament *Christ the End of the Law. Christ the Fulfiller of the Law is as the Law Incarnate.*

In the May Study entitled 'The Law, Justification and Sanctification—II' we had a long commentary (pp. 2–9) on Romans 8:1–11 in which we covered the principle of 'the law of sin and death'—God's law—becoming, through the Cross and the Spirit, 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus'. This ought to be read again conjunction with the present Study as it vitally concerns it. In hindsight, I realise the Series should have been better planned.

Introduction: Viewing Law in the New Testament

It is essential that we come to an understanding of God's law in the New Testament because of the many prevailing variant views that obtain. As we have seen these are linked with justification and sanctification and a deficient understanding of law can have unfortunate consequences for Christian understanding and living.

Some New Testament Views of the Law Especially Related to Paul's Epistles

In our previous discussion on the way in which the following variant views have been developed by looking at what Christ says regarding the law, and the discussion of it in regard to the gospel which Paul uses in the light of the teaching of justification and sanctification.

(i) The law is eternal: it will never be finished. Christ said he would not abrogate it (Matt. 5:17–18), and Paul said as long as a person lives that one is under the law (Rom. 7:1). Therefore believers are under law but not in regard to its penalty for,

having died with Christ, they are justified from sin (Rom. 6:7). They must fulfil the ‘just demands of the law’¹ (Rom. 8:4), not for justification but because that is a right demand for one who has been regenerated.

- (ii) The law as spoken of in the New Testament, and especially in the Epistles was the Mosaic law, and has no reference to Gentiles² and especially Gentiles who have been justified by grace through faith, and so the Christian does not have to think in terms of this law except in an antiquarian sense.
- (iii) Christ has made an end to the law by fulfilling it, rendering obedience to it and by bearing its judgement (Rom. 10:4; cf. Rom. 5:12–21; cf. Col. 2:14–15; I Cor. 15:55–56). If Christ has fulfilled the law and so made an end to it, then the believer is not under law.
- (iv) An extension of ‘(iii) is that believers—those justified by faith—are no longer under law but only under grace (Rom. 6:14; cf. I Cor. 15:55–56). This is because they have died to law by the body of Christ (Rom. 7:4; cf. Gal. 2:19; Rom. 7:11) and so have been discharged from it (Rom. 7:6). Whilst this raises the question of obedience to commands God may give explicitly or implicitly, yet it helps to prevent the justified person from re-entering the old ‘justification by works of the law’ syndrome.
- (v) The law and the gospel are distinct entities, never to be confused, never to be fused, and in a sense may even be opposed each to the other. The gospel is not *with a view to* obeying the law for if this were so then obedience to the law might constitute the continuance of the gospel and take away its grace. The law’s ultimate purpose is to be a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, after which its function is finished. The one who has been brought to Christ does not stay under law as a schoolmaster or pedagogue, but henceforth lives in grace, or under grace.
- (vi) The believer is saved from the judgement of the law by grace, in which case ‘law-way’—the system of self justification by works of the law—is seen to be futile. Even so, the law of God still represents the will of God and its just requirements ought to be fulfilled in the believer. In other words obedience to God’s law is still the true way of life for Man (cf. Pss. 1; 19; 119), though, of course, it is not obeyed in order to maintain, sustain or retain justification, for this act of imputation of righteousness to the believer never depends upon obedience to the law. Any obedience would issue from and depend—in some way—upon the justification of the person.

It can be seen that these six variant views of the law all have something in common. It is certain that in some cases Paul’s reference to the law is to the law of

¹ Rightly speaking Romans 8:4 does not demand the just requirement of the law to be fulfilled, but says ‘that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us’ which may well mean we are not the subjects of fulfilling the law so much as powers may be moving which accomplish this in us..

² Paul’s statement of Romans 2:14 confronts us, ‘When Gentiles who have not the law [of Moses] do by nature what the law [of Moses] requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have [the law of Moses]’. If this translation is correct then it does not necessarily mean any Gentile has actually done what the law of Moses sets forth, but *if* there were such a one—or ones—then that one’s obedience would be counted as though he were a Jew obeying (cf. 2:25–29). It seems to me that Paul is *not* saying that all Gentiles have a law written on their hearts which is similar to the law given to Israel, in covenant. It is the possibility that such could happen to any Gentile which stops the obedience of an Israelite being unique and exclusive. Perhaps behind this passage lies some knowledge of the creational law which may be common to both Jew and Gentile, but which, perhaps, is crystallised for the Jew in the law God has given him in the covenant.

Moses which has nothing to do with the converted Gentile. Often the apostle refers to law as a general moral principle in which case it is not unrelated to the Gentile (e.g. Rom. 2:14ff.). It is clear from Romans 6:14 that believers are ‘not under law but under grace’. Yet does this statement mean believers are not *under* (or, *in*) any law? Has the law been abrogated because Christ has fulfilled it, i.e. ‘is the end of the law’ (Rom. 10:4)? Does the law of God no longer obtain, and if it does, does it not obtain for believers? Does it work end when it acts as the pedagogue to bring to Christ? These are questions that the 6 views above must raise.

Pastorally we need to have the apostolic understanding of ‘the law of God’ (e.g. Rom. 8:5–8), ‘the law of Christ’ (I Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2) and ‘the law of the Spirit [of life in Christ Jesus]’ (Rom. 8:4) so that we may know how to teach regarding the life of holiness, avoiding both nomistic and antinomian emphases.

Comment: It must be patently clear to us that if these variant views have emerged in our research into the matter of the law of God, then they must be seen in the context of the enquiry we have made. Without realising it we may have gained the impression that the law *per se* is an enemy of Man, instead of seeing it as the problem which sinners experience before the law. Even then, if the sinner could realise it he/she would know that it is not the enemy of anyone who wishes to do God’s will. Paul could call the law the law ‘which promises life’ and is ‘just’, ‘holy’ ‘good’ and ‘spiritual’ so that it must be of exceptional quality. Because Man is made in the image of God and because the law is the preceptual image of God³, then to obey law must be a matter of being congruent with the Creator. Being congruent with his Maker is all that Man is about, for in thus living he is doing the will of His Creator. In this he is his true self as a human being. The way in which the true Israelite loved the law, meditated in it day and night, drew his life from it, and accepted all its elements of blessing, chastisement, and even cursing, shows us the law was—and ever is—a wonder of God⁴. So then, we must make our way towards this comprehension of it, and realise that the law and the gospel are not antagonistic or in opposition to one another, but are both from God, and relate to His most perfect will. If what we might call the lethal view of the law is abhorrent to the sinner then that one must keep in mind that Paul is not demeaning the law and exalting the gospel against it, but is showing the work the law must do in order to bring us to Christ. This is what Luther called its ‘alien work’ as against its ‘proper work’, that is, its natural work in the lives of those whose consciences are clear.

The Glory of the Law in the New Testament

Although it is not a simple method I propose to try to deal with God’s law in the New Testament under the three heads of ‘The Law of God’, ‘The Law of Christ, and ‘The Law of the Spirit’. In doing so I realise they are really the one law, but believe we can show them to be that one law by using this method.

³ This is a point made by J.A. Motyer in his article ‘Law’ in Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (Baker Book House, 1984, p. 624). He writes, ‘Man is the living, personal image of God: the law is the written preceptual image of God. The intention of Leviticus 19 is declared at the outset: ““You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy” (vs 2). The Lord longs for his people to live in his image, and to that end he has given them his law’. We will take up this point again in our Study.

⁴ See our previous Study entitled ‘The Law and All its Glory—Torah in the O.T.’.

(i) The Law of God

The 'law of God' could possibly be taken in two ways, the preposition 'of' being either objective or subjective. It could even be taken as both. In the first instance it would then mean that the law of God is the law innate to God, the way He is and works, that is, His character and actions. In the second case it could mean the law is a law given to Man from God. If both are really the one, then it would mean God is—so to speak—His own *Torah*, and from this gives *torah* to Man commensurate with the fact that Man is made in His image. If so then this would lend some substance to what J.A. Motyer wrote⁵, 'Man is the living, personal image of God: the law is the written preceptual image of God. The intention of Leviticus 19 is declared at the outset, "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (vs. 2). The Lord longs for his people to live in his image, and to that end he has given them his law.' Previously Motyer has said, 'all that God demands of Man flows from what He is, so that God commands, "You must this or that because of what I am"; every precept of the law is a reflection of "what I am".' This certainly accords with God's giving of the 'ten words' preceded as they were—and had to be—with the 'I am the Lord your God' so that God spoke directly, relationally and covenantally to them, adding His declaration of saving grace, 'who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.'

In the New Testament none of God's essential *torah*⁶ is abrogated. We will deal with this fact under the heading of 'The Law of Christ', but the themes of sin, judgement, justification and sanctification have no meaning if there is no law of God. We have seen that what Luther calls 'the alien work' of the law is such as to bring knowledge of sin, arouse the sinful passions, delineate sin, work wrath and bring death to the sinner. The good outcome of this action is that the law is a pedagogue to bring us to Christ. These terrifying actions of the law might cause us to dread it and see no good in it⁷. However Romans 7:4–6 tells us that through Christ's death we have died to the condemnation and death of the law that we might 'serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit. In this seventh chapter Paul then describes the law as 'that which promised life', holy and just and good' and 'spiritual' and says 'For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self', This law, then, in its proper work is beautiful.

In Romans 8:1–8 it is obvious that when the believer has the just requirement of the law fulfilled in him (v.4) that he pleases God (v.8). In all this we are back in the atmosphere of Psalms 1, 19 and 119. Throughout the first 8 chapters of Romans Paul has pursued the matter of the law, speaking in 2:26 of keeping the precepts (*ta diakaiomata*) of the law, in 3:31 of upholding the law, and in 8:4 of having the righteous requirement (*diakaioma*) of the law fulfilled in us, inferring that those walking in the Spirit know this obedience to the law.

We could leave the matter of the law as 'God's law' here, but John refers time and again in his Epistles to God's *commandments* even though sometimes it is difficult to distinguish specifically whether they are the commandments of the Father or the Son

⁵ His article 'Law' in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Baker, 1984, p.624).

⁶ The term 'essential *torah*' calls for explanation. We could say, at this point, that it is the Decalogue, or we could say it is the will of God for His people in creation and covenant, but we still do not define it. Certainly Christ, Paul and James seem to sum up the essence and spirit of the Decalogue as the law of love to God and neighbour, but throughout the Gospels and Epistles this outworking of love is given in terms of *paranases* and *parcloes*, and this really adds up to 'the essential *torah*'.

⁷ See also I Timothy 1:8–11 for what some of the Reformers called 'the first use of the law'.

(cf. I John 2:3–6;5:2–3) and he speaks of those who sin as ‘lawless’. In the Revelation the term ‘the commandments of God’ is used in 12:17 and 14:12.

(ii) The Law of Christ

This term is used in I Corinthians 6:20–21 and Galatians 6:2 and in its context is obviously the action of love. Yet the term might also apply in a number of ways to Christ. It could be applied to him being wholly in the image of God in his perfect obedience to Him—something of which J.A. Motyer was speaking. A line we could pursue is that those redeemed follow this law of Christ in that they are ‘being renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him’ (Col. 3:10). These ideas have much to commend them and certainly relate to the regenerating work of the Spirit—‘the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus’. For the moment we will not pursue them. We will concentrate on the person and work of Christ, or, if we may say so, ‘the *torah* of Jesus’.

In the life of Jesus we find that obedience which theologians call ‘active’, that is his obedience to the law within the context of the covenant of the people of Israel. As a boy he was under the law, ever ‘in his Father’s house’, or ‘about my Father’s business’ and ‘increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man’. In that sense he offered active obedience.

The Law and the Sermon on the Mount

It is in his teaching and ministry that we see his understanding of the law. All that he did from birth to his ascension was by means of the Spirit, the Spirit who is known in the New Testament as ‘the Spirit of love’. We might say it was ‘the *torah* of the Spirit’ by which he worked. Of course he worked by the Spirit in every act (Isa. 61:1; Luke 4:17ff; Matt. 12:28; etc.) The number of times he said to have had compassion on the multitudes or on the city of Jerusalem convince us that his ministry should be seen in the light of Zechariah 12:10, as well as in the light of Isaiah 61:1 and other passages.

And I will pour out on the house of David and inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of compassion (chen; ‘grace’, AV) and supplication, so that, when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a first-born son.

It has been pointed out by many commentators that the Sermon on the Mount is a fine exposition of the law of God in its true, essential being. Whilst it may be a true criticism that the Pharisees and others had developed a legalistic view of the law, in fact they were virtually antinomian, at least in the sense that they reduced the law from its true nature to a humanised version, one which they could pursue and achieve. It was not that Jesus lifted the law above what it had been, or ridiculed it by saying, ‘It has been said to you of old, but . . .’, for he was revealing the true spirit of the law. The introduction—if we may call the beatitudes that—set the understanding of true law, one that demanded a certain spirit of being in approach to obedience to the Father. It set it also in the context of the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom which Paul later calls ‘the kingdom of the Son of his love’ (Col. 1:13). The *torah* of Christ has to do with the Kingdom and, in one sense has to do with nothing else. Thus we can rightly speak of ‘the law of the Kingdom’. We also observe that since the Father in mentioned so many times and in connection with so many actions regarding life in the Kingdom, that the Sermon must be of ‘the law of the Father’ as it is ‘the law of Christ’ in the sense that he had taken it to himself. If the Sermon on the Mount is the key to understanding love for

God and neighbour as set out in the Decalogue, then the Decalogue is the key to understanding the Sermon on the Mount.

We cannot here take the Sermon step by step, but we can observe that Jesus did not see himself as derogating the law of the Mosaic covenant, but rather unveiling its riches and reality. When, then, he said,

Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. For truly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota or dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

This is, indeed, ‘the law of Christ’: not only the law that he kept, but the law that he expounded in the name of God. That is the law of love, and especially in the relational sense can be seen in Matthew 5:43–48. That his words are true *torah* and *dabar* can be seen by 7:21–27 where Jesus reveals his place of authority as judge on ‘that day’ (vs. 22–23).

21 "Not every one who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ 23 And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.’

Verses 24–27 reveal that he has not been making a commentary on the *torah* of God, but that what he has said *is* the *torah* of God, or, in short, the *torah* of Christ.

24 Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; 25 and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. 26 And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; 27 and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.

There can be no doubt that Jesus is claiming his word is as the *dabar* (command) of the *torah*, and in that sense, though Jesus is not here indicated the new Moses, he is that and even more than a new Moses⁸. The people had not previously heard such words, nor witnessed such authority. Verses 28–29 indicate this.

28 And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, 29 for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.

Verses 24–27 reveal that he has not only been making a commentary on the *torah* of God, but that what he has said *is*, in fact, that very *torah*—the *torah* of God, the *torah* of Christ and the *torah* of the Spirit, even the *torah* of the Triune God.

Jesus’ Teaching Consistent With the Sermon on the Mount

That Jesus saw the law going back to creation cannot be doubted. In Matthew 19:1–12 (cf. 5:31; Mark 10:1–12; cf. Luke 16:18) Jesus based his opposition to divorce on the basis of creation, and in particular on Genesis 1:27 and 2:24. He saw no place for divorce in the Mosaic law, even though he acknowledged the so-called concession of Moses in Deuteronomy 24:1–4. Divorce would not happen apart from hardness of hearts, and that hardness can scarcely be said to begin with the married couple—any married couple—as it would be with opposition to what we have called ‘creational’ and ‘covenantal’ law. The hardening against one another would derive from their hardness

⁸ A number of commentators see Jesus as the new Moses in the Gospel of John. The writer of Hebrews certainly presses the point that ‘Jesus is greater than Moses’ (3:1-6) and the Mosaic covenant as been superseded by the greater covenant, the covenant of which Christ is the new mediator, and the True Priest, after the order of Melchizedeck.

towards God's law. Thus when Jesus made his statement regarding divorce within the Sermon on the Mount he was being consistent with *torah* as Israel knew it, and *torah* as it is, always. That hardening may well have begun with the primal couple (cf. Genesis 3)

When the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16–22; Mark 10:17–22; Luke 18:18–23) came to him Jesus did not vary from the law. He said, 'If you would enter life, keep the commandments.' The commandments were virtually the Decalogue. When in Matthew 22:35 the lawyer asked Jesus which was the greatest commandment in the law he said,

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets⁹.

