



New Creation Teaching Ministry

1998 PASTOR'S MONDAY STUDY GROUP NOTES

‘PROCLAIMING THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD’

February:	The Everlasting Gospel in the Whole Creation
March:	God Is Always on Mission
April:	God, History & Mission
May:	Pentecost & the Revelation of All Truth
June:	The Theologies by Which Salvation Is Proclaimed
July:	Glory & the Apostolic Proclamation
August:	Glory Proclaimed & Pastoral
September:	Proclamation As Witness to Christ
October:	The Gospel of the Kingdom of Love
Addendum:	The Term 'My Beloved Son': Colossians 1:13-14
November:	Proclamation, Forgiveness & Love
December:	Proclaiming the Grace of God in Christ

Enquiries:

P.O. Box 403, Blackwood, SA 5051

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

Fax: (08) 8270 4003

Email: ministry@newcreation.org.au

*Note: Some of the notes in these series have not been proofread.
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The 1998 NCTM Pastors' Monday Morning Study Program

This year we are seeking to detail the thrust of the 11 months' Program of Studies. The theme will be *The Whole Counsel of God*. The idea of the year is to see that this 'whole counsel of God' covers the whole of the Scriptures, or as we would say in other terms, 'the law and the prophets', that is, the whole of the Old Testament and 'the gospel', the whole of the New Testament, these constituting one unitary whole. Christ said he did not come to abolish the law and the prophets but to fulfil them, that is, to establish them, himself being their goal and *telos*. The fulfilling or establishing of them means a new matter has come into view and into being, namely the Apostolic truth. This we equate with 'the whole counsel (will, wisdom, purpose) of God'.

In other words, we are out to tell 'the Story of God', what He as the Triune God has done in Creation and Redemption, and what He is doing through the Church to bring about the proper consummation of Creation—the new heaven and the new earth, with all the things of the *telos* (goal) as it is completed. The drive of God to make history the fulfilment of His will means that He is about salvation history, and in that action loves the world He created. Whilst we have covered much of this ground over the past 10 years or more on the Monday Morning Studies, and have used its themes over the past 25 years in NCTM missions and classes, yet the 11 Studies should be helpful to put 'all things' into their true perspective so that we can understand 'the mystery of God', 'the mystery of Christ' and 'the mystery of our religion'—themes of the whole Scripture.

I have not been able to work out with finality the titles of the 11 Studies, but they will flow from the first one, '**The Everlasting Gospel in the Whole Creation**'. Part of the aim of the Studies is to examine how the Bible can be said to be one Story, how it was intelligible to the people of faith, and what has motivated the saints in every age to proclaim the nature and purpose of God, and God's purpose in creating and redeeming Man. In one sense our 1998 Summer School covered much of this theme and the power of motivation to proclaim the gospel and to be Christ's Church which proclaims the gospel of the Kingdom. I have therefore set out at this point some of the themes we will bring together to present a unity of truth and action for us, as pastors, elders, and deacons, as well as all other active Christians. What we want to avoid is simply being informative about 'the way things are'. Rather, what the Holy Spirit brings to our understanding should raise astonishment, wonderment, and the urge and drive in us to be in the full Story of God. I am hoping those of us who have not yet 'caught fire' will do so. Out of the series of titles the 11 Studies will nominate themselves. If you have further suggestions I will be glad to consider them. Eleven Studies can contain a vast amount of material.

Here, then, are some of the suggestions: The Everlasting Gospel and the Whole World; God Is Always on Mission; God the Mystery of the World; Pentecost and the Revelation of All Truth; The Gospel in Covenant and Kingdom; The Nature of the Gospel as Evangel and Proclamation; Proclaiming the Gospel in the Modern World; The Witness by the People of God in Old and New Testaments; The Apostolic Imperative and Power; Christ the Meaning of History; Christ the Perfector of the World; The Shape of History as 'From Eden to the New Eden'; The First Adam and the Last; God's People in Christ and the Action of the Gospel; The Law of Israel and the Gospel of Christ; God the Future of the World; and The Battle of the Two Kingdoms for the Goal of God.

To get the ‘feel’ of these Studies I suggest some books which will be helpful and which are indicative of what we will be about. Because of the wide variation of the actual subjects—though the theme is one—it is difficult to suggest a bibliography.

Even so I would recommend books by and about Roland Allen, including *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Christian Church*; *St. Paul’s Missionary Message or Ours*; and *The Ministry of the Spirit*; Vincent Donovan’s *Christianity Rediscovered*; Lessley Newbigen’s books, especially *The Household of God*; *A Word in Due Season*; *Foolishness to the Greeks*; *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*; *The Open Truth*; and *The Gospel as Public Truth*.

Seminal books on mission are *The Bridges of God* by Donald McGavran; Harry Boer’s *Pentecost and Mission*; and David J. Bosch’s *Transforming Mission*. Old but helpful is J. H. Bavinck’s *An Introduction to the Science of Mission*.

Helpful for both mission and theology though out of print is *The Practical Approach to Muslims* by Jens Christensen. *The New Testament Concept of Witness* by Alison Trites helps us in regard to the important subject of witness.

Further books on mission are *I Believe in the Great Commission* by Max Warren; *The Christian Mission in the Modern Age* by John Taylor; *Heralds of God*; and *A Faith to Proclaim* by James S. Stewart; H. Richard Niebuhr’s *Christ and Culture* is still a good stand-by but other books on Christianity and culture need to be ferreted out, Newbigen’s books being helpful. *Creation, Christ and Culture* ed. R. W. A. McKinney is quite valuable. In regard to the universal nature of the Gospel, *Christ the Meaning of History* by Hendrikus Berkhof; *Christ the World’s Perfecter* by Karl Heim; *The Christian Story* by Gabriel Fackre; and *Theology for a New World* by Herbert W. Richardson. The gospel and covenant with a view to salvation history and the end (Eden) have useful books in Bill Dumbrell’s *Covenant and Creation*; *The Faith of Israel*; and *The End of the Beginning*; and Graeme Goldsworthy’s *Gospel and Kingdom*; and *According to Plan*. John Peter’s *God—the World’s Future* sets the perspective of eschatology, as does also Adrio Konig’s *The Eclipse of Christ in Eschatology*. The recent books by N. T. Wright which are *The Climax of the Covenant*; *The New Testament and the People of God*; and *Jesus and the Victory of God* are helpful, but they require close reading.

Other books on particular topics I am sure you will know. NCPI Books are *Christ’s Message For Today’s World*; *Christ’s People in Today’s World*; *Proclaiming Christ’s Gospel in Today’s World*; *The Story of the Acts of God*, and a host of others including P. T. Forsyth.

The list may appear formidable but it needs to be supplemented by others which deal with soteriology, sanctification, glorification and perfection.

Geoffrey Bingham, January 1998.

The Everlasting Gospel in the Whole Creation

INTRODUCTION: THE UNIVERSAL GOSPEL

In Revelation 14:6–8 we have the following description of an angel flying in midheaven:

Then I saw another angel flying in midheaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; and he said with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of water.'

It is proper for us to context this passage in order to understand the term 'eternal gospel'. Chapter 13 describes the terrible ascendancy of the red dragon—'that ancient serpent . . . the Devil'—in the being of the two beasts. Those who will not wear the number of the beast will be terribly persecuted. Chapter 14 begins with the showing of the Lamb who is standing on Mount Zion in the midst of the 144,000, and they are singing a new song, almost certainly that of 15:3–4, namely, the song of Moses and the Lamb, the song of victory. Such a vision comforts the beleaguered saints of the Church. These are still suffering in what we may call the kingdom of the beast, the reign of Antichrist. The sight of the angel flying midheaven with the eternal gospel must be most cheering, and shortly we will examine its meaning. Following the sight of the angel and his message, we have a second and then a third angel, these presumably also flying, but anyway the first of them pronouncing the defeat of Babylon and the second announcing God's judgments on those who worship the beast and receive his mark.

In all, we have the statement that 'the hour of his [God's] judgment has come', and so all on earth are to worship God and if not, to realise that Babylon is being judged, and the worshippers of the beast will receive God's unmitigated judgment which is, in fact, an eternal judgment. In verses 12–14 the saints are to receive God's call to them for enduring the situation, even if they die, for should they be killed they will be blessed and their warring will cease. If we have examined the wider context and grasped its meaning then we can go back to verses 6–7 to discover their significance and, in particular, the meaning of the term 'the eternal gospel'. The meaning of the context is surely that no one must fear the dragon and the two beasts, for they and their ally Babylon are due, immediately, for judgment and punishment.

This is borne out when we look at verses 6 and 7. The news which the angel proclaims is for all who dwell on the earth—every nation and people and tribe and tongue—and it constitutes a command for all to fear God and glorify Him, for the hour of His judgment is come. The basis on which they are to worship Him is that He is Judge, and is the One who 'made heaven and earth, the sea, and the fountains of water'. That is, He is the Judge Who is the Creator. In 13:1–4 the beast is to be worshipped because the red dragon has given him authority and so it is claimed that he is unique, 'Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?' The truth is that in 4:11 it is God alone who is qualified to be worshipped because 'thou didst create all things, and by thy will they existed and were created'. It is the Creator alone who is to be worshipped and feared *because He is Creator*.

When we look at 'the eternal gospel', we have to ask ourselves is it that which is known elsewhere in the New Testament as 'the gospel of God' or 'the gospel of Christ', that is, the gospel formed by Christ and proclaimed by his followers? If the gospel means 'good news' for those who need and welcome grace, and 'bad news' for those who reject it, then 'eternal gospel' here does not quite mean that. True, it is good news for those who refuse to worship the beast, and bad news for those who do worship it, but is it what we ordinarily understand by terms such as 'forgiveness', 'justification by grace', 'clearance of guilt', and so on?

The answer is that the eternal gospel is not, in this context, in that form. Looked at, it seems to simply mean, ‘the good news is that God is defeating the beast and its adherents, and is working for the best for the worshippers of God’.

Even so, we pause, and remember that the gospel John the Baptist and Jesus proclaimed was ‘the gospel of the kingdom’, that is, of the rule and reign of God. When Jesus defeated evil by exorcisms and other such works, he said, ‘then the kingdom of God has come upon you’, or ‘near you’. The Sermon on the Mount and most of his parables were about the Kingdom. Immediately after his resurrection he spoke to his disciples on ‘the things pertaining to the kingdom’. In one sense Christ’s ministry, cross, resurrection, ascension and reigning at the right hand of God meant the gospel of the Kingdom had become the saving gospel. In some senses it had seemed to have changed its form, but essentially it was the same gospel. It constituted Christ’s victory over Satan and evil, the liberation of men and women from the bondage of sin and other enemies, and so it was a gospel of victory. The ‘weakness’ of the Cross had defeated the ‘strength’ of Satan, the evil powers and the world. In this sense it can be called both the gospel of the Kingdom and the gospel of salvation. Christ who is King has saved Man from his enemies: the Kingdom is triumphant.

There must have been something of this when Philip went down to Samaria and preached ‘the Christ’ and ‘good news about the kingdom of God’. Paul likewise preached ‘the kingdom’ which was the equivalent of ‘repentance to God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ’; and ‘the gospel of the grace of God’. It was the same teaching he was giving at the end of Acts, when he was in Jerusalem. The heart of the message of the gospel was ‘Jesus is Lord!’ and it contained the victory of the Kingdom, a victory to be worked out in time in the terms of I Corinthians 15:24–28.¹ That is, the gospel—even the ‘eternal gospel’—is that of the Kingdom and of the salvation of men. We conclude then that, whilst the particular meaning of ‘the eternal gospel’ in Revelation 14:6 refers to God’s sovereign power and His judgments, yet the salvific elements of the eternal gospel are not excluded in that passage. We also have to remember that by the time and occasion of Revelation chapters 13 – 20, the gospel will have been heard in all the world. Chapter 12 shows the rebellion is against Christ and his people.

THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL FOR THE WHOLE WORLD

There can be no question about Christ’s commissioning of his disciples to go into all the world to preach the gospel. The last chapters of the Synoptic Gospels, indicate that. In Matthew, Christ has authority over all things and commands his disciples to go to the world in that authority. One of the Markan sayings is, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation’, whilst some ancient authorities have, ‘And after this, Jesus himself sent out by means of them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation’. In Luke 24:47 it is ‘that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem’. In Acts 1:8 Jesus had told them, ‘But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth’. All of these statements seem to be uttered in the light of the story of Psalm 2 where the nations strive against God and God says, ‘I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill’, and the anointed one adds:

I will tell the decree of the LORD: He said to me, ‘You are my son, today I have begotten you, Ask of me and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.’²

¹ See Acts 8:5, 12; 20:21, 24; 27; 28:23, 31.

² What needs to be kept in mind all the time is that the whole of creation is involved in the whole of the gospel. Judaism, which was current with the first era of the proclamation of the gospel, sought to inhibit the scope of that proclamation, and sought to contain it within Judaism. In one sense—though apart from present Judaism—the Judaising attempts have gone on through all history. If we may coin a phrase, ‘the Jerusalemising of the Christian faith in theology, doctrine and ecclesial life has sought to make the church territorial, and if busy within its own local community, yet static in the world one’.

In Matthew 24:14 Jesus said, ‘And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come’. This indicates that not until the gospel has been proclaimed in all the world can the end come. Paul in Romans 10:18 speaks, ‘But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have; for “Their voice has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the end of the world”’. In Colossians 1:5–6 he speaks of ‘the gospel which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing’, and in 1:23, ‘the hope of the gospel which you have heard, which has been preached to every creature under heaven’.

We know that the order of that preaching was ‘to the Jew first and then to the Gentile’. We also know of the strong battle which was waged by some converted Jews at Jerusalem to keep the gospel within Judaism, so that in essence a Gentile could not become a Christian without first becoming a Jewish proselyte, but the dynamic gospel could not be contained in the old leather bottles of Judaism but burst out and flowed out into the world—so to speak.

Another indication of the eternal nature of the gospel is in Revelation 13:8, ‘and all who dwell on earth will worship it [the beast], every one whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain’, which can also be translated, ‘written in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world’. In other words, the gospel is planned before the foundation of the world. Few would claim that the Lamb was actually slain before creation, but most would concede it means that this was God’s intention before time.

When in Revelation chapter 5 we are shown ‘a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain’, we see that the intention of God for His gospel has been fulfilled. In addition we discover that this Lamb is the only creature in all creation who has been found worthy to open the seven-sealed book. That book is really the book of God’s history, His outworking of His intentions in acts of judgment on evil and His victories for His people. In eternity this Lamb is ever living, ever working. The gospel covers all times, rightly understood, and in the Person of the Lamb is present in eternity. As we will see in our coming Studies, the Lamb—Christ the Lord—*is* the gospel. Without him there is no gospel. He is the Eternal Word of God and the word he brings into action and utters in the creation is the gospel—his work, his word, his action.

The eternal nature of the gospel is not only to be thought of in terms of time—from before creation to the end of human history—but also in terms of its intrinsic quality, its indestructible nature, its undefeatable being. All elements of evil come time and again against this gospel to destroy it, but evil’s efforts are futile. In this sense the gospel is everlasting. This is because it pertains to all things. There is nothing to which it does not pertain. When it is called in I Corinthians 2:1 (cf. Rev. 10:7) ‘the mystery of God’, then it means that there is nothing not contained within it. The RSV translates ‘the testimony of God’, whilst the NRSV translates ‘the mystery of God’, and both versions allow for the alternate translations, but whether ‘mystery’ or ‘testimony’ it remains of the essential revelation of God in His purposes.

Another look at Revelation 14:6–7 shows us then the following: (i) ‘another angel’ is one apart from and in addition to the seven angels (cf. vv. 8, 9, 17, 18), and it is flying in midheaven so that none may miss its proclamation; (ii) the gospel is preached to all who dwell on the earth; (iii) it is the news of judgment—good news to those who are not under the beast and bad news to those who are; (iv) it is the gospel which calls all to the worship of God; and (v) the God to be feared and worshipped is the Creator of all things.³ Because He is Maker of all things, His is the true rule over ‘those who dwell upon the earth’ (cf. 3:10; 13:8, 12, 14; 17:2, 8). The gospel, then, is everlasting and as such *it must contain all that God is about*. As we will see below, ‘the gospel’ and ‘the whole counsel of God’ are one and the same thing. We conclude, then, that the gospel has two discernible marks: (i) *its universality*—for the whole world, for all nations, kindreds, tribes and tongues, and (ii) *its eternal nature*, that is,

³ Some see in ‘the fountains of water’ a reference to the River of God flowing from Eden, having originated in that Garden, and which will be there in the true Eden, as in chapter 22.

that it is for all time—from beginning to the end, and also for eternity. As we shall see this covers the ‘all things’ which are so often mentioned in the New Testament.

THE GOSPEL IS ‘THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD’

In the context of Acts 20:18–35 Paul told the elders of the Ephesian church, ‘Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God’. We are about to examine Paul’s meaning regarding the whole counsel, but first let us look at some of the adjectives and possessives of the term ‘gospel’.

WHOSE GOSPEL IS THE GOSPEL?

This may seem a strange question to ask but it is an important one. The term ‘the gospel of the kingdom’—used three times in Matthew and once in Mark, and inferred to be such in Acts 8, 20 and 28—has the parallel use of ‘this gospel’, ‘the gospel’, ‘the gospel of Jesus Christ’, so ‘the gospel of the kingdom’ or just ‘the gospel’. The terms ‘the gospel of Jesus Christ’, ‘the gospel of Christ’, or ‘the gospel of our Lord Jesus’, are used thirteen times. The gospel is referred to four times as ‘the gospel of God’, and twice Paul refers to it as ‘my gospel’. In Galatians 3:8 Paul says the scripture preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham. When we look at the genitives ‘of the Kingdom’, ‘of Christ’, ‘of God’, and the possessive ‘my gospel’, we begin to understand something of its nature. One thing is certainly clear, there is no gospel which is a unit on its own. It is of God, of Christ, and in some sense of Paul, that is, we must not look at the gospel apart from God and Man.

The good news for persons of faith is of the Kingdom, which, as we have seen, pertains to God’s reign and rule by virtue of creation. God’s sovereignty ultimately brings the creation to its intended fulfilment, and if God has somehow lost His power, and His authority has been forever broken, then there is no good news, but only bad news for all mankind. That reign and rule of God is for all creation and its good goal and end is in the salvation of the elect and the judgment of rebellious creatures both celestial and terrestrial. Believers now enter the Kingdom by new birth, by faith in Jesus Christ, having been transferred from the powers of darkness into the Kingdom of the Son of his love. There are such human beings as those who will never enter the Kingdom, or—as is the case with the elect—be inheritors of the Kingdom at the last. In this sense the ‘gospel of the Kingdom’ is the far-reaching reign of God which is secured—so to speak—by the work of the Cross, the Resurrection, the Ascension and Session of the Son at the right hand of the Father. The gospel of the Kingdom thus includes the defeat of evil and the establishing of the new creation of heaven and the earth. We understand, then, that it is the gospel of God, of Christ and of Man in that it primarily concerns God’s elect humanity. It is indeed a wide and deep gospel!

The Matter of the Gospel Being ‘the Whole Counsel of God’

We saw, above, that in the context of Acts 20:18–35 Paul told the elders of the Ephesian church in verses 26–27, ‘Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God’. In order to get the most from these two verses, and especially to understand ‘the whole counsel of God’, we need to look hard at Paul’s spoken pericope of 18–35:

And when they came to him, he said to them:

‘You yourselves know how I lived among you all the time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which befell me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public

and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance to God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, bound in the Spirit, not knowing what shall befall me there; except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may accomplish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that all you among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom will see my face no more. Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God which he obtained with the blood of his own Son. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. 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. I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities, and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by so toiling one must help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

In verse 20 Paul says, 'I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable'. In verse 27 he said, 'I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God', and in verse 31, 'I did not cease day and night to admonish every one with tears'. From these statements we can conclude that Paul told everything to the church which was profitable for it, and this was surely not easily told. Paul had to steel himself against shrinking from such a ministry. He had in mind, also, that already amongst this group of elders were those who had ambition and their own teaching which did not accord with Paul's, with the truth of the gospel. It is reasonable, then, to assume that what he had taught them, and especially those things nominated in the spoken pericope, constitute the gospel.

'These things' are (i) 'testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance to God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ'; (ii) 'to testify to the gospel of the grace of God'; (iii) 'preaching the kingdom'; and (iv) 'declaring to you the whole counsel of God'.

The question is, 'Were these four things virtually the one, or do the first three of them add up to the fourth, or are the first three equal to 'the gospel' and is the fourth, then, beyond the range of the gospel?' The answer appears to be in the Greek text, which is that Paul declares to them 'the will of God' (*boulen tou theou*), and in the whole pericope Paul has spoken of repentance towards God and faith in Christ, of the gospel of the grace of God, preaching the Kingdom and of the Church of God. The Church is part of the good news, especially as the Church is there to proclaim the Kingdom.

We can say that the fullness of the gospel is set out in the first three chapters of Ephesians. At the beginning we find God's plan for His people set out as God's intention for His people before the foundation of the world. In history His will is to sum up all things in Christ. God is One who 'accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will', and this is 'according to the eternal purpose which he has realised in Christ Jesus our Lord'. Certainly it is 'the whole counsel of God'. In I Timothy 3:14–16 we hear Paul talking about 'the mystery of our religion':

I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you so that, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth. Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of our religion:

He was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated in the Spirit,
seen by angels,
preached among the nations,
believed on in the world,
taken up in glory.

This 'mystery of religion' is really 'the truth' of which the Church is the pillar and bulwark. Here in Paul's words it is a precis of the wider truth. It is not exactly the gospel in its widest form,

and not even the *kerugma* which we discuss further below, but without ‘this mystery of our religion’ we cannot understand ‘the mystery of God’. In I Corinthians 2:1, as we have already mentioned, Paul proclaims the mystery (or the testimony, the truth of) God. Revelation 10:7 in speaking of ‘the mystery of God’ is speaking of the eschatological fulfilment of God’s plan or purpose which will take place after the blast of the trumpet of the seventh angel. Yet in I Corinthians chapter 2 there seems to be first the proclamation of the mystery of God, and then a further revelation *for the mature believers* concerning ‘a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification’ (vv. 6 and 7). Are they, in fact, two steps in apostolic teaching, that is, first the gospel then a further step than the gospel?

When we ponder the use of the terms ‘mystery’ and ‘revelation’ in their New Testament contexts, they seem to add up to something like this; namely that the whole plan of God is the whole truth of God, which is really ‘the mystery of God’, and in I Corinthians 2:1–5 that is surely the gospel of God, that is, *the whole plan and purpose which God had for His creation in Christ Jesus*. Some might object and say that ‘the gospel’ (*euangelion*) is the same as ‘the proclamation’ (*kerugma*) and that the *kerugma* has a form which can be set out from the sermons in Acts, and that it does not include the whole plan of God. I doubt whether this claim can be sustained. Wherever we read the sermons in the Acts we see that none is complete in itself. That is, none takes everything into account. Of course it may be that Luke’s reportage may not be full and comprehensive. Even so, each sermon seems to be adapted to its audience at the point or points which the apostles wish to bring to the hearers. For example, on the day of Pentecost Peter commences with the phenomenon of the outpouring of the Spirit and links it with Joel 2:28ff. He takes it to ‘the great and notable day of the Lord’, thus extending it to the eschaton. Clearly, his first main point is to show through the Resurrection the Lordship of Christ and in the process of showing that brings a true rationale of the event of the Cross. Finally he points to the way of salvation in response to their question, ‘What shall we do?’

The fact that the resultant body of believers attends to the ‘apostles’ doctrine’ means that there was yet much for them to hear and understand. Peter’s sermon in Acts 3 commences with reference to ‘the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob’, the name by which Yahweh demanded to be known to all the generations (Exod. 3:15). This incidentally was where Stephen began his address, itself not outside the form of the *kerugma*, but never completed as such. So then, in Acts 3 Peter goes back to the prophets and forward to Christ’s return to his people. There can be no doubt that the apostles base their gospel on the Old Testament and the event of Christ. The apostolic truth, as we have often seen, is the interpretation of the event of Christ in the light of the Old Testament, and the interpretation of the Old Testament in the light of the person and work of Christ. The other sermons in Acts and the teaching of the Epistles show us that the gospel contains the whole of the apostolic truth.

We are surely justified, then, in speaking of the gospel as ‘the whole counsel of God’ and ‘the whole counsel of God’ as the gospel.

THE PLACE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF PENTECOST

In this present Study we are not so much interested in how the apostles and the early Church came into possession of the gospel, but here we have to see, briefly, that it came from two sources, (i) from the teaching which Jesus gave to his disciples during his ministry—all teaching prior to his resurrection, and then the teaching he gave following his resurrection; and (ii) the teaching the Holy Spirit brought at Pentecost, and doubtless even beyond Pentecost. In John chapters 14 to 16 Jesus had said that the Holy Spirit would

- (i) bring to their remembrance all things he—Jesus—had said and done;
- (ii) that the Holy Spirit would teach them all things;
- (iii) that the Holy Spirit would lead them *into* all the truth;
- (iv) that the Holy Spirit would glorify Christ and the Father;
- (v) that the Holy Spirit would convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment; and
- (vi) he will show them things that are to come.

It was not that the Spirit would simply give them some systematic *kerugma*—he certainly would do that—but that the Spirit would take them *into* that truth so that they would know, with every fibre of their being, the gospel, the whole truth, or as we say, ‘the whole of the Story of God’, for the Story is the apostolic truth, the gospel. We mean that the Story stretches from God’s creation of the world to the final renewal of creation at the point of the *telos*, the goal reached at the end of time. This is ‘the whole counsel of God’.

The ‘All Things’

This term is quite significant in the New Testament. To trace its use is to see how essential it is. In John 14:25–26 Jesus tells his disciples that when the Spirit, the Counsellor, is come then he will bring ‘all things’ to their remembrance and teach them ‘all things’. It is just about the parallel of 16:13, where the Spirit will lead them into ‘all the truth’. Since the gospel would have to cover all things, it would have to include the protological, the acts and happenings of all history, and be eschatological in regards to the ‘all things’ which God is doing. Thus in referring to creation Stephen disestablishing idolatry in Acts 7:49–50, quotes Isaiah 66:1–2, and especially ‘Did not my hand make all these things?’, and Peter speaking eschatologically says in Acts 3:20–21, ‘Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all [things] that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old’.

Again, when we think of Christ’s ‘unsearchable riches’ (Eph. 3:8), and of him ‘in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge’ (Col. 2:3), then such are there to be the very nature and resources of the gospel, so that ‘their hearts may be encouraged as they are knit together in love, to have all the riches of assured understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, of Christ’ (Col. 2:2). This is another way of saying that the ‘all things’ of God are present in the gospel and its power. It is ‘the power of God’ (Rom. 1:16–17; I Cor. 1:18ff.) and this in the sense that the gospel embraces the all things, happenings, situations, and actions of all history. ‘The whole counsel of God’ is not just a list of ‘things’, but covers the whole action of all history. Because of these ‘all things’, then, we must truly explore the gospel and know its depthful being and its undefeatable power. Nothing is left out of this gospel, and it is powerless against nothing which confronts or battles with it. That is why we must know ‘the whole counsel of God’, and know it by the revelation of the Holy Spirit. Each person must have his/her personal Pentecost as well as draw on the Pentecost which is for all corporately, and this for all time.

WHAT, THEN, IS ‘THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD’?

The whole counsel, will, wisdom or plan of God is surely all that the law and the prophets and the gospel contain and proclaim. When Christ appeared to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus he said to them in Luke 24:25–27, ‘O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?’ Luke adds, ‘And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself’. That evening in the upper room in Jerusalem, as the account is in Luke 24:44–49, we read that he said to them:

‘These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled’. Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high.’

Luke also tells us in Acts 1:1–3:

In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.

To them he presented himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the kingdom of God.

Here it is made clear that in the time of his ministry Jesus ‘began to do and to teach’, and that following his resurrection he continued that work. Thus all they would need to know to proclaim the gospel was brought to them. The use of ‘through the Holy Spirit’ tells us his post-resurrection teaching was through the Holy Spirit. Doubtless this was the case prior to his death, but the Cross and Resurrection had not then happened. Now the Spirit would have a better way with his followers. It is to be noted that Jesus’ teaching theme for the forty days was the kingdom of God and the coming outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Here, for lack of time and space, we cannot trace much of what Jesus placed in the minds of the disciples, but an exercise is possible in which we can trace many of the Old Testament references and materials which Jesus used both prior to and posterior to the Resurrection. Our point is that Jesus constantly adverted to what we call ‘the Old Testament’, and which Paul described as ‘The sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work’ (II Tim. 3:16–17).

We do not doubt that having the whole canon of Scripture, which now includes the writings of the New Testament, we also have the full materials of ‘the Story’. In II Peter 3:13–17 the author of this Epistle rates Paul’s writings as amongst the Scriptures. We have thus arrayed before us an awesome body of truth which we must call ‘apostolic’. Not only do the Gospels, the Acts and the Epistles inform us wholly, but the Book of the Revelation is a monumental work which leaves us in no doubt that ‘the Story’ is what God is about in history. We have ‘the whole counsel of God’ set forth in full and wonderful terms. The whole of Scripture, rightly understood, is a marvellous unity.

CONCLUSION: CALLED TO PREACH THE GOSPEL, CALLED TO DECLARE THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD

It is clear from Paul’s message to the Ephesian elders gathered at Miletus that the apostle felt he would not be free from the blood of all men unless he declared ‘the whole counsel of God’. In his mind must have been the passages of Ezekiel 3:16–21 and 33:1–9. The spoken pericope shows us that Paul had not hesitated to tell the whole counsel of God but he had to work at it, so to speak. He speaks about ‘not shrinking’ and not ceasing day and night to admonish each one, with tears. Obviously it was no less a battle for him than for us to tell the whole of that apostolic truth, the gospel, the whole Story.

We are no less called to give the full counsel and will of God to the world. We must see the Story not only as something to be told to the Church, but also to be proclaimed to all. Only then will Paul’s claim for the Scriptures to be ‘profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work’, be fulfilled. Only then will we, too, be free of the blood of all men. To tell out this gospel requires all of a person for all of the time.

We have pointed out that the gospel is not simply a *kerugma* which is a system of salient points to be shown, received and believed as a kind of *credo*, but the gospel is also the very action of Christ as his word proclaims powerfully the active grace of God, evoking faith and repentance in the believer who is taken into the very ‘mystery of God’.

All we have spoken above is simply an introduction to what will be the substance of our Studies for this entire year. That is why we have not sought to define gospel as *euangelion*—saving news—and as *kerugma*—the saving proclamation of God in the light of His Kingdom. We leave these matters, along with others, to the Studies which will follow.

God is Always on Mission

INTRODUCTION: THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL

When we speak of God as always being on mission we do so in a particular way. We do not mean it is one of God's occupations to be on mission from time to time, before time to the end of time, that is, that among many things 'God is on mission'. Rather we are emphasising that God's activity *is* mission, that He has directed all things to this action and its goal. To understand mission is to understand God and creation and history. It is not that God is locked into one occupation but that it is the free expression and action of His very nature. To understand God as he has revealed Himself to us is to understand mission properly. It is to understand God properly.

We take a note from our previous Study 'The Everlasting Gospel', that God's intention before creating the world was to bring it to its ultimate being as 'the new heaven and the new earth', so that what is eschatological arises from the plan of God—the mystery of the plan'. We might reason that God can dispense with an 'old' imperfect heaven and earth—as indeed they may appear to be because of the sin of angelic and human rebellion—and simply create a new and fresh heaven and earth. By nature of the case this is impossible with God, who will renew the heaven and the earth and bring it to be sanctified, glorified and perfected. In fact, all in the last sentence really constitutes the gospel or 'the whole counsel of God', rightly understood. What is protological as written in the beginning of Scripture indicates the course of history and history is the action of God from the pre-history Divine Intention—'his purpose', 'the eternal purpose', 'the counsel of his will', 'the mystery of God'—to its fulfilment in the *telos*. We concluded that 'the everlasting gospel' is 'the whole counsel [will] of God'.

There is a certain theology which acknowledges that God is aiming at His *telos*, but it appears to show God as trying, one after another, a number of expedients to accomplish that. The first one, of creation in which all things were 'good' and Man was made in God's image, fails in the fall of Man, and the Flood and its covenant are attempted remedially but without success. Thus the Sinaitic covenant and the nation of Israel are another endeavour of God to deal with Man. Here law is given, but does not avail since it is not kept. The elect nation of Israel receives judgments for this failure. Like the other actions of God this dispensational action fails. The sending of Messiah is envisaged and prophesied, but Israel does not, on the whole, receive him, and the Cross 'happens' of necessity. Various prophetic schemes are formulated for the Kingdom of God and the eschaton. Ultimately God does succeed: He even succeeds with Israel. Even so, a vast section of humanity fails. It is doubtful whether this *schema* over all, with all its virtues and its thoughtful accommodating variations, fully fits the biblical *schema*.

By contrast, the theology we espouse here is one which can only be explained by the fact that God has ever been on mission, that nothing He does in history is dispensational in the sense stated above. He devises no expedient to meet a contingency. Rather, all that happens in time has been planned before time. There are no vagaries. God is the sovereign Author of all things without in any way being the Author of sin and evil. His intention is to create and bring that creation to the *telos* He has planned. What does He have in mind—so to speak—for that creation? Our task of sussing this out may be difficult, but I think the method we will presently use is the right one.

THE COMMISSION OF THE MISSION

Let us face directly the commission for mission which Christ gave to his Apostles. The New Testament certainly makes it clear that *sending* is a major activity. The Latin word *missio* ‘to send’ has its parallel *apostello* in Greek, ‘to send’.¹ Whilst we may interpret ‘God is on mission’ as ‘God is sending’, since to be on mission means *to be sent for a purpose*, yet we really mean that God is not only in the action of sending—which He is—but He is identified with the action which comes from sending, the goal which He intends shall be fulfilled. He sends, but all the time He is on mission—the prime One on mission! He will not send if He Himself is not going! There is a thought in the commission of Jesus in Matthew 28:18–20, ‘You go, and look, I will be with you’. In Galatians 4:4 ‘God sent forth his Son’ uses the verb *exapostello*, that is, ‘out of’ Himself. In 4:6 it is repeated of His sending the Spirit *out of* himself and then *into* our hearts. He, on mission, ‘missions’ the Son and the Spirit, so that ultimately we—being sent—are on mission with Him, His Son and His Spirit. Christ does not only send but he is present with the Apostles as ‘on mission’. So to say ‘God is always on mission’ means He is involved in His own mission, His own goal for which He sends others. Something of this comes out in the word ‘apostle’ (*apostolos*) which means ‘one who is sent’ but also ‘a messenger’, that is, he is sent with a message. Of God we can say, ‘He is always about the message He has given. He has worked to make that message.’ We would say He has worked from before the foundation of the world to do this. In one sense He is never absent from His message and in this sense He is always on mission. When we ask, ‘Why is He on mission and what is His message?’, then we are asking about the whole revelation of ‘the mystery of God’. We are asking about His nature, His eternal wisdom. We are asking about everything: indeed we are asking about God’s ceaseless and purposeful activity.

Christ Commissioning the Apostles

No one doubts that Christ commissioned the Apostles to go into all the world and tell the gospel. To be specific and say he commissioned only the Apostles, and not all the church which resulted from the preaching of the gospel, is to be tediously specious. Whether commissioned to do so or not, *they went*. Philip is perhaps the first recorded example of this, but others went. They still keep going. Paul’s question ‘How shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach except they be sent?’, puts an end to the nonsense about Apostles being the only ones sent and so the only ones going. We agree, of course, that theirs was the only apostolic truth that all who sent and went were bound to preach.

If we look at the passages of Matthew 28:18–20; Mark 16:15–18 (that is, the longer, added version, or the shorter version—see below for both); Luke 24:45–49; John 20:19–23; and Acts 1:8 (cf. 10:42; 17:30–31), then we clearly perceive ‘the commission to mission’. We look now at the essential sending portions of these commissioning accounts:

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age (Matt. 28:16–18).

And he said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover’ (Mark 16:15–18).

¹ There are, of course, other verbs in the New Testament which relate to sending. The sending verbs in themselves present a fascinating study. Things have always been ‘on the go’ with both God and Man!

Markan Shorter Version: ‘And after this, Jesus himself sent out by means of them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation’ (*RSV* footnote).

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high’ (Luke 24:45–49).

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

And he commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that he is the one ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead (Acts 10:42).

The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead (Acts 17:30–31).