In every way, then, he supported the law of God, and, we may say, having taken it to himself as his own¹⁰. This alone can give sense to what we are about to consider, namely the theological terms 'Christ's active obedience' and 'Christ's passive obedience'.

Christ's Active Obedience

By this is meant the obedience Jesus rendered to God throughout all his life. It was obedience 'from the heart'. It was the keeping of the law, but not 'the letter of the code' but in accordance with the magnificent way Jesus knew the law, especially as it was the will of God, and perhaps, also, as 'the preceptual image of God' to which he gladly conformed.

Much has been made of the fact that Christ obeyed the law. A docetic view of Christ would find no difficulty in seeing this obedience as natural. There was no docetic Son but a Jesus who was 'born of a woman, born under the law', who was 'made in the likeness of sinful flesh', who 'had to be made like his brethren in every respect', who 'suffered and has been tempted' and 'one who in every respect has been tempted as we are' and was 'himself beset with weakness'. This one could call the law his own—'the law of Christ'—because he kept it. Even so, it was no less than what he ought to have done, and indeed, no less than all human beings should have done, and still should do, for fallenness is no part of true created humanity. Of course, had he not rendered 'active obedience' he could never have become the spotless sacrificial Lamb to take away the sin of the world.

⁹ Richard N. Longnecker in his commentary on Galatians (Word Biblical Commentary 41, Word Books, 1990, p. 243) quotes the Rabbi Hillel as rep[ly]ing to a Gentile who asked regarding 'the whole Torah', 'What is hateful to you, do not to your neighbour; that is the whole Torah, while the rest is the commentary thereof. Go and learn it'. In one sense the Sermon on the Mount is a commentary on the twofold law of love to God and one's neighbour.

¹⁰ We need to note in the passages above which relate to divorce, to entering into eternal life, and similar situations in which Jesus was questioned that he did not simply return flat quotations of the law but went on to explicate and apply those passages. So he teaches a radical matter of no divorce and sees it in the context of 'for the kingdom of heaven's sake': he demands of the rich young ruler that he fulfil the one thing he lacks by selling all he has and giving it to the poor. He tells the lawyer the story of the good Samaritan and thus defines who 'the neighbour' is. Jesus' understanding and practice of the law was alive and dynamic.

Christ's Passive Obedience

This is the obedience Christ offered in his passion, death and resurrection. This kind of obedience as such was not explicitly demanded by the law¹¹. He said that he had been commanded by the Father to lay down his life (John 10:17–18; 14:30–31; cf. Phil. 2:8; Romans 5:21–21). We have spoken in previous Studies of the *dikaïoma* of the law, and this we have in Romans 5:18 (*enos dikaïomotos*) which means that Christ obeyed ‘the just requirement of the law’ in the sense of both active and passive obedience. We need to see—as in Romans 3:24–26 and Colossians 2:14–15—that Christ actually took the judgement for all sins of all persons for all time.

Our conclusion, then, is that as regards the law of God, Christ in obeying it made it ‘the law of Christ’.

The Commands of Christ

Whilst we have seen that Christ upheld the essential law of God by obeying it in both the *active* and *passive* senses, and taught that the law would not be abrogated we cannot escape the fact in the Gospels that Jesus gives commands. Not only in regard to the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Luke 6:46), but in regard to the commandment to love (John 13:34; 15:10) and other commandments, Jesus speaks to his disciples. In John 14:21ff. he promises the Triune indwelling; ‘If you love me you will keep my commandments’, ‘He who has my commandments and keeps them . . .’, and the latter accords with John 8:51, ‘If anyone keeps my word he will never see death’. Here the use of ‘my word’ (*emon logon*) really relates to the Hebrew *dabar*, the dynamic *word*, even the word of law. In Acts 1:2 ‘After he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit to the apostles’, surely catches up the ‘proclamation commission’ passages at the ends of the four Gospels, especially in Matthew 28:20—‘teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you’—and surely links with Acts 10:42, ‘he commanded us to preach to the people’. Paul, likewise is commanded to do the same in Acts chapters nine, twenty two and twenty six.

What is also important is that the proclamation—the *kerugma*—is also a command. Listeners have to ‘obey the gospel’¹², a term used in Romans 10:16ff. and II Thessalonians 1:7–8, and referred to in Acts 5:32; 17:30; I Peter 1:2, 22; Romans 1:5; 15:18 and 18:26. In Acts 6:7 it is recorded that ‘a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith’. In this sense the gospel becomes the new ‘torah’ to be obeyed, and the outcome of such obedience is the gift of eternal life, with forgiveness of sins, justification, sanctification, adoption and ultimately, glorification. By this we do not mean ‘obeying the gospel’ earns these gifts, but it is submitting to the saving Lordship of Christ (cf. Rom. 10:9), so that then the gifts are the fruit of the gospel. following the acts of repentance and faith. It is repentance and faith which are the obedience, but is the gospel of grace which saved. Having saved, the gospel then demands the continuing obedience intrinsic to the New Covenant.. It would seem equally clear in the

¹¹ It could be well argued in John 15:12–13 that true love of the brethren did demand the laying down of one’s life for one’s friend, but there is a voluntary aspect to this which takes such an act away from the purely mandatory. Even so, there is room for argument that Christ’s laying down of his life fitted the law. Indeed, it might be argued that it was even the heart of the law.

¹² Being obedient to the proclamation of the gospel lies in the idea of *kerugma* which was a term used for the proclamation of the Emperor’s edict, delivered by his messenger, and usually in a public place. Obedience to the *kerugma* was under the threat of pain of punishment; hence the strong statement in II Thessalonians 1:7–8, ‘when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his holy angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and upon those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ’.

Book of the Revelation that the servants and saints of God who ‘keep His commandments’, are at the same time keeping the commandments the Lord gave to his church. The Book, itself, contains numerous commandments for the people of God, not least paranetic statements in the seven letters of chapters two and three.

‘The Law of Christ’ in the Epistles

The two explicit mentions of ‘the law of Christ’, are found in (i) I Corinthians 9:21 and (ii) Galatians 6:2. In the first he says, ‘To those outside the law I became as one outside the law—not being without law towards God but under the law of Christ—that I might win the weak’. He says clearly he is not lawless—‘not being without law towards God’—but that is ‘under the law of Christ’: that is he is ‘enlawed’ to Christ. To Paul the idea of being without law was unthinkable. In the context of his utterance his being under the law of Christ, or under the law to Christ, relates to his desire to ‘that I might by all means save some’. He is not under the law only in order to save some, for that would mean his being enlawed to Christ was utilitarian. No: all his life was lived passionately in the law of Christ, a law he would understand to be no less the law of God the Father, or the law of the Holy Spirit.

In the second reference (Gal. 6:2) he says, ‘Bear one another’s burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ’. This must equate with the law of love. In Galatians 5:13–14 he has said, ‘. . . through love be servants one of another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself”’. This accords with Romans 13:8–10,

8 Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbour has fulfilled the law. 9 The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." 10 Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

‘He who loves his neighbour has fulfilled the law’ is the principle. Note the use of the verb ‘to fulfil’ (*pleroo*) in both the Galatian and Roman passages. Linked with Romans 8:4 and Galatians 6:2 (*anapleroo*) the statements in all references speak of the law being fulfilled in us rather than us fulfilling the law¹³, and this is an important point. In Romans 8:4 and Galatians 5:16ff. the fulfilling of the law arises from walking in the Spirit for to live in the Spirit is to experience the fulfilling of the law within us. It could not be otherwise.

There is a further reference to ‘the law of Christ’ which, though not explicit, is thinking of law as ‘Dominical’, that is, as the mind of Christ, out of his *torah*.. In I Corinthians 7 Paul is giving advice in regard to marriage, the possible separation of spouses and the states of unmarried persons. For the most part he proceeds as though what he is saying is evidently correct, and that the basis for such advice is that it has already proceeded from Christ, the Lord. In verses 10 and 12 he says he is giving a certain charge, ‘To

¹³ The point made is that in Romans 13:8 and 10 gives no explicit command to fulfil the law. In 13:8 it is said, ‘He who loves his neighbour has fulfilled (pepleroken) the law’; in 13:10 ‘love if the fulfilling (*pleroma*) Likewise Romans 8:4 says, ‘that the righteous demand of the law might be fulfilled (*plerothe*) in us’. Again, Galatians 6:2 (*anapleroseite*) can be translated ‘and so you fulfil the law of Christ’ (*NRSV*). One might conclude that the fulfilment of the law is something which is accomplished in us, rather than the idea that we set out to accomplish it, though this idea may not be wholly absent.

the married I give charge, not I but the Lord’, ‘To the rest I say, not the Lord’, and these statements do not mean that Paul is speaking from his own mind, but really from the mind of the Lord. It is just that Christ had not given explicit pronouncements, but Paul being an apostle could speak *as* the Lord.

(iii) The Law of the Spirit

The term ‘law of the Spirit’ is not found singly as is ‘the law of Christ in I Corinthians 9:21 and Galatians 6:2. In Romans 8:2 it is ‘the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus’ and this can be thought of in a number of ways. We will not try to explicate these, but simply note that there is no law of the Spirit which is not related to Christ, and so, we take it, the law of Christ. They are here related. We also take it in Romans 8:1–4 that somehow the law of sin and death—the true law of God—could not, of itself, enable us to have the just requirement of the law fulfilled in us. However, as ‘the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus’ it could so work that the just requirement of the law could be fulfilled in us¹⁴.

There can be no fulfilling of ‘the just requirement of the law’ apart from the Spirit, apart from living in the Spirit. Galatians 5:18 says, ‘If you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law’, and there ‘under the law’ has nomist implications. All the lethal elements of the law are present when one is ‘under the law’ and are absent when one walks by the Spirit. In the Galatians 5:13–26 context one produces ‘the works of the flesh’ when ‘under the law’ but brings forth ‘the fruit of the Spirit’ when led by the Spirit. There is a law against ‘the works of the flesh’ (cf. I Tim. 1:8–11), but no law against ‘the fruit of the Spirit’ which must mean that ‘the fruit of the Spirit’ are according to the essential law of God, and, indeed, are the very law itself, in the action of obedience.

The Law of the Spirit of the Heart

Ezekiel 36:16–38 is a prophecy speaking of God vindicating His holiness in the face of the heathen by purifying and re-establishing Israel. The way in which he would do this is seen in verses 22–27

22 Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. 23 And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them; and the nations will know that I am the LORD, says the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. 24 For I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. 25 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. 26 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. 27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.

In this passage God speaks of purification of Israel from their idols and uncleannesses and the putting of a new heart and a new spirit within them. He also speaks of putting his own Spirit within them. The result of all this will be that ‘I will . . . cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances’. This new

¹⁴ We have noted in previous Studies that the law of God is for the unjustified sinner ‘the law of sin and death’ but for the justified person ‘the law of the Spirit in Christ Jesus’ is that which (i) has brought the gospel of justification to the person of faith, and (ii) it now enables that person to fulfil ‘the just requirement of the law’. In this sense it may even be said that ‘the law of the Spirit’ is ‘the *Torah* of the Spirit’ in the widest sense of the meaning of ‘law’.

heart and new spirit will mean a whole new approach to God's law, and the Spirit within the heart will cause obedience, and so the law can indeed be called 'the law of the Spirit of life'.

If we link Jeremiah 31:31–34 with Ezekiel 36 and see them both as elements of the New Covenant then the law becomes the principle of life to those of the New Covenant.

31 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, 32 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. 33 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. 34 And no longer shall each man teach his neighbour 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 law that is placed within those of the New Covenant and written within them corresponds with Romans 7:22—'I delight in the law of God after the inward man'—so that it means this is 'the law of the Spirit, whilst at the same time being the law of Christ and the law of God. We have already seen that only he or she who walks in the Spirit knows the just requirement of the law being fulfilled in him or her.

If to all this we add the Trinitarian matter of the Spirit being the Spirit of both the Father and the Son, so that what we might call 'the law of the Father'¹⁵ and the law of the Son [Christ] are also 'the law of the Spirit' then we see that the law is really the law of the Triune Godhead. If we take J.A. Motyer's statement that 'the law is the personal preceptual image of God' then the fulfilling of this Torah of God means that on the human level we are working out—as we are the image and glory of God—the law of the Triune Godhead.

We might close this section on the note of 'the Lordship of the Spirit'—The Lord and Giver of life'. We know that Christ was under the Lordship of the Spirit in his incarnation and in everything was led by the Spirit, being wholly dependent upon him for all things. In one sense there can be no law where there is no lordship. II Corinthians 3:18 is a verse difficult to exegete, but we seem to gather that both Christ and the Spirit have here a twin Lordship. Certainly in the church the believers are 'led by the Spirit'—as was Jesus—and they 'walk in the Spirit'. The Spirit gave commands to Philip in regard to going to Gaza, the ascending the Ethiopian eunuch's chariot, to church at Antioch (Acts 13:1–4) to ordain Barnabas and Paul for immediate ministry, and it was the Spirit who sent them forth. Likewise in Acts 16:6–7 the Spirit would not allow Paul and his team to venture in certain directions. In Revelation it is the Spirit who gives certain commands to John the Divine, and instructions to the Seven Church via the medium of Christ's letters. Certainly the Spirit issues commands. All in all we cannot but be impressed by a certain aura which surrounds the Spirit, and cannot refrain from calling it 'the *torah* of the Spirit'.

¹⁵ Note that in Romans 8:14 that those who are led by the Spirit are the sons of God, then Christ's obedience to the law of the Father is our obedience also, and is the way we go in life as we practice the law.

The New Testament Torah and its Glory

At this point a quote from Otto Weber¹⁶ on *paranesis* and *paraclesis*¹⁷ would be apt.

The good command of God not only confronts us as judgement or condemnation. We also experience it as it sets us straight and corrects us. It transfers us to the place where we are put through the salvation-event. This is made clear in the biblical *paranesis* or *paraclesis*. We find it, for example, in the Old Testament in Deuteronomy, as well as in the prophets (e.g. Amos 5). We find it in the Messianic Torah of Jesus, as, for example, in the composition of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew. We find it in the *paranesis* of the New Testament Epistles. Its hallmark is that in it the indicative of the divine ‘mercy’ (Rom. 12:1) received is directly transposed into the imperative and takes on the form of the admonition or direction, or also of consolation (which is another form of the *paraclesis*). We must also bear in mind that there is *paranesis* in the Old Testament. Basically the decalogue discloses the same combination of divine beneficence and human obligation (‘I am . . . thou shalt’). It was not a helpful thing that Luther, in his catechism, cited the ‘I am’ without reference to the liberation from Egypt. As it stands God appears as the arbitrary commander, but not as the One who is gracious and who is already appearing as that. . . . the Old Testament law, viewed from the salvation-event in Christ, is the unfulfilled law . . . Therefore the New Testament Community cannot attend to the law in the way in which it was once propounded. The priority of the divine act of salvation over all commands ever spoken remains.

What Weber is saying is that the *Torah* of Israel is transformed by the act of salvation in Christ into the New Testament *Torah*, the one we have been discussing as the *Torah* of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. He seems—with other theologians such as Paul Althaus, W. Joest and Karl Barth—to back off from using the word ‘law’ in favour of the word ‘command’. Certainly the ‘law of God’, ‘the law of Christ’ and ‘the law of the Spirit’ are communicated through the idea of ‘command’ and ‘commands’. Primarily, then, the law of God comes through as ‘commands’ and the theologians mentioned above—as also others—see the comprehension of the lethal or alien work of the law transmuted into a view of the law as personal, intimate commands from God which are welcomed, loved and obeyed in the light of the grace which has given birth to that obedience from the heart which is the expression of the love for God which the justified and sanctified believer has in Christ and the Spirit¹⁸. God’s commands always sprang out of the gift of creation and the grace of covenant, and were always intended ‘for your good’ (Deut. 10:13; cf. 4:5–8).

The Johannine View of Commands

We have seen under the heading of ‘the Law of Christ’ that Jesus points to his own commands, as well as those of the Father. In John 14:15–23 to obey the commands of the Son is to delight the Father. In his Epistles John is still attending to the matter of commands. In I John 2:3–8 he writes,

¹⁶ *Foundation of Dogmatics* (Eerdmans, 1962, Vol. II. p. 403)

¹⁷ The word *paranesis* is not found in the New Testament, but the principle is. It refers primarily to commands. *Paraclesis* is found, and it refers primary to exhortation, and exhortation is linked with command. The word *nouthesis*—not mentioned by Weber—is found in the Epistles and is linked with *paraclesis*, mainly appearing as warning and admonishing. The three are linked with the idea of ‘command’ and as such help to constitute the idea of God’s law.

¹⁸ This Section requires an extended exposition for it the heart of seeing law in the New Testament as a thing of glory and obedience to it—from the heart—as the totality of life.

3 And by this we may be sure that we know him, if we keep his commandments. 4 He who says "I know him" but disobeys his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 5 but whoever keeps his word, in him truly love for God is perfected. By this we may be sure that we are in him: 2:6 he who says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

7 Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment which you had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. 8 Yet I am writing you a new commandment, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.

So John sees the keeping of the commands as the way of love, and the old love commandments is stated anew, reprinted, so to speak. In 5:2–3 he further confirms this.

2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

In the Book of the Revelation the saints are those who ‘keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus’ (12:17; 14:12). In this way the commands of God are the ‘*torah* of God’, a fact which we can certainly find set forth in the Epistles of Peter, James and Jude.

This brief survey is simply to confirm the matter as set out in the Gospels and the Pauline Epistles.

The Law and the Image

If the law of God is ‘the personal, preceptual image of God’, that is, the revelation of the nature of God in preceptual terms, then a rich area of research will be that of redeemed Man as being regenerated—i.e. renewed—in ‘the spirit of the mind’ (Eph. 4:23) having put on the new humanity (the New Man, Christ: Eph. 2:24) as Paul puts it in Colossians 3:9–10. Ephesians 4:24 speaks of ‘the new nature (*anthropos*; ‘man’ or ‘humanity’) created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness’. Colossians 3:10 says ‘the new nature (*anthropos*, ‘man’ or ‘humanity’) renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator’. If we add to this the thought that we are ‘in Christ, as against being ‘in Adam’ (cf. Rom. 5:12–21; I Cor. 15:22, 45ff.), and that God is working all things for good in order that He might conform us to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:28–30), then it must mean that more and more redeemed Man as the image of God is comporting with the law of God as the working ‘personal, preceptual image of God’. Thus what we call the *paranesis*, *paraclases* and *noutheses* of the New Covenant, especially as they are stated in the Epistles, quite wonderfully constitute the *torah* of the Triune God, the God in Whose image we have been made.

In the practice of life this must mean that the law of the Triune God becomes increasingly precious, and increasingly the way of life of the believer and the believing community as all walk in the Spirit and so bear the fruit of the Spirit—‘against which there is no law’.

Conclusion: The Law of God is Good

In Romans 7:10 Paul says ‘the law promised life’. In 7:12 he says ‘the law is holy’, and in 7:14 ‘the law is spiritual’. He also takes up the word ‘command’ which for him is synonymous with ‘law’ and says, ‘the commandment is holy and just and good’. In 7:22 he testifies, ‘I delight in the law of God after the inward man’, and concludes in 7:25, ‘I of myself serve the law of God with my mind’. In 7:6 he explains that ‘we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit’.

In these statements Paul is not simply preserving the validity of the law of God, but opening up its essential nature. As we have seen, this *torah* of God is not only precepts, ordinances, statutes and commands, but it is the very exposition of the nature of the Triune God in whose image Man is made and the instruction which aids Man’s understanding of God’s glory so that he can live out life as the true image of God. Creation, covenant, salvation and the like are all elements of God’s *torah*. They are at the same time the source of true life and its being lived out by the recipient of the grace of God.

Trinitarian Ecclesial Theology

Introduction to the Idea of Trinitarian Ecclesial Theology

All Christian theology has to be Trinitarian. The works the Triune God does are those of creation, covenant, redemption, and the ultimate restoration or renewal of all things. We can trace the unity of these works relating to the Father, the Son and the Spirit. It would seem logical that the church is a creation of the Three Persons, and we will explore this fact. If we start back at creation where God made Man in His image, then it would appear that the internal relations (in *extra*) of the Three Persons within the Godhead would be reflected by created Man. That is, Divine relationships would be imaged in and by human relationships. In a corporate way the People of God would likewise reflect the Divine relationships in their community. It would be fair to call these relationships ecclesial relationships, and also be fair to call the community the People of God who image the Divine relationships. Since relationships are not an end in themselves but are something which obtains in doing the will of God for creation and history then we can say that the external (ad *extra*) works of God will be reflected in the works of the People of God, since Man is God's creational and covenant partner.

We can conclude, I believe, that when we know the Community of the Triune God, we have a proper understanding of the Community of God, His true People in all ages.

The Pastoral Value of Ecclesial Theology

Some of the values are seen immediately. If the church is the church of God the Father, the church of our Lord Jesus Christ and the church of the Holy Spirit, then we must have an understanding of the Persons, and of their unity of the Godhead. If the perichoretic life of the Godhead flows into the church because, as the people of God it is the practical reflection of the Divine relationships both in *extra* and *ad extra* then we will know the way of living the *perichoresis* in the church which lives in the world of creation, the world of humanity. If we understand the salvation history of the Triune God then our people will see they are the people of God in this action of God which leads to the *eschaton* and the *telos*. It is good that we work out these things together especially as we understand the works of the Three Persons in their gifts of differentiations and their complementarity of love.

Salvation history is personal as well as corporate. It has to do with persons regarding their identity, their vocation and their relational living in faith, hope love. This means a biblical theology, cosmology and anthropology will enable us to know the way of life of our community, and in particular, the way of life of its members. We can even speak, here, of Trinitarian Pastoral Counselling¹ when we meet the relational

¹ This is the theme of our November Monday Pastors Group Study.

problems that seem endemic not only in our church today, but which have been from apostolic times. We have understandings and insights that secular therapies cannot have, whatever their healing powers may be on the horizontal level.

Always the People of the Triune God

It is an interesting point in the New Testament that the nominated ‘children of God’ commence with Abel (I John 3:10ff.) and that ‘the people of faith’ (Hebrews 11) also begin with him (Heb. 11:4). We can only speculate as to the primal parents but the first two of their family are a murderer and a prophet. One does evil deeds and hates, and the other does righteous deeds and loves his brother. The principle of *communion* as a way of life seems virtually absent. The matter of sacrifice certainly indicates the need for, and application to grace, and all of this perhaps in the light of the proto-evangel of Genesis 3:15 (cf. Rev. 12:9-10), and most certainly in the knowledge of God. In true sacrifice is true communion with God (I Cor. 10:14-22).

The joy at the birth of Seth, ‘the substitute’ for Abel seems to indicate the flow of ‘the sons of God’ in history. The so-called ‘pre-history’ of Genesis chapters 1-11 leads us to the Noahaic (universal) and Abrahamic covenants and so to salvation history as covenantal.

Thus we are brought to the covenant with Israel through Moses, and then the new covenant through Christ with the new people of God which is aimed at all the people of the world (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:14-20 plus the ‘fragment’; Luke 24:40-49; John 11: 51-52: 20:19-23; Acts 1:8). This new people is the Church, born at Pentecost, having continuity with the old Jewish *qahal* since all were Jews who became the church on that day, but then discontinuity, because at that time the Sanhedrin rejected it, and it went on to bring in the Samaritans and Gentiles. The new *qahal* is the *ecclesia*.

Now we will look at the church as it relates to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, seeing it as the creation and community of all Three Persons, and-as always has been the case with God’s people-imagining the Triune God as the social Family of God. In all of this lies the secret and principle of communion.

The Church of the Three Person-in-Unity

It is a surprising thing to turn to a concordance and discover that only twice is the church called ‘the church of Christ’ (Rom 16:16; Gal. 1:22) and then, strictly speaking, this is not the term for it is ‘churches of Christ’ (plural), and its context may simply mean ‘Christian churches’.

The Church of God, the Father

In the Acts and the Epistles the *ecclesia* is called ‘the church of God’ ten times, ‘the household of God’ once, and the church is spoken of as being ‘in God the Father’ twice. This would appear to make the church to be that of the Father. In Acts 2:47 the Lord-i.e. God-‘added to their number day by day those who were being saved’.

Again, in I Corinthians 12:28 it is said, ‘God has appointed in the churches, first

apostles. . .’ So then we must think of it being ‘the church of God’ and ‘the church which is in the Father’ so that God must be seen to be its founder and sustainer. I Thessalonians 1:1 and II Thessalonians 1:1 both speaks of the church being ‘in the Father’. In John 17 Jesus speaks of the people God has given him, and that he has ‘kept them in thy name’ and he asks for the Father’s care for them. He prays that the church may be one as he and the Father are one, so ‘they also may be one in us . . . that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may be perfectly one’. The initiative in securing this relational perichoretic movement and fullness must come from the Father, then find its fulfilment in and through the Son.

Jesus directed prayer to the Father, through himself that ‘whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you’ (John 15:16) and added, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask anything of the Father, he will give it to you in my name’ (John 16:23). This lends emphasis not only to the Lord’s Prayer which Christ commanded should be addressed to the Father, but the involuntary cry of the children of God, ‘Abba! Father!’ which is aided by the Spirit.

The oneness of the Son with the Father brings the Trinitarian unity to bear within the church. Primarily it is the Father who has raised Christ up above every principality and power and every name that is named so that he is Lord of all things, and is Lord over all these things for the church’ (Eph. 1:20-23). In this the Father is again the Initiator.

The Church of Christ the Son

Jesus had said, ‘I will build my church’ (Matt.16:18; cf 18:15-20) and spoke of the church as ‘two or three gathered in my name’. In that sense we can speak of ‘the church of Christ, but we see in Ephesians 1:19-23 that it was God who raised Jesus from the dead, put him over all things, and made him to be head over these all things ‘for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all’. In Ephesians 5:23 Christ is again said to be head of the church, and in Colossians 1:19 it is inferred that all should be ‘holding fast to the Head’.

In Ephesians 5:23 (cf. 5:2; Gal. 2:20) Christ the Head has given himself up to death for his bride, the church, and in this sense he is her Saviour and Lord. In almost all the salutations he is coupled with the Father when the invocation is ‘Grace to you and peace from God our Father the Lord Jesus Christ’, so that the Father and Christ are together the source of grace and peace. We might also observe that whereas in I Corinthians 12:28-38 it is God who gives gifts, in Ephesians 1:7-11 it Christ who gives gifts. Again, the source is the same.

Of course, the central subject of all the church is Christ, the beloved Lord. So intimate, so one with Christ was the church-his body, bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh-that Saul is spoken of as having persecuted the church (Acts 8:3; I Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:3) and Jesus said to him, ‘Saul! Saul! Who do you persecute me?’ Later Paul said, ‘I formerly blasphemed and persecuted and insulted him’ (I Tim. 1:13).

In the Book of the Revelation (chs. 1-2) it is Christ who walks among the candlesticks and has the sevenfold church in his hands. It is he who will meet out judgements to the churches **where needed, and who exhorts them** to be the community of holiness, truth and love. It is he who smites the nations with the sword which goes out from his mouth and brings his triumphant people into the Holy City. Finally, as the True

Bridegroom he weds the Bride, his beloved church whom he bought with his precious blood.

The Holy Spirit and the Church

Without doubt the church was born of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Whilst this was the whole church in general, yet in particular it was the church of the Jews which was created. In Acts 8 it was only when the Spirit came upon the Samaritans that they were included in the Kingdom and become a church. Likewise in Acts 10-11 the Spirit came to officially to bring-so to speak-the Gentiles into the Kingdom and thus to form the first company of the Gentiles. We know it was the Holy Spirit who went on leading the church in all its situations. In fact, we cannot even think of the church without thinking of the works and ministry of the Spirit in it.

As the Father and Son are one, so in II Corinthians 3:17-18 it is difficult to distinguish in the text who is 'the Lord'. The title must really be accorded to the both of them in their unity. That is why 'the grace' of B Corinthians 13:13 seems to bring the ministries of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to be the one, and it is this we now seek to see the unity of the Father, Son and the Spirit in the church.

The Trinitarian Presence and Work of the Holy Spirit in the Church

We have already seen that the Three Persons in Trinity have ever been present in the work of creation and covenant², in the prophets and the prophetic orientation towards the coming of Messiah. Revelation 19:10 (cf. I Pet. 1:10-12; Luke 24:26-27) states the principle 'For the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy'. Primarily we should understand from a passage such as Ephesians 1:3-14 that God has ever had in mind His elect people whom we have seen from Abel onwards nominated 'the children of God', and 'the people of faith'. The triad of 'faith, hope, and love' has always been at work in these people. God has always held them in communion. In a more immediate sense the church is the eschatological people of God since Acts 2:14-22 describes them as the people of the 'last days' who proceed until 'the great and manifest day', 'the Day of the Lord' with all its eschatological connotations from the Old Testament prophets.

Jesus, the Father, and 'Those Whom Thou Hast Given Me'

The high priestly prayer of John 17 should be linked with John 11:49-52 which speaks of gathering all the children of God, scattered abroad, into one family. Jesus' uses of the collective and intimate figures of the vine and the branches, the good shepherd and the flock, the ones following the light--and others--are caught up in the 17th chapter in the statements 'all whom thou hast given him [the Son], 'the men whom thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them to me,' 'I am praying for . . . those whom thou hast given me, for they are thine'. We see that the

² See my *The Day of the Spirit* (NCPI, 1985, pp. 1-40) for the work of the Spirit in the Old Testament, and my *The Person and Work of Christ* (NCPI, 1983, pp. 45-47) for his pre-incarnation work. Isaiah 48:14-16 is an intriguing Trinitarian statement, concluding with, 'And now the Lord God has sent me and His Spirit'.

Father gives to the Son the people who are precious to Him.³ They are now given into the hand of the Son. These who are given are to be sent to others who are given but who are not yet in the fold of the Shepherd. This is where what we call 'the church militant' comes into operation. They will impart the word imparted to them and the elect of the flock will respond, out of the world. What now concerns us is the unity and communion of the Godhead with the people of God, and this is shown in Jesus' prayer over verses 20-26,

20 "I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, 21 that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. 22 The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me. 24 Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory which thou hast given me in thy love for me before the foundation of the world. 25 O righteous Father, the world has not known thee, but I have known thee; and these know that thou hast sent me. 26 I made known to them thy name, and I will make it known, that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."

The intimacy of the Father and the Son is now to include the church. The Son is in the Father, the Father is in the Son, and as such are One. So the people of God are now to be one in the Father and the Son. This will be the sign to the world that 'thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me'. We need to note here for later significance that there is a hierarchy, the Son praying to the Father, and praying for the church.⁴ We scarcely need note that the High-Priestly prayer of the Son (cf. Heb. 7:25; 8:1-2; Rom. 8:34) of John 17 has been, is being, and will be answered through this eschatological aeon. We have seen that from Pentecost onwards it is the Spirit of love, fellowship and unity who has led the people of God, keeping them in this oneness.

The Triune God send the Perichoresis-Circuminessio

We cannot understand the intimacy that the church has in the Triune God unless we first understand the intimacy of the Three Persons have as the Triune God.⁵ Leaving aside the historical development of the term 'person' the Greek term 'perichoresis' and its Latin equivalents 'circuminessio' and 'circuminessio' means mutual indwelling or inter-dwelling or the mutual interpenetration of the Persons of the Godhead. It was John of Damascus (7-8th. centuries) who expounded the idea of the interpenetration and mutual immanence of the three *hypostases* of the Trinity. There is the idea of the circulatory character of the Divine life and that the Three are 'other-Persons regarding' so that they circulate from their differentiations the gifts which form a complementarity

³ Later, when we examine the perichoresis or circuminessio of the True Godhead we will see that the diving of the Persons to One Another is part of that unity of love which is theirs.