These passages not only speak of being sent, but of the intention of going to the ends of the world—‘*All authority in heaven and on earth* has been given to me. Go therefore and *make disciples of all nations*’, ‘Go into *all the world* and preach the gospel *to the whole creation*’, ‘*from east to west*, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation’, ‘that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name *to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem*’, ‘you shall be my witnesses in *Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth*’, ‘he commands *all men everywhere* to repent’, and in thus speaking, they show us that it is the universal gospel which concerns the whole world—heaven and earth, in fact—that is to say, the whole creation. This emphasis is undoubtedly eschatological: it has in view the redemption of the world, the new heaven and the new earth which cannot come into being apart from the Cross and the Resurrection. What we need to see, then, is why it is at this point in history that (i) there is the first full and purposive commissioning in all history, that it is not a repeatable one, and (ii) how it is that for the *first time* there is the gospel to be proclaimed in that commissioned sending.

The Cause of the Commissioning is the Gospel of Christ

In simplest terms it can be said that, apart from the person and work of Christ, there was no gospel to be told, hence there was no point in sending anyone to proclaim what was not yet in existence. Immediately it will be said, ‘John the Baptist and Jesus preached the gospel of the Kingdom, so it must be said that there was the gospel’. Perhaps even more to the point would be Galatians 3:8, ‘And the scripture [in Abraham’s day], foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying “In you shall all the nations be blessed”’.

To the first statement—that Jesus and John preached the gospel of the Kingdom—we say that this is nominated in the passage of Isaiah 52:7:

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, who publishes peace, who brings good tidings of good, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns’.

In this sense there was always the good news that God was King of Israel and King over all the earth. It was still good news to Israel that, even though they were under the bondage of Rome, yet He was King and Israel was safe.² This is the gospel of the Kingdom that John and

² When Israel was sent into exile as a judgment upon it, it did not think God’s sovereignty over it had ceased. It was out of His sovereignty that He exiled them from the Holy Land.

Jesus referred to. That very gospel which had proleptic salvation was soon to realise itself as that of full personal salvation—but only in and through the person and work of Christ. We know that behind Israel's doctrine of the Kingdom lay the covenant made with Abraham, and that this meant the inheriting by Abraham of the whole world (Rom. 4:13), and of course this was also 'the good news', but just how the Judaism of Jesus' day saw this to be 'the good news' is a matter for discussion.

The second point—that of Galatians 3:8—is answered by the fact that it had to be by the Seed—yet to come—that the gospel would be fully open to all nations for blessing. These answers allow us to proceed to stating *the cause for the commission*. The cause is this—the Cross. Carl E. Braaten gives a heading in his book *The Apostolic Imperative*—'The Cross as the Criterion of Christianity'.³ This is Luther's epigram, *crux probat omnia* ('the cross is the criterion of all things').

For us this is a good launching point, the reason being that all history, all of God's action that affects all of history, happens there in the cross of Christ. Until the Cross happens, the problem of personal, human and societal crises have no answers. In practice, we know that the universal forgiveness of sins cannot exist apart from the Cross, and so it is an obvious element of the gospel, but the matter is deeper and wider than even that. For this reason we must note fully what happened at the Cross.

The Work of the Cross Was a Trinitarian One

- (a) *The Cross was a work of the Father, He taking the initiative.*
See John 3:14, 16; 10:18; 14:30–31; 17:1–5; Romans 8:32; I John 4:9–10.
- (b) *It was the work of the Son, he voluntarily obeying the Father.*
His continuous sense of it we see in Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:32; John 10:18; 14:30–31; 17:5; 18:11; cf. 14:10–12.
- (c) *It was a work of the Holy Spirit.*
He constantly worked in Christ all that he did, even at the Cross (Heb. 9:14). He could not have worked in all things concerning Jesus and not have worked in the Cross.

Here it is not out of order to say that this *Trinitarian* work is one of love; God the Father being love, His Son being 'the Son of his Love' and the Holy Spirit being the Spirit of love. It was not possible that the Cross would not happen.

The Deep Matter of Man's Sinfulness Was Dealt with at the Cross

The Matter of Man's Sinfulness and Sins

Man at the Fall rejected all that God had for the human race had it remained in union and communion with Him. The division between Man and God, the descent of dreadful guilt upon the conscience of each human person, and the break in all relations of Man with God and all others, tells of the terrible state of sin. What, then, can deal with (i) **Man's sinfulness**; (ii) **Man's sins due for judgment** bring him every moment as guilty under the wrath of God; and (iii) **the continuing effects of sin in its cruel presence manifested in its power, penalty and pollution?**

The guilt of sin demands propitiation, but the kind of propitiation for sin Man cannot possibly provide. Romans 3:21–26 (cf. I John 4:9–10) show that the Father set Christ forth as that propitiation which satisfies both God's law (which demands the death of the sinner) and his wrath on what sin has done to violate His holiness.

³ *The Apostolic Imperative: Nature and Aim of the Church's Mission and Ministry*, Augsburg, Minneapolis, 1985, p. 16.

Statements such as ‘he was made sin for us’ (II Cor. 5:21); ‘sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh’ (Rom. 8:3); ‘He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree’ (I Pet. 2:24); ‘For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous’ (I Pet. 3:18); ‘when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice’ (Heb. 10:12); ‘the blood of Christ . . . purify your conscience’ (Heb. 9:14); ‘as one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man’s act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men’ (Rom. 5:18)—amongst many such others—make it clear that the Son of God wrestled with the problem of Man’s sinfulness and his sins, and wrestled successfully. Here we cannot rightly describe the existential bearing of sins, God’s wrath, the righteous law and the guilt entailed. Whilst biblical words and descriptions can certainly act as indicators to the enormity of Christ’s task, yet the heart of it all must remain a mystery, a mystery which must take the name of love.

It is appropriate here to quote P. T. Forsyth’s saying, ‘**That which goes deepest to the conscience goes widest to the world**’. In this sense the Cross could not not be if Man was to be set at ease in his conscience, which is his only hope for true living.

The Matter of Division between God and Man and between All Members of the Human Race

Doubtless the fall of Man from union and communion with God was the cause of shattered human relationships, the pain of which is felt daily in marital, familial, societal, national and international relationships. Doubtless, too, Christ’s dealing with all human sinfulness and sins was essential to God’s reconciling Man to Himself, and human beings to one another, so that what is written in the above paragraph is relevant to our understanding that the criterion of Christianity is the Cross. The passage of Ephesians 2:11–22 must be one of the world’s most remarkable documents—to say nothing of its outcome as traced in Ephesians 3:1–12. In his suffering for sin, and his giving satisfaction to the holiness of God and the holy law of God, Christ entered into the world’s sufferings in the total way. Enmity to God is a subject upon which we cannot here expatiate. However, we can conclude that it brings together Jew and Gentile—and so all nations—and effects reconciliation with them. It is the ground not only of every reconciliation that persons make with one another, but also it is the ground and basis of ‘nation shall not lift up sword against nation’, the ultimate peace and tranquillity of the Holy City into which all the nations shall pour. Such reconciliation has been achieved by the Cross and its ultimate fruits will be shown in universal—though not universalistic—reconciliation.

It is appropriate, then, to say that the reconciliation of the world is impossible without the work of the Cross.

The Matter of the Defeat of All Evil for Ever

The battle of evil commences with the event of the serpent in Eden, and continues in history in the cataclysmic struggles of God with ‘that ancient serpent . . . the devil’, the red dragon, the two evil beasts—clones of the red dragon—which arise from water and earth, along with the Scarlet Woman (Babylon). Apocalyptic accounts are such that we cannot name times and locales with certain accuracy. We are made aware that this battle is an unceasing one, a clash of the two kingdoms—one of God, one of Satan. There is ‘the mystery of iniquity’, as there is also ‘the mystery of God’. In this mystery of God is His counsel, His plan for creation—so that the evil endeavour to defeat God and to be lords of the creation is the opposing plan of evil, that is, ‘the mystery of iniquity’. The world system seeks to destroy God’s Son and all the saints of God. The story of the Cross is that there, in Christ’s sufferings, all forms of evil were—and are—defeated, not only sin and the immoral flesh of Man, but also the great deceiver, inciter and threatener Satan himself, along with all his cohorts both fallen human and celestial principalities and powers. Through his death Christ has defeated these and their doom is sealed. At the end all that is evil shall be cast into the lake of fire, but when the iniquity of all evil is ripe and judgment is made and executed, it will be seen that Christ on the Cross, by taking the guilt of the world, has destroyed the power of evil and sealed their judgment.

It is clear that the powers of evil gathered at the Cross to destroy Jesus, the Son of God. Not only did Satan find entrance into Judas' heart that that disciple might betray Jesus, but also Jesus had said two clear things:

- (i) 'the prince of this world is coming', and
- (ii) 'Now is your hour and the power [*exousia*; the authority] of darkness'.

The Messianic Psalms point to roaring 'bulls' and ravening 'lions' and 'the company of dogs' which seek to destroy him, and these are surely the evil powers. He had said that in the hour of his being crucified there would be judgment of the world, and that the prince of it would be cast out. The classic passages of Hebrews 2:14–15 and Colossians 2:14–15 refer to his defeat. The defeat is not just of evil personalities, but of Satan's control of the world and its nations. This defeat of all evil must be told to the nations. It is one of the many reasons that the Church must always be the kerugmatik and eschatological community proclaiming the liberation of Man from Satan, by Christ the Seed.

It is appropriate, then, to say here that Man will always be oppressed by evil, and were there no Cross he could never be saved from these powers. It is therefore imperative that this 'word of the Cross' be preached. This is part of the missioning.

A Conclusion Regarding the Power of the Cross

We conclude, then, that all of history,⁴ from creation to the new heavens and the new earth, is bound up in the Cross—with of course the Resurrection, which in one sense is the fruit of the Cross and in another is the triumph over death as the opening of the new era in human history. When we ask how it is that the Cross does not *seem* to have triumphed in history, the answer must be it *has* happened, and that *that* is why we must preach the gospel, the triumphant kingdom, the whole counsel of God. We must preach its reality, recognising the nature of the gospel that:

even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. [for] In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God (II Cor. 4:3–4).

This does not mean proclaiming the gospel is futile and that the false god of this world is more powerful than the rightful God of this world. The Holy Spirit of God is the One who can—and does—convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment, as he is also the Spirit of judgment. He alone can bring revelation of the Cross.

I think, then, that it a good thing here to examine the differences between what Luther called the theology of the Cross (*theologia crucis*) and the theology of glory (*theologia gloriae*).

Luther's Theology of the Cross

The reason we look at Luther's *theologia crucis* is that it involves what Luther calls 'the hidden God' and in effect he is speaking about 'the hidden cross'.⁵ If, in history, the Cross had been seen by all to whom it has been proclaimed, then even the outward state of the world

⁴ Here we are saying that whatever seems to be the process of cause and effect, or the workings of fate, or the manipulation of the nations by forces of evil, must give way to the fact that nothing—absolute nothing—that happens in history is outside the control of the Cross, or—to put it another way—the Lamb as it has been slain is the one who holds the seven-sealed book, unloosing the seals, and controlling all of history. The kings of the earth and the nations are foolish—to say nothing of individual rebels against God—to think they have in any way determined one event in history, let alone all of them.

⁵ R. J. Bauckham in his article 'Theology of the Cross' in the *New Dictionary of Theology* (eds S. B. Ferguson and D. F. Wright, IVP, Leicester, 1988, pp. 181–3) says:

It refers not simply to the *doctrine* of the cross . . . but to an understanding of the whole of theology as theology of the cross, in that the cross is seen as the focal point of God's revelation of himself and therefore as the foundation and centre of all truly Christian theology.'

would have been vastly changed, beyond what it is now *appearing* to be. We cannot assess the fruits of the Cross by sight: we can only assess them by faith. Luther saw the Cross as the focal point of God's revelation of Himself. 'In the theology of the cross, the cross becomes a methodological key to the whole of theology'.⁶ Those who see the Cross do not see God if 'they believe not'. Human reason at the best would place it as just another event in history, and at the worst would see it as trivial, and certainly not 'as the power of God' and 'the wisdom of God'. The reason we note this is to show why millions do not enthusiastically acclaim the Cross when it is proclaimed. Many theologians debate Luther's doctrine of 'the hidden God', but Paul makes it clear in I Corinthians 1:17–31 that the religious person (the Jew) and the intellectual (the Greek) do not see the Cross as 'the wisdom of God' and 'the power of God'. Certainly those who hold a theology of glory (*theologia gloriae*) do not see it as *the* revelation of God's nature and as the basis of all theology. To quote Braaten:

Luther did not teach that there was *no* knowledge of God to be found in metaphysical, mystical, and moral approaches, or in other religions. But that all of these he labeled as a theology of glory, because they all lead up to a glorious God (*Deus gloriosus*), a God who would not be caught dead on the cross of the man in whom there was 'no form or comeliness' (Isa. 53:2).⁷

This means that for theologians of glory the viewing of the Cross must fit a theology of glory, must be seen in the light of it, so that the Cross is one element amongst many of Christian theology, and must not be seen as 'the focal point of God's revelation of himself and therefore as the foundation and centre of all truly Christian theology', and as 'a methodological key to the whole of theology'. In this Study we work on a theology of the Cross which makes the work of the Cross central to all history, relating to all history, and the very enactment of God's love by which, also, God is made known.

'In the Fullness of Time'

This statement from Galatians 4:4–7 means that Christ's incarnation, and his work—especially the work of the Cross—was not something which happened merely in a line of events which happened through cause and effect, but that it was that point in history to which everything from creation, including the Fall, Flood, Abrahamic covenant, Sinaitic covenant, Israel in Canaan, Israel's judgments in exile and return, were all part and parcel of leading up to 'the fullness of time'. They could not have resulted in anything but what happened in Christ. All actions of history that lead from the Cross to the *telos* are not less expressing 'the fullness of time'. In one sense all prior to the Cross was 'shadowy'—to use the term of the writer of the Book of Hebrews. Essential and preparatory it may have been, but there was no substance in all that happened, except in a proleptic way. The substance comes with the Cross and its concomitants, such as the Resurrection, Ascension and Session at the Father's right hand.

CONCLUSION: THE INDISPENSABILITY OF THE CROSS TO GOD BEING ON MISSION

Jesus was conscious of this fact when he used the Greek *dei* ('must'). 'The Son of man *must* go to Jerusalem, *must* be betrayed at the hands of wicked men, *must* be crucified and *must* rise again', are the substance of such passages as Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:32; Luke 24:26, 44–49; and the statements of Acts 2:23 and 4:28, to say nothing of the apostolic proclamation of the apostolic faith—'the whole counsel of God'. It is not only that the Cross is important along with many other things, but it is the point where we *see* God is on mission and, in fact, no

⁶ *op. cit.*, p. 181.

⁷ *The Apostolic Imperative*, p. 17.

mission can come to birth, have substance and proceed in the arena of creation and history without this Cross-work, this crucial event from which all other events have their meaning. Whilst time-wise we can speak of ‘before the Cross’ and ‘beyond the Cross’, yet a Lamb is slain before the foundation of the world, and that Lamb-as-it-has-been-slain is there in eternity and is the Lion of Judah, and has been found worthy to open the seven-sealed book by which all action of God and of evil—the evil being that of Satan, the red dragon, the beasts, Babylon and the ten apostate ‘kings of the earth’—is found to be in the Lamb’s hands. Yet none of this—repeat ‘none of this’—could or would happen apart from the Cross, for the act of the Cross encapsulates all things in what we call ‘history’.

Again we emphasise the fact that the Cross is not separated from the Resurrection, nor the Resurrection from the Cross. The two events are the one—the full atonement—and yet the Cross is particularly distinctive. It can never be apart from the Resurrection which it guaranteed by destroying death, but in itself it is the God of glory who—to the sight of creatures earthly and heavenly—becomes inglorious in His Son, in whom He is reconciling the world unto Himself. Never a god was like this God, humbled *to* the death of the Cross and humiliated by men and demons in it, though he himself was not humiliated, so full of humility and serving was he as the Son. He broke forever the love of power by the power of love. This was what was—and is—indispensable in the world, the order of things, the process of history, so that the true *telos* might be won and then given to redeemed humanity in its sanctified, glorified and perfected form.

This is what we mean by saying that always ‘God is on mission’, and why we say ‘God is love’. There is no real hiatus from the moment of creation to the moment of the new heaven and earth. In that new heaven and earth God has completed His mission. It is then all things will enter into His Sabbath rest, and this because creation has been sanctified, glorified and perfected.

APPENDIX: THE IMPORTANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS’ RESURRECTION

Though not a part of this month’s Study, I think it is good to see that the Cross and the Resurrection are not separated, and to see the ‘power of the Resurrection’ in the following:

(a) *Jesus was ‘designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead’* (Rom. 1:4). See Matthew 26:63–65, Mark 14:61–64, and Luke 22:70–71, in regard to the claim to be the Son of God. Thus Jesus is vindicated and the Sanhedrin are convicted of an unsubstantiated charge.

(b) *Jesus was shown to be both Lord and Christ because of his resurrection from the dead.* See Acts 2:24–36; 3:14–15; 4:10–11; 5:30–31; 10:39–42; 13:32–39. The Scripture shows that the power of Jesus Christ was present to heal the lame man at the temple gate. The Sanhedrin are told he is ever present to do such works. Generally the New Testament speaks of Jesus being raised from the dead by God, rather than of him rising, and thus the God of Israel vindicates him and his claims as being true. *Romans 10:9 makes it clear that without confessing faith in Christ’s resurrection and his consequent Lordship, no one can be saved.* Of course the death and the resurrection had to do with both the forgiveness of sins and justification.

(c) *Jesus was made to be the judge of the world by his resurrection from the dead.* Peter was the first to announce this fact in Acts 10:39–43:

And we are witnesses to all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and made him manifest; not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him

after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that he is the one ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness that every one who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.

This was what Paul told the Athenians in Acts 17:30–31:

The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead.

In the first quote Jesus is declared to be judge and in this capacity can forgive sins. This fits well with what Jesus told his disciples in John 5:25–29.

(d) *Acts 2:22–24 (cf. 4:27–28) shows that it was God’s plan that Jesus be crucified in the manner that happened, and by those who did it, and so the resurrection was equally the intention and act of God to (i) vindicate Jesus as the one sent by God, and (ii) to ensure that he would be Lord and Christ, with all that those two designations indicate, that is, Lord over all things. For this see Acts 2:33–36, Matthew 28:18, Philippians 2:9–11, and Ephesians 1:19–22 (amongst other references), to show that Jesus was exalted to the place of power at God’s right hand, to be God’s true Prophet, Priest and King. When we ask, ‘What was the purpose of the Cross?’ then we have answered that previously. Without defeating evil at the Cross he could not be Lord and Christ, and without effecting the Atonement none could be given the forgiveness of sins, cleansing from their guilt, and the justification from the law which would have come to them in his judgment of human beings (cf. Rom. 5:10, 17–19). In I Corinthians 15:17–19 Paul says:*

If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied.

We can see that in every way, for the Christian, the resurrection of Christ is essential for the forgiveness of sins.

(e) *The resurrection was part of the Atonement of Christ. Romans 4:23–25 says, ‘Jesus our Lord, who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification’. Colossians 2:11–15 connects the Resurrection with the Atonement, including the defeat the evil powers:*

In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ; and you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses . . . He disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in him.

(f) *In Romans 8:33–34 Paul shows that without the Resurrection God’s people would have no intercessor for them. They would be defeated by Satan:*

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, who indeed intercedes for us?

Hebrews 4:14–16 and 7:23–25 link with this idea, in that it is the victorious Christ, raised to God’s right hand, who is our intercessor. Whilst it is by him as intercessor that we come to God, it is also by him that we are continually preserved from the Evil One and his powers every moment of our lives.

(g) *The fact of the Resurrection is the basis for the believer’s union with Christ, as also his communion with him and the Father. This is a vast subject and needs to be opened*

thoroughly. First we have the fact that all believers died with him on the Cross when he died. This can be seen in Galatians 2:20 (cf. 6:14), ‘I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me’; II Corinthians 5:14, ‘We are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died’; Colossians 3:1, ‘If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things which are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God . . . For you had died and your life is hid with Christ in God’. The passage of Romans 5:12–21 assures us that we were one with Christ in the obedience Christ gave to God in his death. Romans 6:1–10 is really an enlargement of the principle of Galatians 2:19–20. In other words, when Christ died we died, and when he was buried so we were buried with him, and when he rose so we rose. On the one hand this was a death and resurrection in identification with Christ, but its language also assures us our death for sin is finished and we will rise to the life eternal. This wonderful truth comes most powerfully in Ephesians 2:1–10, of which verses 4–7 we look at here:

But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Here it is clear that in this life we are truly alive, and are seated with Christ in the heavenly places, ruling with him, *now*. Thus the doctrine of what we might call ‘our present, spiritual resurrection’ is most powerful, for it embraces the people of God as the Body of Christ, as the Bride of Christ, with whom Christ the Head and Lord is present, having her work as his ‘helpmeet’ in all that he is doing now and will do in eternity.

THE RESURRECTION ONE OF THE POWERFUL FACTORS OF THE APOSTOLIC TRUTH

On the day of Christ’s resurrection all the elect rose with him in principle. Proleptically they were raised for ever. On that day the news came to the human race that a man had risen from the dead, nevermore to die. All history changed when human beings could now be assured of their resurrection. This most potent factor has to be understood by the revelation of the Holy Spirit. Christ, our new true and last Adam, is the life-giving spirit who, through the Cross and his own resurrection, can now—and does—give eternal life to his elect. Two statements by Jesus give us great encouragement:

I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die (John 11:25–26).

Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades (Rev. 1:17, 18).

God, History and Mission

INTRODUCTION: GOD, MAN, CREATION AND THE MEANING OF HISTORY

There is no need for us to define the meaning of history. History, biblically, is the story of God's action in creation from the purposive beginning to the completion of that purpose in its climax. The point we want to make here is that 'God so loved the world' (John 3:16). Without doubt the climax of 'a new heaven and a new earth' is the ultimate goal God has in mind for His present creation, but it is the goal of love for His creation and we must interpret God's history with this key—love that creates and love that saves: love is one of the criteria for true history. His love was for creation but in particular for 'whoever believes in him', which means that humanity which has faith. His intention is to save humanity from perishing. He sets the way of *not* perishing and of obtaining eternal life by the knowledge of Him. In John 17:3 it is eternal life to know God so that it is death *not* to know him.¹ What we have to keep in mind is that Paul's principle of Man knowing God is given in Acts 17:22–28 where he addressed the citizens of Athens:

Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything. And he made from one every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find him. Yet he is not far from each one of us, for 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your poets have said, 'For we are indeed his offspring.'

We see that some Athenians had come to the conclusion that there was a god they did not know, but then he may have been to them one of the many gods. Paul really claimed that though unknown to the Athenians he was the true God, namely the god Who is God. Paul used the point to commence communication. He spoke about the unknown God, describing Him, and concluded that it was this unknown One in Whom all human creatures 'live and move and have [their] being'. The point we need to see is that of verses 26 and 27, that God plans the nations' 'allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation' that 'they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find him', that is, they should come to know Him and have eternal life. 'The nations' are continually in God's mind and action. Certainly the ultimate picture of them in Revelation 21:24–25 is their entering the Holy City, and in 22:2 of the leaves of the tree of life being for 'the healing of the nations'. At the end time the nations will be judged before they are awarded entrance into life eternal, or everlasting punishment (Matt. 25:31–46).

Early biblical history gives us the picture of the relationships of God and Man. The bliss of knowing God up to the point of the Fall is evident. The refusal of the knowledge of God was the refusal of that true knowledge which is essential to Man being Man. Man thus has a long fall into not being true Man. Romans 1:18–32 is a powerful description of this state. Whilst Genesis 3 tells us of the doctrine of 'the seed of woman', Genesis 4 tells us of a division in mankind, and Genesis 4 and 5 give us the family histories of both Cain and Abel/Seth.²

¹ Jeremiah 9:23–24 speaks of the knowledge of the Lord being primary to human life. See also Hosea 4:1–3 and 6:1–3, 6.

² We could say 'the generations of Cain and Abel', if we understand Seth to be 'the substitute'—the meaning of the word Seth—for Abel. However, it is really 'the generations' of Adam. Cain is not included in these. It would seem that 'the sons of God' are the Sethites and 'the daughters of men' were Cainites (Gen. 6:2). Cohabitation of women and angels seems to be impossible. Also where are 'the sons of men' in this interpretation?

Genesis 6 speaks of the outbreak of corruption and violence which called for the judgment of Man in the Flood, Noah and his family being excepted. Following the Flood we have the genealogies of the nations in chapters 9 and 10, after which we have the universal covenant with Abraham, which is related to all the nations. If we keep Paul's key to the nations in mind—that they should come to know God—then we see that the salvation of the nations is in God's mind from the first. The 'one [‘blood’ or ‘man’]', of Acts 17:26 is either Adam or Noah, but Romans 5:12–21 seems to indicate Adam.³ From the beginning God had planned the order of nations and their salvation. This must be a major matter to keep in mind when we think of God and history. Our only other comment here is that we must take seriously God's plan to bring the nations to know Him, and that seems to be by 'a man' as in Acts 17:31, the 'man' being Jesus.

Now we will try to trace the matter of nations and of God's mission in the Old and New Testament. We expect them to go together and to be the active expression of 'God so loved the world . . .' and 'that they may feel after him and find him'. The idea which preceded that of the saving of the nations was that Man—Adam and his posterity—should 'fill up the earth and subdue it', but until Man is saved he cannot come into the fullness of operating this mandate of Genesis 1:28. God's mission is indispensable to this coming to pass.

GOD, COVENANT AND MISSION

In our previous Monday Study—'God is Always on Mission'—we looked at some of the elements of God's intention for His world, especially for humanity made in His image. In our day we have the advantage of the whole Scripture, the full doctrine of the Atonement, clarified eschatology, and knowledge of the *telos*. We also have the immense advantage of a fully developed doctrine of the Trinity. It is easier for us to see the form of God's mission, and to know its Source—the Triune God. This is the God who is love, and love helps us to understand creation, redemption and the fulfilled *telos*. Of the absolute unity and one mind for all Trinitarian Being, Herman Hoeksema writes:

The three persons of the Holy Trinity live in inseparable, most perfect, and eternally complete communion with one another. It is the life of eternal and perfect knowledge, of perfect entering into one another's life, of a perfect understanding of each other. In the divine economy there are no secrets. The Father never thinks or wills what the Son and the Holy Spirit do not think or will. It is the life of the most perfect love, in which the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity eternally find one another and are eternally united in the most perfect divine harmony in the bond of perfect union.⁴

What is it that primarily concerns us in regard to God, Man and history? The answer must be 'covenant'.⁵ We may use the terms 'eternal' or 'everlasting', by which we do not mean there is a thing called covenant, which like God is everlasting and has—and is—its own hypostasis. No: we mean that God is by nature of His Triune Being covenantal and that when He creates, the criterion of creation is *covenant*. Hoeksema gives us a wide and deep view of the God who is innately covenantal, and shows us the power of that Nature:

³ There is a growing school of thought which speaks of Israel's 'Adam theology' worked out in its later Judaism. The Pauline theology of 'the second Adam' or 'the last Adam' seems to indicate that 'one blood'—Adam—was the father of all nations. Christ as the Second/Last Adam is the Saviour and Lord of all the nations. Through him the nations come to know God. The term 'a man' in Acts 17:31 may be part of this 'Adam theology'.

⁴ H. Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Reformed Free Pub. Assoc., Grand Rapids, 1985, p. 321.

⁵ For the whole question of 'Covenant' see my *Love's Most Glorious Covenant: Studies in Covenantal Theology* (Redeemer Press, Castle Hill, 1997, and William Dumbrell's *Covenant and Creation: An Old Testament Covenantal Theology*, Paternoster, Exeter, 1984.

For the same reason, however, this covenant relation is not to be conceived as something incidental, as a means to an end, as a relation that was established by way of an agreement, but as a fundamental relationship in which Adam stood to God by virtue of his creation. It is not essentially an agreement, but a relation of living fellowship and friendship. It was given and established by Adam's creation after the image of God. For fellowship, the intimate relation of friendship, requires likeness as its basis. Like knows and can have fellowship only with like. For this reason the ultimate covenant life is to be found in God Himself, and it is based on the Trinity. Being essentially One, yet personally distinct, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost live in eternal covenant friendship with one another. And for this same reason that reflection of God's life of friendship which is found in God's covenant with man was realized when Adam was created in the image of God, that creaturely likeness of God which consisted in true knowledge of God, [righteousness], and holiness. From the very first moment of his existence, therefore, and by virtue of his being created after the image of God, Adam stood in that covenant relation to God and was conscious of that living fellowship and friendship which is essential to that relationship. He knew God and loved Him and was conscious of God's love to him. He enjoyed the favor of God. He received the Word of God, walked with God and talked with Him; and he dwelled in the house of God in paradise the first. And as he stood at the pinnacle of all created things on earth, the whole creation through him was comprehended in that covenant relation of fellowship. In Adam's heart the whole creation was united to the heart of God.⁶

Having obtained this understanding we have a view of the statement 'God so loved the world' which is of inestimable benefit and help. We can now see that the covenantal God cannot but work covenantally. It also helps us to see why covenant is continually breaking surface in history. We can also see that for Adam to reject God's word to him is crime of the most enormous nature. Sins may be breaking God's law and be abhorrent to God, but original sin is that enormous crime of which we have just spoken. A careful study of Romans 5:12–21 should communicate the dynamics of evil in a powerful way. At this point we need to make the comment that covenant is always linked with promise. The promises are covenantal and they make visible the powers and riches of covenant.⁷ When we see the true nature of covenant—love—we see it is a relational bond which is difficult to define. When we see the nature of promise as being a gift, then any thought of covenant being contractual is inadmissible. Mission—God's mission—is His working in history and His working of history to fulfil His own eternal covenant. Covenant makes mission both intelligible and indispensable.

THE COVENANTS AND MISSION

All the covenants known as Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic and New are essentially the workings of the everlasting covenant until God's purpose is completed through them. We must not bring our criteria of *mission* and judge whether the covenants are *missionary* by those criteria. Modern criteria are often to do with inroads into culture rather than the saving, rehabilitating and re-creating work of God. We must seek to discover the mind of God in His work, not as a rescue mission, but as the fulfilling mission which not only rehabilitates fallen Man, but also incorporates him as the covenantal partner of God, His friend-servant, his servant-friend. To repeat part of the Hoeksema quote above:

And as he stood at the pinnacle of all created things on earth, the whole creation through him was comprehended in that covenant relation of fellowship. In Adam's heart the whole creation was united to the heart of God.

It is that re-creation towards which God works.

⁶ op. cit., p. 222.

⁷ My friend Archbishop D. W. B. Robinson once commented to me that he thought 'promise' or 'the promises' were more important than covenant, that the Scriptures are more to do with promise than covenant. It is interesting to see that in Ephesians 2:12 Paul speaks of 'the covenants of promise' which would cover all the covenants and their particular promises. Romans 9:4 speaks of the gifts to Israel, one of which was 'the covenants' and another 'the promises'. Probably both should be seen as one together.

For this reason the view that God had a covenant of works with Adam cannot be sustained. Nor does covenant have to appear as a word, a theme or an object in the first chapters of Genesis.⁸ The very nature of ‘the eternal covenant’ means it does not have to be objectified in the early chapters of Genesis, for it is essentially there and could not be otherwise.

The Covenant with Noah

When it comes to the covenant with Noah, William Dumbrell suggests that, because *heqim berit* ‘to establish a covenant’ is used rather than *karat berit* ‘to make or cut a covenant’, God was not making a new covenant with Noah. Dumbrell says:

Evidence of this character makes it more than likely that in contexts where *heqim berit* stands (Gen. 6:18; 9:9, 11, 17; 17:7, 19, 21; Exod. 6:4; Lev. 26:9; Deut. 8:18; 2 Kgs. 23:3) the institution of a covenant is not being referred to but rather its perpetuation. We have already virtually suggested in passing that this was the case in regard to the citations referred to other than those in Genesis. We may probably now surmise that what is being referred to in Gen. 6:18 is some existing arrangement presumably imposed by God without human concurrence, since it is referred to as ‘my covenant’. Despite the human sinful condition, he is determined to maintain it. The nature and the details of this arrangement are not clear from Gen. 6:18, though they might with some probability have been inferred from the course of the Genesis narrative to that point. The details will become quite clear, however, when Gen. 9:1ff is reached.⁹

If we were to try to define the everlasting covenant which is inherent in creation, we would say it is a gift covenant springing from love, and that the following covenants we mention—beginning with Noah—were grace covenants since they dealt with fallen Man. In one sense the Noahic covenant is the second beginning of mankind and the whole creation. Genesis 9:8–17 sets out this matter. In this sense it is a soteriological–re-creating covenant. It needs to be read closely and pondered much.

The Covenant with Abraham

The covenant with Abraham has to be a covenant of grace, for it not only engifts Abraham with a magnificent posterity and eternal inheritance, but also involves—one way or another—all the nations of the earth. Genesis chapters 3 – 11 speak of the human condition, including the rebellion of the building of the tower of Babel. The Abrahamic covenant is bound in with the everlasting covenant.¹⁰ Just as the Noahic blessing is never recalled or cancelled, so also the Abrahamic: it is never recalled, the continuity of covenant not depending upon the obedience of Man. The covenant with Israel through Moses at Sinai, rightly understood, is also a soteriological–re-creating covenant, as the Passover shows. A slave people are exalted to their own land which is virtually an Eden. It came into being as part of the Abrahamic covenant. In Exodus 2:23–25 it is written:

In the course of those many days the king of Egypt died. And the people of Israel groaned under their bondage, and cried out for help, and their cry under bondage came up to God. *And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.* And God saw the people of Israel, and God knew their condition [emphasis mine].

⁸ The ‘proof-text’ of Hosea 6:7, ‘But at Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me’, cannot be taken to mean that God has made a covenant with Adam which he broke. This would require ‘But like Adam’, which cannot be substantiated. ‘At Adam’ would signify a place, and whilst in Joshua 19:35–36 an ‘Adamah’ is mentioned, it would have to be a later-named place in Hosea’s time. ‘Like Adam’ cannot be ruled out, but a whole doctrine must not be built upon it.

⁹ *Covenant and Creation*, p. 26.

¹⁰ All but the Sinaitic covenants are called ‘everlasting’. This suggests their oneness of gift, of love and of grace.

The Covenant with Israel

Israel, the covenant people, is a kingdom. Exodus 19:5–6 speaks of the people as holy and a witness to the nations:

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

If we read back into this passage the nature of the people of the new covenant, as set out in I Peter 2:9–10, then we gain even more light on it:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy.

Israel is to be the priest-nation amongst all nations, witnessing¹¹ to them, declaring God's soteriological–re-creating deeds so that they will seek after God to find Him.

The substance of this Study really lies in what Israel as the covenant people ought to have been and done. Every detail of Israel's history is dynamic for good or evil, for God's will or against it. The worship cultus based on what Moses saw on the Mount, namely the heavenly worship sanctuary patterned into the tabernacle and later the temple, was virtually the manner of Israel's life and mission. It was also its eschatology—royal, priestly, and prophetic. The once-Adamic is seen re-created in the now-and-yet-to-be Adamic. That is why Israel had a high view of itself, and knew its mission even when it turned to idolatry and the cursed 'mission' of evil which Paul refers to in Romans 1:18–25. The sacred writings of the Psalms and the Wisdom books show the magnificence of Israel's richest relationships with God, all covenantal, whilst the Prophets—former and latter, major and minor—tell out the mystery of God and eventually speak of the New covenant, and the re-created people of God. They envisage the future of Israel and God's plan for the nations. Israel will be at the centre of all creation, the nations coming up to hear the word and the law of the Lord and to worship him in the new temple which will be the house of prayer for all nations. Judgment will come, as the terrible 24th chapter of Isaiah portrays in its last verses:

On that day the LORD will punish
the host of heaven, in heaven,
and the kings of the earth, on the earth.
They will be gathered together
as prisoners in a pit;
they will be shut up in a prison,
and after many days they will be punished.
Then the moon will be confounded,
and the sun ashamed;
for the LORD of hosts will reign
on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem
and before his elders he will manifest his glory.

The geographical, historical and cultus details of Israel's life have reached their eschatological zenith in the manifestation of the glory of their covenant God, fulfilling His own plan and His promises to Israel. The words of Isaiah 25:1–29 go universal, so to speak, especially as they are later trumpeted forth in the 21st chapter of the Revelation:

O LORD, thou art my God;
I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name;

¹¹ The idea of Israel being God's witness (Isa. 43:10; 44:8; cf. 42:1) is linked with the work of the Suffering Servant. It is a strong theme in the New Testament, and one which we hope to cover in later studies.

for thou hast done wonderful things,
 plans formed of old, faithful and sure.
 For thou hast made the city a heap,
 the fortified city a ruin;
 the palace of aliens is a city no more,
 it will never be rebuilt.
 Therefore strong peoples will glorify thee;
 cities of ruthless nations will fear thee.
 For thou hast been a stronghold to the poor,
 a stronghold to the needy in his distress,
 a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat;
 for the blast of the ruthless is like a storm against a wall,
 like heat in a dry place.
 Thou dost subdue the noise of the aliens;
 as heat by the shade of a cloud,
 so the song of the ruthless is stilled.

On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined. And he will destroy on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death for ever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken.

It will be said on that day, 'Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.'

It would appear that, universally, salvation has come. It is for 'all peoples' and it is not just 'repair work' but repristination. Of course we have to keep in mind the Suffering Servant of Isaiah chapters 40 – 66. Without him the lost, straying and sinful people will never see the glory of God. He must suffer *for* them as also *as* them, be uncomely, be put to death and then intercede for them through his passion and his own new vocation as Warrior King and Intercessor. All of this is linked with what the prophets have called 'the New covenant' which they called 'the everlasting covenant'.

The Covenant With David

This covenant is important—covenant and Kingdom coming together. The King–Messiah and his work have universal connotation. II Samuel 7:8–16 is the classic passage. David's response in 7:19 (cf. I Chron. 17:17) is important; 'thou hast shown me future generations' should be translated 'this is the law for man' or 'the charter for humanity'. Without doubt 'great David's greater Son' will be Messiah–King and rule the creation in peace. Covenant theologians go to great length to show that the Davidic covenant is rooted in the Abrahamic if not in the *eternal* or *creational* covenant.¹²

The New Covenant

We have stated that covenant as a principle is a criterion of God's history and that must be maintained. Covenant, however, is not an entity on its own. It is not *per se* the key to history. It has no hypostasis. It is part and parcel with the criteria of God's intention for His history, with His kingdom, with His creation and the *telos* He has for it. God is not only covenantal in nature but also royal—King of all the nations. He is love and love is a criterion of history. He is holy and that is a criterion of His work of history. It is evident when we move into the New Testament that all of these criteria we have named are innate in Him and so in His history. We have often indicated that the *telos* is of the sanctification, glorification and perfection of all creation. As we cannot understand creation without covenant, neither can we understand covenant without creation.

¹² See my book *Love's Most Glorious Covenant*, pp. 84–91.

At the moment of entering the New Testament arena we are met with mission. Israel is agog with it. Not only have false messiahs arisen to cash in on this expectation, but genuine believers anticipate the event. With reference to Israel's consciousness of its Divine election and its formation as the holy people of God, we saw that the prophets exhorted and predicted the shape of Israel's history under God. They knew His soteriological intent, and His repristinating plan. In forgetting often that God had called them in grace as the least significant of nations, they had come to view themselves as a singular people. Jonah is the story of a society which forgot that God loved the world—all its peoples, no matter how much they were *goyim*, supposedly unclean Gentiles in the eyes of Israel.

The early pages of the New Testament describe what is unique to Israel, namely the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus. No doubt the prophets had called for national repentance and had warned of judgments and the Day of the Lord. John, without authorisation from the 70 elders, is speaking as a prophet, yes, but also as 'more than a prophet'. Jesus is the One prophesied by the prophets and introduced by John whose ministry had been prophesied as the precursor of Messiah. The feeling is 'all that the prophets have spoken' must now have its fulfilment in a world in which Rome was paramount in power. Jesus said he had not come to abolish 'the law and the prophets' but to *fulfil* them.¹³ He means that he will establish all that God has said, shown and declared in the Old Testament.

Whilst he attended primarily to 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel', indications are given of his universal outlook and intention. John 3:16 is a commentary of God's love for the whole world. What was needed for the salvation of the world and its renewal into covenant relationship with God with a view to the fulfilment of God's plan, was accomplished by him, the Christ. Nothing was left undone. Mission, to use a term, came out into the open. It was not so much exposed to the world as the world was exposed to it. In our previous Study we saw the universal nature of the gospel, and how Christ's authority over all things was the aegis under which the apostles were sent. We saw that the apostles were given the apostolic truth by the Spirit catching up all history and interpreting it in the light of the person and work of Christ, and interpreting the person and work of Christ in the light of it. Under the revelation of the Spirit they proclaimed this word, their intention being to reach all nations to the ends of the earth for these had been given to the Son.

Our point, then, of 'God, History and Mission', is seen as one in which grace to fallen Man is given in the covenants and their promises, so that the nations have never been left without the light of God which they could see as they faced Abraham and Israel. With Christ's coming the whole situation has opened up in a burst of soteriological–repristinating order and power, in and through the gospel. This is the thrust of the New Testament. We saw in our previous Study that the basic criterion of all theology is the Cross. We can see, then, that all God's history has to be seen and known. It is not that in the New Testament we see history capped off, so much as it is the Story in which we live as it moves to its *telos*. We live in its soteriological and repristinating power and works.

THE CHURCH AND HISTORY

We need to make a note that the Church is the means by which God fulfils His history. Created Man was equipped and commissioned to be the royal, priestly and prophetic people of God, thus being covenant partner, and servant-friend of God. Israel as God's *qahal* (congregation; *ecclesia*) was to be the prophetic, priestly and royal community to the world. The oneness of Exodus 19:5–6 and I Peter 2:9–10 tell us the Church is God's agent in history. The Church was born out of the Cross, was the Bride for whom Christ shed his blood (Eph. 5:25–27; Acts 20:28)

¹³ Jesus has come to fulfil not just the law, but 'the law and the prophets' (Matt. 5:17, *passim*). 'Fulfil' should read, 'establish', 'bring to completion', and not be seen that he simply rendered obedience to the law, the *torah*. The work is greater than that, not properly fulfilled until he cried, 'It is finished!', died, rose again, ascended, sent forth the Spirit and was seated at the right hand of 'the Power'.

and she is the second and last Adam's bride and wife. First he works with her in saving and re-creating her (Eph. 5:25–30). She thus works with him in all history: she is one with him in his action. She is the *kerugmatik* community, never her true self except when she is proclaiming.

What is needed to complete this present paper is a close study of the Book of the Revelation. In that God's history is told powerfully and we would be incomplete in our knowledge of God, Man, creation and history without it. In it the covenantal people of God are spoken to by Christ the Lord of history, and are then shown to go through all the violence and vicissitudes of history. The Bride of Christ is pressed by the red dragon, his clones the two beasts, and 'the mother of harlots', Babylon. This helps us to see how unfailing is God in His love for the world, and how persistent in assuring us that it will reach His designed *telos* for it.

CONCLUSION: GOD, THE MYSTERY OF THE WORLD

Our view of history is certainly not the secular or academic view. History must be what it is because of the nature of God. In order to understand history we must understand God. He is the mystery of the world, in that human reasoning cannot work Him out with all its theology. Someone has said that the God of glory which we may imagine, would not be seen dead on a cross! Unless we understand God through the revelation of His Word we will never see Him making a non-contractual, unilateral covenant, being constantly on mission for the world He created and which He loves with all His Being. History demands the criteria we have named, for they are the very Being of God. The New Testament takes up this theme powerfully, from the Incarnation to the *telos* of God. Thus we see God, Man, creation and history.

Herman Hoeksema's *Reformed Dogmatics* on 'The Pactum Saluds', p.321-322.

However, as soon as we present the matter of the covenant in this wise, if the life of the covenant in God is such a life of most perfect friendship, of the most intimate communion, of the deepest knowledge and the most affectionate love, it follows, in the first place, that the idea of the covenant cannot be found in an agreement or pact. In perfect harmony and communion of life, in the perfect, eternal knowing of one another, and in the most perfect love and unity, the idea of an agreement, of the conclusion of a pact, does not fit. In such a relation everything is spirit and life. The covenant idea is given with the life of the Triune God in Himself. It rises in eternal spontaneity from the divine Essence and realizes itself with perfect divine consciousness in the Three Persons. God knows and wills Himself, loves and seeks Himself eternally as the covenant God. The covenant is the bond of God with Himself. It is the eternal life of perfect light. But if this is so in God Himself, this must also be applicable to the covenant idea as a relation between God and man. For all things are only out of God, through Him, and unto Him. Also the covenant relation can never be anything else than an ectypical reflection of the covenant life in God Himself. If the essence of the covenant in God is the communion of friendship, this must also be the essence of the covenant between God and Man. If this communion of friendship in God rests upon the perfect essential unity by personal distinction, then this must also be the case with the covenant between God and man: it also must be based upon a creaturely likeness of man to God by personal distinction. If this communion of friendship in the Trinity implies a perfect knowledge of one another, then also the covenant life of man must consist in this, that God reveals Himself to him, causes man to know Him, reveals His secrets to him, speaks to him as a Friend with His friend, walks with him, eats and drinks with him, lives with him under one roof. If the covenant life in God consists in this, that the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity are united in the bond of perfect love, then also the covenant relation between God and man must originate in this, that God opens His heart for man. Then the life of the covenant is eternal life itself. For this is life eternal, that they know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent. Thou in Me, and I in them, that they may be perfect in One ...Then the covenant is the very essence of religion, the highest good, the very best that can ever be imparted to man through grace, the highest bliss. The idea of the covenant is certainly not a pact or agreement, whether you conceive of such an agreement in the unilateral or bilateral sense. It is the relation of the most intimate communion of friendship in which God reflects His own covenant life in His relation to the creature, gives to that creature life, and causes him to taste and acknowledge the highest good and the overflowing fountain of all good. And once more, if we may thus conceive of the very essence of the covenant, the covenant also is not a way to a certain end, is no means to the attainment of a certain purpose, is not the manner wherein we are saved. It is itself the highest purpose, the end, the eternal bliss, unto which all things tend and must tend. Then the purpose of all things is always the covenant of God. Then the covenant determines and dominates the whole of God's counsel, and the whole of history concentrates around the highest realization of the covenant of God. That is the sole purpose in creation and recreation. That is the purpose of the Word, of the cross and resurrection, of the uniting of all things in heaven and on earth in Immanuel, God with us. In the covenant of God is found the motive of the struggle of all ages in the world. And in that covenant is found the reason for the consummation of all things. And the idea of the covenant dominates all existence and all life and all relations of the creatures to God and of the creatures mutually. So all dominating is the idea of the covenant that it would not be impossible to write a complete dogmatics from the viewpoint of the covenant. Not a way, and not a means, but the final destination and the all-dominating purpose is the covenant of God.

Pentecost and the Revelation of All Truth

INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEMS FACING HUMAN UNDERSTANDING

In this Study we are seeking to understand why it is that so often our proclamation and preaching meets with little response and also with distinct opposition and rejection, even when we are not aggressive, but are rather loving and warm-hearted. Why is it that this opposition and rejection pervades even our dreams, let alone our waking hours? We are often tempted to think we are wrong in our approaches, wrong even in our doctrine, and yet, in our heart of hearts, we know that despite our many weaknesses, failures, and faulty approaches to ministry, we are genuine and believe we must proclaim the whole counsel of God. In this Study we would want to correct what is incorrect, and also comprehend why we meet the confronting refusal of humanity to hear what we say.

From our former Studies we have seen

- (i) that the gospel is the only good news and that it is everlasting and for all nations,
- (ii) that God is always on mission, and that principle of 'mission' is the criterion for all history, and
- (iii) that there is an everlasting covenant which embraces all humanity, no matter whether everyone accepts this covenant or not. God is covenantal and, ontologically, Man is structured to receive and live under covenant as his true principle of life. How is it, then, that men and women do not, on the whole, respond to what we know to be marvellous?

Created Man Would Have Had Understanding of God

On the face of these findings we might expect all humanity to be under covenant and to find its fulfilment in such. To some degree this is correct. It is clearly correct in that there is a history of people who, being sinners as are all people, yet have faith in God and live in that faith, are loved by God and love Him, and seek to love all others. On the other hand there are those who, being of the same origin in Adam, will have no part in God as He is.¹ Since knowing, living with, serving and sharing with God is ontological, such people devise substitutes for God; surrogate gods and surrogate covenants. Thus it should not surprise us that we find copies or caricatures of the true covenant God in forms of idols, devised icons, and devised covenants and similar treaties. In fact, it is difficult to live without contracts: all mankind bargains and puts stipulations on its agreed actions or covenants. Indeed some theologians see God's covenants as derived from the contexts and patterns of human cultures, but it would be best to say that such human covenants are unconscious imitations of the divine and everlasting covenant of God. We have seen that—with the possible exception of the Sinaitic covenant—all covenants are called everlasting, and that this points to their being one covenant, namely *the* everlasting covenant, or 'the covenant of creation'.

Man's Difficulty in Understanding God Because of the Primal Sin, and Because of the Ancient Serpent

If we keep in mind the Fall of Genesis 3, and the description of Man's opposition to God in Romans 1:18–32, then we can understand that it will always be difficult to change the mind

¹ See Hebrews 11:4ff.; I John 3:10–11; Acts 17:26–28.

of Man so that he, as a race, accepts the gospel of the Lordship of Christ over all creation and his saving grace to sinful Man. We would have to keep in mind that from Abel onwards there have been those who have believed in God, the covenant God. Doubtless, the reality of predestination and election enters here, though with no philosophical solution or rationalisation since the heart of the matter lies in the wisdom of God. The mystery of God successfully working on the hearts of some, whilst others still remain obstinately in their adamant autonomy, is beyond our ability to apprehend.

In our previous Studies we also saw that God is concerned with the whole world, with all people and nations as well as individual persons, that the Atonement was effected for all the world and that Christ had commanded us to go to every creature and preach the gospel.² What faces, and often puzzles, us is that listeners do not all believe, and there seems to be a strong impediment to believing in Christ, receiving his proffered salvation and thus coming under his Lordship. Why, then, should this be?

(a) *The first answer must be the conscious rebellion of Man against God because of the Fall, and thus his refusal to know God and his insistence that he—Man—live his own life.* This, of course, is linked with (b) below. That he has an ontological drive to worship makes him primarily worship himself, or worship idols which pander to his self. Literal idols and mental icons then control his life, although he assumes that he retains his autonomy.

(b) *The second answer must be that they do not wish to receive God's needed proclamation of His grace.* They refuse grace because it is abhorrent to them, since grace would seem to demean Man, to say he needs the favour and love of God to bring him out of his sinful state and save him. This is an affront to man's religious pride. He believes he can effect his own salvation. Of course, he naturally has what we call a Pelagian view of sin, that there is no such thing as original sin, that Man is born with a tabula rasa—a clean sheet—and that he has the capacity to effect his own salvation. This is raw humanism because, at depth, he has a most deficient view of sin. He does not see that even one sin constitutes an entire violation of God's holiness. Hence he sees no need for God to go to such extremes as having His Son crucified.

(c) *Man does not know that he is in thrall to 'the god of this world', also known as 'that old serpent the devil', the one who deceived him in the Garden of Eden.* In fact, Man is caught in an evil system. The serpent continually seeks to 'blind the eyes of them that believe not'. In being deceived into rebelling against God, Man's mind became darkened—'they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools' (Rom. 1:21–22). We need to see that darkness and light are two opposites and not two elements of a created monism. Darkness is terrible. Blindness and darkness are as one. The Gospel of John, and his First Epistle, speak of the terrible nature of blindness and darkness.

(d) *The wisdom of Man when he is apart from God is foolishness—'Claiming to be wise, they became fools'.* This foolishness of fallen, human wisdom seems absolute wisdom to the person apart from God. God does not even let this foolishness be, but opposes it, as we see in I Corinthians 1:17–20 and 3:18–20, when God destroys the wisdom of the wise, and catches the wise in his foolishness.

(e) *There is a horizontal 'wisdom', a vertical 'wisdom' and a vertical–horizontal wisdom—the true one, as set out in the Book of Ecclesiastes, which is a powerful book, requiring*

² The Atonement is executed for all sinners, but the saving effects of the act are limited to the elect.

many readings. When we have reasonably understood it, we will know that the writer—a very wise man—has sought to comprehend ‘everything that is under the sun’ first by what we might call ‘the scientific-empirico’ method. Note that he sees things on this horizontal dimension—‘everything under the sun’—and seeks to understand them by

- (i) experimentation, and
- (ii) by reasoning from his investigations—the method we use in science.

He seeks to develop

- (i) a philosophy (theology?) of life, and
- (ii) a practice of life, of living in and enjoying this world which will satisfy him.

In other words, he seeks to rationalise the world that is about him and its various operations. The investigating Preacher’s conclusion regarding all this is that it is ‘vanity and a striving after wind’. That is, a satisfactory rationalisation of it all cannot be found. He sees that Man has another dimension—the ‘vertical’—for when he mentions God, the pride of human ‘knowing’ is seen to be futile. He says that God ‘has put eternity into man’s mind [heart] yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end’. Each time he mentions God he is speaking of a fear of God which leads to true wisdom. He concludes, ‘this is the end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments; for this is the whole [duty] of man’. We conclude that the writer is saying, ‘There is a horizontal dimension in which Man lives, created by God and good for Man, but when Man sees *only* the horizontal, seeks to live *only* in it, and tries to derive a philosophy (theology?) of it so that it is all rational to his mind, he will find that it is “emptiness and a striving after wind”. If Man fears God then he will do well’. In our terms, if he sees that life has a horizontal–vertical reality and perspective, then he will enjoy God and the creation together. Otherwise he will be either a horizontalist (worldly, secular) *or* a verticalist (hyper-spiritual or dualist).³ Only when he has the true verticalist–horizontalist perspective can he truly know God. The horizontalist view always works on the belief that Man can know God by his reasoning, and is much the same principle as that of the Age of Reasoning and Enlightenment, that of humanism.

(f) *In order to know God, one must be loved by Him, that is, receive His love, and so love Him.* Galatians 4:8–9, I Corinthians 8:3, John 17:3, and I John 4:7–10 make it clear that the true knowledge of God, such as we see in Jeremiah 9:23–24, comes from being born of God. This brings liberation from Satanic blinding and bondage. See II Corinthians 4:3–6.

(g) *In adding to (c) above, we perceive that the serpent is always seeking to seduce, blind, threaten, deceive and destroy.* He does not love the saints of God—those who come out of darkness into light, from blindness to sight—but endeavours more earnestly to bring them to nought. He is relentless in trying to destroy God’s beloved community. We read history superficially if we do not see the enormous forces which seek in every possible way to dull spiritual sensitivity and twist the truth. Movement after movement in history may appear to be initiated by human beings, but the celestial principalities and powers and their intellectual brilliance and plausibility must not be overlooked. There is a conspiracy by personal evil, but we ought not to be caught in fear of it, or exaggerate its ability to destroy humanity and the creation. The Epistles written to the early Church both by the apostles, and Revelation chapters 2 and 3 by Christ, through the Holy Spirit, show the endeavours of evil men and powers to subvert the Church. The apostles warned against this continuous attempt to destroy the Church, and we can see evidences of much success of evil in adulterating the truth.

³ This paragraph has been taken from the Pastors’ Monday Study of February 1995, p. 6.

All Truth Is a Mystery to the Natural Man

Paul, in I Corinthians 2:14 (cf. James 3:15; Jude 19), talks of the ‘natural man’ or the ‘psychical man’ (Greek: *psychikos anthropos*) translated ‘the unspiritual man’, as a person who cannot receive the ‘things of the spirit’. They are ‘folly to him’ and ‘he is not able to understand them for they are spiritually discerned’. This fits with what we have said in the section immediately above, and points to Romans 1:19–25. It also fits with Jesus saying that unless a person is born ‘from above’, he cannot *see* the Kingdom of God: ‘That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit’; ‘Unless one is born of water [baptism of repentance] and the [Holy] Spirit, he [or she] cannot *enter* the kingdom of God’. It fits with the Apostle John’s saying, ‘he who loves is born of God and knows God’. Otherwise—unborn of God—a person cannot know God or His things (cf. I Cor. 2:12). John 1:12–13—as indeed all references to new birth in I John—show that there is only one birth, that of God, which can bring humanity into light and sight. The natural man is the person in Adam, and not in God by Christ.

We must be careful not to say that the natural man is intellectually incapable of thinking even to the point of brilliance. The fall of Man did not impair his ability to think, but it did alter the thrust or bias of his thinking. He can be brilliant, competent scientifically, competent in developed skills, a great painter, sculptor, writer, poet, musician, technologist and so on, but all these remain in the natural realm. He may even be a brilliant theologian and not know God. Likewise the natural man may be well-versed in things occultic and cryptic. He must be given all credit for natural and developed skills. His failure to understand God lies in the fact that ‘only God knows God’ and ‘only God can tell (reveal) God’.

The Mysteries of the Scriptures

There are no natural or what we call ‘scientific’ proofs of Scripture.⁴ The Bible does indicate that it deals with things it calls mysteries. Anything we can nominate as ‘the things of God’ will remain unknown to the natural man, the man in Adam. Again, this is not to impugn his natural wisdom, nor even to be critical of his criticisms of the Scriptures as he sees them, nor is it to claim that God’s truth is esoteric and cryptic, but simply that its real nature is hidden from him. This does not mean that ‘the natural man’ cannot read the Bible intelligently, and gain much from it. We are saying that the nature of God can only be shown to the person open and willing to hear God and thus to receive truth which God will reveal to him. To receive truth is to believe it and act on it, for ‘hearing’ is ‘obeying’. Perhaps the best way of saying this is to quote Jesus as he often cried, ‘He that has an ear to hear, let him hear’. In Revelation chapters 2 and 3 Jesus wrote, ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches’. What has been uttered will thus be obeyed.

To come immediately to the matter; that which baffles the person who would know God because knowing God is his intention, is that he cannot make his way to God. Eberhard Jungel, commenting on Psalms 14:1 and 53:1, and the statement, ‘The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God”’, writes:

If he were not seriously and profoundly disquieted by the possibility of something like God, would the speaker say in his heart, ‘There is no God’ (Ps. 14:1; 53:1)? That doubtless correct statement can also be the sharpest expression of a truth without which the being of God is neither thinkable nor experienceable. That no one has ever seen God would then not be the statement of his unknownness but rather the characteristic of his being known under the conditions of the world.⁵

⁴ For some treatment of the subject, see my little book *The Glory of the Mystery and the Mystery of the Glory* (NCPI), shortly to be published.

⁵ *God as the Mystery of the World* by Eberhard Jungel (T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1983), p. 376.

What baffles the person who seeks to know God for himself *from himself* is the very baffle of the mystery itself. God as the Mystery ensures that His truth can only be intelligible to one who genuinely seeks, knocks and asks. Only to him shall be given. Where humility is missing, arrogance is present and God does not submit to this. The proud cannot find God, and quickly become the arrogant atheists of Psalms 14 and 53.

A mystery in both Old and New Testaments is a secret, something to be revealed by God in order to bring truth to the person He intends to enlighten. Limited space here prevents us opening up the entire subject. In Matthew 13:10, Jesus' disciples ask him why he teaches the crowd in parables. He answers, 'To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, *but to them it has not been given*'. (In Mark 4:11 the word is single, 'secret', whilst in Luke 8:10 it is plural.) The reason for keeping the secret concealed from others is that they are not to know it. If we think this is unfair then we should go back to Isaiah 6 and discern the message of the whole chapter. Mark records, 'that they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand; lest they should turn again, and be forgiven'. This is spoken in regard to all the Kingdom parables, but especially in relation to the sower and the seed. All ground, no matter what its condition, receives the seed—the Word of God—but only one proves fruitful—'he who **hears the word and understands it**' (Matt. 13:23); 'those who **hear the word of God and accept it**' (Mark 4:20); '**hold it fast in an honest and good heart**' (Luke 8:15). The gift Jesus gives to the disciples is, 'But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear'. Something must be present in the attitude of the three unproductive soils which prevents them truly hearing the word. We must keep this in mind when it seems some are 'hearing' the Word we preach, but not responding, and not receiving it.

The matter of mysteries is found not only in the four Gospels,⁶ but also in the Epistles—especially the Pauline Letters—and in the Revelation. The following is a list of the mysteries:⁷

- (a) The Mystery of the Kingdom (Matt. 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10);
- (b) The Mystery of the Hardening of Israel (Rom. 11:25 *passim*);
- (c) The Revelation of the Mystery (Rom. 11:25–26);
- (d) The Mystery [Testimony] of God (I Cor. 2:1);
- (e) The Mystery of Glorification (I Cor. 2:7 *passim*);
- (f) The Mysteries of God (I Cor. 4:1);
- (g) All Mysteries (I Cor. 13:2);
- (h) A Mystery (I Cor. 15:51ff.);
- (i) Mysteries Uttered in the Spirit (I Cor. 14:2);
- (j) The Mystery of His Will (Eph. 1:9; cf. 1:11, 'the counsel of his will');

⁶ We have not included John's Gospel in the survey of the term 'mystery' because that is absent from that Gospel. This is not say the whole idea is absent. Jesus' demand of Nicodemus that he be born from above is clear: the man cannot even *see* the Kingdom of God until he is born again, let alone *enter* it. It is in this Gospel that Jesus' use of parables (figures) makes it difficult for the disciples to understand his 'plain meaning'. The statement in 7:15–17 that if any man's will is to do His will, he shall know whether the teaching is from God or otherwise, tells us that hearing and willing are linked as in the Synoptics.

⁷ The above list of the mysteries is taken from the Monday Pastors' Study of February, 1995. That Study is entitled 'Knowing the Mystery and Mysteries of God'. It would be helpful to read that Study, especially as it deals with human attempts to know God, Man and Creation from a horizontal point of view as we have seen above. The list is filled out with comments which could be helpful. It also deals with the fact that God's mysteries can only be known truly in the situation of God's love—*agape*.

- (k) The Mystery of Christ, the Plan of the Mystery (Eph. 3:3, 4, 9);
- (l) Marriage, the ‘Profound Mystery’ (Eph. 5:32);
- (m) The Mystery of the Gospel (Eph. 6:19);
- (n) The Word of God, the Hidden Mystery, Glory of the Mystery (Col. 1:25–27);
- (o) God’s Mystery of Christ (Col. 2:2; 4:3);
- (p) The Mystery of Lawlessness [Iniquity] (II Thess. 2:7);
- (q) The Mystery of the Faith (I Tim. 3:9);
- (r) The Mystery of the Seven Stars (Rev. 1:20);
- (s) The Mystery of God (Rev. 10:7);
- (t) The Mystery of the Woman, Babylon (Rev. 17:5, 7).

As there is ‘the man of sin’ (II Thess. 2:3) so there is ‘the woman of sin’, these being the counterparts to Christ the man of godliness, and the Church the woman of godliness. The nature of this woman cannot be known apart from a revelation, the unveiling of the mystery.

Having looked at these 20 nominated mysteries, we notice that most of them have eschatological meaning and connotation. This must mean that the plan of God has always been a mystery to the natural man, but that to the elect it is God disclosing what He has done, is doing and will do (cf. Dan. 12:1–4, 8–13). Eschatology is not simply ‘the last things’, but God in His action. Creation is the beginning of the end, and the culmination of history is the end of the beginning, so that all things are always eschatological. Revelation is the unveiling of the mysteries: the mysteries are the mind of God and the actions thereof.

THE OPENING OR UNVEILING OF THE MYSTERY OF GOD

From the beginning there have been media of revelation, such as the word of God, the Creation itself, God manifesting Himself in theophanies, God’s law, God’s covenants, God’s people, God’s actions, the prophets, Christ incarnate, the Holy Spirit and the Church. In all cases there has had to be a right disposition of the human heart to receive these revelations which are unveilings of God. There has never been a time when God has not revealed Himself, though there may seem to have been times when He has withheld communication with Man. Those times have been the withdrawal of the Presence so that it becomes the Absence of the Presence, a form of stating the nature of the real Presence. Without seeking to cover all these various manifestations, we come to the one of Christ incarnate, or ‘Immanuel’—God present with Man as God.

In John 1:1–5 the Apostle speaks of the Word as Creator, as being the one in whom is life and that the life is the light of humanity. This light shines in the darkness and the darkness does not overcome it. ‘The darkness’ must be that of evil, the darkness of the mind of God-rejecting Man, as in Romans 1:19–32. Even so, John 1:9 speaks of ‘the true light that enlightens every man’ and says it (the Word) was coming into the world, meaning ‘the Incarnation’.⁸

⁸ The verse can be translated ‘This is the true light which enlightens every man [who is] coming into the world’.

In the Old Testament, as we have said, there were manifestations and revelations of God, particularly through covenant. The heart of covenant is that God is present to His people; that they are His people and He dwells in their midst. Even so, He never gives full revelation of Himself. Moses was permitted to see the back of God, but was not given a full revelation of Him. His glory was sometimes seen in the cloud, which filled the first temple at its dedication, and was seen in a vision by Isaiah. God apprised Israel of His intentions by His prophets. It is in his life and ministry that Jesus became the revelation of the Father who sent him. He spoke the Father's words, and did the Father's acts, or, rather, the Father did His works in the Son. Jesus made it clear that he did nothing from himself, he said only what the Father told him, and did only what the Father taught him. That is why he could say, 'I and the Father are one', 'I am in the Father and the Father is in me', and 'He that has seen me has seen the Father'. Above we have talked about the necessity for the new birth in order to be able to understand the words and acts of Jesus. To the puzzled Nicodemus, Jesus had to say:

Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen; but you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man (John 3:11–13).

The Puzzlement of Jesus' Apostles⁹

We have one more detail to clear up before we come to the heart of our Study. It is this, that it was given to the apostles—and others—to know the mysteries of the Kingdom and of God, yet, it appears, they did not really understand. If we can go by what they said to Jesus on the night of his betrayal, then they had not grasped the mysteries spoken in parables of 'a figure'. In John 16:25–33 we read the discussion Jesus and the disciples had:

'I have said this to you in figures; the hour is coming when I shall no longer speak to you in figures but tell you plainly of the Father. In that day you will ask in my name; and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from the Father. I came from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and going to the Father.' His disciples said, 'Ah, now you are speaking plainly, not in any figure! Now we know that you know all things, and need none to question you; by this we believe that you came from God.' Jesus answered them, 'Do you now believe? The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, every man to his home, and will leave me alone; yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.'

Their statement, 'Ah, now you are speaking plainly, not in any figure!' tells us that, although they were not locked out of the mystery of God, of Christ, of the Incarnation, of the Cross, Resurrection and Ascension—which were at that time unclear to them—yet they needed a revelation of both Christ and the Father which would bring them to know the true nature of the gospel, and fit them—and all who followed in their stead—to be able to proclaim Christ in all the world. They needed Pentecost.

⁹ We have talked about the 'puzzlement' of the disciples. God's mysteries are not puzzles to be solved, but His secrets which are opened by the Holy Spirit. Human reasoning seeks to puzzle out difficult matters, but God's mysteries are something, when opened, in which the recipient actually lives. Whilst living in them the recipient knows them: withdrawing from them they, so to speak, 'close up again'.

PENTECOST AND THE REVELATION OF ALL TRUTH

The thesis of this Study has been that

- (i) by Man's original rebellion he has cut himself off from God though God did not cut Himself off from Man;
- (ii) Man has broken the everlasting covenant with God, but God did not, therefore, abandon Man, but had within His intention the saving of His elect people;
- (iii) Man moved into self-sufficiency and devised idols to take the place of God, but claimed to be able to know God or to show that He did not exist;
- (iv) Man moved into darkness and blindness of mind, so far as God, Man and Creation are concerned;
- (v) God did not cease to manifest Himself, but did so to those who were blind and deaf to His expressions of His grace;
- (vi) there were those who, from the beginning, responded to His grace and worshipped and knew Him;
- (vii) the full revelation of God appeared in God incarnate, Jesus Christ, Immanuel, but even his close companions did not wholly know him as God's revelation of Himself, so that
- (viii) the Holy Spirit of God had to be poured out and come to God's people as the Divine Revelator in order that the gospel, being made known by this Spirit, could now be proclaimed in all the world to all humanity.

Jesus' Promises as to the Spirit's Revelation to the Apostles

- (a) *The promise of the teaching and remembrancing of all things by the Holy Spirit.* John 14:25–26: 'These things I have spoken to you, while I am still with you. But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will *teach you all things*, and *bring to your remembrance* all that I have said to you.' They had heard so much, seen so much, pondered so much, and yet it had not come to them in all its meaning. They had been confused. The promise is that, though they know nothing yet, they will come to know all things.
- (b) *The promise that the Holy Spirit will guide them into all the truth.* John 16:12–13: 'I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth.' Note that '*into* all the truth' is not just *to* all the truth. The truth is something lived out, as well as known by the mind. They will know and live the gospel.
- (c) *The promises that the Holy Spirit will declare 'things to come.'* John 16:13: 'for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come'. These 'things to come' may well include guidance for the new church in its movements, but probably this promise covers the eschatological understanding which will come to the Church.
- (d) *The promise that both the Son and the Father will be glorified by the Holy Spirit.* John 16:14–15: 'He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.' The promise is not only that the disciples will see the glory of the Son and the Father, but that they will have the power to glorify the Son and Father to the world through the gospel. This is linked with the next promise.
- (e) *The promise that the power of the Holy Spirit would convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment.* John 16:7–11: 'Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convince the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more;

concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.’ Undoubtedly the five promises concerning the coming of the Spirit are all of one piece. To know the life and ministry of Christ will result in the Holy Spirit working in the lives of the Apostles, especially in proclamation of the gospel.

After the events of the Cross and the Resurrection, Jesus talked with his disciples. He opened the Scriptures to them (Luke 24:25–27, 44–48), so that he was showing himself in the light of the Old Testament, and doubtless many of their later quotations from the Old Testament came from this teaching. In Luke 24:48–49 he said, ‘You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high.’ Here, then, was a further promise of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 1:1–8 we see Jesus teaching the apostles during the forty days before his ascension. His subject is the Kingdom of God, his promise is that of the Holy Spirit coming to them and making them authentic witnesses of him. Not only does he reveal himself, but he also prepares them for the coming of the Spirit who will even more powerfully do so. Thus the moment is prepared for when, for the first time in all history, the fullest revelation of God that Man can have will come upon the human race; that is, at Pentecost.

The Coming of the Holy Spirit and the Great Revelation

Keeping in mind the promises of Jesus on the night of his betrayal, and the Lukan references in the Gospel and the Acts, we can be truly prepared for what happened at Pentecost. Suddenly all the promises come true, and so much so that the apostolic band begin prophesying (cf. Acts 2: 4–21), ‘we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God’. ‘The mighty works of God’, what are they? They are the plan of God from the beginning, the work of God in the human race, the covenants, promises and prophetic predictions. They are the fulfilment of all these in the incarnation, the ministry, death, resurrection, ascension and reigning of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We will miss the whole point of this Study if we miss the fact that, with razor-edged sharpness, the apostolic band¹⁰ have revealed to them by the Holy Spirit the ‘all things’ of which Jesus spoke to them. ‘All things’ are brought to their remembrance, are taught wholly to them, so that they enter by the Spirit into ‘all the truth’. Having had fully revealed to them by the Spirit the glory of Christ and the Father, they are able to grasp ‘things to come’—the dynamic eschatology of ‘all the truth’—and have received the power to be living witnesses to Christ, and thus to proclaim his gospel. Whilst those minds which wish to agree with the text of Acts 2 nod agreement, that agreement cannot be authentic unless we, too, who read the text *have the same revelation come upon us which came upon that apostolic band*.

What we are saying is that the apostolic truth came into being by the revelation of the Holy Spirit in accordance with Christ’s promises. When Peter spoke his sermon it is evident that he was seeing things as he never did see them on the night of Christ’s betrayal and judgment. In fact, he had never seen them in this way. ‘The wonderful works of God’ must immediately refer to the Cross, the Resurrection, the Ascension and Christ’s reigning at the right hand of God. His sermon is filled with these things and their significance.

Let us take these things in slow motion: let us ponder each of them separately and all of them, together. They have been the subjects of monumental theology and discussion down through our 2000 years of history. They have also been the subjects of a monumental misunderstanding. It is not difficult for us to trace the apostolic truth if we will give ourselves to it. We imagine that the ‘apostles’ teaching’ of Acts 2:42 was what had broken open to the apostles and had their authority to pronounce it as truth. We also imagine that from Pentecost onwards it broke out in new freshets, great torrents, brilliant revelations, but then as a concerted whole, a full body of truth.