⁴ For 'hierarchy' and its significance see my *All Things Are Yours* (NCPI, 1991, pp. 47-58. Some modern theologians, such as Moltmann oppose the idea of hierarchy for the egalitarian relationship of love. Moltmann takes Barth to task for his hierarchical approach. This is not seen in his earlier so much as his later works, and especially in *History and the Triune God* (SCM, 1991).

⁵ I suggest readers in addition to *All things are Yours*, peruse my Monday Studies of the dates of 4/6/90; 2/7/90; 6/90; 4/9/90 which cover the themes of the **Trinity, Relationships Human and Divine, the Theology of Relationships, Superordination and Subordination**, and the whole matter of **Hierarchy Human and Divine**.

of action, not one of Them being existent apart from the other. Our word 'empathy' is a weak one in trying to describe the intimacy of intention and work (*in extra* and *ad extra*) of the Godhead.

Within this *perichoresis*⁶ is the action and intimacy of the Father, Son and Spirit, and it is really for this that Jesus prays in John 17:21-26. It is all the action of love. Elsewhere I have shown⁷ that three elements are evident in this *circumincessio*, namely that all Three Persons in their interrelationships interserve One Another in the following manner,

- (i) the Three mutually glorify the other Persons,
- (ii) the Three mutually serve One Another, and
- (iii) the Three mutually give to One another.

What we must note is that there cannot be these three forms of *giving* without also the *receiving* of them. If we can speak of a flow *downwards* from the Father to the Son and to the Spirit, then we must speak of the reciprocal flow *upwards* from Person to Person. To human observation this may seem there is a superordination and subordination which is repugnant to true love, but as we must keep saying, we dare not 'level out' the Godhead in an idolatry of egalitarianism, nor fail to see that the movement is primarily one of servanthship and not of domination. The Divine hierarchy of love is a mystery to us who work in man-made hierarchies, or transmogrify the Divine hierarchy into fallen human modes. If I Corinthians 11:3 is a hierarchy of love-and it is!-then there is no need to fear it, and every reason to preserve it.

Our paper cannot here expand these principles shown above but if they are taken as given, then we begin to see what arises from the intimacy of the Triune Godhead in the inner workings of the Persons, and then the outer workings in creation, redemption and the ultimate glorification of all creation. As an introduction to our next section we can do no better than quote the breathtaking word of Jurgen Moltmann.⁸

The unity of the Trinity is constituted by the Father, concentrated around the Son, and illumined through the Holy Spirit. So, summing up, we can say the following.

In the history and experience of salvation this illumination is perceived through the Spirit first of all. It is in the power of the Spirit that doxology begins. The perichoretic unity of the triune God is perceived in salvation history. Lastly the monarchy of the Father is perceived in the Trinity because everything in the history of salvation comes from him and strives towards him. *To throw open the circulatory movement of the divine light and the divine relationships, and to take men and women, with the whole creation, into the life-stream of the triune God: that is the meaning of creation, reconciliation and glorification.* (Emphasis mine).

⁶ Whilst the term perichoresis is most useful yet it cannot substitute for the ontological oneness of the Triune Godhead, the Father being love (I John 4:7-16), the Son being 'the son of His love' (Col. 1:13) and the Spirit being the Spirit of love (Rom 5:5; 15:30; Gal.; 5:22-23). The unity is that the Son derives or proceeds from the father and the Spirit from both, or from the Father through the Son. This must constitute a hierarchical unity.

⁷ The Study of Relationships Human and Divine (Monday Study Group Paper 4/6/90, NCPI). ⁸ The Trinity and the Kingdom of God (SCM, 1981, p. 178).

⁸ The Trinity and The Kingdom of God (SCM, 1981, p. 178)

The Circulatory Movement of the Triune God to the Church

We have here to see that the church is really *in* the Father, *in* the Son and in the Holy Spirit, that it is-to use a phrase--it is caught into the perichoretic movement of the Godhead. At the same time the flow of the Godhead is to and *through* the church. In this way of speaking the Father, the Son and the Spirit honour, serve and give to, the church. We do not have time here to develop this concept but it is dynamical for the church, especially those within it who think they must plead to God for works to happen, or must summon up works out of their imagined sufficiency (contra: see II Cor. 3:4-6; 12:7-10; 13:3-4; cf. Rom. 8:37; Phil. 1:6; 2:12-13; 4:13; I Thess. 5:24).

We have had one example of the perichoretic movement to the church by the Three Persons, namely the giving of gifts by the Father (I Cor. 12:28), by the Son (Eph. 4:7-11) and by the Spirit (I Cor. 12:4-11). These trifold actions could be multiplied but it is rather the intimacy, the fellowship with God and the oneness with the Three Persons-in-unity which inspires us. The following Scriptures relating to this present age of the church inspire us.

- ... our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ' (I John 1:3).
- ... called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord'.
- ... the fellowship of the Holy Spirit' (II Cor. 12:13). ... any participation in the Holy Spirit' (Phil. 2:1).
- ... one body and one Spirit ... 'one Lord' ... 'one God and Father of us all who is ... in all' (Eph. 4:1-6).
- ... your lives are hid with Christ in God' (Col. 3:3).
- '...you may... become partakers of the divine nature'.

In addition to these remarkable passages we have those relation to abiding in God (I John 3:24; 4:13) in Christ⁹ (John 15:1ff, and the Epistles), and God-all Three Persons-abiding in us (John 14:15-23; Rom. 8:9-11; Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:27). Such abiding can be no less than dynamic since the Persons are not static within us. There can, then, be no question of the Absence but only of the Presence both to us, in us, and through us to the world.

At the same time all this that is presently happening is eschatological. 'He that is doing a good work within you shall to complete it up right up until the day of Jesus Christ' (Phil. 1:6, my expanded version). This is the day when the church will know 'the glory of the liberty of the children of God' (Rom. 8:21) which will be total fellowship with the Triune God in the context of total worship. This will be because all the people of God will be conformed to the image of His Son in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren' (Rom. 8:29). In another figure it will be the union of the Bride (human) and the Lamb (human and Divine) for ever. The final figure of the Holy City where the New Temple (the church) has become one with God and the Lamb tells of the indissoluble union of the church and Triune God. This is the ultimate intimacy, the eternal *perichoresis*.

The Church in the Circulatory Movement of God and His People

I Romans 1:21 the fall of man includes this, 'For although they knew God they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him. . .' Honouring God-as God honouring

⁹ Note that the term 'in Christ' is used innumerable times in the Epistles

Man-is part of the act of Creation. God honours Man and Man in return honours God, responding to the blessing in gratitude and taking part in the creation communion (Gen. 1:29). Doubtless the sacrifices of Cain and Abel were intended to carry the idea of thanksgiving, if not propitiation, but Cain's offering failed in Spirit. Honouring and thanksgiving were part of the worship of the patriarchs, and doubtless sacrifice was giving as well as thanksgiving. If Man has nothing to give to God there is not what we can call 'mutual *circuminessio*'. There is only receiving. In the Mosaic law the idea of giving and thanksgiving is at the heart of all sacrifice. God provides sacrifice (cf. Lev. 17:11) but man gives sacrifice. There is a sense in which God needs this worship, for it is fellowship (cf. I Cor. 10:14-22). There is thus mutuality of worship with God and Man.

In the New Testament, and particularly in the beginnings of the church, worship is offered to God. Jesus had already said 'Such the Father ever seeks to worship him,' that is those who 'worship him in Spirit and in truth' (John 4:21-24). With the coming of the Spirit and the truth (the gospel) at Pentecost there was immediate praise (Acts 2:4-11), there was the distribution of goods to the needy, and the people 'partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God' (Acts 2:44-47). From that point onwards there was the mutual honouring and giving that was evident not only in Jerusalem, but in the 'daughter churches'-Antioch ministering to the poor and needy of the Jerusalem church, and the other churches of Asia Minor and Europe also ministering by means of 'the offertory'.

The Freedom, the Law of Life and the Perichoretic Community

We have noted that the three things which constitute the intrinsic life of the Godhead are interpersonal giving, honouring and serving. Without doubt these elements are seen in the church, are functional, and are the expression of God living in His people nor more than these three elements were present in the Mosaic covenant. We note that within the Godhead the Persons are only known in the context of One Another. Their particularity and their differentiations are preserved-so to speak-so that they are free to give from them to One Another thus honouring and serving One Another. Likewise in the church-as we would expect-all members are allowed to retain their particularity and differentiations without being forced into a form of homogeneity or 'the kind of egalitarianism which is the denial of particularity, and leads to collectivism, and forms of individualism which in effect deny humanity to those unable "to stand on their own feet"¹⁰. The strength of the members of the community lies in the mutuality of their giving, serving and honouring through *agape*.

What we have called 'the freedom' of the members is that which reflects and echoes the freedom of the Persons of the Godhead. Whilst there is hierarchical order, there is no domination in the order of the Persons. Superordination and subordination must not be thought of in human terms but in terms of servanthood and loving. The Trinity is not egalitarian or the divine mystery evaporates in a flatness of Being. The never-ending power and wisdom of God the Father circulates the Godhead and returns in terms of acceptance, obedience and service in the unity of the Trinity. Likewise there is freedom in the church only when there is mutual giving and receiving. If there are the weak then it is not their qualitative giving which is weak, but their qualitative giving and receiving. No one must give of compulsion but of willingness (II Cor. 9:7).

¹⁰ Colin Gunton's *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (T&T Clark. 1991), p. 117.

Freedom Lies in Mutual Giving, Receiving, Honouring and Serving as True Periehoresis

Freedom, then, must be preserved. It is preserved by a person when he/she joins in mutual giving and receiving, honouring and serving. The strong in faith and conscience must be careful that they do not dominate 'the weak'. Paul who was in a hierophantic relationship¹¹ to his spiritual children said, 'Not that we lord it over your faith; we work with you for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith' (II Cor. 1:24). Peter exhorted the elders, 'Tend the flock of God that is in your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain, but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock' (I Pet. 5:3). Romans chapters 14-15 and I Corinthians chapter 8 show that the weak were not to be oppressed, that *agape* was to decide the action those stronger in faith and conscience should have towards the weaker brethren. Knowledge might seem important but it could puff up if not used with love (I Cor. 8:1-3). In all community living each person lives and dies to his own Lord, Christ. For this purpose Jesus both died and rose again, that he might thus be Lord of both the living and the dead. Those who are strong in faith must have their strength before Christ as the weak¹² must have their weakness before Christ. (Rom. 14:10-12) The true hierophant is to give out of love and humility, recognising that every member of the community has gifts (I Cor. 12:4ff.), everyone stands to his or her Lord, and that servanthood is voluntary, springing from the presence of the Triune God in the community. Since all are 'members one of another' (Rom. 12:5; I Cor. 12: 12-30) and all are 'subject to one another out of reverence for Christ' (Eph. 1:21) then the freedom to have one's particularity kept intact and so be able to contribute to the whole community is ensured. Thus the image of God knows the same relational dynamics as are in the Triune Godhead. As there is mutuality of giving, receiving, serving and honouring in the Godhead, so there is in the community of the church.

The Essential Matter of Communion

The title of John D. Zizioulas's book *Being as Communion* (SVS Press, New York, 1985) indicates to us that true being is communion, not with ourselves but others. Communion with the Triune Godhead is true human being, as we can see in the primal couple in their pre-fall situation, and redeemed men and women within the sociality of the church, which is in turn within the sociality of the Triune Godhead. Of course we see it in all fullness in the Holy City. The word 'communion' (*koinonia*) has fallen into an almost bland usage. Its use in such a context as 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation [communion] in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is not a participation [communion] in the body of Christ?' makes it of immense

¹¹ By this we mean the apostle--along with the other apostles--had the entire revelation which we call 'the apostolic church' revealed to him in the revelation of Christ to him and in him (cf. Gal. 1:11-17; I Cor. 15:1-4; cf. I Cor. 1:4; II Tim. 2:1-2). The revelation given by Christ through the Spirit to the apostles meant they could hand down the wisdom of God to others. In Acts 20:27 Paul said he did not shrink from declaring to the elders 'the whole counsel of God'.

¹² In I Corinthians 12:1-10 Paul shows that none is strong in himself/herself. Romans 7:13-25 also demonstrates this, but undoubtedly some who had grasped the message of grace were able to feel free in their consciences from a nomistic view of law. They knew that 'all things were theirs' (I Cor. 3:21-22 in the context of Christ and God, cf. I Cor. 11:3).

importance. We are only truly human when we are in communion with God-from Whom we came-and with the members of the Body of Christ, the elect people of God in Christ. 'The communion of the Holy Spirit' speaks relational and social volumes. This Divine-human *perichoresis* is the mainstay of true being and its eschatological promise and experience is beyond telling. It is the heart of everything true and it is the heart of all things created, redeemed and glorified.

A Conclusion to Triune Ecclesial Theology

This paper is simply intended to draw our attention to the place of the church in the intention and action of the Triune Godhead. The truth of the church is a mystery and a beautiful one at that. Of necessity we have not been able to amplify and verify many of the principles, and materials set out. Many are working on a practical ecclesiology, that is on pragmatic principles which will animate and enlarge local churches and increase their missionary activity. If so then an ecclesiology must be of the Triune Godhead, and not of human reasoning.

For many, sadly enough, the local church is an ecclesiastical goldfish bowl. Not a few are caught in the dry images of the local church which are cultural, social, and that hold no joy or inspiration although they make many demands for belaboured attention and what is often unbiblical action. An understanding of the church being in the Godhead and the Godhead in it could revolutionise and radically change the understanding and action of such assemblies. Having said this, we must not develop a methodology of using a Trinitarian theology to vivify the churches. The church is that company of people in the hands of the living God and we must be aware that His judgements, His exhortations, His encouragements are now proceeding as ever they were. In humility we must listen to the voice of God and be glad to be in the perichoretic flow of the Godhead into the community and the responsive flow of the community into God Himself. Our fellowship is with the father and the Son. Our lives are hid with Christ in God. We-the church-are partakers in the Divine nature.

I must admit that only in recent years have I caught something of the vital vision of this ecclesial truth. Those on their safe systems expressed in 'I am of Paul', 'I am of Apollos', and 'I am of Cephas' would be shocked if these three stalwarts were to appear and condemn them to their face for 'safety systems' and denounce them for heresy.

I have appended a few statements which may stimulate us to further research on this most important subject.

Quotations

In an Essay entitled 'The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit' and subtitled 'On Trinitarian Pneumatology' in his *History of the Triune God*, Moltmann says (sub-section 3. 'Trinitarian ecclesiology: the community of brothers and sister', p. 63)

In the West theological ecclesiologies traditionally have their focal point in the grounding of the authority of ministry in the church. The way in which they are grounded in the fellowship of the people of God falls well behind this . . . The unity of the community is in truth the trinitarian fellowship of God himself, of which it is a reflection and in which it participates.'

Christoph Schwobel in an Essay 'Human Being as Relational Being' (*Persons Divine and Human*, Ed. C. Schwobel, C. Gunton, T&T Clarke, 1991, p.165) says,

the triune God with his creation in the community of faith in the church is the anticipation and witness to the perfect fulfilment of the fellowship of the Kingdom of God.

Colin Gunton in an Essay The Community. '*The Trinity and the Being of the Church*' in His *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (T&T Clarke, 1991, pp. 71-72) says under the heading 'IV Towards-an Ontology of the Church';

The argument stands as follows: that on 'economic' grounds one source of the weakness of the ecclesiological tradition has been identified. An overweighting of the christological as against the pneumatological determinants of ecclesiology together with an overemphasis on the divine over against the human Christ has led to a docetic doctrine of the church... The contention is accordingly, that a more satisfactory ontological basis will be found if we pay attention to the doctrine of the Trinity, which was, when first formulated, the means to an ontology alternative to those of the intellectual worlds in which Christianity once took shape, and must now reshape its form of life if it is to be adequate to the challenge of modern conditions. The doctrine of the Trinity as it comes to us from the Cappadocian theologians, teaches us that the first thing to be said about the being of God is that it consists in personal communion. Communion is for Basil an ontological category. The nature of God is communion.

The Pastor as Teacher-Hierophant—I

Introduction

When we look at the church today¹ we are faced with many problems, inadequate eikons, varied views of ministry and congregation, the application of modernity to the current ecclesial situation, the desires to extend churches as social groups by means of 'church-growth' promotional principles, application of entertainment attraction, the sociality principles as well as social 'do-gooding', along with the natural elements of ambition which variously affect pastor and people. Simply to use the NT church as a paradigm is inadequate since this calls our motives in question and may result a sectarian approach to the living body of Christ as also to its Head who is Lord over all things in the universe for the church.

We must keep in mind the Lordship of Christ over his people and not simply deplore the defects and problems which we face ecclesially. Christ is obviously walking amongst the church, the candlesticks, and, as ever, he must be judging, taking away the light of certain churches, rebuking, correcting and, where fitting, encouraging his people. This sovereignty saves us from bitter criticism, unthinking idealism, and attempts at reforming the body of Christ.

Even so, we are faced with the responsibility to understand the nature of the church, Christ's Lordship over it, and the purpose and function of the church in history, especially present history. All of this needs to be understood in the light of the Kingdom of God, Christ as Lord of history, and the present motions of the church under the will of the Triune God. As pastors and people we need to understand the principle of I Corinthians 11:3 of the hierarchy of God, Christ, the man and the woman, and with it, the matter of Christ's ministerial gifts to the church (Eph. 4:7–11) as also the gifts of the Father (I Cor..) and the gifts distributed by the Spirit (I Cor. 12:4ff.; cf. Rom. 12:3ff.; cf. I Pet. 4:10f.).

The Aim of Our Study

The aim of this paper is to come to ministry of the pastor or pastor-teacher as some see him designated in Ephesians 4:11². In particular we seek to see him as a shepherd of the flock, and in that role as one who feeds and leads the flock, the feeding and leading being linked with the teaching committed to him for the sake of the flock.

¹ See my *Christ's Living Church—Today* (NCPI, 1993) for a view of the state of the church and the eking that members have of the church in contradistinction to the way is set out in the New testament.

² In my little book *Shepherds of the Flock* (NCPI, 1978) I have tried to show that 'past and teacher' are the designation of one gift ministry. Since writing the book I have seen there could be some difficulties in maintaining this claim particularly in the light of Acts 13:1. Even so, I think the thesis still stands.

One of the problems in selecting the pastor-teacher is that we have to deal with the matter of the apostolic truth, and that truth as it is linked not only with the apostle, but also the prophet, and almost certainly with the evangelist as well. Some see the gifts of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher as constituting a functional hierarchy of proclamation, church establishment, and pastoring in which the truth and wisdom of God flows down from the Triune God through the hierarchy and so feeds, sustains, energises and motives the flock. We cannot deal with all this in one Study. From this point onwards we will try to show the dimensions and facts of the apostolic truth and then narrow it down to the ministry of the pastor-teacher, or, as Markus Barth calls him ‘teaching shepherd’³.

Defining a Term

What do we mean by our title, *The Pastor as Teacher-Hierophant*? The word ‘teacher’ and the function of the teacher we all know. As for ‘pastor’ we know the Greek word *poimen* mean pastor (Eph. 4:11) or shepherd (John 10:14; Heb. 13:20; I Pet. 2:25; 5:4). *The Macquarie Dictionary* defines the word ‘hierophant’ as ‘n. 1. (in ancient Greece, etc.) an official expounder of rites of worship and sacrifice. 2. Any interpreter of sacred mysteries or esoteric principles’. *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* adds, ‘The minister of any “revelation”; the interpreter of any esoteric principle 1882.’ It gives the derivation from the Greek *hierophants*, *hieros* being ‘sacred’ and *phaneiv* ‘to reveal’. We conclude that a hierophant is one who ministers or interprets revelations. We note the sacred status and work of the hierophant. If the task of the pastor is that of a hierophant then it is a rich and valuable function indeed⁴.

Linked with the term ‘hierophant’ is the word ‘hierarch’ (hierarchy), ‘1. One who has rule or authority in holy things’; an ecclesiastical potentate; a chief priest; an archbishop. 2. **Applied** to an archangel 1667’. (*The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*). Again, this term is not explicitly used of any of the offices or ministerial gifts in the New Testament and we should be cautious in applying such a term.

The dangers of using this word hierophant for a pastor in the church—especially if we link it with hierarch—are obvious. If the congregation has to wait upon the pastor for interpretations of Scripture and revelations from God, whether from the Scripture or otherwise, then it could be faced with an interpretative tyranny or a dependence which might destroy personal initiative in coming to know truth⁵ and the praxis which goes with it. The pastor would be in the dangerous position of being a purveyor of knowledge, and so the congregation would be on the way to cultic and sectarian modes

³ *Ephesians 4–6*, p. 438 (Anchor Bible, Vol. 34A, Doubleday, 1960).

⁴ We are not told directly in Scripture that a pastor is a hierophant for the word is not explicitly used. Nor are we told that any office or ministry is hierophantic, but we may be able to see and show that terms like ‘feeding the flock’ (I Pet 5:2) and ‘ruling the flock’ (Matt. 2:6; Rev. 2:27; cf. Acts 20:28) bring the pastor-shepherd into such a function. We also note that ‘pastor and teacher’ of Ephesians 4:11 is considered by many scholars to be not two offices or gifts but the one. If this is so, then the pastor-teacher might be said to fulfil the role of a hierophant, but then his/hers may not be the only office of a hierophant.

⁵ Passages such as John 7:17; 16:7–15; I John 2:20–27 make it clear that with the coming of the Holy Spirit all truth would be made known to the church, the new people of God, and the constant statements such as ‘You know’, and ‘knowing this’ testify to the fact that truth does not reside in pastors only, or even in the ministry of gifts such as nominated in Ephesians 4:7–11; I Corinthians 12:28f. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are each nominated as teachers, and so truth comes to men and women via the Scriptures so that the members of the church are far from being shut up to their pastors and teachers. This is not say that there is not a special mandate, franchise and gift of teaching which resides in pastors: there is, as we shall see, but such is not confined to them.

of being and living. In the New Testament the Word of God originates with the Father, is incarnated, lived out and mediated by the Son, and is fully communicated and known by the Holy Spirit. Nor is teaching limited to pastors. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers were present in the apostolic age to teach, and it may well be that most of these offices or gifts are still extant in some form or another. The passages of the New Testament which relate to bishops, elders and deacons, as also to older women teaching younger women show us that teaching came from many quarters. The teaching by parents of their children is also another factor in instruction and training for life. Members of the church are exhorted to ask wisdom from God if they lack it in certain situations and are assured they will receive it 'from above'. There was certainly an interchange of insights, doctrines and understandings within the body of the congregation.

In the face of all of this evidence why do we even pursue the idea of pastors being hierophants? The answer to this question is not simple and we must take time to fashion a response.

The Matter of Wisdom

Every culture has its hierophants, going by the various names of priests, soothsayers, witch-doctors, gurus, pundits, shamans—and so on. Ideally these elders of the people are wise persons who, having garnered the wisdom of the past and having the responsibility of using it in the present, teach the people of their tribe or nation how to live in this world. It can be said that they all have—consciously or otherwise—a world view, a theology and an anthropology and teach in accordance with these principles they espouse. Students of the Wisdom literature of Israel, both the canonical and non-canonical materials, are generally convinced that over the world's history there is a kind of wisdom which we can call 'human' that is fairly common to most cultures and which has not called for special revelations, but is most useful in the practice of living. There also seems to be innate in most of us a recognition and even an admiration of this ancient, accumulated wisdom. This seems to have subsisted even in the face of what we biblically understand as human depravity. It is a practical wisdom that assists us in living in our world, even if we rarely rise above the 'horizontal'⁶ and know little of the 'vertical'.

Canonical, biblical wisdom may be summed up as the true knowledge of God, of His workings and His will (cf. Eph. 5:17; Rom. 12:2). Biblically, a person who has much of this can be called a wise person, and in some loose sense a hierophant⁷, that is he—or she—has something to pass 'down the line', so to speak. Of course the wisdom of God is something that is specific and the three great religions of the world—Judaism, Christianity and Islam—which claim they have come to knowledge of God by

⁶ By 'horizontal' we mean that which is empirico-scientific, knowledge which can be obtained by observation and experiment, which studies the phenomenology of things, and deduces principles which can be practically applied. By 'vertical' we mean that there is a dimension which is not empirically observable, a dimension which is supernatural. If these two dimensions exist then they are not naturally opposed to one another. Some would place 'unseen things'—as in II Corinthians 4:18; Colossians 3:1–4—in this vertical dimension, and others would place things occultic and of 'the new age' in this dimension. Biblical theologians would simply speak of celestial and a terrestrial creation and insist that all creation—whether things seen or unseen—are of the one piece.

⁷ For example, in Daniel 2 the 'wise men' of Babylon who are designated 'the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans'. In chapter 1 Daniel and his three friends are said to be ten times better than 'in every matter of wisdom and understanding' than the other wise men.

His personal revelations through His prophets and teachers are of a different ilk to the more cognitive and religio-philosophical systems such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Parseeism, and so on. Animistic religions have also their accumulated wisdom linked with the spirits and the lore that they have accumulated. On the whole they would believe their leaders were authentic hierophants, i.e. that they had received their special wisdom ‘from above’ or ‘out there’ and in that sense all religions might claim they are/were revealed.

Modern Wisdom

In the West the Age of Enlightenment seemed to put an end to wisdom ‘from above’ i.e. revelatory wisdom. The wisdom of the Bible came to be placed amongst the gathered knowledge that was cultural to Israel and early Christianity. The Hebrew-Christian Scriptures were now to take their place alongside other religions and their writings. Humanism changed human orientation from God to man, from the imagined deities to human ability. When the ‘God of the gap’ was closed off, Man was freed from the bondage of superstition and religion. Humanism with its ‘liberty, equality and fraternity’ presupposed that wisdom for human living lay within humanity itself. Man’s interest and preoccupation with himself has developed an ever burgeoning anthropology which not only includes biology, psychology, psychiatry, psychogeriatrics, and psychotherapy but also genetic engineering and the ability to change and utilise human genes to prevent disease and, perhaps, to prolong life. This is part of modern wisdom⁸ and it may seem unduly pessimistic to say all of this has changed human nature little, if at all, and that the same problems of that nature threaten to confront us perpetually. At present the United Nations Organisation seems to lack both the wisdom and clout to bring warring factions to sensible peace, and the world to living in a comfortable equality of classes, races and sexes. At the same time UNO has its departments which seek to make better the lot of the human race—as in education, social aid, health research with their application; and the like.

Even so, and in the midst of all modernity⁹ and perhaps because of it, human beings do look for persons of wisdom, and even devoutly hope their leaders will be such persons. Wisdom may be lost by default, but it is still not in the discount. Wise persons are generally treasured, if not always easily, quickly and widely recognised. So called ‘modern Man’ quickly reverts from his new ‘wisdom’ to that of the ‘new age’, the occult, the shaman and the guru. So many of us still seem to think wisdom had its genesis in the past, and it is there that it must be sought, even though it may—or must—apply to the present and the future. The Christian view is that wisdom comes¹⁰ from above when God’s people apply to Him, especially out of a recognition of their own poverty.

⁸ Like Paul we need to distinguish between knowledge and wisdom, since the two may now always be synonymous. In I Corinthians 8:1–3 and 13:2 Paul insists that knowledge without love does not equal genuine wisdom.

⁹ In the 1950s writers began to speak of ‘the post-Christian era’, probably meaning ‘the post-Christendom era’, believing that Christianity was outmoded. It may be that we are now on the ‘post-post Christian era’ and that the gospel has lost none of its power, and Christ’s Lordship has in no way lessened. It needs to be investigated whether the crumbling of churches may not be the judgements the Lord of the church is bringing upon faithless people, and whether such judgements do not portend a rich revival, in history, of the Christian faith.

¹⁰ See my LFS Study 35, *The Wisdom of God and Man* (NCPI, 1979).

The Matter of Biblical Wisdom, Revelations and Mysteries

We now need to inquire in regard to the wisdom—the apostolic truth—that we so need. From his doxology of Romans 11:33–36 it is evident that Paul sees all wisdom as being in God Who, as such, is inscrutable to Man. Even so, the Bible does represent God as disclosing Himself to Man, even fallen Man (cf. Rom. 1:18–25; cf. Acts 14:15–17; 17:23–30)¹¹. Paul as an Israelite opposing the gospel of Christ, himself received the mystery of the gospel¹² by a revelation of Jesus Christ and not from or through another human being (Gal. 1:11–16). The ‘natural man’ is unable and unwilling to receive the things of the Spirit (I Cor. 2:14). This he has determined in the fall; he does not wish to have the knowledge of God in any form (Rom. 1:19–28) even though God ever confronts Man with Himself (Rom. 1:19ff; Psa. 19:1f.). God’s wisdom insofar as the creation is concerned—man included—is really His will and purpose. So In Ephesians 1:9–11 His ‘will’, His ‘purpose’ and ‘the counsel of His will’ are the one thing. Since these are incomprehensible to us ‘He has to make known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will according to his purpose which he has set forth in Christ’ (1:9) and this is his ‘plan for the fullness of time’ (1:10) and we thus see that He ‘accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will’ (1:11), that is ‘according to the eternal purpose which he has realised in Christ Jesus’ (3:11).

Wisdom then is only truly of God and ‘comes from above’ (Jas. 3:15). To have wisdom Man needs God’s revelations which reveal Himself and His purposes. Such revelations come to the recipient as a mystery or as mysteries. Hence the importance of Paul’s words in I Corinthians 4:1, ‘This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.’ The ‘us’ here seems to refer back to 3:5 and to Paul, Apollos and Cephas. It could even refer to the apostolic band which came to Corinth in the beginning. In any case the apostolic truth has come to the church through the coming of the Holy Spirit to the apostles. It is the truth of Christ and can be called ‘the word of God’ and ‘the word of Christ’ and it is the word which reveals God, which saves Man and which teaches him even to the point of his ultimate glorification.

Attendants of Christ and Stewards of the Mysteries of God

In I Corinthians 4:1–5 the apostolic band—especially that which brought the church of Corinth into being—attends on Christ as a helper and as one under orders. This band is not the deviser of the mysteries of God but its members are attendants and stewards of those mysteries or, perhaps, collectively, the mystery of the gospel. In I Corinthians 4:1–5 Paul seems to be saying that as a steward he is not under the judgement of anyone¹³ and that no one is in a position to judge the mandate and ministry Paul exercises. The various passages relating to Paul’s apostolic commission by Christ and the receiving of the gospel directly from Christ convince us that Paul, no less than the other apostles, was given that apostolic truth which is the foundation and the life of the church.

¹¹ These passages which speak of God’s knowability if Man were to wish to know also indicate that Man has not wished to know, not, anyway, in the form God would disclose Himself.

¹² We hope to show that ‘the mystery’ (*to mysterion*) and ‘mysteries’ (*ta mysteria*) come only by revelation, and not by simply pondering data that is available.

¹³ In II Corinthians 4:1–2 he seems to be saying that his hearers will agree in their consciences that what he is saying is unquestionably the truth, that such truth is self-evident.