¹⁰ By ‘apostolic band’ we mean the 120 (Acts 1:15) who were present at Pentecost, not limiting to the 12 apostles.

**CONCLUSION: THE WAY OF MAN KNOWING GOD IS THE GOSPEL,
THE 'WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD'**

We may seem to conclude this Study abruptly after spending so much time on the minutiae of human blindness to God and the truth, but think of the matter of communicating the apostolic truth. We are disappointed that multitudes do not immediately flock to the gospel, receive it gladly and break into the Kingdom of God. We have to ask ourselves, 'Is this because in reality I know the gospel so well because the Spirit has revealed it so sharply and deeply to me? Do listeners reject it because it is—as is the theology of the Cross—hidden as yet from them, or is it because, in fact, I do not know the apostolic truth—the gospel, the whole counsel of God, the theology of the Cross—as it ought to be known?'

We are not asking ourselves whether we have a full-bodied theology as we find it in the Scriptures. We may well have that. We may compass everything of which we spoke in our last Study, namely covenant and grace and love, and yet it is possible that the Holy Spirit has not yet revealed to us as clearly and distinctly as he did to the apostolic band, the whole of truth, the 'all things' and 'all the truth'. Here there is no room for accusation, for self-defence, for acts of judgment and recrimination, but only for humility. Each of us is faced with the fact that the Scriptures tell us nothing is known of God apart from the Holy Spirit, and all we need to know—and must know—is by the Holy Spirit. We dare not say, 'Oh, everything was to be revealed at Pentecost, and was, and now we search through all the apostolic writings to discover what that was'. No one can object to such research, but the truth is that in order to understand what the apostles taught and lived, we need the personal, intimate and total ministry of the Holy Spirit. We need to be dependent upon the Holy Spirit all the time for the continuing opening of the whole mystery of God. All things will be dull to us but for this present, personal and persistent revealing of the Spirit of all 'the wonderful works of God'. Pentecost is ours through the apostolic happening of that day, through the fruits of that apostolicity of proclamation and teaching, and through the intimate presence and teaching of the Spirit, both then and now, to comprehend and live by the mystery—and mysteries—of the Cross, the Resurrection, the Ascension, the present Reigning of the Lord of Glory, and the Summation to which he is bringing all things. We must be constantly filled with the Spirit, aglow with the Spirit, led by the Spirit, walking in the Spirit and hearing what the Spirit is saying to the Church, the churches and each one of us, personally.

The Theologies by Which Salvation is Proclaimed

INTRODUCTION: THE MATTER OF TWO THEOLOGIES

We saw in our March Study that there are, in the mind of Luther, two theologies; a 'theology of the Cross' (*theologia crucis*) and a 'theology of glory' (*theologia gloriae*). In one sense the matter of two theologies may not seem to concern us, but we are people of history and cannot ignore the events of 2,000 years of Christian theology. Evangelists may not think they are called upon to take such formulations and principles of theology into consideration. 'Let us just get on with the job', they might say, 'for how can Luther's thought affect us either way in regard to his two theologies? For that matter why should anyone's theology of the Cross influence us, since we can derive it ourselves from Scripture?' It seems clear enough that evangelists, unknowingly, seem to operate within one of the two theologies. To know what they are can therefore be advantageous. It may prove essential for some to move from the theology of glory to the theology of the Cross, no matter what results they may seem to have achieved by being conditioned by the theology of glory.

Luther's theology of the Cross is not an easy theology to put into propositional form. It is doubtful that such has been done.¹ Gerhard O. Forde in his book *On Being a Theologian of the Cross* says that one only comes to know the theology of the Cross by being a theologian of this theology. That means that one has to absorb Luther's development of the theology, and that—as Luther would say—it is only in not being a spectator but a participator in the Cross itself that one comes to know it. One has to live in the story for the Cross to be a living theology, and this demands living in the life of the suffering of God. There are many theories of the Cross in regard to its atoning nature, and there are many theologies of the Cross which are developed for their usefulness in supporting the very opposite of the Cross, namely the theology of glory. The theology of glory conscripts the Cross to support its theology of praxis.

Often contrasts are helpful in gaining the truth and so it can be profitable for the two theologies—that of the Cross and that of glory—to be seen as antitheses. The theology of the Cross says that God as He really is can only be known through the Cross and not through what is visible. As we will see, Luther's theology of the Cross, as also the rejected theology of glory, is worked out in the Heidelberg Disputations 1518 and the 28 Theses which he put forward. Other writings of Luther also support and amplify these Theses.

F. R. Harm gives us a condensed view of the theology of glory:²

The theology of glory comes to know God by means of his works. Natural theology and speculative metaphysics fit into this category, as does the triumphalistic view expressed by some modern-day charismatics who see God revealing himself in dramatic interventions (visions, miracles, healings, etc.), and the Christian life as one that is lived on a constant spiritual 'high.' With this view, proponents of the theology of the cross resoundingly disagree. God wishes to be known and revered on the basis of another principle. The theology of glory feels that it knows God immediately through his expressions of divine power, wisdom, and glory; whereas the theology of the cross recognizes him in the very place at which he has hidden himself—the cross and its suffering, all of which is esteemed to be weakness and foolishness by the theology of glory.

¹ Books which deal with the theologies of the Cross and glory are *Luther's Theology of the Cross* by Walther von Loewenich (Christian Journals, Belfast, 1976); *Let God be God* by Philip S. Watson (Epworth, 1954); *The Righteousness of God* by Gordon Rupp (Hodder and Stoughton, 1963); *The Apostolic Imperative* by Carl E. Braaten (Augsburg, Minneapolis, 1985); *On Being a Theologian of the Cross* by Gerhard O. Forde (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1997). Our text for the Heidelberg Disputations is from *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Timothy F. Lull (Fortress, Minneapolis, 1989), pp. 30–49.

² Articles 'Theologia Crucis' and 'Theologia Gloriae' by F. R. Harm in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. W. A. Elwell (Baker, 1990), pp. 1086–87.

The potential danger that the theology of the cross sees in its antithesis is that the theology of glory will lead to a form of moralistic works righteousness, a propensity to strike a bargain with God on the basis of personal achievement. The theology of the cross repudiates man's own accomplishments and permits God to do everything to effect and preserve his salvation. Such theology redirects from moralistic activism to genuine receptivity.

This quote from Harm is partly helpful, partly not. Its reference to the 'some modern-day charismatics' seems to limit the theology of glory to such people, whereas Luther's Heidelberg Theses would take in all who would see God as the God of glory—His power, wisdom and goodness—through the works of creation, through palpable acts and events. Hence Thesis 19 says, 'That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened (Rom. 1:20)'. By contrast is Thesis 20, 'He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross'. Thesis 21 says, 'A theologian of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theologian of the cross calls the thing what it actually is'.

It is best for us to see the 28 Theses, read and ponder them, and then come to some conclusion in regard to the theologies of the Cross and glory, and their value to us in the message we proclaim.

THE HEIDELBERG DISPUTATION, 1518—THE 28 THESES

THEESIS 1. The law of God, the most salutary doctrine of life, cannot advance man on his way to righteousness, but rather hinders him.

THEESIS 2. Much less can human works, which are done over and over again with the aid of natural precepts, so to speak, lead to that end.

THEESIS 3. Although the works of man always seem attractive and good, they are nevertheless likely to be mortal sins.

THEESIS 4. Although the works of God always seem unattractive and appear evil, they are nevertheless really eternal merits.

THEESIS 5. The works of men are thus not mortal sins (we speak of works that are apparently good), as though they were crimes.

THEESIS 6. The works of God (we speak of those which he does through man) are thus not merits, as though they were sinless.

THEESIS 7. The works of the righteous would be mortal sins if they would not be feared as mortal sins by the righteous themselves out of pious fear of God.

THEESIS 8. By so much more are the works of man mortal sins when they are done without fear and in unadulterated, evil self-security.

THEESIS 9. To say that works without Christ are dead, but not mortal, appears to constitute a perilous surrender of the fear of God.

THEESIS 10. Indeed, it is very difficult to see how a work can be dead and at the same time not a harmful and mortal sin.

THEESIS 11. Arrogance cannot be avoided or true hope be present unless the judgment of condemnation is feared in every work.

THEESIS 12. In the sight of God sins are then truly venial when they are feared by men to be mortal.

THESIS 13. Free will, after the fall, exists in name only, and as long as it does what it is able to do, it commits a mortal sin.

THESIS 14. Free will, after the fall, has power to do good only in a passive capacity, but it can always do evil in an active capacity.

THESIS 15. Nor could free will endure in a state of innocence, much less do good, in an active capacity, but only in its passive capacity.

THESIS 16. The person who believes that he can obtain grace by doing what is in him adds sin to sin so that he becomes doubly guilty.

THESIS 17. Nor does speaking in this manner give cause for despair, but for arousing the desire to humble oneself and seek the grace of Christ.

THESIS 18. It is certain that man must utterly despair of his own ability before he is prepared to receive the grace of Christ.

THESIS 19. That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened (Rom. 1:20).

THESIS 20. He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.

THESIS 21. A theologian of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theologian of the cross calls the thing what it actually is.

THESIS 22. That wisdom which sees the invisible things of God in works as perceived by man is completely puffed up, blinded, and hardened.

THESIS 23. The law brings the wrath of God, kills, reviles, accuses, judges, and condemns everything that is not in Christ (Rom. 4:15).

THESIS 24. Yet that wisdom is not of itself evil, nor is the law to be evaded; but without the theology of the cross man misuses the best in the worst manner.

THESIS 25. He is not righteous who does much, but he who, without work, believes much in Christ.

THESIS 26. The law says, 'do this,' and it is never done. Grace says, 'believe in this,' and everything is already done.

THESIS 27. Actually one should call the work of Christ an acting work and our work an accomplished work, and thus an accomplished work pleasing to God by the grace of the acting work.

THESIS 28. The love of God does not find, but creates, that which is pleasing to it. The love of man comes into being through that which is pleasing to it.

A modern reader will be puzzled by some of the statements because they are in strong language, such as is rarely used today. The reader will also be unaware of the meaning of certain terms, such as 'mortal sin', 'active capacity', 'passive capacity', and so on.

What we will now attempt is a limited, running paraphrase of the Theses so that, all together, they make sense. This runs the risk of not stating Luther's full, exact meaning. Even without such a commentary the general meaning of the Theses is fairly apparent. For an extended and particular consideration of each Thesis we need to apply elsewhere.³ Note that the numbers indicate the Thesis under consideration.

³ *On Being a Theologian of the Cross* by Gerhard O. Forde, and text and commentary of the Heidelberg Disputations in *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*.

1. The law's intention is for human righteousness, but for fallen Man who thinks he obeys it, it turns out to be lethal for it works wrath and not salvation. 2. Even less able to help than the law of God are human precepts, that is, human laws. 3. The works a human person does may have the appearance of being good and attractive but in fact they constitute mortal sins. Mortal sins are those which bring death. 4. God's works are such that they seem to be 'unattractive and appear evil'. Those works of God are true works and they constitute 'eternal merits' for us. We are not talking of works which God does through us, but those which He does and which bring grace to us, though they seem to be evil. 5. The works of men which appear to be good and do not, so to speak, appear to be as terrible as crimes, are in fact mortal sins. 6. There is a danger when God works through us. The danger is that we look upon the works as being sinless, but the more pious the deed the greater danger of pride as we see the work as coming from ourselves and not God. 7. Thus works which truly righteous people do need not be feared as mortal sins if they are done in the fear of God. 8. What are outrightly mortal sins are those done by those who do not fear God and who give rein to their deeds in 'evil self-security'. 9. The scholasticism of the day distinguished between 'works done without Christ' and 'mortal sins', the first not being counted as mortal. *All* sins done without the fear of God are mortal. 10. Thus it seems strange to take a 'dead sin' and say it is not mortal, since sin done without fear of God must be dangerous. 11. The fear of God is essential for every work done. Arrogance—in the doing of 'good' works—rejects the judgment of condemnation that is in all works and so the doer cannot have true hope of the salvation expected from these works he has done. 12. Venial sins are those not mortal, that is, not needing the grace of God to save the doer from death. If a person judges his sin to be venial, then in fact it is mortal because the fear of God is absent. 13. Because of the Fall, free will no longer exists as a reality. What is said to be done by free will is, in fact, a mortal sin. 14. We are talking about will. What can will accomplish in a fallen person? At the most it has a passive capacity and not an active power to operate. It must be worked upon as a passive object, hence it is not personally free will. Example: water can be warmed, but not warm itself. Human will that is active, always and only, commits mortal sin. 15. Free will before the Fall had no active power to remain in innocence. It needed God's working then as, no less, now. Only in innocence did it have the passive capacity to remain in innocence. 16. Grace is not something one can prepare for, and certainly not by 'doing what is in him (one)'. This is adding sin to sin, so becoming doubly guilty. 17. Speaking in this way does not present cause for despair, but it is said with a view to a person coming to humble himself and to seek the grace of God. 18. Before a person will be prepared to seek the grace of God he must 'utterly despair of his own ability' to accomplish anything from himself. 19. The person who believes that from 'the visible things of creation'—the things that have happened—he can know the invisible things of God, is not a true theologian. This person contemplates what he sees but is not a participant in it, as such, and so intellectualises his perception. 20. The person, who through suffering and the Cross comprehends the visible and manifest things of God, is worthy to be called a theologian. He does not have perception so much as participation. He is not a spectator. He suffers, he is crucified with Christ. Christ crucified is now his life. 21. A theologian of glory calls evil good. See Theses 3 and 4 which state that God's works appear to be evil, and that other, attractive works are not really God's but Man's. The Cross is a scandal and foolishness to the theologian of glory for that is how it literally appears to be. The sheer look and appearances of the suffering of the Cross seem against 'nature'—the way we think things should be if they are right and righteous. The theologian of the Cross sees—knows in the action of the Cross—things as they truly are. 22. The theologian of glory has a wisdom of a kind. It lies in works. These are things he sees, feels and does, and they deceive him into thinking he knows God in the doing of them. There is a wisdom of 'law' which urges him on obsessively to fulfil righteousness, and they stave off the need for grace, which such a theologian does not desire. By this compulsion he loses humility, dependency and becomes blind to the God he should have known in the suffering of the Cross. He becomes hardened in his self-sufficiency. 23. The law is against

everything that is not in Christ, that is, which is not under grace. Under grace—under the theology of the Cross—all is safe, but under law all is under damnation. The law ‘the wrath of God, kills, reviles, accuses, judges, and condemns everything’. This can be seen in Galatians 3:10, 13 (the law—works curse); Romans 4:15 ‘the law brings wrath [and not love]’; Romans 5:20 ‘the law came in, to increase the trespass’, so that Romans 7:10 pronounces, ‘the very commandment which promised life proved to be death to me’. **24.** This thesis guards against calling the law and the wisdom of it evil. One does not separate oneself from law, since it is there. Paul asked ‘Is the law sin?’ because he saw that sin used the law to increase itself and its power. No, the problem is that without the theology—the knowledge and experience—of the Cross, ‘the best’, that is, the law, is misused ‘in the worst manner’. The law is lethal, but designed originally for life, it is not now to be abrogated. The goal of the law was Christ (cf. Rom. 10:1–4), and it is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ (Gal. 3:24), and all this apart from its intrinsic value. Antinomianism is no solution for it has not faced up to, and received, the death brought by law (Gal. 2:19–20). **25.** The theology of glory—working much for salvation and personal righteousness—does not achieve righteousness. Faith in God, without dependence upon works, brings righteousness (justification) (Rom. 3:20, 28). **26.** The law can and does command, but it has no power to ensure responsive action. Its commands are good and for goodness, but as Paul said, ‘How to do, I find not’, (Rom. 7:18). Grace calls to belief and belief happens (cf. Titus 2:11–12), and what the law cannot bring about by command has already become so for, and in, the believer. The law commanded to love and we could not. Grace enjoins love and it has happened. **27.** This follows on the heels of Thesis 26, that is, Christ operates in us as the power needed for our operating. Being operated upon we responsively—as also imitatively—operate, and the works we do are not law-wise in the sense that Christ simply kick-starts us to obey law, but love so enables that we do the works, but to God they are works of Christ done in and by His people through grace, and so are pleasing to Him. **28.** God is both the subject and object of His love. Man in idolatry and other matters devises the object of his love and demands its attraction and pleasure, but will tire of such objects from time to time. God as the subject of love makes persons the object of this love, and not because they are attractive since they are sinners, ‘Therefore sinners are attractive because they are loved’. This is because ‘love seeks not its own’, but seeks the things of others.

The Essence of the Theses

We have to remember that the Theses were Luther’s presentation to his Augustinian Order of his resolution of the theology of the Cross as against the theology of glory. A year before he had nailed the 95 Theses to the church door at Wittenberg, and the Heidelberg Theses are the result of further thought. Therefore we should not feel ourselves to be bound to think precisely as he did, nor to give the exact emphasis he did. Certainly the Theses, per se, are not the gospel. They simply arise from it. The essence of the Theses is that Man cannot do anything for his own salvation, that if he thinks salvation is by his works then he is terribly mistaken. As Christ had opposed the religious leaders of his day—the scribes, lawyers, Pharisees, high priests, and so on—as being inconsistent with the law and the prophets, so those who claim to be Christians must understand the grace of God in releasing us from our own endeavours to be righteous by the law. Man cannot merit grace, nor prepare himself for it. The only way to know God is through the Cross, for here, though all appearances are that everything about it is evil, yet, in reality, it is all the expression of the Suffering God, God crucified in Jesus Christ—God forsaking God. Whilst the law does everything to destroy Man, the Cross does everything to rescue him through grace. In the Cross God redeems Man, who though unattractive in himself, is made attractive by the redeeming, justifying love of God. For God to love fallen Man is to make him attractive.

PROCLAMATION IN THE LIGHT OF THE THEOLOGIES OF THE CROSS AND GLORY

When one is immolated in the Cross—as all humanity was in history⁴—then the Cross is part of each person’s history. However, only the obedience of faith will see it so, and know it so. To be, by faith, immolated in the Cross is to know the God who cannot be known by the senses and intellectual apperception.⁵ It is out of this death and life of the Cross that we must proclaim, not excluding of course the Resurrection which is part of the whole Atonement. To do such preaching means not only that we have come to the hidden God in the *seemingly* ungodly and anti-godly events of the Cross and so have come to know Him as the revealed God, but it means that we also see the event of the Cross as the fulfilment of the New Covenant, and thus as the completing work of all history. It is the creational covenant, in and by which, God in His love forgives, sanctifies and perfects us (cf. Heb. 10:9–18).⁶ We do not, then, preach a theology of the Cross, as though people hearing it will understand this theology and be saved, but rather that they will know themselves as crucified with Christ—crucified to sin, Satan, the world powers, the curse, the Adamic self, the flesh—and know that they have been given the righteousness of God, that is, have been ‘justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus’. Thus they will, themselves, become ‘theologians of the Cross’ rather than simply possess a theology of the Cross.⁷

If we work from the theology of glory then, to quote Braaten:

Luther did not teach that there was *no* knowledge of God to be found in metaphysical, mystical, and moral approaches, or in other religions. But that all of these he labeled as theology of glory, because they all lead up to a glorious God (*Deus gloriosus*), a God who would not be caught dead on the cross of the man in whom there was ‘no form or comeliness’ (Isa. 53:2).⁸

This means that for theologians of glory the viewing of the Cross must fit a theology of glory, must be seen in the light of it, so that the Cross is one element amongst many of Christian theology, and must not be seen as ‘the focal point of God’s revelation of himself and therefore as the foundation and centre of all truly Christian theology’, and as ‘a methodological key to the whole of theology’. In this Study we work on a theology of the Cross which makes the work of the Cross central to all history, relating to all history, and the very enactment of God’s love by which, also, God is made known.

It is to be hoped that if, in the light of these two theologies we have now seen, we realise there has been a deficiency in our proclamation, then we should ponder the matter deeply and check where we are.

CALVIN, LUTHER, AND OTHER THEOLOGIES IN REGARD TO PRESENT PROCLAMATION

We have seen that for Luther the theology of the Cross was the only theology and was the basis for salvation. Luther did not necessarily preach a system of *theologia crucis*. He said, ‘I simply taught, preached and wrote God’s Word: otherwise I did nothing’. This is exactly what we must do. Whilst we must be theologians of the Cross it does not mean we convert listeners

⁴ For a development of this idea see my *Come! Let Us Go to Calvary!* (NCPI, 1997).

⁵ Carl E. Braaten (op. cit., p. 18) says of the theologians of Glory:

They look away in shame from the God hidden in the suffering and cross of Christ. They want a healthy theology of glory. They want to talk about the power, wisdom, and glory of God, God’s works in nature, history, and personality. So they develop uplifting theories by which to ascend to their *Deus Gloriosus*.⁷

⁶ We are not here saying that Luther expressed the Cross precisely in the terms we have here—of the creational covenant. We are expressing our theological notions.

⁷ This is an idea strongly promoted by Gerhard Forde in his book *On Being a Theologian of the Cross*.

⁸ *The Apostolic Imperative*, p. 17.

by a theology of the Cross, as such. For Calvin, who certainly had the theology of the Cross, it was the Fatherhood of God which was the context for salvation. Whilst God does reveal Himself as wrathful upon sin, yet in Jesus Christ His Son He reveals Himself as ‘the Father’. By the forgiveness of our sins in believing on Christ and being brought into union with him, we are adopted. That is, we become sons of God in the Son of God, and this work of grace is accomplished by the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of the Son. Because the basis for our being adopted is the forgiveness of sins we see, then, that justification is the basis of adoption. As with Luther, so for Calvin, adoption was the basis of all things. For Calvin justification was God’s grace in action, and so adoption arises from it. ‘However, the grace of sanctification is the purpose and goal of our adoption, for God adopts us so that we might actually become God’s gratefully obedient children’.⁹ Luther had regard for the Fatherhood of God, but he approached it from the viewpoint of his theology of the Cross. He also emphasised sanctification but it was subservient to justification. Both Luther and Calvin saw justification as the hinge on which the door of grace—the gospel—swings. Their systems differed. Calvin had a system as it is seen in *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, but Luther’s ‘system’ must be deduced from all his writings—a difficult task.¹⁰ If we were to take P. T. Forsyth as another example of a proper theologian, then we would see the emphasis on God the Father being holy, and out of His holiness redeeming fallen human beings as His sons to bring them to His holiness. We could add theologian to theologian and enlarge our understanding of theology—even the theology of the Cross.

Why have we selected Luther in particular and Calvin in brief, to talk of proclamation? Our task is not to preach Luther’s theology or Calvin’s—as such—but to preach the biblical gospel. We have always had to search the Scriptures and from the Word of God know what we must proclaim as the gospel. In the stream of 2,000 years of history the biblical gospel has, at times, nigh on been obscured. It is our task to see it freshly, personally, intimately and deeply, and theologians such as Luther and Calvin—to say nothing of the many others—have helped us to clear away accretions of wrong thinking as well as lead us to valuable biblical insights. The task still remains for us to be theologians of the Cross and not of glory, and to do this we must understand the Cross, live in the truth of it, be in Christ and be filled with the Holy Spirit as we receive sanctification, thus being sons of the Father. The power and substance of true proclamation can only arise from our being immolated in the Cross, buried with Christ, raised and presently living in ‘the power of his resurrection’. Only in this way can we proclaim ‘the word of the Cross’.

CONCLUSION: THAT WHICH WE CONTINUOUSLY BATTLE

Luther’s argument against good works is undoubtedly attacked as being false. It is said that for the most part this is a dead issue, that Christians agree that such was the case in Paul’s and Luther’s times; but surely it is not a dead issue. It is true to say that men and women think of themselves as righteous because they do ‘the right thing’—as they see it to be right and proper. In fact, they see themselves as righteous—justified—by obeying the system or culture of their day and situation. Was that not what the scribes, lawyers, Pharisees, religious leaders and others held to? In this context the theology of glory flourishes under the guise of correct belief and correct action. The theology of glory in accordance with the 28 Heidelberg Theses holds as firm today as at any time in all history. No less does the theology of the Cross hold firm in its revelation of the Suffering God.

⁹ *The Assurance of Faith* by Randall C. Zachman (Fortress, Minneapolis, 1993) p. 11.

¹⁰ One of the simplest evangelical statements by Martin Luther is his *Preface to the Epistle to the Romans*, obtainable through NCPI in its 1995 copy of the Open Book publication of 1966. This is a valuable if small overview of Luther’s essential doctrine.

Glory and the Apostolic Proclamation

INTRODUCTION: THE APOSTOLIC MESSAGE AND GLORY

Later we will seek to trace the history of glory, but here we are thinking in terms of the apostolic life and ministry. The Apostles had seen the glory of Christ, or, we might say, the glory of God in Christ, since the Father had given him that glory.¹ He showed forth his glory—‘We have beheld his glory’, he ‘manifested his glory’ (John 1:14; 2:11), his birth took place in circumstances of glory, he was glorified before them at the Transfiguration, he spoke of his coming again (or return) in glory, and he was taken up in glory at his Ascension. The apostolic message would not have been complete without the proclamation of this glory, and especially his eschatological glory. The epistles show that Christ’s return, and the judgment of the world and evil powers, is in this glory. II Thessalonians 1:9–10 is a good example of this:

They shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at in all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

There are other Scriptures we shall examine later.

Not only does the apostolic message speak of the glory at the end of time, but during time, and in particular the glorification of the elect as in I Corinthians 2:7, ‘we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification’. There is also mention of the glorification that comes in the resurrection, and with Christ’s appearing (Phil. 3:20–21). These references are enough to show us that by the apostolic preaching a dynamic hope possessed the true hearers.

The point in our Studies of apostolic truth and apostolic action is that the apostolic faith embraced not only the past—Israel and the anticipation of Messiah’s coming—but also his incarnation and work, including his ongoing work in history and the hope of the glorious future, the future of glory. The truncated proclamation which typifies much modern preaching was not present in the apostolic proclamation. Having said this, we are now in a position to study the whole truth of glory. We should know that the idea of glory is present in all humanity, and its presence in the gospel is quite significant and a powerful factor in communicating the truth.

THE MEANING OF GLORY

I Timothy 6:15–16 speaks of ‘the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of Lords, whom alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, who no man has ever seen or can see’. From our human point of view, ‘whom no man has ever seen’ may mean one of two things; either God is invisible to the seeing of Man, or Man is forbidden such seeing. Whilst it is true that all men cannot bear to see the glory of the Lord, and many are not shown that glory, yet it is true that the true people of God are not only permitted to see manifestations of Himself in and through glory, but also will one day be partakers in that glory. *God’s glory, then, constitutes those manifestations of Himself, in multitudinous ways, which He is pleased to give to Man and other elements of His creation, both celestial and terrestrial.* Even so, we should say that God’s glory is His very Being, but what we see are *manifestations* of that Being and not, in themselves, God’s glory.

¹ John 12:23, 28; 13:31, 32; 17:1–5, 22, 24; cf. John 1:14.

In the Old Testament, there are a number of terms rendered as glory, so that the Hebrew words *addereth*, *heder*, *tohar*, *yegar*, *tsebi* and *tipharah* prove to be synonyms for the more generally used word *kabod*. There are, of course, differences in meaning, but then many of these are translated with the Greek *doxa* in the LXX (Greek) translation of the Old Testament. The former terms include the ideas of honour, adornment, cleanness, rarity and beauty, whilst *kabod* itself primarily signified weight or heaviness or honour, signifying something substantial and successful.

There are so many usages of the words and particularly of *kabod*, that when these are read in their contexts we come to a richer understanding of the meaning of the word. For example, in Genesis 49:6, Jacob says of Simeon and Levi, 'O my soul, come not into their council; O my spirit [glory: *kabod*], be not joined to their company'. Here the word 'spirit' is actually *kabod*, and the same is used of 'soul' (RSV) in Psalm 16:9, 'Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul [glory] rejoices'; and Psalm 57:8 (cf. Ps. 108:1), 'Awake, my soul [glory]! Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awake the dawn!' In Jeremiah 2:11 and Psalm 106:20 the term 'their glory' really means 'God's glory', insisting that the only authentic glory Man has is God's glory, but it is interesting that it can be said that glory is 'their glory', showing how Man's glory derives from God's *kabod*.

In Genesis 31:1, *kabod* is translated as *wealth*. In Psalm 49:16, this wealth is translated as 'glory'. It also refers to position, as is seen in Genesis 45:13 (RSV, *splendor*). In Exodus 28:40, the garments of the priest glorify him. In I Samuel 4:21f., it is seen that the Ark of the Covenant is the glory of Israel; when it has gone the glory has gone. Job 19:9 indicates that the humiliation of Job is his loss of glory; his glory is his honour and dignity. This same glory is seen in the army of Assyria (Isa. 8:7, 17:3–4); the trees of Lebanon (Isa. 60:13); in royalty (Esther 1:4; Ps. 45:3, Dan. 11:20). It refers to Man's created status in Psalm 8:5, and relates to the nature of *the* first temple (I Chron. 22:5), as also the second (Hag. 2:3).

We gather, then, that glory has the ideas of weight, substance, possessions, authority, brilliance, as in I Chronicles 29:11–13:

Thine O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all.

Likewise in Revelation 4:11 and 5:12, the ascription to the God of glory really catches up the synonyms such as honour, power, wisdom, might and blessing, as being elements of that glory. In II Corinthians 4:17, Paul talks about 'an eternal weight of glory', showing its substantial nature.

What we shall see time and again in this Study, is the fact that God's glory is moral. This is particularly so with His revelation of His glory to Moses in Exodus chapters 33 and 34, especially in 34:6–7:²

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

By 'moral', we mean having those characteristics and attributes which require the use of choice and the will. Thus choices, especially with Man, are for or against righteousness, goodness, love, truth and holiness. In one sense God does not choose for He is holiness and love, but we call the elements 'moral' because we judge both God and Man according to these five 'attributes', as we loosely call them.

² cf. Numbers 14:18; Deuteronomy 4:31; Nehemiah 9:17; Psalm 86:5, 15; 103:8; 145:8. We need to understand this kind of moral glory was the support of Israel, especially as it knew God in covenant. Apart from covenant, moral glory does not make much sense, because then it becomes legal, and not the will making its choices by love.

Finally, we recognise that God manifests His glory throughout time and via certain media. Recognising that, in some sense, celestial glory differs somewhat from terrestrial glory, we also see that manifestations of His glory differ. Whilst angelic creatures proclaim that glory in the celestial sphere, they also bring something of it into the terrestrial sphere when sent by God. Otherwise, ‘the heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork’, ‘All Thy works shall praise Thee’, and ‘the earth is the fullness of His glory’, and so glory is indicated in praise. In both cases, these manifestations are not God’s glory, but means by which God would show it forth.

THE GLORY OF GOD AND MAN

As our Study proceeds we will see more of the glory of God and, as a result, will see more of the glory of Man. We will see, for example, that the glory of God and His holiness are never seen apart. Man as reflecting God’s glory will also be a person in holiness. Assuming the fact of the glory of God, we look at the creation of Man. Genesis 1:26f. speaks of Man being made in the image and likeness of God. I Corinthians 11:7 says simply, ‘[Man] is the image and glory of God’. Psalm 8 is worth reading as a whole because it depicts the glory of God, and the giving from His glory the glory which makes Man, Man. The extent of Man’s glory is remarkable:

Yet thou hast made him little less than God, and dost crown him with glory and honor. Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet (Ps. 8:5–6).

This helps us to understand why a man’s spirit or soul was called his *glory*. Perhaps it links with Proverbs 20:27: ‘The human spirit is the lamp of the LORD, searching every innermost part’ (NRSV). Man as the image of God (I Cor. 11:7) reflects His glory; Christ as ‘the radiance [*apaugasma*] of his [the] glory’ (Heb. 1:3), does not merely reflect, but actually radiates the glory of God. Later we will see that ‘Jesus, who *for a little while* was made lower than the angels’ (Heb. 2:9), was ‘crowned with glory and honor’ in a way which transcended Man’s glory, even his original (created) glory, and that as the Second and Last Adam he brought glory to the human race, even more than it had lost at the Fall. In Proverbs 30:1–3 we read, ‘The man says to Ithi-el, to Ithi-el and Ucal: Surely I am too stupid to be a man. I have not the understanding of a man. I have not learned wisdom, nor have I knowledge of the Holy One’. Here ‘the man’ recognises that Man has a glory and a substantial being to which he has not attained, or from which he has fallen dismally. Created Man, truly known, is a grand creature of glory. As Paul put it, ‘All [human beings] have sinned and fall short of the glory of God’. That is, they have fallen short of their own, true glory.

THE HISTORY OF THAT GLORY AS BROUGHT TO MAN

In discussing the history of the glory of God and Man we have five premisses:

- (a) *God was present in Eden*. Eden was the place of the Presence and of the worship. This was because of His eternal covenant which issued from His nature as the Triune God, and became innate to creation. In Eden, God’s glory was present to Man, and Man as in his native glory of innocence. Man needs to see that glory and believes he must.
- (b) *God is invisible* (Isa. 31:3; John 4:24; cf. ‘spirit’ in John 4:23; Rom. 12:1; Phil. 3:3) and in Eden He dwelled with Man and was worshipped, but when the Fall came this worship of glory was broken, so that Man ceased to know that glory in the way he had known it. Man believes he must see God, though I Timothy 6:15–16 denies that he can. At least, then, he must see the glory!

(c) *Man retains some memory and idea of the glory of God and desires to experience that glory*, since his own glory derives from God's. In practice, he does not wish the full flood of that glory to come to him, and he has devised that it be otherwise by the exchanging of that glory for the 'glory' of idols (Rom. 1:19–25). This, he maintains, is God's glory (cf. Exod. 32:1–4).³

(d) *Cain was terrified of being banished from 'thy face' and 'the presence of the LORD'*, which were virtually synonymous (Gen 4:14, 16). So, we can speak of 'the absence of the Presence', 'the Presence of the Absence', and so on.⁴ ('Thy face' can be linked with coming before Him in regard to justice and judgment, as was the case with Cain). Man, then, knows he needs the glory of God, yet fears both its Presence and its Absence.

(e) Whilst Man can no longer directly see the glory of God, yet God in His mercy has given manifestations of His glory to the human race from time to time. Always, unchanging, there is the testimony to God's glory by creation (Ps. 8; 19; 104; 136), but whilst this is testimony which judges us if we do not read it (Rom. 1:19, 20) and vitalises us if we do, the fact is that fallen Man does not read creation as manifesting God's glory. He reads nothing in it which speaks of God's glory or His holiness. Nevertheless these manifestations come through creation. In this sense the glory of God has always been manifested. Yet the time will come when 'the earth shall be filled with . . . the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea'. That will be eschatological glory.

The Glory from Adam to Israel

God, then, showed His glory from the beginning in direct communication with the first couple, in innocence, their being as His image corresponding to His Being, they being in covenant relationship with Him. The loss of glory through original sin⁵ did not cut them off from God. Sacrifice was the means whereby Man could relate to God and perceive His glory. God had direct speech with Noah. Creational covenant is stated or reiterated at the end of the Flood and when Noah speaks to God by sacrifice.

Whilst creation was beating out the message of God's glory, unheeded except to people of faith, yet He appeared as 'the God of glory' to Abraham (Acts 7:1), so that Abraham saw it, and this when he was an idolater. The Covenant of the promise of inheritance and of justification is stated by God. (God also appeared to Sarah and Hagar.) Theophanies, in the Patriarchal times, were manifestations of God's glory, and both Isaac and Jacob were given covenantal manifestations of glory. After Jacob's death, the covenant line awaited the suffering of Israel in Egypt before manifestations of God came to Moses. Through these, Moses led Israel out of Egypt.

The Glory in Israel

God's communication with Moses was from the Mercy Seat (Num. 7:89) and was via the word. The Ark of the Covenant was the place of God's dwelling. He always dwelt with Israel until He had to judge it at the time of the Exile. His covenant promise was to dwell with His people, in their midst, and this meant the glory was resident.

³ When we examine God's glory and the glory of the idols we see Man gives God's glory to the idols (cf. Rom. 1:19–25).

⁴ See my book, *The Everlasting Presence* (NCPI, Blackwood, 1990), for an explanation of these terms.

⁵ Whilst Man as fallen could not reflect the whole glory of God, yet God makes His demands on him *as though* he retained the full glory, that is, the demands of morality and obedience, as well as the requirements of the creational mandate of Genesis 1:28f., Psalm 8, and other related references, set Man forth *as though* unfallen.