Paul's responsibility was to preach this gospel which he had come to know and in doing so compass what he himself called 'the whole counsel of God' (Acts 20:26). The apostolic truth was primarily known and uttered by the apostles alone, but then as the truth given to the church through the apostles, it was always to be proclaimed by the whole church until the *parousia* of Christ the Lord. The church is 'built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus being the cornerstone' (Eph. 2:20), and this is in some way linked with 'no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus' (Cor. 3:11) and is also linked with 'the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit' (Eph. 3:4–5). It must also be connected with Paul's declaration to King Agrippa in Acts 26:22–23, 'To this day I have had that help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: that the Christ must suffer, and that by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles.' In Luke 24:25–27, 44–47 Jesus had pointed to all the Scriptures regarding himself. Lest we think of the apostolic truth as being a formulated body of doctrine or doctrines we are reminded that the foundation is the living Christ himself. The foundation is palpable, alive and personal. Hence in Colossians 2:6–7 Paul says. 'As therefore you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so live *in him*, rooted and built up *in him* and established *in the faith*, just as you were taught . . .'

Without going into the matter of 'apostles and prophets' in detail¹⁴ we may conclude that the mysteries of which Paul and others speak constitute 'the gospel', that is, 'the whole counsel of God'. It is of these mysteries, or this mystery that the apostolic band were 'attendants' and 'stewards' (I Cor. 4:1), and we suggest that apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers were all involved, and involved together in such a stewardship. We are anxious to see what is the role and ministry appointed to pastor-teachers.

The Mystery and Mysteries of God

The Mystery in the Gospels

In Mark 4:11 Jesus told his disciples, 'To you has been given the secret [*to mysterion*] of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables.' In Matthew 13:11 (Luke 8:9–10)¹⁵ it is recorded, 'To you it has been given to know the secrets [*ta mysteria*] of the kingdom of heaven'. Some see the singular 'mystery' as constituting the secret or disclosure of the whole kingdom of heaven, and some see the plural

¹⁴ The linking of the apostles and prophets in Ephesians 2:20 and 3:5 (cf. Eph. 4:11; I Cor. 12:28) has caused some to integrate the prophets with the apostles as though without the prophets the apostles would not have held the whole apostolic truth. There is no need for such observations: the apostles were clearly the ones given the truth by Christ, and prophets are coordinated with the apostles. At the same time I Corinthians 13:2 may indicate that to have prophetic powers is to 'understand all mysteries' in which case the prophet understands the mysteries which the apostles have been given to understand, which may then give point to Ephesians 2:20 and 3:5. It may well be, also, that evangelists, pastors and teachers' are no less coordinated in what might be seen as an 'apostolic hierarchy of ministry of declaration', but certainly the apostolic college was unique and not to be replaced. The prophets were more than confirmatory of the apostolic truth: they were its charismatic manifestation and life.

¹⁵ We cannot here enter into Jesus' use of Isaiah 6:9–10 except to say that his use of parable was intended to conceal the revelation from wrongful hearing whilst at the same time declaring the truth which would judge those not having a will to hear the truth.

‘mysteries’ as constituting the total component secrets of the Kingdom, whilst some it as Christ, the King of the Kingdom. Whilst commentators may argue what this mystery (or, mysteries) is, yet Jesus made it clear that no one could see, understand or enter into the kingdom of God without new birth originating from above in God’s will, without becoming as a little child (John 3:3–16; Matt. 18:1–2). Revelation is not the unveiling or showing of something incomprehensible to the human mind, something which is against being grasped by human reason, but is the unveiling of the truth which the human will, unless changed by God, does not wish to understand. The will either desires to know or not to know, but God does not always leave it in this state. In Saul of Tarsus’ case there was no will to know the mystery of God in its Christian form, but God interrupted—so to speak—into Paul’s situation, confronting him with the truth of the gospel or ‘the whole counsel of God’. When Paul claimed that the apostolic band were attendants and stewards of the mysteries of God he meant that full revelation had brought the mysteries or mystery to him and his people.

We must conclude that when God’s wisdom comes as revelation then the mystery is clear truth to the willing, but closed off truth to the unwilling.

Paul’s Mysteries

If we proceed in order of the Epistles then the following are the mysteries Paul knows and wishes to communicate,

(i) Romans 11:17–26.

Here the hardening of Israel (v.25) is part of the mystery, but the full mystery is that ‘all Israel will be saved’; the hardening is with a view to Israel’s ultimate inclusion.

(ii) Romans 16:25–26

This may relate to Romans 11:25–25 and thus include both Jews and Gentiles, but its primary thrust is that Paul’s gospel—the preaching of Jesus Christ—is that God will bring about ‘the obedience of faith’ of all nations, in relationship to which we should see Romans 1:5; 15:18; Acts 6:7; Philippians 2:9–11; Romans 10:16ff.; I Peter 1:2, 22; II Thessalonians 1:8; I Corinthians 15:24–28.

(iii) I Corinthians 1:18–2:16

This passage should be read as a whole. The wisdom of this world does not encompass the Cross which is ‘the power of God and the wisdom of God’ (1:24), that is ‘Christ crucified’. In 2:1 Paul says, ‘I did not come proclaiming the mystery¹⁶ of God to you in lofty words or wisdom’ (NRSV). In 2:7 he says ‘We impart a secret (*en mystereio*) and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification’. Thus the whole matter of the Cross and its purpose of ultimate glorification constitutes the gospel Paul preached at Corinth. *Note:* Whilst Paul gives this wisdom only to the mature we cannot be sure those hearing the mystery of God for the first time are not included.

(iv) I Corinthians 4:1–2

See above for ‘the mysteries of God’. As we have observed this can mean a collection of mysteries or may just cover the entire mystery of the gospel ‘the whole counsel of God’.

(v) I Corinthians 13:2; 14:2

In 13:2 one can, seemingly, have the form and knowledge of the mysteries of which Paul speaks in 4:1 but where love is absent then the mysteries are virtually empty. In 14:2 one can, when speaking in the Spirit utter the mysteries, but in unintelligible form.

¹⁶ Some translations have ‘testimony’ (*to marturion*) where others have ‘mystery’ (*to mysterion*).

Perhaps these edify the one speaking glossolalia, but do not benefit hearers. This may be the second occasion when one is not a true steward of the mysteries.

(vi) I Corinthians 15:51f.

This mystery is certainly something which needs to be revealed as it is not self-apparent, that is the transformation of humanity ‘at the last trumpet’ blast. Parallel to this passage are Philippians 3:20–21 and I Thessalonians 4:13–17. Certainly a significant mystery, especially for hope.

(vii) Ephesians 1:10; 3:1–11; 6:19; Colossians 1:21–28; 2:2–3; 4:3; cf. I Timothy 3:9, 16

The mentions of *mystery* in Ephesians and Colossians¹⁷ can be taken together, generally. In 1:10 it is the mystery of the will of God which is His plan for ‘the fullness of time’, which is His heading or summing up all things in Christ, which things are ‘things in heaven and on earth’. That which has been divided—we suppose by the fall—is brought together in one in God’s plan, ‘the counsel of his will’ (1:11) and ‘his eternal purpose’ (3:11) is realised in Christ (3:11). The ‘all things’ include Jew and Gentile (cf. 2:11–22), and, in particular, this was ‘not made known to the sons of men in other generations’ but has now been ‘revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit’ (3:5) namely that ‘the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, members of the same body and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel’ (3:6). This breath-taking reality is that there are not two bodies of holy people (i) Jews and (ii) Gentiles become Christians, but only *one* body which is the church, and in which neither Jew nor Gentile is ahead of the other, but together all are one [body]. This really is really the idea repeated in Colossians 1:24–29,

24 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, 25 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, 26 the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now made manifest to his saints. 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. 28 Him we proclaim, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man mature in Christ. 29 For this I toil, striving with all the energy which he mightily inspires within me.

for in this passage the *mystery*—as in Ephesians 3:5—has been hidden and is only now revealed to the saints, and it is ‘Christ in you, the hope of glory’, ‘in you’ meaning ‘among you Gentiles [as well as among the Jews]’ (1:27). It naturally follows Colossians 1:19–22 where ‘all things’ are reconciled in Christ through the blood of his cross’, the all things being celestial and terrestrial. Thus in Colossians 1:22–28 ‘the mystery hidden’ and ‘the glory of this mystery’ are linked with and even equated with ‘the hope of the gospel’ (1:23) and ‘the word of God’ (1.25). So, too, in Ephesians 6:19 it is ‘the mystery of the gospel’ which needs to be made known, and which is difficult to be made known. In Ephesians 6:20 Paul is ‘an ambassador in chains’ and—most importantly—in Colossians 1:23 and 25 for which [gospel, mystery] he ‘became a minister’ and ‘became a minister according to the divine office which was given to me for you’. If we miss this special commission of divine ministry we miss the responsibility of proclaiming the mystery of God, i.e. the gospel. *We note here,*

¹⁷ Colin Brown in his *Dictionary of the New Testament Vol. 3* (Paternoster Press, 1978) page 504 observes, ‘Practically wherever it occurs in the NT *mysterion* is found with verbs, denoting revelation or proclamation, i.e. *mysterion* is that which is revealed. It is a present day secret, not some isolated fact from the past which merely needs to be noted, but something dynamic and compelling’.

strongly, that whilst we as pastors and others do not have that initial commission as apostles we nevertheless have it repeated in every ministry to which and for which we—in these very days—have been and are ordained.

So, then, in both Ephesians and Colossians the mystery compasses the entire gospel, which can rightly thus be called ‘the whole counsel (*boule*)¹⁸ of God’. Thus if we limit the gospel to what we call ‘the *kerugma*’ then we may be missing the full display of the will and counsel of God as being the fullness of the gospel. Thus Colossians 2:2–3 and 4:3 make ‘the mystery of Christ’ equal to the gospel, the gospel which Paul is responsible to make known.

We now compare I Timothy 3:9—‘the mystery of the faith’—and 3:16—‘the mystery of our religion’ with the Ephesian-Colossian use of the mystery as the gospel and see that they are the one and fit the use of Romans 16:25–26, also of Romans 11:25–28, that is the ultimate obedience of Israel and the nations to the gospel, ‘the obedience of faith’. ‘The mystery of the faith’ in I Timothy 3:9 And ‘the mystery of our religion’ are both—as the contexts show ‘the mystery of Christ himself’.

(viii) Ephesians 5:32

The mystery of marriage in 5:32 makes something hidden in Genesis 2:24 to now become ‘an open secret’. An allegory has always been present, but is only now revealed, by Paul, whose ‘I am saying that it refers to Christ and his church’ makes this revelation to be irreversible. Here Paul is speaking in a way which is different from his uses of *mysterion* which we have seen above.

(ix) II Thessalonians 2:7; cf. Revelation 17:7 et al.

Paul’s use of the term ‘the mystery of lawlessness’ is not far from his other uses of ‘mystery’. None of ‘the mysteries’ would be known or be able to be interpreted without God’s revelation in each case. If the gospel is a mystery unable to be invented or devised by Man, so too iniquity. Iniquity has to be known by God. The essential nature of lawlessness can never be arrived at by Man. Its essential nature is beyond empiric-scientific observation. So ‘the son of perdition’ who is ‘the man of lawlessness’ will need to be revealed at the right time by God, and not even by the appearance of that evil one. Likewise in Revelation 17 ‘the mystery of the woman’ requires the services of the seventh angel to bring revelation to John the Seer. In fact the whole book of Revelation is an unveiling of things that are as they are, and this accords with the use of term ‘mystery’ in the Old Testament and the Apocrypha.

Mystery in the Old Testament and in the Book of Revelation

The term ‘mystery’ appears only in the Book of Daniel in the Old Testament and refers to matters which we would call apocalyptic. Thus the dream of Nebuchadnezzar (ch. 1–2) is a mystery and its interpretation is the unfolding of that mystery. Daniel says ‘there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries’ and having heard the *revelation* of the *mystery*, the king says, ‘Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery.’ Elsewhere in the book Daniel has visions, but he does not have the capacity to *interpret* them and needs the interpretations of the celestial aides. In 9:22 the archangel Gabrielle says to Daniel, ‘O Daniel, I have come to give you wisdom and understanding.’ In 10:1 we read, ‘And the word was true, and it was a great conflict. And he understood the word and has an understanding of the vision’.

¹⁸ In Ephesians 1:11 it is ‘the counsel (*boule*) of his will’ which equals 1:9 ‘the mystery (*mysterion*) of his will’, and 3:9 ‘the plan of the mystery’ and 3:11 ‘the eternal purpose (*prosthesis*)’.

In the OT the term ‘secret’ or ‘counsel’ (*sod*) is close to the idea of mystery (Job 15:8; 29:4; Psa. 25:14, AV, but is translated ‘council’, and ‘friendship’ respectively in the NRSV. The term ‘council’ (*sod*) is used in Jeremiah 23:18, 22 where, if the prophets had been present, they would have known the mind of the Lord. It appears that as in the NT so in the OT that there is nothing that God does not declare to his prophets (Amos 3:7), but He will reveal nothing to His covenant people other than what they need to know (Deut. 29:29). The term for ‘mystery’ or ‘secret’ in Daniel is *raz* and here again what is to be known God will reveal, though its understanding may not come at the time of His communication.

In Revelation the idea of the *mystery* (cf. 1:20; 17:5; 17:7) is similar to that of the Book of Daniel but it is evident that whatever may be the *mysteries* yet ‘the *mystery* of God, as he announced to his servants the prophets’ (10:7 *et al*) is really the plan of God, and this fits with Paul’s wider use of the term ‘mystery’. It is also evident from 1:1–3—‘What must soon take place’ and 4:1—‘what must take place after this’, that the elements of apocalyptic prophecy—‘the mystery of God as he announced to his servants the prophets’—are part of the mystery which in turn is part of ‘the whole counsel of God’ and even a synonym for it and so is part of the wisdom that ‘the shepherds of the flock’ should know as the wisdom they must impart, cf. 13:13 ‘this calls for wisdom’ and 17:9 ‘This calls for a mind with wisdom’. If we link the Books of Daniel and Revelation—as they are in fact linked—then the wisdom we gather is not only invaluable, but essential for teaching ‘the whole counsel of God’.

Conclusion to Part I of *The Pastor as Teacher-Hierophant*

By ‘hierophant’ we mean that person who receives the truth and wisdom from above him, but passes it down to those who as yet do not have truth in its fullness. We have made the point that such truth as we call ‘the apostolic truth’ is needed for the human race. That truth came in particular through the ministry of the apostles, and that somehow the gifts of prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher were essential to the full outworking and teaching of that truth, the truth called ‘the whole counsel [wisdom, plan, purpose] of God’.

What we have not shown as yet, is the important part the pastor-teacher or ‘teaching shepherd’ has in the impartation of apostolic truth and the wisdom of God which the church has always so much needed. This will be the substance of our next Study, but is of importance that the function, purpose and importance of the pastor be rescued from its present democratisation and the disregard for it in churches which seem to be antagonistic to any suggestion of ministerial hierarchy or the receiving of truth from those who have been set aside to give it.

The Pastor as Teacher-Hierophant—II

“I became a Minister According to the Divine Office Given to Me”

The full quote of Colossians 1:21–29 gives us the rich context of our heading above,

21 And you, who once were estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him, 23 provided that you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which has been preached to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister. 24 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, 25 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, 26 the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now made manifest to his saints. 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. 28 Him we proclaim, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man mature in Christ. 29 For this I toil, striving with all the energy which he mightily inspires within me.

The first statement about being a minister is 1:23, ‘the hope of the gospel which you heard, which has been preached to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister’. Paul is a minister of ‘the hope of the gospel’, but of course is also ‘a minister of the gospel’. The second quote is, ‘the church, 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’, and states that Paul is a minister of and in the church and that is ‘the divine office which was given to me for you’. In these words we see the high standing of ‘the minister’, that it is a holy office and commission, that it is for the church and it is for proclaiming the gospel, and that that gospel is not only the one of hope, of the mystery of hope—‘Christ among the Gentiles’—but one which matures those to whom it is proclaimed, who are warned, and who are taught in wisdom. If we compare our ministries with Paul's where are we?