In Exodus 40:34, ‘the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle’. The cloud was the cloud of His Presence, but it covered the intensity of His glory within it, which would have been fatal to Man’s sight. This cloud also appeared at the dedication of the temple (II Chron. 7:1–2). The cloud of the Presence covered the tabernacle by day and at night was an ‘appearance of fire’ (Num. ch. 9). God’s glory is shown to Israel in the cloud both by day and night. His glory led them to Canaan (Exod. 13:21, 22). The cloud was important as the manifestation of God’s glory. In Numbers 11:1–13 (cf. 16:35, where it was judgment of Korah’s rebellion), ‘the fire of the Lord’ which destroys can well have been that of ‘the cloud’. Exodus 24:16–17 (cf. 19:18) spoke of the cloud being ‘like a devouring fire’. We notice also that the giving of the law related to glory (Deut. 33:1–5; cf. 4:11f.). In II Chronicles 5:14 and 7:1–3, the cloud and the fire were present, the fire consuming the sacrifices—an immolation of Divine acceptance. See also Ezekiel 8:4, 9:3, and 43:2–3. In Isaiah 6, the cloud of the Presence was there in the temple, and the message of the seraphim was of God’s holiness and glory. It was, at the same time, the release of the prophet Isaiah from the bondage of his uncleanness. Ezekiel saw the glory of God as he—the prophet—was beside the river Chebar in idolatrous Babylon. This showed that God’s presence was not confined to Canaan, the holy land of the holy people, Israel. He was also present to His people in Babylon.

The Book of Ezekiel tells the story of God’s glory and the temple as yet undestroyed, but from which God withdrew His glory. The prophecy of the new—eschatological—temple was mainly a prophecy regarding Israel’s future, and gave to Israel the principle of the glory of the Lord being present to Israel in the new (eschatological) temple. He then promised He would dwell in the midst of Israel: ‘Son of Man, this is the place of my throne and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the people of Israel for ever’ (43:7). Haggai 2:6–9 was a promise that God would fill the latter temple with His glory to an even greater extent than the first temple.⁶ His promise was, ‘I am with you . . . according to the promise I made you when you came out of Egypt’ (2:4f.).

Exodus 33:12 – 34:9 was an important revelation of glory: (i) Moses must have all the Presence of God that he could if he was to undertake the leading of Israel to Canaan, and this God promised so that Moses could be sure he had found favour in the sight of God; (ii) Moses desired to see all God’s glory, and God would not grant a direct revelation of His glory but that which Moses needed to know, and only that; and (iii) God’s revelation of glory was the *word* of His glory, namely what the Lord *said* in 34:6–7, which was at once a declaration of His *moral* nature, including the promise of forgiveness of sins to thousands of generations, as well as non-forgiveness to those for whom idolatry replaced God in their eyes and worship.

Following the history of Israel in the land until the Exile, the return and the building of the second temple, the nation had the post-exilic prophets, but then was without a prophet for hundreds of years and the temple lacked the Ark of the Covenant, the dwelling place of God. If Haggai 2:4 is to be taken as truth, then God was ever with Israel in the Exile, the Return, and the post-exilic years, but without the expressed glory of a theophany. The prophetic word had to suffice, and even this was not given for a long period of time. It was a judgment of God that Israel was bereft of the prophetic word, let alone manifestations of God’s glory.

The Glory in the New Testament

In the New Testament there are manifestations of the glory. We can speak of the Voice at Jesus’ baptism, when the parting of the heavens and the descent of the Dove was a theophany.

⁶ There is no account of the second temple being glorious or that God’s glory was seen to fill it. Whilst Christ treated it with reverence, he also saw it as doomed to destruction in the light of the new temple, the people of God, the Church. I believe this is arguing correctly.

The Voice came at his Transfiguration, and when Jesus spoke to the Father in John 12:27–28. There was also the cloud at the Transfiguration and the three disciples entered into this without harm. Jesus was taken up in the cloud at his ascension. He had prophesied he would come again in it—the cloud or ‘the clouds of heaven’—with the glory of the Father, and he would be at ‘the right hand of the Power’. In Acts 1:11, the ‘two men . . . in white robes’ confirmed this, saying he would come as he had gone, in the cloud. The reason why the glory was not more manifested in theophanic forms we discuss in our next section, ‘Jesus the Son, the Glory of God’. The history of the manifestations of God’s glory continued through the Apostolic age, and prophetic presentation of it occupies the Book of the Revelation.

Jesus the Son, the Glory of God

To this point we have sketchily traced God’s revelation of Himself and His glory. We have said that because God is unseen—‘the invisible God’—yet testimony to His glory is unceasingly given by creation, particularly the heavens and the firmament (cf. Ps. 8; 19; 29; 104; 136; cf. Rom. 1:19–21). The direct word, the prophetic word, theophanies—these all speak of His glory. In sacrifice, God takes the initiative and Man responds appropriately, and he knows God is, and he gleans something of His glory. Israel is the special, holy and priestly nation in whose midst God dwells and is worshipped; a witness to the nations of the reality and nature of God. Even so, until the incarnation of the Son, God has not come *bodily* and dwelt *bodily* with the human race. In him dwelled the fullness of the Godhead, *bodily*. He was Immanuel, ‘God with us’. We know that God was always with humanity, but not as a member of the human race. In I Timothy 6:15–16, Paul speaks of God’s unique glory. ‘the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen or can see’. He lived as this glory of God within the human race, which did not recognise him but ‘crucified the Lord of Glory’, the Son of the Father. Not able to bear the incarnate glory of God, they crucified him.

That this Jesus was indeed the glory of God is present for all to read in the Gospels, and especially so in John’s Gospel. In 1:14 we read, ‘And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father’. ‘[F]ull of grace and truth’ represents what we read in Exodus 34:6–7 as the moral glory of God. ‘Dwelt among us’ is literally ‘tabernacled among us’, and it was in the tabernacle that the glory of God had dwelt in Israel, and we see the implications of this regarding Jesus tabernacling among us. Leon Morris quotes A. M. Ramsay:

As A. M. Ramsey says, ‘We are reminded both of the tabernacle in the wilderness, and of the prophetic imagery of Yahweh tabernacling in the midst of His people, and of the Shekinah which He causes to dwell among them . . . The place of His dwelling is the *flesh* of Jesus.’ He goes on to bring out the force of the present passage by saying, ‘*All* the ways of tabernacling of God in Israel had been transitory or incomplete: *all* are fulfilled and superseded by the Word-made-flesh and dwelling among us’.⁷

In 1:17, John explains two advents of glory: (i) ‘For the law was given through Moses’, and (ii) ‘grace and truth came through Jesus Christ’. The first advent to Israel was of the law, in glory, as seen in Deuteronomy 33:1ff.; the second was here as in John 1:14. In 1:18, he goes on to say, ‘No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known’, that is, the very glory of the God of I Timothy 6:16 is made manifest in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This is an unspeakable happening, unique in all history and unique for all mankind.

Christ’s glory was that given by the Father (John 17:24) and he came with it from the Father. By it the Son was to glorify the Father. To the degree demanded by the Father he had already glorified God—‘I glorified thee on earth, having accomplished the work which thou

⁷ *The Glory of God and the Transfiguration of Christ*, by A. M. Ramsey (Longmans, Green & Co., London, 1949) quoted by Leon Morris in his *The Gospel According to John* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1971) p. 104.

gavest me to do' (John 17:4). In 7:18, he had told the listening crowd, 'He who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but he who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood'. Yet there is one thing more Christ must do, and that is the glorification of the Father in the Cross, by being the Son executing glory in the very act of Atonement. In 2:11, Christ manifested his glory in the sign he did and thus glorified God. We rightly gather that all such signs were manifestations of glory. Certainly in 11:40–44, in the sign of the raising of Lazarus, Jesus said to Martha, 'Did I not tell you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?' Previously he had told the disciples (11:4) that this event was to be for the glory of God. He never sought his own glory. At the same time the Father's purpose was to glorify His Son, and this was so at the Baptism and Transfiguration. At the Baptism there was the parting of the heavens, and the Spirit as a Dove descending on Jesus—a theophany of kinds. At the Transfiguration the cloud of the shekinah glory was present. In 8:50, Jesus said, 'I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it and he will be the judge'. In 12:27–28, Jesus prays for the Father to glorify His name, and the Father answers that this is what He has done, and what He will do again. What He has done is the glorification of Jesus at the Baptism and the Transfiguration. What He will do again will be the act of the Cross in His Son. To glorify the Son is to glorify His own name. In Acts 3:13, Peter said God indeed glorified Jesus, 'The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him'. We conclude, then, that Jesus was the glory of God, manifested by Him, and yet not seen as God's glory, even by many who were near him. It is the Cross that fully manifests the glory of God.

THE GLORY OF THE CROSS

We may as well start off with the premiss that *the Cross is the glory of God*. It has no outward appearance of being so, but it is. Its glory is hidden under veils of the inglorious, under veils of what seem opposite to glory, for this is how Man would see it. However, what happens there is 'to the praise of the glory of his grace'. Grace is part of the substantiality of God. We should not then be surprised if it is not seen and understood by human beings, for grace is anathema to fallen Man, repugnant to his spiritual pride. He has, he thinks, enough glory within himself to produce works acceptable to God, but he has not.

The next and ultimate revelation and actuation of glory must be the Cross, and then, through it, God's resurrecting and exalting of His Son. Even more is the Cross indicated as the act of glory in John 13:31: 'Jesus said, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and in him God is glorified; if God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once"'. Calvin comments:

So whatever ignominy appears in the cross, which could bewilder believers, Christ testifies that the same cross is glorious to him.

The immediately following clause, *And God is glorified in him*, is put in for confirmation. For it was a paradox that the glory of the Son of man arose from a death humanly ignominious and even accursed before God. He shows therefore how He would win glory from such a death—because He glorifies God the Father. For in the cross of Christ, as in a splendid theatre, the incomparable goodness of God is set before the whole world. The glory of God shines, indeed, in all creatures on high and below, but never more brightly than in the cross, in which there was a wonderful change of things (*admirabilis rerum conversio*)—the condemnation of all men was manifested, sin was blotted out, salvation restored to men; in short, the whole world was renewed and all things restored to order.⁸

We see that in the Synoptic gospels and Mark in particular (8:31; 9:31; 10:32f.; cf. Luke 24:26, 45f.), Jesus speaks of the fact of his coming crucifixion, with the Greek *dei*,

⁸ *The Gospel According to St John 11–21 and The First Epistle of John* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1959), p. 68.

the ‘must’ of it. This indispensable act was there in intention from before creation (I Pet. 1:19–20; Rev. 13:8) and the dynamics of that Cross work effectively from the Slain Lamb (Rev. 5:1ff.) throughout all history, so that in this sense the Cross is eternal.

In John’s Gospel, as we have indicated, it is somewhat different. There is the consciousness of the coming Cross, without doubt, but the act of the Cross is that of glory—showing the glory of the Father and his own glory. In 7:37–39, the Spirit will not come until the work of the Cross is completed—along with the Resurrection and Ascension. Then comes 12:23, ‘The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified’, and the next in verses 27–28, when he asked the Father to glorify His name. The Father replied, ‘I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again’. It appears that His having glorified it was in His words at the Baptism and the Transfiguration, for to glorify the Son is to glorify His own name. The next act of glorifying His name will be the Cross and what follows it.

Unmistakable in regard to the Cross being the event of glory is John 17:1–5, ‘When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify thy Son that the Son may glorify thee”’. His prayer is that the Father may glorify him (Christ) as the Son, so he, as the Son, may show forth the glory of the Father. Calvin says:

If it be objected that nothing could be less glorious than Christ’s death which was then at hand, I reply that in that death we see boundless glory which is concealed from the ungodly. For there we know that by the expiation of sins the world has been reconciled to God, the curse blotted out and Satan vanquished.⁹

It is clear, then, that in John’s Gospel the Cross is the place of the glorification of the Father and the Son.

When we ask what constitutes the glory of the Cross—if, indeed, there is a glory of the Cross—then we see it lies in God’s exercise of His glory, such as is given to us in Exodus 34:6–7. This we have called His moral glory. There we see:

The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty.

Because the law—God’s own law—demands the death of a sinner, then in order to exercise mercy, grace, steadfast love, faithfulness and to forgive the sinner, the Son must suffer death on the cross. God’s love provides the propitiation which allows these elements of glory to so work that sinners ‘are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith’. Undoubtedly that glory is the moral glory set out in Exodus 34:6–7.

Many, then, are the elements of great and sacrificial glory, but one most important one which must not be omitted is Christ’s love for his Bride. Summing up, we may itemise some of the components of ‘the Cross glory’: (i) The ‘humble glory’, as in Philippians 2:5–10. That is, the suffering of death and what it was; (ii) The humiliation of Man changed to a restoration to glory, glory once lost in the Fall. That is, what kind of suffering was required for that restoration to be effected, and with it liberation from all accusing enemies; (iii) The moral glory of God as in Exodus 34:6–7, a glory always related to propitiation in sacrifice, this propitiation of the Cross being the final and sealing one (see Rom. 3:24, *passim*; I John 4:10); (iv) The dreadful death, the curse, and all of it the true glory, as it also defeated all powers of evil; (v) It was the glory of giving himself for the Bride (Eph. 5:21f.; Acts 20:28), and for us personally (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:1–2); and (vi) The Good Shepherd giving his life for the sheep (John 10:10–11). All of this, fully researched, seen and understood, constitutes the glory of God.

⁹ *op. cit.*, p. 135.

THE APOSTOLIC MESSAGE OF MAN'S GLORIFICATION

The message of Man's regeneration, which for our purposes here we will call 'Man's restored glory with a view to his ultimate glorification', is one which—when seen and comprehended—should seem wonderfully radical to doomed, fallen Man, and which, too, should galvanise Christians into delight and consequent mission action. This glory action of the Triune God relates to (i) restoration of glory to fallen Man; (ii) present development in glory; and (iii) comprehension of ultimate, eschatological glory, which at the present is the dynamic hope in its various elements—the hope of personal and creational glorification. Because it is 'glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages', the churches should be vitalised by this teaching, and intent on proclaiming it. Because 'Christ in you [among you], the hope of glory' is the assurance of ultimate glory, then the matter of human mortality gives way to the hope of immortality (I Cor. 15:35–58; II Tim. 1:9–10).

Believing Man is Restored in Glory

In Romans 3:23, Paul says that all have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God. Christ spoke of having given his glory to his disciples (John 17:22). The fact is that the church can now see 'the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ'. The gospel is 'the gospel of the glory of Christ' and its 'light' is ever present. Man is still 'the image and glory of God' (I Cor. 11:7)—no matter what was his fall—and redeemed Man, because of glory-restoration, is more so. Colossians 3:9–10 and Ephesians 4:20–24 tell us that the believer has put on the new humanity—Christ's—'created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness', that 'which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator'. One major fact we have not dealt with in this Study is that God's glory and holiness are never apart. J. A. Motyer's statement, 'Holiness is God's hidden glory: glory is God's all-present holiness', is most apt. God's sanctification of His people Israel was linked with His gift of glory to them (Rom. 9:4; cf. Exod. 19:5–6). Exodus 19:5–6 is the basis for Peter's statement of I Peter 2:9–10. God's sanctification of the church in Christ is necessarily his giving of glory to it. In the church, redeemed Man has been restored to glory. Romans 8:30, 'those whom he justified he also glorified', speaks of a proleptic glorification—the future glorification thus being dynamically present, now, in the form of hope.

The Present Experience of Development in Glory

Regeneration is not only a conferred act of renewal (Titus 3:5) by the Holy Spirit, but also a continuing one. II Corinthians 3:18 is significant, 'And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit'. When one beholds glory, one receives glory (cf. I John 3:1–3). In II Corinthians chapter 3, the glory of the dispensation of law was said to be great, but the dispensation of grace is greater in glory. Moses' face shone, but the glory faded. Our faces shine in increasing measure as we behold the glory of Christ (cf. 4:6). Whilst this demands a fuller exegesis, it is sufficient to say we 'are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another'. Chapter 4 speaks of the 'deposit' of eschatological glory being linked to the measure of our suffering:

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal (II Cor. 4:16–18).

This is supported by Romans 8:17–30, in which suffering now is shown to be a factor linked with our ultimate glorification.

Ultimate, Eschatological Glory

Here our vision widens from persons to the whole creation. This is so in Romans 8:17–30, which speaks of the glorification of God’s elect as also of the glorification of creation. Of course this is spoken of much in the Old Testament and other parts of the New Testament, and we cannot here record the whole. The prophecies of Numbers 14:21, Habakkuk 2:14, Isaiah 11:9, and Psalm 72:19, that ‘the earth will be filled with the [knowledge of the] glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea’, is also linked with the Isaianic prophecies of chapters 65 and 66, as well as numerous other Old Testament references to ‘the Day of the Lord’.

In the New Testament, all elements nominated as objects of hope are also objects of glory. These are, ‘the hope of glory’; ‘the hope [of] the resurrection’; ‘our hope of sharing the glory of God’; ‘the hope of righteousness [justification]’; ‘the hope of salvation’; ‘Christ Jesus our hope’; ‘our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ’; ‘the hope of his calling’; along with ‘his glorious inheritance in the saints’; ‘the hope of the gospel’; ‘the hope of eternal life’. It is because God is ‘the God of hope’ and our hope is ‘laid up in heaven’ that hope ‘hopes all things’, and even ‘in hope believes against hope’. As Paul says, ‘If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men to be pitied’. It is hope that is for here and eternity—how could it be otherwise and be hope?—for Christ himself is our hope, and within us (among us) he is ‘the hope of glory’. That is why we are enjoined to ‘seize the hope that is before us’ and to ‘hold fast the confession of our hope’.¹⁰

Whilst we do not have time or space here to develop the following climactic objects or events of glory’s culmination, they are:

- (a) *The Glorification of Creation*. Romans 8:18–25: New heavens and a new earth (Rev. 21:1ff.; cf. Isa. 65:17f.; 66:22ff.), in which dwells only righteousness. This will be the glory of the Lord covering the (new) earth as the waters cover the sea. See also Habakkuk 2:14, Numbers 14:2, Isaiah 11:9, and Psalm 72:19.
- (b) *The Glorification of Man*. Hebrews 2:10 and Romans 8:18ff., ‘the glory of the liberty of the children of God’. I John 3:1–3; Philippians 3:20–21. I Corinthians 15:45ff.—‘we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven’. Glorified as sons. In all this the resurrection and its glory. This is also linked with *Eternal Life*.
- (c) *Sonship and Inheritance*. Ephesians 1:4, 17–18; 4:30; I Peter 1:3; Galatians 4:4–7; I John 3:1–3; Revelation 21:7.
- (d) *The Marriage of the Bride and the Lamb*. Genesis 2:24 and Eden. Ephesians 5:32; Revelation 19:6–10; 21:9–21. See 21:11, ‘having all the glory of God’. The Bridegroom is ‘the image and glory of God’ as Man, but ‘the radiating glory of God’ as in Hebrews 1:1–3.
- (e) *The Holy City, the New Jerusalem, the Paradise*. Its light is ‘the glory of the LORD and its lamp is the Lamb’; its temple is the Father and the Lamb; the river of glorified water—‘bright as crystal’; the glorious worship of the saints; the kings of the earth—their glory and the glory of the nations.

¹⁰ Because we wished this particular paragraph not to be interrupted by references so that straight reading of it might prove more effective, we have stated the references in this footnote. They can be checked against the text. They are Colossians 1:27; Acts 23:6; 24:15; cf. 28:20; Romans 5:2; Galatians 5:5; I Thessalonians 5:8; Titus 1:2; 3:7; I Timothy 1:1; Titus 2:13; Romans 8:30; Ephesians 1:18; 4:4; I Thessalonians 2:12; II Peter 1:3–5; Colossians 1:23; Titus 1:2; 3:7; cf. I Peter 5:10; Romans 15:13; Colossians 1:5; I Corinthians 13:7; Romans 4:18; I Corinthians 15:9; 10:23; Colossians 1:27; Hebrews 6:18; 10:23.

(f) *The Climax of the Covenant*. See Revelation 21:3, 'the dwelling of God is with men', (cf. 22:1–5). The heart of the Holy City is the Triune God. He dwells forever. So the near and far off of Jeremiah 23:2 and Hosea 11:9, will be one with His indwelling. This, according to II Peter 1:4, is the redeemed being 'partakers of the divine nature'.

THE TRIUMPH OF GLORY—MAN AND CREATION ALL GLORIOUS

The seeming defeat of God's plan for Man and the creation, in the fall of Man in Eden, is no final defeat. God's sovereignty of love in predestining the *telos* in the form we have outlined above is the great testimony to 'the counsel of his will', in which is the decree for the glorification of all things (I Cor. 2:6–10). As glorious as was Jesus at the Transfiguration, as glorious will be the redeemed and resurrected humanity in the age to come. Man—the slave of sin, the victim of Satan and evil powers, living in dread of the law and the fear of death—this Man becomes a glorious race, each having a body of glory like unto the Son's body of glory. Granted to inherit all things, this humanity in Christ will rule not only the earth, but also the whole creation—heaven and earth. So upright and noble is he 'to the praise of the glory of His grace', that the mind we have at this time is unable to cope with the promise of God. All will be glory! This glory will shine forth as the holiness God has given to Man. The human race in the Second Adam—the Last Adam—is a 'partaker in the divine nature'—that true *theosis* or divination of Man, especially as the Bride of Christ. This is the true apostolic message, and one which must be proclaimed in all its fullness. Without it the message is incomplete.

If we remember our five premisses (see pp. 3–4), then we will realise the dynamics of glory which affect Man. We ignore these to the loss of true proclamation. For us living now, the theology of glory must be a theology of hope. The gospel is based upon the eternal covenant of God, and the covenant is the reality of the promises of God. Love establishes the hope of sharing the glory of God (Rom. 5:2, 5).

CONCLUSION: PROCLAIMING THE GLORY TO THE WORLD

We would be failing in our Study if we did not conclude with the privilege and responsibility which is ours to proclaim the 'gospel of the glory' (II Cor. 4:4) to the fallen human race. All of us have spent years building up a glory of our own, no matter what kind of glory it may have been. The truth is that nothing can replace the glory originally given to Man. Marvellously it has been won back for him by the suffering of the Cross. Man has fallen short of the glory of God which means he is pathetically short of his own original glory. Now we have a message and by it we can proclaim. 'Forsake the glory you thought was all you needed. Look at the glory of God in the death of God Incarnate on Calvary's Cross, and come into it, now. Immediately you will begin to experience the life of glory. Even in this life you will know a transformation from a glory which must fade with the grave to a glory which is eternal. This present, new glory will grow from one stage to another, and finally, at the point of human death will fill out to an everlasting glory. Christ will come and change this body of our humiliation so that it be made to be a body like his body of glory! Then it will be all glory where those made glorious will share eternity in the purpose of glory. This is the glory which God has prepared for those who have come to love Him.'

For us, the proclaimers, this is the greatest thing we can do in life, that is, invite men, women and children into the glory won by the Lord of glory. It is our privilege and responsibility, and not to do this is to fail in the highest ministry God has entrusted to us. It is to deny our hearers the richest gift a human being can receive.

Glory Proclaimed and Pastoral

Opening Note: Following our previous Study it was suggested that a further Study should be developed in which the evangelistic and pastoral elements of the glory of God and Man should be explored. By ‘evangelistic’ was meant the offer of glory to fallen Man through the gospel, a factor rarely considered; and by ‘pastoral’, the present process of developing from one stage of glory to another, as also the dynamics of the prolepsis of glory—‘the hope of glory’. I am grateful for these suggestions and hope they may prove to be clear enough for use in ministry.

INTRODUCTION: THE APOSTOLIC MESSAGE AND GLORY

We closed our July Study on the thought of the gospel being ‘the gospel of the glory of Christ’ because ‘the knowledge of the glory of God [is] in the face of Jesus Christ’ (II Cor. 4:4, 6), and the proposition of ‘Christ in [among] you, the hope of glory’. The full outcome of the gospel is that we shall be glorified.¹ Few evangelists and proclaimers think of proclaiming the matters of God perfecting, sanctifying and glorifying us as an essential ingredient of the gospel.² The effect of proclaiming a saving gospel which does not include these is to diminish the fullness of a salvation which includes God’s perfecting, sanctifying and glorifying us. Not only is it this, but also the ultimate environment of the redeemed will be a perfect, holy and glorious one—one of full glory. Because we think of the *telos* as something which closes off the *eschaton*, instead of it being the climax of a steadily developing glory (II Cor. 3:18), we miss the point that all things which lead up to this climax are, themselves, formative of that climax. According to Hebrews 10:14, God ‘has perfected for all time them those who are sanctified’, and these actions—perfecting, sanctifying—in this verse are shown as being elements of the gospel of forgiveness. In I Corinthians 2:1–5, Paul pronounces the gospel he taught, and then introduces ‘the mature’ converts to the truth of God’s wisdom for glorification in 2:7–10. In Romans 8:30, Paul says simply, ‘And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified’.

In this Study we work on the general assumptions that

- (i) Man was destined for glorification before creation (I Cor. 2:7);
- (ii) Man was created in glory (Gen. 1:26–27; I Cor. 11:7; Ps. 8:3–9); and
- (iii) presently, continuously, he *must* have glory.

Living in a glory, even if it is a surrogate one—the idols—is demanded by fallen and as yet unredeemed Man. He always has an ontological pressure upon him not to be satisfied until he comes fully into God’s glory, the glory of which he has fallen short. By this we mean living in God’s presence, doing His will and having lordship (as God’s vice-regent) over the creation committed to him for its leadership. It is to this pressure or drive that the evangel addresses itself as the ‘gospel of the glory of Jesus Christ’. We have seen that fallen Man is awry, dislocated and empty without the gift of God’s glory.

¹ I Corinthians 2:7; Romans 1:17–30; 2:7–10; I Corinthians 15:42–56; II Corinthians 4:16–18; 5:1–5; Philippians 3:20–21; Colossians 1:27; I Thessalonians 2:12; II Thessalonians 2:14.

² It is clear from I Thessalonians 1:9–10 that the converts at Thessalonica were told of the *eschaton* and its judgment for unbelievers, as also the deliverance of believers ‘from the wrath to come’.

What we seek to know at this point is the glory of God, not only as we saw it in the previous Study, but also as it is in the Triune God; the unity and Being of the Trinity. Unless we grasp the magnificent dimensions of God's glory and created Man's glory also, we will not be offering it in the gospel as the greatest gift and outcome of grace. Personally understanding glory will powerfully motivate us to offer it in the proclamation of the gospel. It will be a matter of wonder as well as of witness. Because fallen Man has a deep need of glory, the offer of it can speak to that need.

THE GLORY OF THE TRIUNE GOD, THE SOURCE OF ALL GLORY

In John 17:22, Jesus said, 'The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one'. That means that glory is unitary and makes unity even to the depthful creation of rich relationships. When did the Father give the Son His own glory? It could be 'before the foundation of the world' (17:24), or in his Incarnation as in the Baptism and the Transfiguration, or as in 17:1–5, where Jesus asks for special glorification for the work of the Cross.³ What is helpful in 17:22 is 'that they may be one even as we are one', for it indicates the unity of the Father and the Son is their glory.⁴ The glory of God is the unity of the Godhead. It is the oneness of the Three Persons which is the glory. We need to grasp this wonderful truth for 'glory in the church by Christ Jesus' springs from it. Elsewhere we have said that glory is substantiality, is that authority, wealth, substance and true moral being which are God's glory. The manifestations of Divine glory come through creation, in theophanies, in light, radiance, the cloud of the Presence, the Name and Face of God. Here we are saying that glory is the unity of the Three. It is love which flows from the Father as the Fount of the Godhead, is present in 'the Son of His love', and flows through the Spirit of the Father and the Son to redeemed humanity. We avoid saying love makes for unity. God is love; God is holiness. From Him, the 'three-personned God', flow all holy relationships of true love.

In further pursuing the glory of God we see there are a number of things in which the Three are active and which constitute their Being, namely :

- (i) their mutual glorification;
- (ii) their mutual serving;
- (iii) their mutual giving; and
- (iv) their mutual receiving.⁵

These being one in action have been described as the Divine *perichoresis*, which is the doctrine of the Three Persons who interpenetrate one another—that is, they indwell and coinhere one another. In so doing they are 'other-Persons centred' and have a movement of giving to one another, and receiving from one another. Each Person gives from his particularity of differentiations to make that complementarity which constitutes the Godhead. In all of this there is no coalescence of the Persons.

³ In our last paper we dealt with the glorifying of Christ through Baptism and the Transfiguration before the Cross.

⁴ C. K. Barrett says:

The unity of the Church is strictly analogous to the unity of the Father and the Son; the Father is active *in* the Son—it is the Father who does his works (14.10)—and apart from the Father the deeds of the Son are meaningless, and indeed would be impossible; the Son again is in the Father, eternally with him in the unity of the Godhead, active alike in creation and redemption. The Father and the Son are one and yet remain distinct. The believers are to be, and are to be one, in the Father and the Son, distinct from God, yet abiding in God, and themselves the sphere of God's activity (14.12). (*The Gospel According to St John*, SPCK, London, 1958, p. 427.)

⁵ For further material along these lines see our *Monday Pastors' Studies* of June, July, and September 1990, March and May 1991, and also *Trinitarian Theology: Human Unity and Relationships*, Pastors' School 1991 and *Relationships Divine–Human*, Pastors' School 1994.

This has also been described as *circumincessio*, referring to the circularity of the perichoretic movement of giving and receiving.

In John 10:38, Jesus said ‘... the Father is in me and I am in the Father’. In 10:30, he had said ‘... I and the Father are one’. In 14:28, he was to say ‘... the Father is greater than I’. There was no contradiction in these statements. Whilst the Son is eternally begotten of the Father yet he and the Holy Spirit are one with the Father. The question of one Member of the Trinity being superior or inferior to another does not arise. Functional subordination does not imply subordinationism. In their glory they are One. The subordination–superordination debate is irrelevant to the nature of the glory of God, if it considers subordination to be inferiority and superordination to be superiority.

The Mutual Glorifying of the Persons of the Godhead

Since the three Persons inter-dwell one another (cf. John 17:20ff.), they naturally do those four things we have mentioned above which mark all Divine relationships, and this should be the way of human relationships, that is, that persons serve one another, glorify one another, give to one another and receive from one another. We will take one of these elements, the mutual glorifying or honouring of one another. The source of Divine glory is the Father (*fons divinitatis*)—‘the Father of glory’ (Eph. 1:17—who glorifies the Son and the Spirit; whilst the Son—‘the Lord of glory’—glorifies the Father (John 17:1–5); and the Holy Spirit who is ‘the spirit of glory’ (I Pet. 4:14), glorifies both the Father and Son. This mutual glorification one of the other is the expression of the Divine love.⁶ Glorification is simply revealing what is true, what is so, and not an amplifying of it. It is revelation and attestation. We can say that the Three Persons each give to and receive from, the radiant splendour of the two other Members of the Trinity.

- (a) *For the glorification of the Son by the Father* see John 3:35; 5:26–27; 13:3; 17:2, 5, 6–8, 11–12; Matthew 11:27; II Peter 1:16–19.
- (b) *For the glorification of the Father by the Son* see John 1:14; 11:4, 40; 13:31–32; 14:13; 17:1.
- (c) *For the glorification of the Father and Son by the Spirit* see John 16:14–15, but let us recognise that the work of the Spirit was always in serving the Father and the Son. The Son did nothing but by the Spirit (Matt. 12:28) and the Father did nothing which was not through the Spirit.
- (d) *For the Father and the Son glorifying the Spirit* see the ways in which the Spirit is portrayed as the Lord and giver of life (Rom. 8:2; II Cor. 3:6, 17, 18), the one against whom blasphemy is not forgiven (Matt. 12:31–32; Heb. 10:29). It is wrong to vex the Spirit of God (Isa. 63:10; Eph. 4:30; I Thess. 5:19). That he is variously called ‘the Spirit of Jesus’, ‘the Spirit of Christ’, ‘the Spirit of the Lord’, ‘the Spirit of holiness’, ‘the Spirit of worship’, is enough to tell us of his lofty nature.⁷

⁶ Thomas Torrance in his *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons* (T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1996) has a beautiful section on the mutual glorification of the Three Persons on pages 65–67.

⁷ Some theologians argue that the Son is subordinate to the Father only in his incarnation. His subordination, it is said, is voluntary in order for him to go to the Cross and redeem Man. Returning to the Father in ascension, this subordination ends. Christ’s incarnation is the expression of his glory—his concern and love for the humanity he—with the Father and the Holy Spirit—created. His words which speak of his dependence upon the Father for all that he does and says should not be thought to belong only to his humanity. He is surely revealing what had always been the nature of his life as Son eternally.

Put this way—the giving of a host of references—it might seem to be proof-texting and missing the immense tide of glory which flows in the *perichoresis* of the Trinity, which is the continuous action of the Three. In fact, its splendid action only comes home to us when we see the Persons together seeking as their goal to glorify Man. The glorification of a person by the whole Godhead is a matter for immense praise and personal humbling to one's depths. In practice it means that the entirety of the glory of God comes to dwell in the person, transforming him or her, and making that one a witness to the Divine glory and its ultimate work of glorifying Man and the rest of creation. When God glorifies Man and all creation into their magnificent fullness, then they will glorify Him forever, and this is the reason for the creating of 'all things'.

THE GLORY OF THE GLORY OF GOD

If a person were to give himself or herself to worship and adore the living God, then it would be proper to seek out all the glory of God that it is possible for one to do in one's humanity and by the enabling grace of God. To see and hear of His glory through the full-throated declaration by the whole creation, to see what He has made and what it does, and what it is and what its goal would be, is enough to stretch all the senses and mental faculties to their full extent. Simply to read the entire Scriptures and to grasp the endless theophanies as though they were being 'played over again', so to speak, and to grasp the awe and astonishment, the reverent fear of the receivers, would be to hold to ourselves this magnificence of God. To know His eternal covenant with Man, and to hear His covenant pronouncements to Israel, to the nations and all creation, would be to know the glory of His love and holiness. To see the incarnation of the Word, the becoming flesh of the only Begotten of God, would be to see glory become flesh, 'full of grace and truth'. To see God the Father working in His Son by the Spirit, and the Three converging, so to speak, at the Cross and there see the greatest act and operation of God's moral glory, would be to see the humility and suffering of God Himself. The Resurrection would be no surprise, but would still be awesome in its happening and its future significance for the human race. Likewise the Son's ascension in glory, his being received into glory and reigning in glory would be to see the sealing of Man's destiny of glory. If, into our sight came all the glory-suffering of the countless multitudes of saints and then the glory of *their* resurrection, their holy inheritance and their sharing in the marriage of the Bride and the Lamb, the splendour of the Holy City and Paradise—their habitation for ever—and the Triune God as their light and worship sanctuary for ever, would be to cap the glory that one person might be permitted to see all in one extraordinary moment by the grace of God! What a gift that would be, forever transforming him into the very image of the Son and inducting him into the 'liberty of the glory of the children of God'! Only this sight of glory will make us know the true glory of God. Seeing it will transform us for ever. It is both a strange and wonderful thing that all this can be, and is, imprinted upon us by the Spirit of glory (I Cor. 2:9–10; cf. I Pet. 4:14).

THE GLORY OF MAN

The glory of Man in the ultimate will not be simply a mild reflection of ‘Who and What He is’, but the very radiation of all that, because our image is *in the Son* (II Cor. 3:18) who is the very radiation of God Himself. In our last Study we looked at the glory of both God and Man. Without knowing the glory of God we cannot understand the glory of Man. Now, for both proclamatry and pastoral purposes we need to enlarge our view of Man’s glory and see how he lives *now* in that glory. Above, we have enlarged our view of God’s glory, especially the glory of God as the Trinity in His ontological being and the works which are *in extra*, those of the internal relationships of the Three. The works of the Trinity *ad extra* are those of creation, then of redemption and the final works of the sanctification of Man and creation, including the perfection and glorification of all things. With this immense canvas in view we seek, again, to see the glory of Man.

The insistent prophecies of the earth being filled with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea,⁸ bring us to the meaning of the earth being filled with God’s glory. It means that what the glory fills and covers is God’s possession. Isaiah 60:1–2 speaks of this glory in direct relationship with Israel:

Arise, shine; for your light has come,
and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.
For behold, darkness shall cover the earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;
but the LORD will arise upon you,
and his glory will be seen upon you.
And nations shall come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your rising.
Lift up your eyes round about, and see;
they all gather together, they come to you;
your sons shall come from far,
and your daughters shall be carried in the arms.
Then you shall see and be radiant,
your heart shall thrill and rejoice;
because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you,
the wealth of the nations shall come to you (Isa. 60:1–5.)⁹

When the glory of the Lord rises upon Israel it means that it is glorified, it is lightened, and only it in all the earth has glory. The glory of God has filled it. Now, when the rest of the world is in darkness because *God’s glory has not risen upon it*, that part of it, then what is in darkness hastens to the light of Israel. Israel is glorious and the nations see clearly that it is substantial in wealth and position. This is an example of the glory of the Lord filling something—in this case, Israel. At present unseen, except to faith, the earth is filled with the glory of God. At the *telos* the whole creation will be seen to have been filled with His glory, else it could not properly proclaim. Of course, at the *telos* all anti-glory and inglorious elements will have been removed. Nothing will be left unfilled or uncovered with the Divine glory.

⁸ See again Numbers 14:20, *passim*; Habakkuk 2:14; Isaiah 11:9; Psalm 72:18–19.

⁹ Isaiah 60 is a treasure-house of the nature of God’s glory and Man’s, and the manner in which God glorifies. Israel is God’s special, holy people, and its land is the newest Eden, its worship place the sanctuary of God. Where God dwells is His Presence, and where His Presence is, there is God’s glory, the glory which rises upon Man and continually glorifies him.

Man's glory as God's image and glory (I Cor. 11:7) means he is to 'fill up the earth', that is, he is to possess it all, filling it with the glory God has given him—or, as we say, Edenising it. He is vice-regent to God's Kingship over creation. It is one thing to have a mandate to glorify the earth, but it is another to have the innate capacity to do so. The ability to do so only comes when Man is subject to his King, and dependent upon Him. God's glory rose on Man at creation and equipped him for his task. Psalm 8 shows all of this, explaining that only for a little while was he made 'a little lower than the angels', or 'a little less than God'.

Living in Glory is Human Fullness

When we are truly informed of the glory of God and Man, then in hindsight, we regret the Fall. We think how wonderfully well-off was Man whilst living in the glory. It meant living in what we have called 'the moral glory of God'. We need to point ourselves and others back to that original glory and to seek its restoration in full. Yet the glory of Man was not a mere accompaniment to his living, for God had designed him to be fulfilled, in the ultimate, *beyond* what he was when created. We have observed that Man was always a 'becoming' creature, never to be himself fully until the *telos*. In losing his created glory Man lost the prospect of his eschatological glory. Later we will discuss what is Man's eschatological glory, but for the present we will observe that it will be greater than his created glory. What we must keep in mind is what we observed before, namely that God still holds Man to his original glory, so to speak. He does not let Man off the original mandate or His relationship with him in the creational covenant. God makes His full moral demands of Man, no matter how much he appears to be fallen and, so, bereft of substantial glory.

From Loss of Glory to the Regaining of Its Fullness

Man's lordship over the earth was not rescinded with the Fall. Indeed, in Genesis 9:1–7—following the Flood—it was reiterated, but there was some loss of glory in that Man is now to be feared. The gift of glory in lordship requires that its very heart be moral, and Man because of the Fall lacked this moral core. It was here the image was lacking. The loss of moral glory is a sad loss. We also saw that Man's spirit or soul being called 'My glory!' had a different ring to the 'My glory!' prior to the Fall. At the Fall, and because of it, Man did not want to know God (Rom. 1:28; Ps. 14:1; cf. Jer. 9:23, 24), but then he needed to have a surrogate glory and this had to issue from his own devising, hence his narcissism and his making and worshipping of idols. Man, bereft of the glory which flows perichoretically from God to His created humanity, was in dire straits. On the one hand he needed—needs—the glory of God. On the other he will have only his own glory, lest he be confronted by God. There is no *perichoresis* from narcissism and idols.

It is worth observing here that the Greek idea of glory was beauty, symmetry, and perfection. It is not by accident that the Olympics are a Greek concept. Here glory is in the beauty of Man's form and action. Today Olympic gold is the dream of glory-hungry humanity. Yet all humanity seeks to create glory of one kind or another, but although it can create *nothing*, it can *devise* much. In a secondary sense it can create, that is, be creative, though not *ex nihilo*. It is compelled to make surrogate glory, since it cannot live without it. The point is that in order to exist Man has to have his fill of glory, no matter what it may be according to cultural and other demands. We are not saying that the works of Man cannot be marvellous, for mostly they are, but they lack the substance that makes them morally powerful in the affairs of Man.

God's Provision of Glory

In our last Study we saw what God does down through human history to communicate the fact of His glory:

- (i) Creation continually gives out the message of God's glory;
- (ii) God visits Man by theophanic means and this is a reminder of His unseen glory;
- (iii) Israel is made the nation of God's glory. His glory was present in theophanies such as the burning bush and, later the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, the Presence at, and then in, the Tabernacle, signified by the cloud filling the tabernacle, but symbolised by the mercy seat in the Holy of holies. Israel had the gifts of glory; the sonship, the law, the worship, the covenants—and so on. Just as God was and is always present to Man via the creation, so He was always present to Israel in the Tabernacle and worship. The presence of His glory in Israel's temple and then His departure from it was spoken of by the prophet Ezekiel, and the coming of a greater glory than Israel has known was a constant theme of the prophets;
- (iv) The coming of Christ was with angelic pronouncements and then the glory of angels. God was glorified by them for the Nativity. Christ is 'the word made flesh', and 'the glory as of the only begotten of the Father'. His life and ministry led to the Cross where God's glory was seen as, through Christ, His moral glory worked to redeem humanity, defeat the powers of darkness, and restore to Man the glory he had lost in the Fall. Christ was glorified in his resurrection and his ascension, and has reigned continuously at the right hand of the Father. Just as he went in the cloud of glory, so, likewise he will come on the clouds, being at the right hand of The Power—a synonym for 'God'; and
- (v) The prophecies have always claimed that Man and creation will be ultimately glorified as one. Proleptically the glory is known to Man through the virtue of hope. These are the five elements of God's setting for the revealing of His glory to mankind.

Man Brought into Glory in the Present, in the Now-time

Now we come to the heart of our Study. It is the matter of our experience of present glory and knowing the prolepsis of future glory. In Romans 3:23—'all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God'—Paul sums up most of what he has argued in Romans 1:16 to 3:22. 'All' means both Jew and Gentile. It includes his Romans 5:12 '. . . all men sinned'; that is, in the original sin of Adam, and then in each person's history, none has lived without sinning and falling short of God's glory. We have seen that original sin and habitual sinning does not divest humanity from being 'the image and glory of God', but all are culpable for falling short of this ontological state. Paul has talked about 'those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality', and says God will give them eternal life (Rom. 2:7). He says, there will be 'glory and honour and peace for every one who does good'. It is pointless to ask, 'Who are these people?', for it must be those whom God has initiated into seeking Him and His glory.

Here, in the passage of Romans 3:24–26, is disclosed the way in which humanity can be rescued from its sin and sin's judgment. It is by the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, for by this those who believe are justified. This is amplified in Romans 5:5–11, where Paul concludes that sinners have been given 'reconciliation' through Christ's timely death. It can be assumed that the 'falling short' of God's glory is now made up in the redemption that comes to Man 'through faith in his blood'. Talk in other places

of ‘new birth’, ‘regeneration’, and ‘new creation’ are indicators that the glory has been restored. Man may now proceed in glory:

Now if the dispensation of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such splendor that the Israelites could not look at Moses’ face because of its brightness, fading as this was, will not the dispensation of the Spirit be attended with greater splendor? For if there was splendor in the dispensation of condemnation, the dispensation of righteousness must far exceed it in splendor. Indeed, in this case, what once had splendor has come to have no splendor at all, because of the splendor that surpasses it. For if what faded away came with splendor, what is permanent must have much more splendor.

Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not see the end of the fading splendor. But their minds were hardened; for to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their minds; but when a man turns to the Lord the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit (II Cor. 3:7–18).

When it comes to the matter of the glory the covenant-believer experiences, Paul has good words to say in the third and fourth chapters of II Corinthians, particularly in the passage set out above. In 3:4–11, he speaks of ‘the dispensation of death’, that is, the dispensation of the law; and of ‘the dispensation of life’, that is, of the new covenant, the dispensation of grace. It is true that in the Old Testament the law was given with much glory at Mt Sinai. It is observable that the ‘dispensation of grace’ was ushered in by Christ, though without it having an outward and discernible glory. It all passed by without the world recognising the great event, so intent was Man upon fostering his own glory. John records, ‘For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ’ (1:17). Paul is saying that the brilliance of splendour which marked the giving of the law has been vastly surpassed by the dispensation of grace.

Going on to the matter of abiding glory, Paul says in II Corinthians 3:12–16 that when Moses was in the Presence of God his countenance grew glorious and when he came from that Presence to the presence of the people he had to veil his face for the shame that the glory was a fading one. This veil has been passed on to the people who read the law. They have a veil over their minds which does not make for seeing God’s glory, but those who turn to the Lord have the veil taken away. In verses 17–18, he comes to the crux of the matter. Whilst these two verses are much debated by exegetes, it would seem that the essence of the matter is as follows. When one turns to the Lord then the veil which blinds a person to the glory of God is taken away. The hindrance to seeing the Lord is the veil which is there because ‘the written code kills’ (3:6), and the glory of the Lord is not therefore seen in the dispensation of law. Because this present dispensation is ‘the dispensation of the Spirit’ (3:8), then the One known as ‘the LORD’ back in Exodus 34:29–35 is here—in the dispensation of grace—the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Lord. Elsewhere in the New Testament it is the Holy Spirit who is associated with the new and continuing freedom of the Christian (cf. Rom. 7:6; 8:1–11; Gal. 5:1–5, 13–26). In 3:17, he is called ‘the Spirit of the Lord’. It would seem then in 3:18, that ‘the Lord who is the Spirit’ could be a term in which ‘Lord’ could be used as an adjective, thus we could say, ‘the Sovereign Spirit’,¹⁰ or ‘the Spirit, who is Lord’.

¹⁰ A. M. Ramsey in his *The Glory of God and the Transfiguration of Christ* (Longman, Green and Co., London, 1949), seems to favour this exegesis. In footnote 2 on page 52 he says, ‘... (b) In the same verse there is much to be said for the conjectural emendation of Hort, *kuvrion* for *kurivou*, i.e. ‘where the Spirit is Lord, or sovereign’.

If this exegesis is correct then the one by whom the transformation into the image of Christ¹¹ takes place in 3:18 is the Holy Spirit. We would keep in mind that he is at one with Christ, just as the Father and the Son are one in John 10:30. He is also elsewhere called ‘the Spirit of Christ’, ‘the Spirit of Jesus’, and ‘the Spirit of [His] Son’. He is also the one by whom a believer says, ‘Jesus is Lord!’

An alternate exegesis taken by competent commentators is that the word ‘Spirit’ should be put in lower case, the argument being that Christ is the Lord, and it is his own spirit which effects freedom, and the transformation from one stage of glory to another. If this be the case, then the result is that Christ, by his own spirit, effects freedom and successive stages of glory. This kind of use of Christ’s spirit would be close to unique in the Epistles. We can conclude that whether by the Holy Spirit, or by Christ’s own spirit, or by Christ through the Holy Spirit, the marvellous transformation is effected.

THE PRESENT MATTER OF TRANSFORMATION IN CHRIST’S IMAGE BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, SO THAT THE PERSON GOES FROM ONE STAGE OF GLORY TO ANOTHER

Transformation into Christ’s image, which brings the Christian person into glory stage-by-stage, is a most important one. That person should be conscious of what is happening. If the first exegesis given above regarding the Spirit being the Lord is correct, then it is the Spirit who helps the believer to behold Christ and somehow to be transformed. The principle of glorification we adduced in our previous Study is that *one is glorified by beholding glory*. The Son received his glory from the Father and he had wholly seen the Father. To see His glory wholly is to be wholly glorified. That principle is stated in I John 3:1–3, ‘When he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is’. The caution we need to keep in mind is that human glory—even eschatological human glory—cannot be more than it is to be the utmost of human glory. When Paul says that our bodies will be like unto Christ’s body of glory, he means that our humanity will be glorified as is Christ’s—no more and no less—but that does not go beyond the glorification God had planned for us before time (I Cor. 2:7, *passim*).¹²

We have already seen that Christ promised the disciples what would happen with the Spirit’s coming. He would bring into their remembrance all things Christ had said and done. He would teach them all things. He would lead them into all the truth. He would glorify Christ. He would tell them things to come, that is, the things of the future. He would glorify Christ and the Father. He would convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment. We have seen this is what he did, so much so that at Pentecost¹³ all

¹¹ In II Corinthians 3:18, the one beheld is ‘the Lord’. Is this God as in Exodus 34, or is it Christ? It could be either. Is one changed into the image of God or is one transformed *into* the image of Christ; that is, Christ himself who is the image of God? The result is that the beholder is being changed from one stage of glory to another. Whilst 3:16–18 is not to be taken as an exposition of the Trinitarian nature, yet Trinitarian roots are deep, here.

¹² When Moses asked to see all God’s glory and was told that it was not possible, we have here a clue to the fact that seeing God’s full glory could not be contained by a human being. ‘Face to face’, as the phrase is sometimes used, cannot mean ‘seeing all God’s glory’. That Man was made ‘little less than God’ (Ps. 8:5) does not mean ‘nearly God’! Hebrews 2:7 adds ‘for a little while’, and this could mean Christ’s incarnation or refer to Man’s creational glory which always had in mind his eschatological glory.

¹³ The praise was not only at Pentecost but also at Caesarea (Acts 10:44–48), at Ephesus (Acts 19:5–7), and we have reason to believe, at Samaria (Acts 8:14–17). The infilling of the Spirit in Acts 4:31–35 was no less dynamic as fresh revelation came to the church.

burst out in praise at what they had seen through the Spirit, so ‘telling . . . the wonderful works of God’. With razor-sharp definition everything of Christ was borne in upon them. The results are recorded. The fellowship burst into life. They lived out the things which are Christ as the living image and glory of God. We can say they went from one stage of glory to another.

We are saying that in II Corinthians 3:18, the Spirit constantly ‘Pentecostalises’ us. Elsewhere Paul speaks of an habitual living and walking in the Spirit, being filled with him, glowing with him—and so on. These are the means by which the Spirit continually ‘Pentecostalises’ us, that he does what we have said in the paragraph above. The Spirit thus transforms us, but he transforms us by continually showing us Christ. Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration was brilliantly transformed. This is what is happening in us. We should teach this wonder to others. We should recognise it ourselves. Christ is kept livingly before us by the Spirit. We see the glory and are always being glorified.

The Matter of Image and Transformation

We have said that at his transfiguration Christ was transfigured that he might—at the Cross—be disfigured (cf. Isa. 52:14 – 53:12), that we who have been disfigured—by sin and the Fall—might be transfigured. We need one to show us that Cross unceasingly, so that we can be constantly ‘conformed to his death’ (Phil. 3:10), which is the place of Christ’s greatest glory. We know that Man was created in the image of God. He is still counted as ‘the image and glory of God’, yet the image has undergone disfiguration. Paul makes a contrast between what the (fallen) image was and the renewed image is. In Ephesians 4:22–24, he says:

You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self [*palaion anthropon*], corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self [*kainon anthropon*], created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness (NRSV).

Likewise in Colossians 3:9–10, it is written:

Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self [*palaion anthropon*] with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self (‘new man’: *ton neon*), which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image [*eikon*] of its creator (NRSV).

What we gain from these passages is that a transformation has come. The old has been made to give away to the new (cf. II Cor. 5:17¹⁴). The new image is ‘created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness’, and is ‘being renewed in knowledge after the image [*eikon*] of its creator’. This is a remarkable change. The image of God in which Man was originally created is being renewed as they are ‘renewed in the spirit of your minds’. Certainly, in the first place, we can talk about ‘restoration’. What has been corrupted is now restored, is now being ‘reprimed’, it is being made as it was. Yet, is this all? If this were all then it would be enormous in its act and implication. To think of the *palaion anthropon* being transformed to the *kainon anthropon* would be to think of an extraordinary miracle—the shattered old derelict being restored to the new and holy Man would be wonderful to contemplate, yet II Corinthians 3:18 talks of us ‘being transformed into *his* [Christ’s] image’. We are not only being transformed into our original image but into *his* image.

¹⁴ Note in II Corinthians 5:17, ‘the old’ is ‘renewed’, the old has become new, and not, as some translations have it, ‘the old is gone, the new has come’, although that is what it amounts to, virtually.

Of course that is the way it would have to be, since we are not in Adam but in Christ the second and last Adam, but the wonder of it should give us great urge to see the power and magnificence of what is *now* happening in us.

Romans 12:1–2 is also to the point:

I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Here we are asked to give our bodies as living sacrifices, and doing this is ‘spiritual’ or ‘reasonable’ worship. We are not to let the world form us, but we are to be ‘transformed by the renewal of [our] minds’. Such transformation conforms us to the image of Christ (cf. Rom. 8:29). This is part of what Paul is speaking about in II Corinthians 3:18. Pastorally we have a great vision and power to impart to our fellows.

This action is, then, going on all the time and we have the responsibility of being renewed perpetually in the spirit of our minds, by the Holy Spirit. As we have said, the Holy Spirit constantly ‘Pentecostalises’ us so that we will have that view of his glory — ‘the glory of God in the face of Christ’ — which will bring the succeeding stages of glory until all is consummated in the ultimate glorification. Of course, this ‘beholding’ is not a mystical one, but one of seeing Christ by the Holy Spirit and thus living in him in his actions. It also includes imitating him, as in Ephesians 5:1–2, and having Christ formed in us, as in Galatians 4:19. What should be kept in mind all the time is Colossians 3:1–4:

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory,

for this is saying that our lives are not lives which are seen by the world, or even by us (cf. II Cor. 5:10), but in their hiddenness in Christ and God they are so being transformed that the glory of them will be seen when he, Christ, appears. ‘Christ in [among] you, the hope of glory’ is saying much the same thing.

Transformation into Glory by Suffering in the Work of the Gospel

Suffering, of itself, does not bring glory. Peter talks about a suffering we deserve for our misdoing, and a suffering which we do not deserve. Jesus, Paul, Peter and others speak of a suffering which inevitably comes to those who proclaim Christ. This is not the place to enter into the whole subject of suffering, but Christ said that to suffer for the Kingdom of heaven’s sake would be a matter for rejoicing. Paul showed in Romans 8:17–30 that suffering was the *way* to glory, though not at all the *cost* of glory, for we do not earn glory. In 8:17 he said, ‘. . . provided we suffer with him in order that we may be glorified with him’. This is something like II Timothy 2:12, ‘if we endure, we shall also reign with him’. The key to the suffering which brings glory is that kind of suffering which is in the cause of Christ, the proclamation of the gospel and the membership of his Body, the Church. This is powerfully shown in II Corinthians 4:7–18:

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair;

persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you. Since we have the same spirit of faith as he had who wrote, 'I believed, and so I spoke,' we too believe, and so we speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Paul in wonderful words tells us of the *fact* of suffering. He also shows us the *nature* of suffering. We need also to look at other passages which deal with this kind of suffering, such as II Corinthians 6:3–10 and 11:21–29. It is the scandal of the gospel and the foolishness of it which brings the suffering of persecution and rejection. In 4:10–12, Paul shows us the *cause* of suffering. It is 'always carrying in the body the death [dying, killing] of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our bodies'. In one sense proclaiming the gospel is like carrying around all the time a video of the Cross. In Galatians 3:1, Paul uses the term 'publicly portrayed', or 'placarded'— so that no one can escape the sight of that terrible event. Again, the Cross is a 'scandal' and 'foolishness' to the viewers who are greatly angered at being confronted with the Cross. To proclaim Christ crucified is the deepest offence which can come to the human spirit which is repelled by the Cross, seeing no need for its saving, propitiatory work. The suffering that comes with, and because of, proclamation, is the suffering which brings 'an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison'.

For the Holy Spirit to so show us Christ that we are thereby transformed into *his* image (*eikon*) cannot omit the heart of his glory-suffering, the Cross. Here, as we have said time and again, is the way of moral glory, the outworking of the moral claim of Exodus 34:6–7 regarding the nature of God's true glory. It is not merely the unsightly elements of the Cross as a criminal's death which disgusts Man. It is because this is set out as God's great love for humanity and so, ultimately, the way to his glory. When Paul talks about 'being conformed to his [Christ's] death', he means that we become one with Christ's image as was set out in II Corinthians 3:18. In the passage quoted above he is telling us not to look at the things of sight but of faith, as in Colossians 3:1–4, that is, the things unseen. The more we proclaim the Cross, the more our earthen vessels will be battered about. The body will be worn and torn daily but the inner man—that image of God which is being transformed—will gain increasing form and substance, until, when the vessel cracks and breaks and falls away—its sherds perished forever—there will be the true new man, the one in the *eikon* of Christ, the one in the fullness of the glory of Christ—the true son of the Father.

CONCLUSION: THE GIFT OF PROLEPSIS, 'THE HOPE OF GLORY'

We have indicated that being transformed into the same image—the very image of Christ—is something which is now happening within us. Not until this tent—this body—is fallen away will the glory be consummated. Yet it is 'the hope of glory' which is also a present dynamic and should be received by us and taught by us as such. 'Faith is

the assurance of things hoped for' can, I believe, be paraphrased as 'Faith is the prolepsis of things hoped for', that is, that we now sense, taste and feel. What is in the future, by faith has come to us in the present. True, the process of glorification is now in operation and so aids faith to believe, but it is the substance of what will yet be which comes to us in the present. I refer us to what was included in our July Study, namely the objects as we find them in the New Testament. In sussing them out I discovered that each one is linked with glory. Together they are the full picture of glory.

These are, 'the hope of glory'; 'the hope [of] the resurrection'; 'our hope of sharing the glory of God'; 'the hope of righteousness [justification]'; 'the hope of salvation'; 'Christ Jesus our hope'; 'our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ'; 'the hope of his calling'; along with 'his glorious inheritance in the saints'; 'the hope of the gospel'; 'the hope of eternal life'. It is because God is 'the God of hope' and our hope is 'laid up in heaven' that hope 'hopes all things', and even 'in hope believes against hope'. As Paul says, 'If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men to be pitied'. It is hope that is for here and eternity—how could it be otherwise and be hope?—for Christ himself is our hope, and within us (among us) he is 'the hope of glory'. That is why we are enjoined to 'seize the hope that is before us' and to 'hold fast the confession of our hope'.¹⁵

Seen fully these all add up to the Old Testament prophecies of 'the earth [being] filled with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea'. They add up to all things of the *eschaton* and its *telos*. Glory restored through the Cross, through the Resurrection, through the Ascension and Reigning, through the coming of the Holy Spirit. Man will again be God's vice-regent, but this time not only over all the earth, but also over all creation, in the Son, in the Second and Last Adam.

¹⁵ Because we wished this particular paragraph not to be interrupted by references so that straight reading of it might prove more effective, we have stated the references in this footnote. They can be checked against the text. They are Colossians 1:27; Acts 23:6; 24:15; cf. 28:20; Romans 5:2; Galatians 5:5; I Thessalonians 5:8; Titus 1:2; 3:7; I Timothy 1:1; Titus 2:13; Romans 8:30; Ephesians 1:18; 4:4; I Thessalonians 2:12; II Peter 1:3–5; Colossians 1:23; Titus 1:2; 3:7; cf. I Peter 5:10; Romans 15:13; Colossians 1:5; I Corinthians 13:7; Romans 4:18; I Corinthians 15:9; 10:23; Colossians 1:27; Hebrews 6:18; 10:23.

Proclamation as Witness to Christ

THE IDEA OF TRUTH AND WITNESSING

Anyone who has studied the idea of witness in the Old and New Testaments¹ must admit to the vast amount of material on the subject, and the fine detail in which it is presented. Most of it has to do with the juridical side of things, the legal assembly held 'in the gate', the settling of many controversies, the problem of having the truth presented and preserved, and this in innumerable cases. The Old Testament coverage of the idea of witness relates very much to persons being accused of wrongdoing, and the elders calling witnesses for the plaintiff and the defendant to settle the matter. On the broader sphere, Isaiah chapters 40 to 45 tells of Yahweh's controversy with the nations, indeed the world, and His use of Israel as His witness, the witnesses 'for the defence' being notably silent.

If we go back into the domestic life of Israel, its many law court cases and decisions, the criteria for being true witness and the like, we come up against a great amount of detail. It is not our intention in this Study to take up all that language, but what does emerge is that a witness is one who testifies to what he believes to be the truth of the matter. What concerns us is that New Testament witnessing is on the same principle. We will see how the Holy Spirit is the one who informs and aids the witnesses to have a good testimony in the face of the opposition of Satan, evil powers and opposing persons. If we see witnessing as witnessing to the truth, so that there is no case that is valid for opposition to Christ, then we certainly have a key to the meaning of 'witness'. In some senses it differs from proclamation, although it is essential for true proclamation. The truth of Christ is the case against the whole world which embraces the deceit of Satan's system and religions, philosophies and cultures which claim—in the face of Christ—to have and to live the truth.

THE MATTER OF TRUTH AND WITNESS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

There is no point whatever of witness unless it is to testify to the truth, whatever the situation and circumstances may be which call for it. For this reason we need to enquire as to the nature of truth and the need for witnessing to it. The Hebrew words *emunah* and *emeth* carry the idea of a quality of truthful being and action, rather than the Greek idea of cognitive truth as met in the word *aletheia*. When one is of the truth then one is stable, reliable, faithful, and so on. On this basis the word 'truth' can be contained nounally and adjectivally in the ideas of steadiness, stability, soundness, faithfulness, constancy, truth, loyalty, justice, and so on. A glimpsing through a concordance and a reading of the contexts of the words will bring this out clearly.

Whilst we need to trace many of these uses in their context in the OT, yet we can come up with a general definition of what truth is within its pages. If then we add the usages of the verb *aman* which means to 'confirm, stand firm, trust' and its noun *amen* which in itself means 'true, reliable, valid', then we can see that truth is the way things essentially are, so that they cannot change. When it comes to God, He is the truth and acts consistently with what He is.

¹ A case in point is the monograph *The New Testament Concept of Witness* by Allison A. Trites (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977). The amount of material in this book strains the reader's capacity for comprehension.

Truth in regard to Man is that he understands ‘things as they essentially are’ (ontology) and acts accordingly; his mind-set and his action constitute the truth. In general he is a truthful person if he is a consistent, stable, loyal and reliable person. This however, in the ultimate, will not be so, will not be really truth if it does not line up with the truth of God.

It is interesting to see that in the *AV* the use of the word ‘truth’ is far more extensive than in the *RSV* and *NRSV* which often translate it as ‘faithfulness’ and the adjective ‘faithful’. An example is Deuteronomy 32:4 where the *AV* has ‘He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgement: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.’ The *RSV* has, ‘The Rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is he’. It is interesting to note in passing the values set forth in this verse. In one sense they are *legal*, in another way *ethical* and then *relational* in the sense that one can depend on God always to be true, always faithful. What goes for God must also go for His people in these senses, legal, ethical and relational.

The term ‘faithful God’ in the *RSV* of Psalm 31:5 is (*NASB*) the ‘God of truth’. Jeremiah 10:10 (*NRSV*) has it, ‘But the LORD is the true God’, that is, true in His being, and not simply true by contrast with the false gods. II Chronicles 15:3 (*NRSV*) says, ‘For a long time Israel was without the true God’. In this case Israel needed the God of truth, reliance, stability and help. Psalm 100:5 (*RSV*) says, ‘his faithfulness [is] to all generations’; and Psalm 146:6 (*AV*), ‘which keepeth truth for ever’, whilst the *RSV* has, ‘who keeps faith for ever’. These references help us to see the nature of truth as synonymous with ‘faithfulness’. This God who is ‘just and upright’ is not only the true God when compared with other gods, but essentially He is the God of truth, and as such is faithful to His Being and His Word.

The reflection of this basic stability, truth, faithfulness and righteousness should be Man. Made in the image of God he should have inward truthfulness or integrity: ‘thou desirest truth in the inward being’, David says to God in Psalm 51:6. The Psalmist prays ‘Lead me in thy truth, and teach me’. It is clear, then, that humanity is dependent upon ‘the only true God’ (John 17:3) for all things that have to do with truth and faithfulness. Whilst God requires this of Man, Man of himself is unable to be true and live in the truth. In this sense he is not competent to be a true witness.

TRUTH IN THE BEGINNING AND THE BEGINNING OF DECEIT

When, in answer to Jesus’ statement about his coming into the world to bear witness to the truth, Pilate asked, ‘What is truth?’, some think he was cynical and perhaps world-weary of the use of the word ‘truth’. The text does not wholly indicate that. He may even have desired an answer to his question: we do not know. What Jesus said—‘You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Every one who is of the truth hears my voice’ (John 18:37)—can be understood in a number of ways. If we take it that his kingship is not of this world then there is a sense in which his being king cannot be understood by Pilate, for Pilate might be alert to whether Jesus claims to be king in a political sense. He does not; his purpose in coming into the world—whether he be seen as king or not—is to bear witness to the truth. Pilate’s question is sensible; it is truth that Jesus speaks and those who are of the truth hear him.

That truth must be the truth of God, the truth which comes from God. It must be the truth that unrighteous Man is seeking to suppress or ‘hold down’, just as it is the truth of God that he has exchanged for a lie (Rom. 1:18–25). It must, as we have said, be the truth of God, yet a truth whilst in some sense known to Man yet is rejected by Man. It must be the truth of everything as God created, including God’s intention for His creation.

This brings us to Eden and the truth in which innocent Man lived, including the mandate given to him for being king over all the earth. We note that Jesus’ kingship was that of the second Adam, the kingship the first Adam abdicated when he fell. What we need to see here are two things, (i) whilst God had created all things by the word of truth, and had spoken the

truth to the first couple and Man had known the truth, yet (ii) Man listened to the word of the serpent, the word of deceit. This was changing the truth of God into a lie.

The history of the human race, therefore, is the constant conflict, the battle between the truth of God and what is not truth—whatever we may call that, such as ‘untruth’ or ‘the lie’. Deceit is the *method* used by Satan, evil powers and human beings who are outside the truth, especially those who oppose the truth. If we take the poison of deceit which entered the human scene at the Fall, then we understand John the apostle when he said certain people ‘lie and do not the truth’. A person lives according to the truth or lives according to the lie. He lies or *does* the truth.

It is on this basis we need to look at history and see that in the realm of unseen powers, as well as in human affairs, there is an acting and working ‘according to the truth’, or ‘according to the lie’. This latter system—that of evil—is often known as ‘the world’. In fact we will be seeing that throughout history evil is seeking to make the truth to seem to be the lie and the lie to seem to be the truth (cf. Isa. 5:20–23). On the side of the truth we will see there are other unseen powers and human persons in the system known as ‘the kingdom of God’ who are seeking to live by the truth and exposing the lie. Somewhat confusing is the fact there is the *sense* of truth in all celestial and terrestrial creatures. The unrighteous person knows the truth which he seeks to suppress. At the same time there are those who want to know and live by the truth, but are deceived. Others are plainly and bluntly for the lie. Others who are in the kingdom of God often find themselves caught in the lie, though they know that this ought not to be.

What, Then, is the Truth?

The truth is God Himself. When we say He is the true God we mean that He is essentially (ontologically) God. This is said against the gods and lords which do not have created existence, but are devised by evil human beings and evil powers. Many Scriptures speak of God as the true God, the truth, the God of truth, or the God of faithfulness. He is righteous. He does all things according to the truth. Thus His creation of the world and His design and intention for it is also within the total nature of truth. When He speaks of the creation as ‘good’ He means it is good in its function and has moral being. God’s plan for created Man is also good. All of this constitutes the truth. Included in this truth is God’s work to redeem, sanctify, glorify and perfect all things created by Him. In this is included His law: it is the law firstly of Himself, and then the law in which Man as His image is also called to live. All which does not operate according to the truth is false, the enemy of truth, and to be rejected.²

What, Then, is the Lie or the Untruth?

In the light of our former paragraph the lie is all that is against the truth; which does not operate according to it; which rejects the truth of God and devises its forms of deity and lordship; which worships what is other than God Himself; and which opposes the design and plan of God. This can be called ‘the evil’; as against ‘the good’. In all its creatures and forms it is opposed to the truth and seeks to subvert, transmogrify and destroy truth. It seeks to show truth as the lie. It is always vilifying the truth and vindicating itself. It seeks to topple God and take the reins of creation into its own hands. At this point we need to see the system of deceit into which man was drawn, and which operates within the creation, although it is foreign to its essential nature.

² For what we might call ‘the form of the truth’ see my *Truth the Golden Girdle* (NCPI, 1983) pp. 166–171.

THE WHOLE SYSTEM OF EVIL AND ITS DECEIT AGAINST THE TRUTH³

Satan the Deceiver

Revelation 12:9 says of the serpent, or dragon or Satan, that he is ‘the deceiver of the whole world’. This deception primarily refers to

- (i) *Angels*, since Satan in his rebellion took with him a third of the angelic powers (Rev. 12:4), and
- (ii) *Mankind*. The theme of Satan’s deception is repeated in Revelation 13:14 where Satan’s protege, the beast, ‘deceives those who dwell on the earth’.

In 19:20 Satan’s protege, the false prophet (prophet of falsity) is indicated as the deceiver. In 20:3 Satan is temporarily restrained from deceiving, but in 20:8 is liberated for a time in which he goes out to deceive the ‘nations which are at the four corners of the earth’, whilst in 20:10 Satan, the beast and false prophet who are deceivers, are all given over to punishment.

This action of deceiving extends, naturally, to the system of the world. In Revelation 18:23 Babylon, the world system, is said to have deceived the nations. In Matthew 24:24 a brood of false Christ’s and false prophets will arise from this system, seeking to deceive—if it were possible—even the elect. In II Corinthians 11:3 Paul says the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning. In II Thessalonians 2:3, 9, 11 the most incredible fraud of Satan is revealed, that is his attempt to be worshipped as God in the temple,⁴ which we take to be in the sanctuary of God, His own true people. In II Corinthians 11:14 we are told that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light, seeking to deceive mankind. Jesus unmasks him as a liar and a murderer (John 8:44). He says ‘He was a murderer from the beginning, and has *nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him*’. He adds, ‘When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for *he is a liar and the father of lies*’.

Man the Deceived and the Deceiver

In II Timothy 3:13 Paul speaks of those who are ‘evil men and impostors [who] will go on from bad to worse, [being] deceivers and deceived’. In Ephesians 4:14 he speaks of believers who are ‘tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles’. These are spoken of again in II Timothy 3:6f., the people who make their way into households and ‘capture weak women, burdened with sins and swayed by various impulses’, and these are ‘men of corrupt mind and counterfeit faith’.

Sin the Deceiver

Hebrews 3:12–14 gives good advice as it says ‘exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin’. Obadiah 3 calls it ‘The pride of your heart [which] has deceived you’. In Romans 7:11 Paul says, ‘sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, deceived me and by it slew me’. Sin uses the law, not only to incite provocatively to sin, but also to raise up Man’s pride to think that unaided he can be good and righteous. This is double-deceit.

The Deceiving Lusts

James speaks of the desires or lusts of the heart. He says ‘each person is tempted when he is enticed by his own desire’ (1:14). Paul calls the desires lusts, and speaks of

³ This section on the system of evil and its deceit is taken from LFS vol. 3, study 25, ‘What is Truth?’ (NCPI, 1978). It is slightly abridged.

⁴ It is true that Satan as such is not mentioned as ‘the man of lawlessness . . . the son of perdition’, but when we see the Beast in the Revelation is really a clone of the red dragon who himself is ‘that old serpent the devil’, then we can apply the same principle—it is Satan at root and core who is exalting himself.

‘the old humanity’ which is ‘corrupt[ing] through deceitful lusts’. Proverbs 11:18 describes the illusion lust gives; ‘The livelihood won by the wicked is illusory, but he who sows virtue reaps a solid reward’ (*Jer. Bible*), whilst Jeremiah says (49:16), ‘The horror you inspire has deceived you, and the pride of your heart’. Man then is caught in his deceiving lusts and cannot see the (moral) truth.

The Deceiving Gods, Lords, Idols

In Isaiah 44:20 the prophet speaks of the idolater, ‘He feeds on ashes; a deluded mind has led him astray, and he cannot deliver himself or say, “Is there not a lie in my right hand?”’ Idolatry, of course, derived from the rejection of the true God when Man decided he would raise up his own deities or dependencies, and attribute to them the attributes he desired. Strangely enough the gods make no moral demands, and though there be ‘gods many, and lords many’ (I Cor. 8:5), there are no true gods and no true lords (Isa. 26:12–14), so that Man is deluded by his gods.