The High Ministry of Being Servants

Whereas the RSV uses the term ‘minister’ in the above passage, the NRSV uses ‘servant’ (*diakonos*). Both of course are correct, but how are we to interpret them? Jesus uses the term of himself in Mark 10:45 where his serving is ‘to give his life a ransom for many’, and Paul in Philippians 2:6–7 speaks of the preincarnate Son emptying himself and becoming a ‘slave’ (*doulos*) in his incarnation. Paul can also call

himself both *diakonos* (Col. 1:23–25) and a *doulos* (a) of Christ (Rom. 1:1) and (b) of those to whom he ministers (II Cor. 4:5). Much is spoken regarding members of the church all being servants (Eph. 4:12; ‘the work of the ministry’) and, of course this is the case¹. It is what ‘ministry’ or ‘serving’ means that is the point. In the above passage of Colossians Paul has outlined it very well. It is a demanding ministry and has no note of subserviency in it. It lacks the thought of self-conscious servanthood which almost pleads to be allowed to be servant as in ‘Brother let me be your servant’. Graham Kendrick’s popular hymn ‘The Servant King’ is preserved from being pusillanimous since its centrality is the Cross and not just making the lot of others more comfortable in this world. We have to ask ourselves whether the serving that is sometimes demanded of us is not humanity-centred and oriented before it is God centred and oriented.

In these days of levelling everything in the interests of ecclesiastical as well as community democratisation we have to be sure we are not iconoclastic to the point of destroying ontological categories of hierarchies² which are, in the ultimate, designed as serving structures. One of Dorothy Sayers statements³ is apt,

To be sure, what we want to abolish is the artificial inequality of goods & social status; but I am not sure that this is being accompanied as it should by any recognition of a real hierarchy of merit. I seem to detect a general disposition to debunk the natural hierarchies of intellect, virtue & so forth, and substitute, as far as possible, an all-round mediocrity.

There can be no question, in the New Testament, that all members of the church are in the business of serving firstly God and then one another in the church, and also the community of humanity. What we need to determine is whether being servants means to be rid of authority and hierarchies, and whether it is based on an ontology of equality. This brings us back to our use of the term ‘minister’ or ‘servant’. If we are all servants does that mean the particular ministry to which each is commissioned carries nothing with it of special sacred office or calling—and therefore of responsibility? Does it mean, also, that those to whom this servanthood ministers are under no leadership because everyone is relationally, functionally and ministerially on the same plane? How do we place the gift-ministries of Ephesians 4:11, I Corinthians 12:28, and the leadership of the church by elders (I Thess. 5:12; Heb. 13:7, 17)—and so on. Are these not in any sense hierophantic, that is serving others by their wisdom, their knowledge of the truth, and their promulgated offices⁴ and are such offices not be recognised, acknowledged and acceded to in the life of the church?

The Matter of Significance of the Ministry Gifts

It is quite clear in Ephesians 4:7–15 that the gifts of Christ to the church of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher are *with a view to* the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry (serving) so that the outcome will be the attainment of ‘mature

¹ See my *The Sons of God are Servants of All* (NCPI, 1982) where the matter is fully discussed.

² I again refer to my *All Things Are Yours* (NCPI, 1991) for a discussion on authority, hierarchy and the necessity of both.

³ From a letter to Charles Williams quoted in David Coombes’ biography of Dorothy Sayers *A Rage for Life* (Lion, 1992) page 177.

⁴ When we use the term ‘offices’ let us not confuse the word with ‘officers’ as those who occupy these given ministries are ‘officers’ of the church, that is one who rule in a legal way. Elders certainly do rule as the above references show (I Thess. 5:12; Heb. 13:7, 17) but the manner of ruling is that of shepherds and pastors who have responsibility but not domination.

manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ' and so to the upbuilding of the church in love. Romans 12:3–8 when linked with Ephesians 4:7ff. and I Corinthians 12:4–31 surely teaches us that each person in the church is given at least one gift and that such gifts should be used with humility and love and that their use is in and for mutual ministry. Such gifts are 'manifestations of the Spirit for the common good'.

Whilst I Corinthians 12:28–30 seems to lump all gifts together as though what I have termed 'ministry gifts' in Ephesians 4:11, and what are called 'charismata' in I Corinthians 12:7–11 are the one, yet Paul gives special priority to apostles, prophets and teachers by saying, 'first apostles, second prophets, third teachers *and then* healers, helpers (etc.)'. In this sense he may be distinguishing between two sets of gifts, as I have done. We note that he has omitted 'evangelists' and 'pastors'.

Whatever the case may be, it is very clear that both Acts and the Epistles make the ministry gifts of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher of great significance for these are purveyors of the apostolic truth whereas the charismata do not have this direct function. *The charismata are not proclamatory-teaching gifts* however much they may confirm the gospel.

The Importance and Functions of the Ministry Gifts

- (i) We have seen that *the apostle* is the primary means by which the apostolic truth—the gospel—is formulated⁵, proclaimed and communicated.
- (ii) We have also seen that *the prophet* is coupled with *the apostle* in such references as Ephesians 2:20 and 3:5, and that the foundation of the new temple was their apostolic truth proclaimed. We find prophets mentioned in Acts 13:1 at Antioch, and again in Acts 15:17–23 the prophets Judas and Silas are sent to the churches with the message of the Council of Jerusalem. Other prophets such as Agabus are also prominent. Whilst in the NT 'the prophets' are generally apostolical yet they are not disconnected with their predecessors of the OT to whom Christ referred in Luke 24:25 and other places. The substance of the NT prophets reaches back into the OT teaching, for there the prophets were teachers, though not, of course, the only teachers.
- (iii) The ministry of *the evangelist* Philip required the coming of apostles to confirm the entrance of the Samaritans into the Kingdom by the gift of the Spirit whilst undoubtedly he taught the Apostolic truth—the gospel. He then went on to other ministry. It is notable that Timothy is urged by Paul to teach, but he also exhorts him (II Tim. 4:5) 'do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry'. This could mean Timothy was primarily an evangelist who had received this commission by the laying on of hands of Paul and the presbyters along with prophecy (cf. I Tim. 4:4; II Tim. 1:6). However Timothy's ministry was not confined to that of an evangelist. It was very much that of a teacher.
- (iv) For the moment forgetting *the pastor*, we have plenty of material concerning *the teacher*. There were teachers at Antioch in Syria in Acts 13:1, and these with

⁵ By 'formulated' we do not mean credalised or formalised so that we have a body of doctrine that is dogmatic, or even systematic. The 'apostles' doctrine' (Acts 2:34) is the apostolic truth, the truth of Christ in the light of the OT and the OT in the light of the event of Christ, that is the whole saving gospel along with all its eschatological and teleological elements, 'the whole counsel of God'. Of course there is much that is dogma in the proclamation but the gospel is not a set of dogmatic statements. We may well see some 'form' in the kerugma but the gospel is palpable and living: it is Christ.

the prophets. It seems that both prophets and teachers were in some kind of leadership in the church, since it was to them that the Holy Spirit primarily spoke. Paul's constant exhortation to Timothy to teach such as we find in I Timothy 4:11, 13; 16; II Timothy 2:2, 24; 3:16; 4:2, 3 point to him as a teacher. Titus also was exhorted to teach, 2:1, 7. Indeed, Paul spoke of himself in regard to teaching, linking it with his apostleship, 'For this gospel I was appointed a preacher (*kerux*) and an apostle (*apostolos*) and a teacher (*didaskolos*)', (II Tim. 1:11).

- (v) When it comes to the matter of being *a pastor* we have the term 'pastor and teacher' which, it is often claimed is the one office or ministry. Certainly the pastor (*poimen*) is the same as a shepherd for this is the meaning of the word through the cognate verb in Acts 20:28, 'Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made your overseers (*episcopous*) to care for the church of God', and in I Peter 5:1–4, 'Tend the flock of God that is your charge . . . not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock'. Of course it is used of Christ himself both here in I Peter 4:4 and in John 10:11, 14; Hebrews 13:20 and I Peter 2:25. Its origins lie in Jeremiah 23:2; Ezekiel 34:11 and Zechariah 11:16; cf. 13:7. Peter himself was virtually set up as a pastor-shepherd by Christ in John 21:16. The John who wrote the 3 Epistles called himself 'The *elder* to the elect lady and her children whom I love in the truth' (II John 1:1; III John 1:1).

The brief comments above reveal one thing very clearly: all the ministries of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher were *teaching* ministries, even though only one is explicitly designated as *teacher*. Another important observation we can make is that no one could take on himself these ministries at his own will. They were gifts given by Christ to the church in contradistinction to the *charismata* which were 'manifestations of the Spirit'.

The Elders and Ordination

The elders (*presbuteroi*) were undoubtedly appointed by the apostles in the first case as in Acts 14:23, 'And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting, they committed them to the Lord in whom they believed'. In Acts 11:30 there were already elders of the church in Jerusalem, and they are seen again in Acts 15:4, 6, 22. In Acts 20:17 the elders of the Ephesian church gather at Miletus to hear Paul who says, 'Take heed to yourselves and all the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (*episkopous*), to care for the church of God'. In Titus 1:5 Paul's representative—apostolic delegate—Titus, has been sent to 'appoint elders in every town as I directed you'. In Philippians 1:1 Paul addresses 'all the saints and 'the bishops (*episcopoi*). In I Timothy 3:7 he talks about the qualifications for the office of a *bishop*, and in 5:17 talks of 'the *elders* who rule well'. In Titus 1:5–9 he speaks the *elder* and the *bishop* interchangeably.

In my little book *The Shepherds of the Flock* I have argued that elders, bishops and pastors are the one, and that the elder or bishop is the pastor-teacher or teaching shepherd. One of the reasons for this is that all these designations are of men who are 'apt to teach' (I Tim. 3:4; 5:17; Titus 1:9) . Perhaps further evidence may be that the teachers at Antioch could well be the elders who would have been appointed in the new

church at Pisidia for it is to these teachers, and the prophets with them that the Holy Spirit speaks, and it unlikely that the elders would have nothing addressed to them.

In order to understand the ministry of elders we need to go back into the Pentateuch to see that the office of elder has been from time immemorial, and too look into the Book of the Revelation where the celestial elders are of great importance in many ways. Peter, the shepherd appointed by Christ calls himself ‘a fellow elder’ and speaks to the elders as shepherds. This is surely an echo of Acts 20:28.

I think the term ‘appoint’—for which more than one verb is used in the NT— is not a starting point for arguing for the term ‘ordaining’, especially with the modern connotation of that word. We must not read back into the NT our present ideas. In John 15:16 uses the elective sense of the verb ‘to choose’ (*eklego*) with ‘appoint’ (*tithemi*), but whether this approximates to our present ‘ordain’ does not really matter. The same thought is present; in Romans 10:15 Paul asks, ‘And how can men preach unless they are sent?’

The Leading, Ruling, Teaching Function of the Elders

We can gather something of the function of elders from the Book of Acts. Certainly they lead the churches in which they are appointed. In I Thessalonians 5:12 Paul exhorts, “But we beseech you, brethren, to respect those who labour among you and are over you⁶ in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly because of their work.’ In I Timothy 5:17–19 he says, ‘Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honour . . . Never admit any charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses’. In Hebrews 13:7 and 17 the writer says, ‘Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith.’ ‘Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account. Let them do this joyfully, and not sadly, for that would be of no advantage to you.’ From these verses and other accounts of the works of elders (or, pastor-teachers) we can see the responsibility that comes upon leaders. We cannot here go into the disobedience and rebellion the persons of gift ministries often met within the churches, but the cases were many. James speaks of the function of elders in his Letter (5:14–15), ‘Is any one among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will raise the sick . . .’ Whilst James 1:27 might have applied to all members of the church it would certainly primarily apply to the elders, ‘Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world’.

The Pastor-Teacher as a Special Hierophant in the Church

It may well be debated whether—as a whole—the gift ministries of Ephesians 4:11 were intended always to be present in the church and also whether they are extant today. We may not, irrefutably, be able to prove that they were all part of a hierarchy of ministry and therefore—so to speak—an indispensable ontology of ministry after this hierarchical fashion. We could claim that there has always been a secondary set of

⁶ This may not refer only to elders but it certainly includes them.

apostles, also prophets who work with today's evangelists, pastors and teachers. I am sure a discussion on this claim might not prove to be fruitless or mere speculation, but we must leave it at this.

The Pastor-Teacher Knows and Tell the Truth

What is perfectly clear is that all ministry gifts related to teaching, and that today pastor-teachers—whom I call elders—have the serious and responsible ministry of teaching⁷ If we take the Pastoral Epistles we find the following emphases of Paul to Timothy and Titus, 'Command and teach these things . . . attend to the public reading of scripture, to preaching, to teaching . . . Take heed to yourself and your teaching; hold to that, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers' (I Tim. 4:11–16). 'And what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also' (II Tim. 2:2). 'Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who has no need to be shamed, rightly handling the word of truth' (II Tim. 2:15). 'an apt teacher' (II Tim. 2:24). 'All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching . . .' (II Tim. 3:16). 'preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching' (I Tim. 4:2). 'But as for you, teach what befits sound doctrine . . . Show yourself in all respects a model of good deeds, and in your teaching show integrity, gravity, and sound speech that cannot be censured . . .' (Titus 2: 1, 7).

The Pastor-Teacher is a Steward of the Mysteries of God

What does this mean, then, but what we saw in our previous Study (Study I) that the pastor-teacher is a steward of the mysteries of God. In this sense we do not hesitate to call him a hierophant, the one who hands down the truth as he explicates that which he, in turn, has received from above—from God through the Spirit. He makes not one mystery but is empowered to reveal all 'the mystery which has been first revealed to him. We saw that, simply put, the 'mystery' (or the 'mysteries') constitutes the gospel, but then the gospel as 'the whole counsel of God', and here we must truly define what we mean. We do not mean the pastor-teacher has mysterious truths or a mystical understanding of something hidden from others and so has grasped 'truth' esoterically, or is a kind of gnostic with special knowledge, but we mean he is one who is dependent upon his relationship with the Triune God, in the context of the whole body of Christ, who has been commissioned by the Lord of the Church, and who has been given from God by the Holy Spirit who, himself, continues to bring the reality and power of the whole truth to the pastor-teacher as in humility and obedience he waits upon God and as God unfolds the truth of Himself and 'the counsel of his will' so that the pastor-teacher may continually teach this 'whole counsel of God' to his flock.

⁷ Here I wish to protest against certain modern church structures which prevent pastors from giving themselves to prayer and the word of God and even bring shame to them if they give much time to these exercises. My second protest is that the churches are all but devoid of true biblical teaching and, being so bereft, their worship is thin, weak and even piffling. The evangelistic efforts sometimes made can be mere exercises in trying to enlarge numbers and attendances, and even be exercises in psychological pressures to effect decisions. It is high time both pastors and people became aware of the enormous ecclesial crime of departing from the true nature of the church, its leadership and its worship. We need to be made aware of the flatness of its church life when it so democratizes teachers and the teaching so that it becomes the expression of post-Enlightenment modernity, having lost its awe and reverence of God and the grand shapes of the great eternities.

This is what is meant by ‘tending the flock of God’, ‘exercising the oversight’, ‘being examples to the flock’ (I Pet. 5:2–3, NRSV), it is ‘keeping watch over all the flock’, ‘overseeing it’ ‘shepherding the church of God the church of God’ and ‘being alert’ (Acts 20:28–31, NRSV), ‘labouring among the flock, having charge of it and admonishing them’ (I Thess. 5:12, NRSV), it is ‘speaking the word of God’ to the flock and ‘keeping watch over their souls’ (Heb. 13:7, 17). Yes, this is what pastoring and teaching is all about especially as we have it defined in the paragraph preceding this one, the paragraph in which we have noted Paul’s injunctions to Timothy and Titus for pastoral teaching and oversight.

Whilst we can study the New Testament, sift—as it were—its dogmatics, systematise its theology and present what we might call ‘an objective body of truth’, the matter is not quite so simple. Teaching may be the impartation of knowledge, even theological knowledge, but it has to be more than that. When Paul exhorted, ‘Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and the love that are in Christ Jesus,’ (II Tim. 1:13, NRSV) the first part of the sentence seems to mean Timothy should hold to ‘the pattern of sound words’ (RSV), or, ‘Keep before you an outline of the sound teaching’ (NEB), as though it were almost a creed. The fact is that this is living truth and not just its form; it is existential to the teacher because it is ‘in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus’. Donald G. Bloesch in his *Theology of Word and Spirit* (IVP, 1992, p.19) says, ‘The truth of revelation is made an object of our understanding in the divine-human encounter, but it never remains an object of our understanding like other truths⁸. We must seek it for ever again in faith and obedience. We know it only as we obey it. We have it only as we are grasped by it. The dogma of revelation consists in the unity of logos and praxis’. Even so, there is an entity called ‘the apostles’ doctrine’ (Acts 2:42) and we must never think that it is not an objective reality, nor that it is only that truth when we grasp it. As we have said in our last footnote, it is God Who is the truth, and translated to us that is ‘the whole counsel of God’.

We remember from our Study, *Trinitarian Ecclesial Theology*, that the Divine *perichoresis* —which is intrinsic to the Godhead—flows out in the works *ad extra*, and that its flow is always into the church, and in great measure is through the gift ministries, keeping in mind that all in the church are members one of another, that no minister has dominion over the faith of any member, and that no one shall ‘lord it over the flock’ but shall lovingly respect the particularity, identity and destiny of all others. Thus when we are ‘other persons regarding’, and when there is a flow of perichoretic living and working, it is really the expression of the Trinity within the life of the church. That it often comes to use through a hierarchy of love, holiness, truth, goodness and righteousness, should not make hierophantic ministry to be a thing of envy, any more than it should represent itself as elitist and infallible. None may come between a person and his God.

⁸ I suppose I do not agree there are ‘other truths’ but rather other *facts*, things which are true enough, but there is only one truth—God and His words and actions—so that we do not acknowledge there are other truths. This statement may seem to be carping, but I believe it is not, and that it is important. Even so, I understand what Bloesch is say in principle and thoroughly agree with it.

The Practical Outcome of the Pastoral Ministry

If we put together the ministry gifts, the diaconal ministry, and the charisms given to each member of the Body of Christ, and if we see there is not just one monarchical pastoral head—so to speak—but a collective and unified ministry of pastor-teachers or elders, and that this oversight is conducted with love and humility in the living community of the church as we have seen it in the Acts and the Epistles and having reference to the heavenly elders, then we see that the attention given by the body to the apostolic doctrine, the prayers, the breaking of bread and the fellowship (Acts 2:42) all make for true ecclesial life. They make for a shared life in the Body of Christ under him as its Lord and Head, under the Spirit as the one by whom all love, unity, fellowship, worship and proclamation obtains. In this context the relational, emotional, personal communal needs are met and the proclamation to the world of the gospel of Christ is made effective. We need to say that the weakness of this paper is that, in concentrating upon the role and ministry of the pastor-teachers we have not put it sufficiently in the context and perspective of the whole Body, nor enlarged on the ministry—the servanthood—of all the members of the community of Christ. Even at this last moment of the Study we can emphasise the reality and importance of the whole Body.

Conclusion to Our Study on the Pastor-Teacher Ministry as Hierophantic

We have seen that the hierophant is both the recipient and imparter of the Divine mysteries. Moses is respected as the great law-giver for he imparted what God had told him ‘face to face’ (Num. 12:11), and for this reason the Book of Deuteronomy is outstanding as the holy impartation of ‘the things which are revealed’ (29:29). In the Mosaic covenant system the priests were hierophants for they were to teach the meaning and practice of the law. A beautiful example of this is seen in Ezra 7:10, ‘For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach his statutes and ordinances in Israel’. As we have seen, the prophets also taught, and parents were to impart to their children what they had learned from God through the law and its mentors (cf. Deut. 6:4–9).

In the New Testament Jesus is the ‘new Moses’, or one who is ‘better than Moses’. He is Teacher par excellence, but the Father in primary Teacher and the Son imparts what he hears from the Father, whilst the Holy Spirit teaches what he receives from the Father and the Son. Christ as Lord of the church—with the Father—gives the ministry gifts and these ministries are exercised in the power of the Spirit who constantly brings the revelation of the word of God. Christ is the incarnate word and so is God speaking in human flesh, but at Christ’s ascension to the right hand of the Father, both Father and Son pour out the Spirit, so that henceforth the word of God come through the Spirit who enables God’s servants to proclaim His word to the world and to share it in pastoral ministry.

Our conclusion will lack value unless it draws attention to the fact that God does not give mysteries to His servants that they may ponder them, put them through the processes of human ratiocination and then deliver the results to the world as proclamation and to the church as spiritual nourishment. No: God speaks directly, proclaims directly and teaches directly even though it be through the instrumentality of his human servants, He makes them ‘competent ministers of a new covenant’ and humble hierophants of the mysteries of the living God.

Note: The following Appendixes are intended to be supportive of the Study set out above, and to stimulate our thinking regarding the gifts of proclaiming and teaching ministry.

Appendix One: The Teacher is the Man Under the Word of God and the Spirit

If we work on the principle that all ministries are gifts (Eph. 4:11), callings (Rom. 1:1; I Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:15–17) and commissions of God (Rom. 10:14–15; I Cor. 1:17; 9:17; II Cor. 2:17; Gal. 2:7) and that each represents a holy, solemn and total trust (I Thess. 2:4; I Tim. 1:11) and responsibility (I Cor. 9:17) then the appointment of such is not primarily dependent upon human voting and election⁹ but is a sacred appointment from God (John 15:16) and the recipient is a person under orders and answerable to God (Jas. 3:1: cf. I Cor. 4:1f.). The following quotes indicate the nature of person under the word of God as he/she proclaims that word,

- That then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. (I Cor. 3:5).
- This is how one should regard us, the servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy. (I Cor. 4:1–2).
- For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this of my own will I have a reward; but if not of my own will I am entrusted with a commission. (I Cor. 9:16–17).
- For we are not, like so many, pedlars of God's word; but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ). (II Cor. 2:17)
- Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant . . . (II Cor 3:5–6).
- Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—with far greater labours (etc.). II Cor. 11:23).
- They saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised . . . (Gal. 2:7).
- of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace which was given me by the working of his power . . . to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ . . . (Eph. 3:7–8)
- the gospel . . . of which I, Paul became a minister . . . 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 . . . (Col. 1:23, 25).
- See that you fulfil the ministry which you have received in the Lord. (Col. 4:17).
- but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel . . . (I Thess. 2:4).
- And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers. (I Thess. 2:13).
- in accordance with the glorious gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted. (I Tim. 1:11).
- because he judged me faithful by appointing me to his service. (I Tim. 1:12).
- through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by command of God our Saviour. (Titus 1:3).

Having seen the awesomeness and responsibility of the task, we now look at the nature of the word of God.

⁹ Here we recognise the appointment of 'the seven' and the elders through the apostles (Acts 6:6; 14:23) or apostolic delegate (Titus 1:5) and in particular the presbytery (I Tim. 1:18; 4:14) but just as the disciples were commissioned by Christ, and Paul was commissioned by God through Christ (Gal. 1:16–17) so primarily commission is from the Triune God to the person charged with ministry.)

The Place of the Word in True Proclamation

Keeping in mind that all ministry gifts are in some sense teaching ones we will not make an artificial dichotomy between the gospel (*euangelion, kerugma*) and the teaching (*didache*) since they are all one. The following set references from the Acts and the Epistles shows us the reality, action and power of the word of God. It will be most useful for us to take time to go through these references.

The Preached Word in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles

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

- 2:14 *'Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem . . . give ear to my words [ta rhemata].'* Peter speaks of the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel 2:28.
- 2:22 *'Men of Israel hear these words [logous].'* Peter speaks of the events of Christ, so that when they heard this word (2:37) they asked how they could escape judgement. Peter added other words (2:40). The word was effective for salvation.
- 4:4 *'many of those who heard the word believed.'* The word was effective.
- 4:29 *'grant to thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness.'* This prayer of the church was answered: *'they spoke the word of God with all boldness'*.
- 6:2 *'It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables . . . we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry [diakonia] of the word.'* The result of this was:
- 6:7 *'And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.'* Note the phrase *'the word of God increased'* (cf. 12:24; 19:20; cf. 13:49), i.e. it is a living thing growing—reaching into the hearts of many—or the seed bringing forth a harvest.
- 8:4 *'Now those who were scattered abroad went about preaching the word'*, cf. 11:19, *'those who were scattered . . . speaking [telling] the word'*. The effects of the word are seen (i) in the Samaritans coming to Christ (cf. 8:14, Samaria had received the word), and (ii) in the new church formed at Antioch in Syria.
- 8:25 *'Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.'* Here is the effective preaching of the word of God.
- 10:36 *'You know the word which he sent. The word which was proclaimed.'*
- 10:44 *'The Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word.'* The word was what Peter had preached, including the promise of forgiveness of sins. This was acceptance of the Gentiles by God (cf. Acts 15:8–9), *'the Gentiles had received the word of God'* (11:1).
- 12:24 *'But the word of God grew and multiplied'*, i.e. in spite of Herod's persecution and because of his death. The dynamic of the word knew no restriction by anything else.
- 13:5 *'At Salamis they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogue of the Jews.'*
- 13:7 *'Sergius Paulus sought to hear the word of God.'* Elymas the sorcerer was withstanding the word of God—unsuccessfully.
- 13:15 *'if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it.'* This exhortation was requested in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia. The exhortation becomes

- Paul's long sermon. So much so that *'the next sabbath almost all the city gathered to hear the word of God'* (13:44), but some jealous Jews opposed it so that Paul said, *'It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you.'* . . . *The Gentiles heard that the Gospel was for them also and they were glad and glorified the word of God . . . and believed'* (13:46, 48). To glorify the word of God is simply to recognise and confess its innate glory: it is God's word—to be identified with Him.
- 14:3 *'the Lord . . . bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands'*, i.e. signs and wonders were *not* the word but attested the word, and God desired to do this. It is here called 'the word of his grace' (cf. 13:43, 'the grace of God'; 20:24, 'the gospel of the grace of God'; 20:32, 'the word of his grace').
- 14:25 *'when they had spoken the word in Perga'*, i.e. preached the Gospel.
- 15:7 *'by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.'* Self-explanatory.
- 15:35 *'Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.'* The word was not confined to initial proclamation but was also to the congregation.
- 16:6 *'forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.'* The word must only be spoken by God's guidance in the place God has for it at any point in time.
- 16:32 *'And they spoke the word of God to him [the gaoler] and all that were in his house.'* The situation had been prepared by God. The word was the Gospel.
- 17:2 *'he argued with them from the scriptures.'* The word is not mentioned as such, but it was the word he expounded, i.e. the Scriptures (cf. 18:4, 5).
- 17:11 *'they received the word with all eagerness, examining the scriptures daily.'* The same word Paul had preached at Thessalonica—the Gospel—so 17:13, *'learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul'*.
- 18:11 *'And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them'*, i.e. using the apostolic Gospel in conjunction with the Scriptures.
- 19:10 *'all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord'*, i.e. heard the Gospel.
- 19:20 *'so the word of the Lord grew and prevailed mightily'*, i.e. was growing more and more and prevailing more and more, for it was capturing hearts, and defeating evil, especially the powers of the occult. See 6:7; 12:24; 13:49.
- 20:32 *'I commend you to God and the word of his grace'* (cf. 4:33; 20:24; 13:43; 14:26) i.e. the Gospel of the grace of God.

The Use of 'the Word' in the Epistles

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

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

In *II Corinthians* 1:18 the word of God does not vacillate but is definitive. In 2:17 it is spoken in plain truth and not peddled (cf. I Cor. 4:1f.; II Cor. 4:1f.). In 4:2 the word is not tampered with by St Paul.

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

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

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

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

In *I Thessalonians* 1:5 the Gospel is simply 'word' but is accompanied with power, and by the Spirit, and this word was received by the Thessalonians with dynamic results. In 2:13 the word is the Gospel, and was received as the word of God and not as though it were from men. In 4:15 the 'eschatological word' had been previously taught, thus showing Christ's appearing is part of the word.

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

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

In *II Timothy* 2:9 the Gospel and the word of God are the same, and Paul's being imprisoned does not put fetters on God's word. It is free, even in a prisoner, to do its own work. The word of God is the word of truth, needing to be rightly handled, i.e. proclaimed according to its true nature. In 4:2 this word of God must be preached on every occasion, even when it seems 'not in season'.

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

In *Hebrews* 1:3 the word God speaks through His Son is both creative and sustaining, for it is 'the powerful word'. In 4:12–13 the word is alive (cf. 'living oracles', Acts 7:38), i.e. what was said in the past—in our reckoning—is as alive and dynamic as ever. It is sharper *than* any two-edged sword. The word is penetrative, discerning, unmasking man, so that he is seen as he really is. In 5:12 it is said that there are first principles formed from the word. In 6:5 hearers are said to have 'tasted of the word of God', i.e. begun to hear and feel it. In 11:3 the creative power of God's word is stated—as seen in the Old Testament. In 13:7 the leaders are said to be those who first spoke the word of God to the church.

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

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

In *II Peter* 1:19 Peter says that the prophetic word (both of the Old Testament and Jesus) was reinforced by God's speaking at the Transfiguration. The prophetic word is most significant. In 3:5, 7 it is the word which has created, and the word which will come with dynamic judgement on the present heavens and earth.

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

The Use of the Word in the Book of the Revelation

In Revelation 1:2 John the Seer bears witness to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. That is, the word is given to him or displayed before him in the whole prophecy of the book. In 1:9 he says was on the island called Patmos ‘on account of [because of] the word of God and the testimony of Jesus’, and the meaning seems to be he is being exiled because of his preaching of that word. In 1:16 a two-edged sword issues from the mouth the Lord Jesus. That this is the word of God is supported by 2:16 where Jesus will come and ‘war against them with the sword of my mouth’, and 19:15 speaks of the same sword by which he shall smite the nations. This Warrior has the name by which he is called, ‘The Word of God’. In 3:8 there are some of the saints who have ‘kept my word and have not denied my name’ and in 3:10 those who have ‘kept my word of patient endurance’, which is surely the word which has told them to ‘endure with patience’, and exhortation found in 13:10 and 14:12. In 6:9 we find the martyrs under the altar and they are those ‘who had been slain for the word of God and for their witness they had borne.’ John had been exiled for that word, and they had been martyred for it. In 12:11 ‘the word of their testimony—the testimony of the saints to Jesus (cf. Acts 1:8)—has conquered the beast. In 12:17 the red dragon opposes those who ‘keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus’, so that these both things must be ‘the word of God’. In 20:4 the martyrs are again mentioned for they had been beheaded ‘for their testimony and for the word of God’¹⁰, and they reign with Christ.

We have only described the actual references which use the term ‘word of God’, but since the entire prophecy is from God is all ‘the word of God’ and in chapter 22 readers are encouraged to ‘keep the words of this book’ and are warned against hearing the words of this book and then either adding to, or taking away from them under penalty of a terrible curse. In 22:9 the angel forbids John’s worship of him, saying, ‘You must not do that! I am a fellow-servant with you and your brethren the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book’. What we see is that the whole book is the constant outgoing of the word of God, the word in apocalyptic language, telling of Jesus as Lord of history, of God’s protection of His people and his blessings given to them, as well as His judgements on evil celestial and human powers. It is a powerful exposition, indeed, of ‘the whole counsel of God’ and as such must be constantly read taught., and obeyed.

Note: Karl Barth, ‘Theologian of the Word’

Thomas Torrance in his book *Karl Barth, Biblical and Evangelical Theologian* (T & T Clark, 1990) has a chapter entitled, ‘Karl Barth, Theologian of the Word’. Barth states that God and His word cannot be apart, so that when God speaks He is wholly present.

This Chapter is greatly helpful for the Theme of our Appendix.

¹⁰ The occasions mentioned in 1:2; 1:9; 6:4 and 20:4 show that these saints are persecuted because they ‘hold the word of God and the testimony of Jesus’, but in 12:17 the red dragon makes war on “the offspring of the woman ‘who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus ‘. ‘Keep the commandments’ really seems synonymous with ‘hold the word of God in the above references.