The whole matter of deceit springs from ‘the father of lies’ who could not recognise the truth if he could see it, which he would not. Therefore the system of Satan, his angelic cohorts, his seducing spirits (I Tim. 4:1f.), the world system with its false wisdom (I Cor. 1:20ff.), and the deceived and deceiving spirit of Man with his sin and his deceitful lusts, is too horrific to contemplate. It is against this background that God reveals Himself as truth and as *the* truth.

GOD’S CONSTANT REVELATION OF THE TRUTH: GOD THE TRUE WITNESS

The deceit of sin led to the Fall. The Fall led to Cain’s situation where he could not see the truth. Abel was the man of truth, love and faith (Gen. 4:4; Heb. 11:4; I John 3:10–12). We have noted the link between faith, faithful, faithfulness and truth. Humanity is thus in two streams, the faithful and the unfaithful. Romans 1:18–25 shows unfaithful Man as knowing the truth which he deliberately suppresses by actions of wickedness. He keeps rejecting the truth. He exchanges it for a lie, and for the idols. This is the world into which all humanity is born. At this point we need to insert the reminder that in creating Man, God had His covenant with Adam and his descendants. Living in the lie is to deny the covenantal relationships with God. It is to set up a new system, or rather to coalesce with ‘the world’, the system of deceit over which Satan and his celestial powers are rulers. We can say the truth of God is His innate law which He gives to Man for his way of life. Were it not for grace the entire human race would perish, but grace brings forth faith and so, faithfulness, so one part of humanity knows the truth and does not suppress it.

Israel is the result of covenantal grace. It is given the gifts of ‘sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises . . . the patriarchs . . . the Christ’. Israel knows how to live in the truth for it has

- (i) the constant of the law;
- (ii) the priestly instruction (Mal. 2:5–7); and
- (iii) the prophetic exhortation to live in the truth, as also the predictive element of the truth.

At this point I would like to highly recommend the section on the theme of witness in the Old Testament in the monograph *The New Testament Concept of Witness* by Allison Trites, in his chapters on ‘witness’ in the Old Testament, particularly regarding quarrels and controversies, and especially regarding the controversy in Isaiah chapters 40 to 45. We cannot fully understand the meaning of ‘witness’ in the New Testament without realising, for example, that Israel was supposed to be God’s witness for Him as the truth, and for the truth (cf. Isa. 43:10, 12; 44:8). I am tempted to summarise his work in this Study, but at least we must understand from it that God never ceased to bear witness to Himself. As Paul said:

in past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways; yet *he did not leave himself without witness*, for he did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness (Acts 14:16–17).

The witnesses in the Old Testament were those of creation (cf. Ps. 19:1f.; Rom. 1:19–20), but also were all those who lived in faith. In Hebrews 12:1 there is ‘so great a cloud of witnesses’ to faith, which itself necessarily includes knowing the truth and living by it. When we come to the New Testament it should be with the idea that witness is the testimony to truth, of God as true, of Christ the incarnate Son of God witnessing to the truth, and even claiming to be the truth.⁵

WITNESS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The same idea of setting forth the truth of God is found in the New Testament. The juridical element is almost always present.⁶ Humanity has to be faced with the truth of God, as it is in Christ Jesus, and as made dynamic by the Holy Spirit. As of old, those faced with truth must decide for or against it, for or against God. Witnessing is direct to each person and demands an answer one way or the other. Refusing the evidence for the truth, the person comes under judgment. We saw in Acts 14:17 that Paul said, ‘he did not leave himself without witness’. We need, then, to establish for ourselves what is witness and who are witnesses in the New Testament.

Christ the True Witness to the Father, to the Truth

God as the I AM witnesses to Himself and will countenance no other as truth. Whilst His media of His communication to Man and creation also witness to Him, Jesus Christ far transcends such, as ‘the faithful and true witness’ (cf. Rev. 1:5; 3:14). John 1:14, 17 says, ‘And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father . . . For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ’. He has come from God and speaks only God’s words and shows only God’s acts, and in this sense witnesses to God *as the incarnate truth*. In John 8:40 Jesus speaks to the Jews, ‘now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God; this is not what Abraham did’.

This links with John 3:11–13 where Jesus shows he is the witness to where he has been, with God:

Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen; but you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man.

This thought is expanded in 3:31–36:

He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth belongs to the earth, and of the earth he speaks; he who comes from heaven is above all. He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony; he who receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for it is not by measure that he gives the Spirit; the Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand. He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him.

⁵ When in John 14:6 Jesus says he is the truth, he means he is the truth of the Father. It is this truth to which he came to witness (cf. John 18:37).

⁶ Recourse to Trites’ work on ‘The New Testament Concept of Witness’ is greatly helpful at this point. His thesis on ‘The Concept of Witness in the Fourth Gospel’ is that the whole book is juridical, that it is more an *apologia* than it is a book for Christian believers.

Christ has witnessed to the Father and the truth of Him must be received or rejected. In Revelation 1:5, 'Jesus Christ the faithful witness' is firstly witnessing to God the Father, and then to the truth. John 18:37 gives us perhaps our strongest verse in this regard, 'I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth'. John 1:18 contains the equivalent idea, for there he reveals the Father.

The Father Witnesses to the Son, the Truth

John 5:30–47 is a passage which speaks of a number of witnesses to Christ. Jesus says that his witness to himself is not valid, seeing the law demanded two witnesses apart from the accused. The first of the witnesses in this pericope is John the Baptist and undoubtedly it was the Father who sent him to bear witness to 'that Light', by saying, 'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world'. Jesus said, 'You sent to John, and *he has borne witness to the truth*'. Jesus then says that the works he has done bear witness that the Father has sent him. He prizes the Father's attestation. 'And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness to me.' He also says the Scriptures bear witness to him. In John 8:13 the Pharisees accuse him of bearing witness to himself, this being invalid. Jesus rejects the Pharisees' complaint, claiming that he has come from God, knows where he is going, and so being true, has a right to bear witness to himself: 'I bear witness to myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness to me', thus supplying two witnesses. In John 13:31–32 (cf. 12:28) Jesus says that the Father will glorify him, a statement amounting to the Father's testimony to him. It is clear from the words spoken at Jesus' Baptism and at his Transfiguration that the Father is witnessing to him as His Son and as the one whose words must be heard, heeded, and acted upon. In I John 5:9 the matter is summed up when John writes, 'If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God that he has borne witness to His Son'. Later in the Acts the preachers say, in effect, that God has testified to Christ as being His servant of truth by raising him from the dead, but this we will enlarge upon, below.

The Holy Spirit Directly Bears Witness to the Father and the Son

I John 5:7 says, 'And the Spirit is the witness, because the Spirit is the truth'. John was saying that there were three witnesses, the Spirit, the water and the blood, meaning the Baptism, the Cross, and the Spirit. At the Baptism the Spirit descended and Christ was baptised or anointed, in or by the Spirit. Hebrews 9:14 spoke of Christ offering himself up at the Cross through the eternal Spirit. Whether John was saying that the sacraments of Baptism and of the Eucharist (the blood) remained as standing witnesses does not greatly matter. The events do. In John 15:26 Jesus said, 'But when the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me', he was speaking of this witness against those who hated Christ. He was the Spirit who would 'convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment' (16:8); that is, he would show them the truth unmistakably. In John 16:13 is the basic verse regarding witness, 'When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come'. Verse 14 adds that he would glorify the Father and the Son, and this glorification is showing the nature of the two Persons, the equivalent of witnessing to them.

The Apostles and the Church Witness to the World through the Holy Spirit

Pentecost is the hour of the entirety of truth being brought to, revealed to, and received by, the apostolic community—some 120 persons assembled on the day of Pentecost. Jesus had told the disciples in John 15:26 – 16:15 that when the Spirit came they would be witnesses to him in the face of those who hated Christ, and for all who heard their word. We have seen

they would have all Christ's work and words brought to their remembrance, taught to them so that they would know all, that the Spirit would *guide them into all truth*, and unveil 'things to come'. In Luke 24:44–48 Jesus had said explicitly that they would be witnesses to him and the truth, but they needed to wait for the gift of the Spirit, the gift of power. Likewise in Acts 1:8 he had said they would be witnesses to him when the Spirit came upon them. We know that every element of Christ's incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension was wrought by the Spirit being present. No wonder he knew—and knows—the whole truth.

We grasp, then, the idea that witness in the New Testament is directly witness to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, and that that witness brings the revelation of the whole truth of God such as is called variously, 'the wisdom of God', 'the counsel of God', 'the mystery of God', 'the whole counsel of God', 'the plan of God' and 'the plan of the mystery'. It is really 'the truth of God' or 'the apostolic truth'. It is this witness which the church is supposed to bring. For the people of God to be God's witness to the world in the manner in which Israel was intended to be to the world before Christ became incarnate (cf. Exod. 19:5–6; I Pet. 2:9–10), was for the people not only to witness to Christ, but to the Father and His truth. This truth we call 'the apostolic truth'.

So, then, on the day of Pentecost the Spirit of truth came and revealed the truth to the apostles and the remainder of the assembled company (Acts 2:4ff.). The truth was Christ; the truth was the Father; the truth was the Triune God, His creation, its history especially as it was in Christ, and the things yet to come in history. Because the apostles and the people understood the truth of God they could now witness to it in the power of the Spirit, though not otherwise.

THE CHURCH THE PROPHETIC COMMUNITY

What we need to see is that on the day of Pentecost there was raised up a prophetic community. This is seen by the passage of Acts 2:16–21:

... this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

'And in the last days it shall be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and *your sons and your daughters shall prophesy*,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams;
yea, and on my menservants and my maidservants in those days
I will pour out my Spirit; and *they shall prophesy*.
And I will show wonders in the heaven above
and signs on the earth beneath,
blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;
the sun shall be turned into darkness
and the moon into blood,
before the day of the Lord comes,
the great and manifest day.
And it shall be that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved'.

It is clear that this is the prophesying community. It will remain thus until 'the day of the Lord comes, the great and manifest day'. The Holy Spirit has turned the community into witnessing people, for 'the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy' (Rev. 19:10). The Holy Spirit has shown them 'things to come' and what is coming is part of the prophetic message—it is the truth of God from the beginning to the conclusion of history.⁷

⁷ Christ has been shown to be Prophet, Priest and King. It is obvious that the Church must be the Prophetic Community, just as it must be the Priestly Community and the Royal (Kingly) Community. Even so, we have not used this doctrinal argument in order to set forth the Church as the Prophetic Community.

The Acts portrays a witnessing community. Jesus had said the apostles would be witnesses (1:8) and yet the whole community became that (2:4ff.; 2:16ff.; cf. 2:32). Constantly the statement is ‘To this we are witnesses’ (3:15; 5:32; cf. 10:39, 41; 13:31). Paul who was not a witness to the whole of Jesus’ ministry is named a witness, personally, by Christ (Acts 22:15, 18, 20; 26:16). In Acts 2 the witness of the community begins with the revelation of the apostolic truth and it is in that truth that the community operates (Acts 2:42). The whole truth of God is lived out in the life of the community which is first in ‘Jerusalem and all Judea’, which spreads to ‘Samaria’ and then flows out ‘to the uttermost part of the earth’ (Acts 1:8).

THE WITNESS TO THE TRUTH AND THE OPPOSITION OF SATAN AND HIS FORCES

What we would expect with the coming of Christ to be God’s total witness to the truth, and indeed to be the truth, witnessing by the power of the Spirit, was that Jesus would be fiercely opposed by the lying forces of evil. The four Gospels testify to this. A battle is waged throughout Jesus’ ministry, climaxing within his death. We saw that he warned his disciples of the battle yet to come. The Acts is a book which tells the story of that opposition. Paul gives his personal witness to it in many passages of his Letters, and warns his followers regarding the battle for the truth. Even some of the leaders will prove to be wolves in sheep’s clothing. He fears lest ‘as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning’ that the church be seduced by the one who ‘disguises himself as an angel of light’. Threat, deceit, lying and seduction are some of the methods Satan uses. If any one book of the Bible opens to us the picture of a church which witnesses to the truth, and of oppression of those witnesses, it is the Book of the Revelation.

The Book of the Revelation and the Witnessing Community

The New Testament has no message for the Church or the world today if the church has ceased to be the witnessing community. When we say ‘witnessing community’, we mean ‘the prophetic community’. We mean the community constantly receiving the apostolic truth through the Holy Spirit⁸ and proclaiming God, fully, to the world. This community we find livingly in the Revelation.⁹

The book is, itself, clearly a prophecy—‘the revelation of Jesus Christ’.¹⁰ At the beginning (1:1–2) we are told that John ‘bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ’. Revelation 19:10 says, ‘the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy’, that is, the testimony is the subject and substance of prophecy. In this case ‘the word of God’ is the truth to which testimony is borne. In 1:9 we see John is on the Island called Patmos ‘on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus’. We have the strong intimations of the cost of prophetic preaching and witness.

We must describe ‘the testimony of Jesus’. It is first the testimony which Jesus completed towards God and His truth, His word, by his life and ministry. It is the witness Jesus began in his incarnation and goes on giving in his present reigning at the right hand of God as he continues the Father’s plan (cf. I Cor. 15:24–28), and this compasses all that is in the Revelation.

⁸ It is clear that with the Spirit coming at Pentecost the community became the witnessing Church. In Acts 4:23–37, under a second outpouring of the Spirit, the witness was enriched and extended. In Samaria (ch. 8), Caesarea (ch. 10) and Ephesus (ch. 19) the witness grew with the coming of the Spirit. The emphasis in the Epistles to be continually filled with the Spirit indicates the constant source of revelation and proclamation.

⁹ I suggest reading my *The Revelation of St John the Divine* (NCPI, 1993) and especially the essay ‘The Testimony of Jesus in the Book of the Revelation’. Also helpful could be my monograph *Is Prophecy For Today?* (NCPI, 1982). Very helpful on the principle of prophecy and witness are *The New Testament Concept of Witness* by A. A. Trites, and *New Testament Prophecy* by David Hill (Marshall, Morgan and Scott, London, 1979).

¹⁰ It can mean either the book is the revelation of Jesus Christ, or it is the revelation of what was to happen which was given to Jesus Christ.

For believers who are the prophetic community it is that to which they witness, and they do this by ‘holding’ or ‘having’, through the Holy Spirit, the apostolic truth, which they proclaim by lip and life. To ‘have’ or to ‘hold’ the testimony means the person (community) proclaims prophetically and cannot do otherwise. The prophetic community lives in the testimony of Jesus and its actions are part of the working out of that testimony. That testimony began with creation and will climax in the new creation.

In 6:9–11 John the Seer sees under the altar ‘those who had been slain *for the word of God and for the witness they had borne*’. We begin to see the dreadful opposition of which Jesus had often spoken, and in particular in John 15:18 – 16:4, for he said this would happen when they witnessed, as he had witnessed to those who could not bear the truth. This was what happened in Jerusalem following the witnessing work of the Holy Spirit. In Revelation 11:1–13 we have the witness of two special witnesses—who are prophets—whose testimony is so dynamic as to disturb evil forces and cause the two of them to be killed. In 12:1–6 we have the red dragon seeking to destroy the woman’s male child, without success. In 12:11 the red dragon is conquered by the people of God ‘by *the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony*, for they loved not their lives even unto death’. Yet later in the chapter, ‘Then the dragon was angry with the woman, and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those *who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus*’.

In 20:4 the martyrs are described as having come to life and to be reigning with Christ in what has been called ‘the millennium’. Finally in chapter 22 we come to many comments regarding ‘the words of this book’, ‘this testimony for the churches’, ‘the prophecy of this book’, with the warning to add nothing to it or take nothing away from it. The angel tells John the Seer, ‘I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren the prophets’, thus confirming the prophetic nature of the witnessing community.

THE DYNAMICS OF JUSTIFICATION AND FORGIVENESS OF SINS

It is a fact of life that when we are unsure of ourselves, when we are met by ‘the fierce Accuser’—Satan—and we listen to him and even argue with him, that our hearts sink, for we are in the bog of self-justification. The more we struggle, the deeper we go down. Being justified is not simply an act of grace which relieves us of the guilt of our sins—though of course it does that—but it is an act by which we are strengthened and motivated to live by the truth which grace has brought to us. Justification is the high wall which prevents Satan and all anti-truth powers from getting to us and felling us. If we weaken but slightly on this reality of justification we will not be able to proclaim the truth. We live by ‘the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me’. All the truth of the Cross and Resurrection kept fresh to heart and mind by the witnessing Spirit is that which enables us to proclaim the glorious message of justification and forgiveness and be strong witnesses to the truth.

CONCLUSION: THE DYNAMICS OF WITNESSING

In the Revelation we touched only the edges of the prophetic living and action of the witnessing community. Great principles can easily be seen in regard to proclaiming the ‘everlasting gospel’ to the whole world and the consequent rage and persecution by the powers of darkness. All of this is the action and substance of the ‘testimony of Jesus’ and the community’s witness to it by participation. Unless we are prophetic in nature and action we will be quite ignorant of the meaning of ‘the testimony of Jesus’ and the present work of prophetic witness. We must seek no other means of ministry than the prophetic one, recognising, of course, that it is at the same time both priestly and royal—‘a kingdom of priests’. All three constitute the one community whose Head is Christ—Prophet, Priest, and King, from whom the church derives its powerful life.

We have two simple questions to ask: firstly, ‘Is the Church, today, the witnessing Church?’ Is it then filled with the Holy Spirit, anointed and knowing the great truth of God, of Christ, of the gospel? Has it discovered the apostolic truth and is that the truth it is teaching? By dint of endeavour we might rationalise that it has ‘the four marks of the church’—‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’—but when we look closer, is this so? Does it proclaim the apostolic gospel or has it presumed to modify and even change it. There is a dire warning for such who do take from or add to the witness of Christ, and a rich reward for those who ‘hold the testimony of Jesus and keep God’s commands’. Secondly, is the church as in Revelation 12:10–11, the church that overcame the red dragon ‘by the blood of the Lamb and the word of its testimony, for they loved not their lives unto death’. Are we the wimp church, the church afraid to testify to the truth, no matter what the consequences?

Extra Note

In passing we may note that a person who researched the McCarthy trials in the USA came up with the conclusion that no man can speak the truth, not in totality. In this political witch-hunt for those who were communists or communist fellow-travellers, the researcher pointed out that judges, witnesses, defendants and the lot, all had some personal bias or prejudice for or against communism, and in the light of that could not tell the truth. We are quite aware of propaganda which uses lies and disinformation, and of the techniques of media to create situations for their own agendas. We are also aware of our own ‘white lies’, our own ‘hidden agendas’ which we connive to carry out. Today we have what we call ‘spin doctors’ who have techniques by which they evade the confrontation of truth and slip in their own agendas. Recognising that Man is not competent to be a witness to the truth, we need to recognise that were it not for God’s insistence in grace upon us being born by ‘the word of truth’ (James 1:18; Eph. 1:13), we would all live the lie. Only in the continuity of witnessing will the truth be known. To testify is to be put on the spot regarding our ‘trusting it in love’ and speaking the truth with our neighbour (Eph. 4:15, 25).

The Gospel of the Kingdom of Love

PROCLAIMING THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD AS LOVE

This year (1998) our theme has been 'Proclaiming the Whole Counsel of God'. By this we have meant 'proclaiming the gospel', and whilst we agree that the gospel understood as 'the good news' (*euangelion*) and 'the proclamation' (*kerugma*) has a form of presentation, yet that form involves the whole of salvation history, that is, God's creation in covenant and all that is protological, historical–soteriological, eschatological and teleological. Obviously the whole counsel of God is introduced by the proclamation, but requires a full teaching of the mind and plan of God for all creation. This latter must include the full meaning and action of the Covenant of God and the Kingdom of God. If we examine the sermons in the Acts, of Peter, Stephen and Paul, and do further research in the Apostolic Epistles to discover what was the apostolic truth, then we see two things: (i) that there was a simple but profound proclamation that was made to Jews and Gentiles which made sense to the hearers who wished to hear, and (ii) that this was immediately supplemented by extension of teaching further material to those who were converted, namely the filling out of 'the whole counsel of God'. Even so, we must not make the mistakes of thinking that (i) the proclamation or *kerugma* did not have a full presentation of the saving work of God, and (ii) that there was a line of demarcation between proclamation (*kerugma*) and teaching (*didache*)¹.

Both, together, constituted 'the whole counsel of God'. In I John 2:20–27 the author indicates that believers have 'an anointing from the Holy One' and they all know or 'know all things'. This is because the Holy Spirit has given them understanding of the apostolic truth of God, that is, the truth God gave to the apostles. Again, John in his First Epistle indicates that the new birth makes vast changes in the person to whom that fresh birth has come.

In the light of the truth we proclaim as the gospel, do we recognise that things which bring faith, hope and love to birth are essentially part of the gospel, and may be included in gospel presentation? For example, should the matter of the *eschaton* and the *telos* be proclaimed, namely the things of judgment, of resurrection and eternal life? We do find them included in some apostolic sermons. In the Book of the Acts the word 'love' is not mentioned, yet it is part of the modern evangelist's stock in trade. We cannot conceive leaving out John 3:16 from a gospel presentation, and it is the aim of proclaimers to tell their hearers that God is love and that He loves them. I John 4:7–10 (cf. I John 2:2; 3:16; 4:15) seems to be the classic way of speaking of God and salvation, and here (i) knowledge of God as love comes by new birth,² and (ii) God shows His love by sending Christ into the world to bring life to people through the Father, making him to be 'the propitiation for our sins'. We conclude that the teaching of God as love is true gospel.

At this point we ask, 'If the nature of God as love is a true part of the gospel linked with the giving of eternal life, then would the proclamation of *God as love* and *His purpose in love* to redeem, sanctify, glorify and perfect all creation—Man included—be also teaching which should relate to gospel-preaching, and certainly be part of 'the whole counsel of God'? We are now looking at our heading 'The Gospel of the Kingdom of Love' and our subheading, 'Proclaiming the Whole Counsel of God as Love'. We are saying that proclamation must be

¹ Some decades ago textual scholars saw 'gospel' (*kerugma*) as one matter, and teaching (*didache*) as another. They are really of the one piece. It is true, nevertheless, in I Corinthians 2:6f., that Paul indicates further teaching to be given where receptivity is present.

² Unfortunately new birth is looked upon as a small matter. To be born of the Spirit should not be thought of as other than being baptised in the Spirit, of the experience such as the people knew on the day of Pentecost. This vivid revelation of God as love brings all the truth to the new born persons. Love is then known, and with it 'the whole counsel of God'.

made in love and be about love, and then we are saying that the whole counsel of God—the proclaimed gospel and subsequent teaching—is all about love.

Before we enter into the matter of God’s love as constituting the counsel of God in full, let us ask another question. ‘Is it legitimate, indeed is it mandatory, to present the matter of God’s love because the revelation of it is part of the great offer of God to beleaguered sinners? Is it legitimate and mandatory also to present other gifts of God such as Christ (‘the unspeakable gift’), salvation, clearance from judgment, eternal life, ultimate glorification and similar matters? Could it be that in failing to present these we are in fact not preaching the gospel in full, and withholding the whole counsel of God? This seems to indicate that ‘the gifts [things]³ bestowed on us by God’ are needful for us to know in order to truly know and understand God and His love. Surely it is valid to present the promises that are inherent in the gospel for they do not come as bribes but as munificent grace, and can rightly win the hearts of sinners. It is fair enough, here, to observe that if anyone believed the gospel but did not see God as love that they would be missing the very heart of the gospel. To know God is love must be the most heart-warming experience of all.

THE LOVE OF GOD AND GOD’S INTENTIONS OF LOVE

When we quote John 3:16 we are saying that God loves the whole world, not only all the people in it, and not just the elect people of God. We are saying that His love is such that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. It is nigh impossible for us to believe this and *not* see God as love. To see and know God is love comes by the revelation God gives through His word and His Spirit, and not just by the mere statement of the proposition ‘God is love’.⁴ Doubtless the statement is a proposition, but it must come as a revelation based on the fact that God has moved to save us through giving His Son for the life of the world. No one can possibly understand the reality of God loving the world without a revelation.

If we say that God is love we need to be sure that we understand the matter not only as dogmatic theology, but as it is significant in knowing and understanding Who God is, and what He is about. John’s First Letter has the two statements, ‘God is love’, and ‘God is light’. In theology we would understand them propositionally—as two facts to know and keep in mind. We could say, ‘God is holy’, and ‘God is love’. For John God’s being holy would be linked with his understanding of God’s holiness in Israel and in Christ, and God being love would likewise go back to creation, covenant and the law, and then the revelation of love in Jesus Christ. Both light and love would be significant for His people and their whole manner of life. For example, one either walks in darkness or one walks in light; one hates or one loves—and so on.

In this paper I am suggesting that we should see that God is love,⁵ holy love, and that as love, what He was and is about in covenant, creation, the history of His people, Christ and the church, the final triumph of history and the marvellous things of the new age and eternity. I am proposing that as the God of Covenant and Kingdom He is leading to the goal of the

³ The text is saying that ‘the *gifts* bestowed on us by God’ are ‘the *things* bestowed on us *freely* (*charizomai*) by God’ and that these things comprise all that God has given us. The Spirit is needed by us to teach us to know them since by knowing we will understand the ‘deeps of God’ (I Cor. 2:10–11).

⁴ Well worth studying is Eberhard Jüngel’s essay, ‘What Does It Mean to Say, “God is Love”?’ in the book *Christ in Our Place* which is a collection of essays in honour of James Torrance, edited by Trevor A. Hart and Daniel P. Thimell, and published by Paternoster Press (Exeter, Great Britain), and Pickwick Publications (Allison Park, Pennsylvania, 1989), pp. 294–312. Different, but I believe quite helpful, is my own book *Ah, Strong, Strong Love* (NCPI, 1993) which has a wide coverage of the biblical teaching of God’s love.

⁵ It might seem incredible to suggest that we should *come* to know God is love when the matter is so apparent from Scripture and it would be foolish to think otherwise. Whilst any proposition may be acceptable, it is not necessarily certain that to have grasped an idea is to have had a revelation concerning it. That God is love is a mystery, and we need God’s revelation to know that mystery. No one has the right to accuse us of not knowing God is love, but we have a responsibility to be certain that we really know this.

Kingdom of love, and that that will be the final outcome of history as He plans and directs it. Simply put it means the God of the everlasting covenant leads us to, and brings us into, the Kingdom of love. I am suggesting that we do not read history aright when we do not read it this way. My hope is that those of us who understand it this way will have a great gift to offer both in our proclamation of the gospel, and in our teaching of the whole counsel of God, to say nothing of the joy of living now in the Kingdom of God, and of inheriting that Kingdom for all, and in all, eternity. To know God is love and so to love Him and others is the totality of human living.

The Kingdom of Love: A Preliminary Note

When Paul called the Kingdom, ‘the Kingdom of the Son of His love’ he was saying that this Kingdom is ruled by the Lord and King of love. Its subjects are subjected to love, and they love. A simple way to see this is to see the life of the Kingdom as it is described in the Sermon on the Mount where the Law and its laws are set forth. It is to see its subjects who are members of Christ’s Body, the church. These are they who love one another as Christ loves them, having given his life for his Bride. It is the Kingdom in which the fruit of the Spirit are brought forth. It is the Kingdom of holy love, the Kingdom of heaven and of God the loving Father. It is the Kingdom where there is ‘righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit’. When did this Kingdom begin and what makes it the Kingdom of love?

GOD IS LOVE, THE ETERNAL KING OF THE KINGDOM: KNOWING GOD AS LOVE

Knowing God as Love Is by Revelation

We trust that many of us know God as love, but it is helpful to be able to bring people to know that God is love, and what we have here is good material for such a ministry. In I John 4:7–8 the Apostle wrote, ‘Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love.’ Here the one ‘born of God’ knows God and so loves all others. ‘Born of God’ represents the birth ‘from above’ which Jesus stressed in John 3:1–14. In the New Testament this birth is widely spoken of and is the same as ‘the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit’ as in Titus 3:5–7. By the Holy Spirit the full truth comes to the believing person who is baptised. The Holy Spirit, who is the ‘Spirit of truth’, leads ‘into all truth’. Thus all that Christ was and did in the Father is revealed to the object of the Spirit’s ministry and so God is known as love. Later we will return to the New Testament on this matter of knowing God as love by revelation of the Holy Spirit.

A Theology of Love in the Kingdom of Love

A theologian once said, ‘The love of God is the most theological thing of all’. We have seen in past studies that in the Triune Godhead it is the Father Who is love, the Son who is the Son of His love, and the Holy Spirit who, being the Spirit of the Father and the Son, is the Spirit of love. We have also seen that God in His immanent (ontological) Being is Covenantal. His love is covenantal. When He creates, His covenant is innate in Man who is his image. Man is in the everlasting covenant of God. God in His immanent Being as Trinity subsists in the fullness of *perichoresis* or *circumincessio*. That is, there is a flow which circulates throughout the Trinity and this flow is of honouring, serving, giving and receiving, which is another way of saying, loving. All of this is called *opera ad intra* and Man is in this image. God as ‘economic Trinity’, works in creation, redemption and the final things of

sanctification, glorification and perfection of His creation. These works of love are called *opera ad extra*. This is the *perichoresis* of the Godhead working outwardly.⁶

God is King over all creation and His Kingdom is His rule over all things. Because He is love, creation is a love creation. It is based on love, on the nature of God. Man, likewise, is a love creature. That is his essential nature. He is the King's vice-regent, showing the King to all creation. He is a love creature because he is in the everlasting covenant of God; and is shown that covenantal love. We have to realise Man is supported by the everlasting outflow from God into him. God never falters in love and never breaks His Covenant.

God Shows His Love in History

The primal couple were love creatures in the Kingdom of God as it was in Eden, and in the covenant innate in their creation as the image of God. They should have set the rest of creation for love as did Christ as the Second (and last) Adam. The serpent seduced Eve and she, Adam. Hatred began in Eden. Whilst Abel begins the line of love-and faith people (I John 3:10–11; Heb. 11:4ff.), Cain begins the line of hatred people. Genesis 6:5 tells the story of the universal growth of hatred and violence which demanded the judgment of the Flood. God's love is shown in the reiteration of the everlasting covenant with Noah. The Patriarchs can be shown to be in the love-line by virtue of the everlasting covenant, that is, by 'faith working through love' (Gal. 5:6).⁷ Israel was designed to be a nation witnessing to God and His covenant love.⁸

The tracing of love in Israel is a vast subject. The Pentateuch deals in detail with God's love for Israel.

The Book of Deuteronomy teaches (i) God's elective love for Israel on the basis of His covenant with the Patriarchs (cf. 7:6–11), and that elective love demands refusal to know and love idols; (ii) the 'Ten Words'—the Decalogue—demand love from Israel to its Covenant Lord (Deut. 5:6–21), and also love mutually to neighbours; (iii) God's judgments upon those who do not love Him or their neighbours take up many chapters, emphasising the love of God is holy; (iv) God, having brought severe judgments on the nation will restore His people in His covenant love, and will, so to speak, *force* them to love Him, as in 30:6, 'And 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'; (v) this Deuteronomic treatment of love is the theme of many of the prophets. The importance of knowing God as love is emphasised by Jeremiah (9:23–24),⁹ and God's declarations of love—when Israel might well have thought He hated them—are found in such passages as Ezekiel 16; Isaiah 54:1–10; Hosea chapters 1 and 2 (cf. 4:1–6 and 6:1–6 for the knowledge which is knowing the love of God) and chapter 11; and (vi) one of the most important and moving aspects of love is God's viewing of Israel as His bride and His determination to purify her. This principle is seen in the New Testament with Christ as the Bridegroom and the church as the Bride.

In the New Testament the love of God is shown by God sending His Son into the world to save it, to reveal Himself as Father of His covenant people, and to effect His purposes set before the creation of the world. For all this see Ephesians chapter 1 and note that the

⁶ Many theologians are saying that there is no need to see the Trinity as immanent and economic. The Persons are one in their being and action. Man as true image is created to reflect all of the Triune God.

⁷ Abraham showed his love for God at Mt Moriah, a love in which he placed his obedience to God above saving his son Isaac. Jacob battled on the issue of love but his reconciliation with his brother Esau seems genuine. Jacob's love for God and his own family had its problems but basically he was 'a prince of God'.

⁸ Exodus 19:5–6—on which I Peter 2:9–10 casts more light—shows Israel was to witness to God as His priest-nation in the world. In Isaiah 40–45 Israel is to witness of God to the nations. This matter of Israel's love is a profound theme. Beyond what we briefly show in the text following this note, God's love and Man's love for God and his neighbour is a profound theme in the Old Testament. It would take a long study to compass it.

⁹ This statement must be linked with Exodus 34:6–7 where God's covenantal love is indeed the glory of Himself which He showed to Moses. It is often repeated, almost as a refrain. See Numbers 14:18; Deuteronomy 4:31; Nehemiah 9:17; Psalm 86:15; 103:6; 145:8; Jonah 4:2.

predestining of all things was ‘in love’ (1:3–14, especially v. 5). Jesus is ‘the Son of His love’ and at the same time Head of the church and King of the Kingdom of God (Eph. 1:22; 5:5). Through Christ—the New Man—Jew and Gentile will be made one in the family of God (Eph. 2:11–22), and all things will be reconciled by Christ as also ‘summed up’, ‘filled up’, and ‘harmonised’ (Col. 1:19–21; Rom. 5:11; Eph. 4:10; Col. 3:15). We will treat the matter of love in the New Testament in more detail as we link it with the Kingdom of God.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND ITS NATURE AND POWER

When we say ‘Kingdom of God’ or ‘Kingdom of Heaven’, we are simply talking about the rule of God. The Kingdom of God¹⁰ is a title which tells us it is not the kingdom of man, the kingdom of darkness, or the kingdom of the ruler of this world who is Satan. When we say ‘the Kingdom of heaven’, we mean that it is not the kingdom of earth. It is primarily celestial. The meaning of the Kingdom of God is that God has ever been King over all things. In this world that reign goes on, albeit He also rules over rebels who have their own kingdom, the kingdom of this world. The kingdom of this world may have Satan as its ruler but it is over-ruled by God. God has created all things and thus has the right to rule all He has created. We cannot treat so vast a subject in a paper such as this one, but the reality of the Kingdom does lend itself to our aim, which is to preach the Kingdom of God as being of the nature of the gospel, especially as it is ‘the Kingdom of the Son of His Love’ and therefore necessarily the Kingdom of love.

In the Old Testament Israel knew that their Lord God was King over all the earth. Zechariah 14:9 says, ‘the LORD will become king over all the earth; on that day the LORD will be one and his name one’. This is the same king as in Zechariah 9:9. The many references to ‘the Son of man’ as in Daniel 7:9–14, and to ‘the anointed one’ (Messiah) as in Psalm 2 (cf. Ps. 110, Isa. 11:1ff., and other places), can be linked with the Kingdom of God, especially with reference to the Davidic kingship of II Samuel 7:14f., and Psalms 89 and 145. The Davidic kingship is certainly attributed to Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

Our interest lies in the Old Testament prophecies and the peace which was to come to Israel and the whole world as in Isaiah 2:1–4; 4:2–6; 9:5–7; 11:1–10; 32:15–19; 65:17ff.; 66:22–23. Other prophecies do not specifically mention the pacific situation so much as they speak of the victory of God which establishes Israel as His kingdom over the nations of the earth (cf. Isa. 24:23; Obad. 21; Micah 4:6f.; Zech. 14:9–17).

In the New Testament the Kingdom of God was ‘at hand’ in the Synoptic Gospels. In fact Jesus was the King and in this sense was the Kingdom.¹¹ In Matthew 12:28 Jesus said, ‘But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you’, which comports with Acts 10:38 where Peter said, ‘how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him’. This verse opens up to us the matter of the conflict between the Kingdom of God and that kingdom of the devil. Christ has come ‘to destroy the works of the devil’ (I John 3:8). These works began in Eden and they are works which seek to make human beings the enemies of God and of one another. Christ’s works are to liberate men and women who are in bondage to Satan (cf. Heb. 2:14–15; Col. 2:14–15). His quoting Isaiah 61:1–2 at Nazareth showed he had come to set the captives free.

¹⁰ For a coverage of the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan see my book *The Clash of the Kingdoms* (NCPI, 1989). It contains a helpful reading list up to the date of its publication. Articles on ‘The Kingdom of God’ in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 3 (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1986), pp. 23–29, by George Ladd, and in the *Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1975), pp. 801–809, by J. H. Marshall, are helpful treatments.

¹¹ In John 18:36 Jesus said, ‘My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from the world’. The word ‘kingship’ is *basilea* or ‘kingdom’ but the RSV translation here is very helpful. Jesus’ kingdom is not political but from God. It is the kingdom of truth and Jesus has come into the world to bear witness to it (18:37).

In both the Kingdom parables (cf. Matt. 13) and the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. chs 5 to 7), Jesus expounds the nature of the Kingdom. The Sermon on the Mount has been seen as an exposition of the nature of the Kingdom, and the way in which men and women live in that Kingdom. *Without doubt it is the way of love.* The ‘blessed’ (Matt. 5:3–11) are those who have the right mind regarding life in this world, which is really life in the Kingdom. It can equally be said to be life lived in the law of God. Jesus has not come to disestablish ‘the law and the prophets’ but to establish them, that is to say, affirm them as the way of living in the Kingdom. Some have said that Jesus radicalised ‘the law and the prophets’, and although that may appear to be the case, yet it is simply that he revealed the true nature of ‘the law and the prophets’. We repeat that the way of life of the Sermon on the Mount is really the way of love. This is emphasised in the words of 5:43–48 where the command is to love one’s enemies and do good to them, a thought quite new to Israel, and indeed to us.

The parables actually hide the secrets of the Kingdom to those who do not have ears to hear. Only some are given to understand the mysteries of the Kingdom (13:11). The parables speak of the works of the devil in opposing the Kingdom and of the defeat both of the devil and evil human beings. Whilst Jesus is effective in his ministry of the Kingdom, the defeat of the enemies of the Kingdom—and hence the victory of the Kingdom—cannot be accomplished apart from the events of the Cross, the Resurrection, the Ascension and the Reigning of Jesus at the right hand of God. One factor responsible for the defeat of Satan’s kingdom, was Christ’s destruction of human guilt, that weapon which all evil forces used to accuse Man and keep him under bondage.

THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM

The church is not the Kingdom; neither is the Kingdom the church. The church is that body of persons redeemed and called out to be the new and true people of God. All have been accessed into the Kingdom by Christ as Colossians 1:13–14 describes it, ‘He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins’. Believers enter into the Kingdom by the new birth as Jesus showed in John 3:1–6. They are in the Kingdom, but they are yet to inherit the Kingdom, that is, possess it for ever in ‘the age to come’. In one sense the Kingdom of God *is* the age to come. For this reason believers are warned against certain attitudes and actions which would prevent them inheriting the Kingdom (I Cor. 6:9–10; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5).

The Apostles proclaimed the Kingdom. In Acts 1:3–8 we read:

To them he presented himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the kingdom of God. And while staying with them he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, ‘you heard from me, for John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ So when they had come together, they asked him, ‘Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’ He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.’

The subject Jesus taught the apostles during the forty days was the Kingdom of God. He then told them ‘not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father’. The ‘promise of the Father’ was the Holy Spirit (cf. Luke 24:49). Jesus added, which ‘you heard from me, for John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit’. The apostles recognised that the Kingdom of God and the baptism of the Spirit were linked. Thus they asked him, ‘Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’ His answer, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth’, meant

that the restoration of the Kingdom was not to be limited to Israel but was to be for all nations, and the Holy Spirit would aid them in witnessing to him, the Christ, the King of the Kingdom. This, in fact, is what happened in ‘Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth’.

Whilst John the Baptist and Jesus had preached the gospel of the Kingdom,¹² that gospel awaited the work of Jesus in his ministry, the Cross, the Resurrection, Ascension and Reigning. It was this kind of gospel we hear of in the Acts. The presentation of the Kingdom of God we find in Acts 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, and 31, and these references ought to be perused.

The matter of the Kingdom is pursued in the Epistles but on the whole it is the church which is in the focus. One important statement is in I Corinthians 15:24–28:

Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ‘For God has put all things in subjection under his feet.’ But when it says, ‘All things are put in subjection under him,’ it is plain that he is excepted who put all things under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to every one.’

This short passage is really a summary of the whole of the Book of the Revelation. It is in Revelation that we see the ultimate triumph of the Kingdom. The steps to achieving the Kingdom victory are set out somewhat differently in the Revelation, but the end is the same. In the end we see all evil defeated, destroyed, and the Kingdom of God come in all its fullness. The kingdom of Satan, which is the kingdom of darkness, is defeated. The church plays a large part in this defeat (cf. 6:9–11; 11:17–18; 12:11; 14:1–5; 15:1–4; 19:14f.; 21:7). The sealing of that victory is the marriage of the Bride and the Lamb.

THE KINGDOM OF LOVE

It has taken a long investigation to come to the conclusion that the Kingdom of God is the Kingdom of love. The statement of Colossians 1:13–4 that we have been transferred by God into the Kingdom of the Son of His love should be sufficient to show it is the Kingdom of love. A statement such as Romans 14:17, ‘For the kingdom of God is not [matters of] food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit’, should be enough to tell us it is of that quality of the pacific time of Messiah as prophesied in some of our Old Testament references. When I Corinthians 4:20 says, ‘the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power’, then we should see that it is a strong Kingdom, confirming what we read about it in the Revelation.

Even so, we have needed to see even more than this, because the plan of God, even before creation, was to have a Kingdom of love. We have talked about the wonder of the gospel which can offer such a Kingdom to sinful men and women who long for love, but have not known that love which is *agape*, but only love which is *eros*.¹³ God’s plan for His people to know His love for all eternity must be read from the Scriptures and be wholly understood. The love we would know in the Kingdom is that of the Triune God in His relational Being. It is that love which flows in the *perichoresis* so the Three Persons subsist as love. It is of this love that we now speak.

¹² ‘The gospel of the kingdom’ as presented by John and Jesus was virtually that of Isaiah 52:7, ‘Your God reigns!’. It awaited the full ministry of Jesus as he filled out the gospel of salvation. The term ‘the gospel of the Kingdom’ is still a legitimate one, but only when we see it incorporates the saving work of Christ and the Satan-defeating work of Christ. As used by Jesus, this term ‘the gospel of the kingdom’ may well have had the work of the Cross and Resurrection in mind.

¹³ We mean that *eros* is human love and at its very best is greatly deficient. *Agape*—the love of God which came to us in creation—is the powerful love known in God’s Kingdom and marvellous in its effects.

THE MATTER OF THE LOVE OF GOD IN THE KINGDOM OF LOVE

Paul explains that our knowledge and experience of love come from the Spirit being poured into our hearts (Rom. 5:5). He shows us the love of God by what God has done to redeem us and we read of this in Romans 5:5–11. John has a kind of thesis which is similar to Paul's. He says God's love is shown by what He does. That is, He sends His Son into the world that we might have life (cf. John 10:10), and this through offering His Son up to be 'the propitiation for our sins' (I John 4:9–10; cf. Rom. 3:24f.). Of course it is the Son who shows the Father and then the Holy Spirit who shows the Son. Thus we come to know in reality that 'God is love', and to this we now give further thought:

The Father Is Love

This is seen in I John 4:7–20. He is *fons divinitatis*, the fountain of Deity and the source of love for the Godhead, and for Man and the remainder of creation. Some Scriptures which speak of His love for humanity are John 3:16, Ephesians 2:4 passim; II Thessalonians 2:16, and Romans 8:39. His love for His Son was before the world (John 17:24). It is expressed in John 3:35, 10:17–18, 15:9, and 17:23, 24, 26. At the Baptism and Transfiguration the Father spoke of His beloved Son. His love is that of the Father to us, as also it is to the Son, and then to us *in* the Son (Eph. 1:6).

The Son Is 'the Son of His Love'

That is, he has been ever generated from the love of the Father. His love for the Father is there where his Father loves him. As the Father loves him for laying down his life (John 10:17–18) so he shows his love for the Father in that act. This is substantiated by John 14:30 where he says, 'but I do as the Father has commanded me, that the world may know that I love the Father'.

The Son's love for us is shown in John 13:34; 15:9; Romans 8:35; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 3:17–19; 5:2; I John 3:16; and Revelation 1:5.

The Spirit Is the Spirit of Love

In the mutual coinhering of the Three Persons the Spirit loves the Father and the Son. He is the Spirit of them both. So it is the Spirit who pours the love of God into our hearts (Rom. 5:5). Moreover he is given to us and so maintains the reality of love in our lives. Paul asks for prayer 'by the love of the Spirit' (Rom. 15:30), and is glad to hear of the Colossians walking in love in the Spirit (Col. 1:8). For those of the church to 'walk in love' (Eph. 5:1–2) is to 'walk in the Spirit' (Gal. 5:16, 25), for it is the work of the Spirit within Christ's people which causes them to bear 'the fruit of the Spirit', the first of which is love, as also the remaining eight are elements of love.

Loving God and Others

The Apostle John gives us the principle of love. 'We love, because he first loved us'. That He first loved us is evident. To be loved is the highest experience a human being can know. This gives meaning and joy to all life. For God to love a person is of inexpressible joy to that one. That one then moves into loving another and others, and that is an experience no less wonderful. This is the love which can be perfected in the loving believers (I John 2:5; 4:12). In short, the person is living as Man was intended to live and so knows the richness of life. The first remarkable thing is that because God loves them human beings come to love God. At the same time they come to love their fellow-creatures. The Father is loved as the Father: human beings know true Father-love with all that that means, such as having fulfilment far

beyond what they may have been cheated of in human fatherhood or family and societal life. Loving others means those who love have grown beyond infantile narcissism and the evil of hatred or neglect of others.

Firstly, then, we love the Father as we read in Romans 8:28, I Corinthians 2:9, and James 2:5. It is a miracle that we love Him whose enemies we were (Rom. 5:10; Eph. 2:3; Col. 1:21; cf. I John 4:10). Yet simultaneously we love the Son. Peter wrote, ‘. . . Jesus Christ. Without having seen him you love him; though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy’. Paul said, ‘If any one has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed’. Knowing Christ’s love and refusing to love him would be intolerable. We do not speak about loving the Holy Spirit, but then, why not? He is the loving Spirit as well as the Spirit who loves. Being loved by God and loving Him we thus come to love others—all others including our enemies. Love knows no partiality. To hate in the heart is to be a murderer (I John 3:15) and to say we love God but do not love a brother is to be a liar (I John 4:20).

It is clear from the Book of Acts that from Pentecost onwards those of that early Christian community had a deep, rich love for one another. They were moved to give what possessions they had to help others such as the widows, orphans and other poor and needy persons. II Corinthians chapters 8 and 9 tell us of the love of the European churches for their brethren in Palestine.

CONCLUSION: WE HAVE A GOSPEL OF LOVE TO PROCLAIM

Have we established the fact that the Kingdom of God is the Kingdom of love? Have we seen it as the universal Kingdom of love, the fulfilment of the prophets? Have we realised the enormous power of love to transform men and women, to heal their lives, and to set them sharing the gospel of love with yet others? Do we realise that this Kingdom has already defeated the kingdom of darkness where hatred, envy, violence and such have held sway in the lives of many? Do we realise that the love we know is God’s *agape*, God’s gift-love which loves unconditionally, flowing as it does from God’s covenant love, from His Triune Being which is Love? Do we understand that love is what we were created for—to be loved, to live in love and to love? Do we mistake God’s love for that other self-love called *eros* which looks for returns, which does not really give unconditionally, and which turns to anger and even hate when it is thwarted, when it does not receive the returns of *eros* which it looks for?

One thing we must not miss, and that is the revelation of God as love by the Spirit at the time of our being born again—born from above. Only the experience which came as a result of the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, in Samaria, in Caesarea and at Ephesus can show the whole of the love of God in Christ. John said, ‘he who loves is of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love’. This, as we have seen, is not just a theological proposition, but a great mystery which has been opened so that now the sinner knows God is love and loves Him as such.

Finally, have we realised that God planned this Kingdom of love before the foundation of the world when He gave the Son His glory in His love? Have we, then, understood that this is God’s great purpose and intention in creation?

So, then, we of the church, which is the body of the folk who love Christ, are in the Kingdom of love. We have great hope because we look forward to the time when this unspeakable love of God will have redeemed and gathered all its beloved in to the Holy City, the temple of God, the marriage of the Bride and the Lamb, into Paradise and into the very heart of the family of the Three Persons. No wonder Paul said, ‘Let us do everything through love!’ No wonder we, even in this world, glory in the reality of the Kingdom of love.

The Gospel of the Kingdom of Love—Postscript

Having finished and corrected the 1998 October Study I knew with a bit of heart sinking that the Study was not good enough. It was not only too clinical—an argument for an idea I have—but it would not touch the mind and heart as I know the matter of love should do. A human who is desperate with life, with difficult relationships, and who has been wrought on by the Spirit so that he/she has been convicted of sin, righteousness and judgment, would need something closer to the bone, something which spoke directly into the problem of the troubled heart and conscience.

I began thinking about the matter of *eros* and *agape*, and the way Man thinks and acts, as against the way in which God knows and acts. *Eros* tells of the Greek view of life, the worship of beauty, of lovely form, of attractive and stimulating relationships which one can see on almost any screen today. The excitement of going through life with a wonderful partner and having an adventurous journey of rich companionship and sparkling discoveries is an idea that does not work out for over fifty per cent of Australians, along with a fair percentage who seem to have turned their backs upon marriage and who are uneasy about the matters of raising children, partnership loyalties and the uncertain future. This tells us that *eros* cannot even begin to answer all the problems. Of course to live in God's *agape* love may not assure an easy course, but it can be wonderful—whatever! A clear conscience on the part of both partners, a sense of assurance for the members of the family, the warm, enfolding love of God, and a life where lust does not have to reign, and where disappointment and anger do not have to rule when the difficulties of life which we all experience come to assault us.

I was thinking, too, of the genuine excitement of love, excitement at the thought of God, the wonder of worship, the joy of knowing God, of living creatively through His presence, of understanding what it is to exercise loving-kindness to others, and not to have the fear of death lingering about one's life and spoiling its essential living. The prospect of being in the Kingdom of love, indeed of knowing it now, proleptically, and having a richer prospect than even the first couple enjoyed in Eden—why this makes the heart beat faster and gives stability to present life, no matter how pressing and demanding its circumstances. Yes, to know the nature of God as love, and to be freed from the pain of conscience and to be able to share the love-work of Christ the Lord in liberating us from sin, and bringing us into the Kingdom of love—why, what more can we desire? This is life in fullness of living. God's love not only warms the once-troubled heart of the sinner, but brings him/her into intimate, personal relationship with the wonderful Father, the Son of His love, and the love-flooding Spirit who ever attends our hearts. The fact that we do get excited about others, coming to love them even if they constitute themselves as our enemies—this is what we have been trying to talk about in our Study. We have been trying to say that we must think in love-mode about the universals of relationships, the great eternities which have been designed for all the human race. What confronts us is a tragedy of tangled relationships, of fierce racial and cultural loyalties, of rivalry even in the Greek idea of World Games, and then in the wastage of human life. Is the idea of the Kingdom of love an ideological invention or is it God's powerful reality for His entire creation?

If we have become merely theological, and have bypassed the facts of a sinful and suffering humanity, then we have to be renewed by a fresh flooding of our hearts by the Holy Spirit who gladly shows us clearly, even vividly, the truth we once saw in clarity; and so were moved to pursue the life of love in the Kingdom of love and at the same time out in the world which so much needs that love—the love of God and Man.

ADDENDUM: OCTOBER PASTORS MONDAY STUDY 1998

The Term *'My Beloved Son'* Colossians 1:13-14

The term 'my beloved Son' as used by the Father at the baptism and transfiguration of Jesus (Matt. 3:17; 17:5: *ho huios mou ho agapetos*) differs somewhat from Colossians 1:13, where 'beloved Son' is 'the Son of his love' (*to huiou tes agapes autou*).⁵ We will return to Matthew 3:17 and 17:5 shortly, but for the moment will concentrate upon 'the Son of his love'. Whilst most commentators would agree that it is virtually the same as 'beloved' in Matthew 3:17, 17:5 and Ephesians 1:6, yet some would find something distinctive in the different form, especially in its Colossians context. H. M. Carson says⁶,

The phrase 'his dear Son' is literally 'the Son of His love'. This is a richer expression than would be the case if the epithet beloved, *agapetos*, were used. The Son who is the only-begotten of the Father is not only the eternal object of the Father's love, but is also the embodiment and expression of that love in His gracious dealings with men. Thus to be translated into the kingdom of His Son is to move from the loveless condition of 1 darkness and death into a spiritual realm in which we have the, love of God shed upon us.

H. C. G. Moule comments⁷,

his dear Son] Lit. and far better, the Son of His love. Lightfoot, following Augustine, takes this most precious phrase to mean, in effect, *the Son of the Father who is* (I Joh. iv. 8, 16) Love; the Son who accordingly.. manifests and as it were embodies the Father's love (I Joh. iv. 9,10). But surely the more probable meaning is that the Son is the blessed object of the Father's love (so Ellicott); the supremely Beloved One (cp. the parallel passage, Eph. i. 6 . . .). Far from 'destroying the whole force of the expression' (Lightfoot), this interpretation is full of ideas in point here. The 'kingdom' is what it is to the happy subjects because its King is the Beloved Son, in whom the subjects are therefore not subjects only but sons, and beloved. See Eph. i. 6 and 7, In connexion, for a strong suggestion in this direction.

John Eadie enlarges on the love-connection between the Father and the Son:⁸

'The Son of His love'. . . It signifies the Son who possesses His love-or who excites it in the Divine heart. The meaning is the same in either case, for He who possesses the love is the cause of it towards Himself. Sustaining such a relation to the Father, He is the object of boundless and unchanging affection. This love corresponds to the nature at once of Him who manifests it and Him who enjoys it. The love of God to one who is His own Image will be in harmony with the Divine nature of both-infinite as its object, and eternal and majestic as the bosom in which it dwells. This love of the Father to the Son prompted Him to give that Son as Saviour, and then to exalt Him to Universal Empire. John iii. 35.

Note (G. Bingham)

When the Holy Spirit by his power reveals the mystery of God's love at the Cross, then there is a 'meltdown' in the viewer-the one who participates in that revelation. It is this 'meltdown' of the viewer which causes this union, their melding of welding which makes them to become one in and by **that love**. We are melded into one with God and with the others who participate in the same mystery of love. Their union is not a merging of one into the other, so that the discreteness of the persons is lost.

Rather is it enhanced for each gives to all others of itself to their selves in this love relationship which is really a hitherto unexperienced communion. The meltdown is essential to the community of Christ. There can be no reversal of its happening. It is an event which cannot be gainsaid.

Proclamation, Forgiveness and Love

INTRODUCTION: PRESENT SENSITIVITY TO SIN

Every so often we realise with a shock that the word 'sin' does not really register with us. It is a cover word for all that is wrong and evil, but the essential evil of sin seems to have lost its sharp and bitter edge for us. In preaching the Word and in the Sacraments we mouth the words 'sins', 'trespasses', 'transgressions'; but they seem to have lost their bite for us. The horrors of our land such as Hosea spoke of in his day (4:1–2), 'no knowledge of God in the land; there is swearing, lying, killing, stealing, and committing adultery; they break all bounds and murder follows murder', are around us and we become dulled to their enormity. Sin is more a theological word without our sensing its power, pollution and deadly nature. Where once we warned, where once we alerted our congregations, we now offer more palatable matters, and our sense of sin further dulls. When church-folk march with homosexuals in Mardi Gras, when the divorce rate is 50% of marriages, and when marriage itself is not revered, and sexual promiscuity—seeking many partners—is accepted as an authentic way of life, then how deep is the deceit of sin and the whole system of the god of this world. What will awake us to the desperate evil of sin, and to the immense goodness, grace and love of God in His dealings with a sin-soaked world? It seems that we no longer fear judgment, or know the utter delight of God's love in the forgiveness of sins. Gratuitous forgiveness is no 'big deal' any more, but God must at least do this. Hell is obliterated by our 'more than human' kindness: we even find ourselves to be kinder than God.

FORGIVENESS AND THE NATURE OF SIN

Having spent most of the year on the proclamation of the whole counsel of God, it might seem that we have doubled back on our tracks to be talking about the nature of sin and forgiveness. This is not the case. One of the most difficult matters to communicate to people in today's world is the gift of forgiveness. In one sense this is the primary matter of our gospel—this forgiveness of human sins.¹ The problem of communicating this is not one just of this age or era. The clearest reason is that humanity does not wish to be forgiven, for to mention it as a personal need is to say that that person's sin is of such magnitude as to require forgiveness, to require the work of the Cross. Regarding the Western mind, folk from the East have commented—it is enough for Westerners to say, 'Excuse me', or 'I'm sorry'. That slight saying should effect forgiveness. The matter, it is indicated, is of little importance, of no dreadful magnitude. If it is of no such magnitude, then the Christian gospel is wrong when it says the God of creation sees it to be of such magnitude that it requires Him to send His Son to effect the sinner's forgiveness. Some persons are puzzled at even being called sinners, as though that is an unwarranted, and even an indecent, term. Others admit there is a sense in which they need forgiveness, but surely it is not of such magnitude to require the Cross. Yet others claim—almost perversely—that their sin is too dreadful to be forgiven, or that while they may seem to know that God has forgiven them, yet they cannot forgive themselves. This last seemingly pious statement is a nonsense, since the only one who can forgive is the one against whom sin has been done. A person is not in a position to even think of forgiving himself. This is arrogating the position which belongs to God alone. David rightly said, 'Against you, you only, have I sinned'. Whilst in a secondary sense one may be said to sin against oneself (cf. I Cor. 6:18), yet the prerogative of forgiving lies solely with God. This we are not prepared to admit,

¹ We realise in both the *kerugma* and the theological *ordo salutis* that the proclamation of Christ's Lordship—via his cross and resurrection—are the primary elements of the gospel. Even so, Paul speaks of 'the prime importance' of Christ's death for our sins, along with the Resurrection 'in accordance with the Scriptures'.

and as for the unremitting demand of the law—‘without propitiation, no remission of penal death’—that is unacceptable to the modern mind.

There are more elements which make it difficult to expound God’s forgiveness effectively. The primary requirement is two-fold. Firstly, it is seeing the holiness of God which makes us aware of the magnitude of sin, and secondly, it is seeing the magnitude of human evil which makes us aware of the impossibility of a human dealing with that sin. Forgiveness, then, is impossible apart from the grace of God as Forgiver.

The Origin of Sin

The origin of sin is not properly discussed in the Bible. Christians seek to develop a philosophical explanation of its origins. In the Bible sin at the origin of Man’s creation comes into view, ‘sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned’. ‘Came into the world’ seems to suggest it was extant prior to the moment Adam sinned in Eden. Some speak of demonic sin; but this is simply a logical idea. Original sin (see below under ‘Original Sin’) is the sin Adam sinned at the beginning, and in him or with him and by him all human beings sinned. Some theologians have called sin ‘a nothing’ or ‘a something which is a nothing’, asserting that what is not created is unontological or anti-ontological. Things not created by God are said to be devised. Sin is a devised entity.

The practical fact is that Man—the primal couple, the image of God—listened to and obeyed the voice (or, the word) of the serpent. This was their sin. The action was sin. What has to be seen is that *it was a breaking of the covenant God had with Man*, the covenant which was—and is—innate and inherent in the creation. God is in Himself, in His triune Being, covenantal. For Man to be in the image of God is to have full communion with Him, as the Three Persons have communion in their unity as God. Covenant is primarily a relationship, a relational matter and not a contract. Man’s sin is that he breaks the relationship, that he rejects and belittles the nature of God, and with it the mandate God has given him (Gen. 1:28, *passim*), which means he rejects the purpose of God for the world, and refuses to participate in it. This is essentially sin.² It fits the description of Romans 1:20–23, elements of which are

- (i) they did not glorify (honour) God as God,
- (ii) they did not give Him gratitude for His creation of them,
- (iii) they had darkened minds, devoid of original relationship, and so, true knowledge of God.

Whilst the Romans passage may be speaking of later developments of idolatry than Adam’s moment of the Fall, yet the serpent was given pre-eminence over God! This also indicates his dreadful dishonouring of God. This is the ‘mind of sin’. It is anti-covenantal: it is against any union, let alone full communion, with God. It is against God’s plan for the creation, and thus was against God’s plan made before time for Man’s redemption as well as his glorification—including sanctification and perfection. *Sin* is the state of being anti-God and rejecting the covenant of God. *Sins* are the acts done in that state of *sin*. To quote David again, ‘Against you, you only, have I sinned’.

ORIGINAL SIN

Original sin is the sin which Adam committed at the beginning, at the origin of the human race, as we see the event of Man’s fall described in Genesis 3. Romans 5:12–21 speaks of this case. Man created in full covenant partnership with God and destined to be primarily prophet, priest and king over the whole world, chose to go against being the image of God, by listening to the voice of the serpent, as against God’s voice and word. Original sin was rejection of God as the covenant-God, the rejection of His intimate covenant as the true human way of life, and the choosing of autonomy³ in place of God’s authority. We note that Man did not plan this evil unaided.

² We use the word ‘essentially’ in a secondary sense. Since sin is not part of the creation, it does not have essential ‘being’. We see it as an entity *de facto* but it has no *de jure* reality.

³ Autonomy literally means ‘self-law’, so that Man did not become free from law but was placed under the law of himself. This unontological state is by nature of the case a terrible tyranny. Should Man make himself the primary idol, then the law he devises is no less tyrannous. Sin reigns in every part of the autonomous person.

Companionate to sin is Satan—likewise known as ‘the serpent’, ‘that ancient serpent the devil’, and ‘the god of this world’. In Ephesians 2:1–3 Paul sees Man as following ‘the prince of the power of the air’ which is Satanic discipleship. We will not follow this line except to say that though sin entered into the world by one man (Adam), yet he was tempted to it by the Edenic serpent. When we speak of ‘original sin’ and say that Adam’s sin was imputed to us, we must not take ‘imputed’ to mean we were not involved as the whole race in Adam’s sin.⁴ The whole world was and is involved in it. One evidence of this universality of original sin is that children do not need to be taught how to sin: they sin, all of them. Hence it can be said, ‘all have turned aside’ (Rom. 3:12), ‘all have sinned’ (Rom. 3:23), all stand under the dominion of death (Rom. 5:12), we, ‘like the rest of mankind’—are, ‘by nature children of wrath’. It may be that all ‘live and move and have [their] being in God’, but it is no less true that all are ‘without God in the world’. Romans 1:18–32 shows the decline of Man morally under the wrath of God, *because he suppresses the truth he knows*. It is a question whether the debased mind of 1:28 is any longer able to comprehend good and evil, but it certainly knows the consequences of judgment decreed to those who do evil, but care nothing for this fact (1:32).

Sin and Its Terrible Consequences

As we have said above, we have even become so accustomed to the state of Man in sin that we have lost our sensitivity to that state and its terrible consequences. If we read this Romans passage and add to it others such as Mark 7:20–23, Romans 3:9–18, and I Timothy 1:8–11, then our minds are confronted afresh with the horror of sin, with its various dreadful elements, namely its ineradicable pollution, its seething corruption, its unbearable penalty, its cruelly enslaving power, and its inexpugnable presence. When Proverbs 13:15 says, ‘The way of transgressors is hard’⁵ (AV), it is speaking not only of the judgment of God on evil, of sin finding out the sinner, but of the dreadfulness of losing original innocence and its beautiful life, as well as finding the wages of sin are death, and ‘the soul that sinneth’ shall inevitably die, eking out for ever the misery of judgment which is without remission.

BECOMING BEWARE OF THE NATURE OF SIN

The Conviction of Sin Is by the Holy Spirit

Jesus said, ‘He who commits sin is a slave to sin’, and this is a powerful statement. However, the statement in itself does not reveal the nature of sin, nor necessarily convict the hearer of sin. Jesus told his disciples on the night of his betrayal (John 16:7–11) that it would be the Holy Spirit who would convince the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. The verb ‘to convince’ carries a number of meanings such as ‘to convict’ and ‘to rebuke’. It seems that the triad of ‘sin, righteousness and judgment’ is the context in which the nature of sin is shown by the Holy Spirit. Jesus seems to say in that context, that it would have to be the Holy Spirit and not himself or his followers who could bring about conviction of sin.

⁴ If we think that Christ’s righteousness was imputed to us—in line with Romans 5:12–21—we need to see, also, that all humanity was involved in the Cross. Second Corinthians 5:14 says that when one died, then all died. This is not merely playing with words. We cannot be one with Christ without participation in the Cross (cf. Gal. 2:20). Christ in his incarnation had identified with Man, so that Man might be one with him in his cross-resurrection-ascension and reigning work, not only as beneficiaries, but, in some sense, as participators. Not, we say, as Christ was in working on our behalf, but as identified with him in his shameful but yet efficacious cross.

⁵ What is often forgotten is that the transgressor has deliberately crossed the line of the very law which would be a guide and comfort to him by revealing God to him, and giving him the comfort of knowing he lives within eternal guidelines. To be without guidelines, to have to make up one’s mind continually about what is ‘lawful’ for the conscience is the source of endless discomfort, bewilderment, and misery. A lawless life is not only lonely but frightening.

It is possible to research the nature of sin in the Scriptures and to gather much material regarding it. Many descriptions are given as to what it is, and many kinds of sins are nominated. Even so, it is difficult to bring through living awareness of its nature. Paul indeed speaks of ‘the mystery of iniquity’ or ‘the mystery of lawlessness’ (II Thess. 2:7)⁶ and seems to be pointing to a concerted plan of evil. In the context it would seem that ‘iniquity’ or ‘lawlessness’ is a system composed of supernatural and human forces. At the same time sin is a mystery. Its nature can only come to Man by a God-given revelation. Hebrews 3:13 speaks of one’s heart being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Sin has the capacity to delude the human mind, and this would be one factor in not being able to understand the nature of sin. These are reasons why it is necessary for the Holy Spirit to open the mystery of evil and bring conviction of sin, related to the other facts of righteousness and judgment.

The Knowledge of Sin Is by the Law

In Romans 3:19–20 Paul says that ‘through the law comes knowledge of sin’. He has been discussing the matter of Jews and Gentiles sinning, of the inability of a person to be justified by works of the law.⁷ What, then, does Paul mean by saying the law brings the knowledge of sin? This can be answered in a number of ways:

- (i) by looking at what the law enjoins we can recognise whether or not we have obeyed what is enjoined, hence we know—or would seem to know—what sins are;
- (ii) there is an existential knowledge of sin which comes to the sinner. By this we mean that his experiences of sin make him desperate, wearied and hopeless, because the law is ever before him and shows him he not only cannot succeed, but he is wretchedly wrong, unable to obey properly;
- (iii) the whole matter of sin using the law to incite sin in a person, thus gaining ascendancy over that one, when revealed, shows the savage nature of sin—‘the exceeding sinfulness of sin’—so that this action of law unmasks sin, and in that sense one comes to a knowledge of sin;
- (iv) the lethal use of the law such as we see in Romans 4:15, 5:12, 20, and Galatians 3:10, 19, show that sin is a terrible thing, when the law speaks of the death and condemnation which are in and on sin; and
- (v) the implacability of the law, in its demanding the eternal judgment of the transgressor, makes it to appear as cruel and unremitting in its nature. Probably the Apostle had all these elements in mind, so that the law does a good work in showing the nature of sin to one who has sinned, exposing to that person the hideous and killing nature of sin.⁸

What we have not here discussed is Paul’s assumption regarding human knowledge of the law of God. In some passages he seems to refer to the law of Israel, and the Israelites’ knowledge of law. In other places he seems to point to universal law. The matter is quite complex but it is clear that he is saying there is universal knowledge of law, and that that law is the law of God, even though it may appear in the forms which we call ‘natural law’. This idea of ‘natural law’ does seem to be raised, but it may be best to say that there is universal knowledge of law. Certainly there is a universal sense of wrongdoing however imperfect knowledge of the law of God may seem to be. Conscience makes sure the human spirit sees the law as deadly and keeps the human spirit in that bondage of fear.

⁶ Revelation 17:7 talks about ‘the mystery of the woman’, that is, of her evil nature and plans. Humanity, by reason of its guilt, can never really know the nature of iniquity.

⁷ Here ‘works of the law’ mean ‘works done in order to be justified by law-obedience’, those works which have self-justification in mind—the law being used to accomplish this. Romans 2:13 says plainly that it is ‘the doers of the law who will be justified’, and this stands as authentic. Where obedience to the law is by faith then such works are not accounted as *self*-justifying, but as justifying (cf. Gal. 2:16). Those acts of obedience to the law which are done through faith are acceptable to God, for there is no self-faith in them. Since attaining justification is not in mind, such works are not called ‘works of the law’.

⁸ We might despair of bringing a revelation of human sinfulness to our listeners, but we should not despair. The plain letter of the Bible states it, and thus we should state it. Mystery though sin may be, yet we are bound to proclaim and hearers are bound to hear. We do not have to make sin intelligible!

THE BASIS OF FORGIVENESS AND RESULTANT LOVE

In Christ we are all evangelists; we are all proclaimers of the good news. It is a delight to offer God's love and forgiveness to our fellow human beings. This is because we are convinced of the message of God's grace and mercy. Are we, however, deluding ourselves? If the law, apart from propitiation, will not allow remission of judgment, then are we able *ultimately* to satisfy the conscience of the human race when it comes to offering gratuitous forgiveness?

We have already announced the condition of pardon for transgressions. It is 'the propitiation for sins'. What do we mean by propitiation and is it indeed sufficient to effect the total pardon for sins committed? Can Man who has sinned against God both originally and habitually, really find reconciliation with God through propitiation? Can some action of God in grace for Man make up for the violation of God's eternal covenant of love, and can it also effect the renewal of those broken covenantal relationships?

Without doubt we find the answer to these questions in the New Testament. The most powerful presentation of God's forgiving grace is Romans 1:18 to 3:31. In this Paul shows the universal nature of human sinning, the judgment of the law which is upon that sinning, and the propitiation which Christ effected in order that Man might be justified and forgiven. The forgiveness of sins is dealt with in Romans 4 which concludes with 'Jesus our Lord, who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification'.

The writer of the Book of Hebrews likewise treats the principle of justification in the law of Israel, but shows by contrast that Christ's shedding of his blood was effective whereas 'it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins', that is, effect their forgiveness. He maintains the single sacrifice of Christ for sins was sufficient for all humanity for all time (10:12).

John the apostle also maintains that Christ's death was a propitiatory one, and that it effected the forgiveness of sins. No less adamant was the Apostle Peter that Christ's blood was precious in that it effected the redemption of humanity from sin.

We need, it is certain, to know that the work of propitiation on the Cross is sufficient to give certainty of forgiveness to the sinner. P. T. Forsyth once said that nothing will satisfy the conscience of Man, which does not first satisfy the conscience of God. It would be cruel to offer gratuitous forgiveness when that would prove to be an unholy gift, that is, a gift not based upon the action of God which could rightfully 'satisfy the conscience both of God and Man' and, we might add, 'the conscience of the law'.

THE HEART OF PROPITIATION⁹

Propitiation is the turning away of wrath by the offering for that which caused the wrath. What it is *not* is the work of expiation, that is, the working out of a payment for the cause of wrath. That which causes wrath is Man's sin against the holy nature of God, first in breaking covenant with God, and thus in all the acts which spring from this cleavage of covenantal relationship. In Lamentations 3:42–43 Jeremiah speaks of Israel's sin in regard to God's covenant with her. 'We have transgressed and rebelled, and thou hast not forgiven. Thou hast wrapped thyself with anger and pursued us, slaying without pity.' In 1:12 the anger of the Lord had been described, 'Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow which was brought upon me, which the LORD inflicted on the day of his fierce anger.'

We see that sacrifice and propitiation are linked. By sacrifice which is ordained by God (Lev. 17:11, 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and *I have given it to you upon the altar* to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life'), Cain and Abel are able to offer up sacrifice, yet God is adamant that *only sacrifice offered by faith* (Heb. 11:4) is able to avert His wrath. This is the sacrifice which Christ alone can offer, and it is God

⁹ See Leon Morris' *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Inter-Varsity Pr., Leicester, 1976).

who is the initiator of it. This is seen in passages such as Romans 3:24–26, I John 2:2, and 4:10 (cf. Heb. 2:17). Propitiation is the basis of the Levitical sacrifices where the statement is so often made regarding the outcome of the sacrifices, ‘and he shall be forgiven’. The writer of Hebrews speaks of the blood of atonement and makes out the case that Christ’s blood alone makes authentic atonement. Israel is able to speak of her sins in Psalm 78. In verse 37 it is said of Israel, ‘Their heart was not steadfast toward him; they were not true to his covenant’, and could add, ‘Yet he, being compassionate, forgave their iniquity, and did not destroy them; he restrained his anger often, and did not stir up all his wrath’ (v. 38). By this is indicated that God never breaks His covenant of love towards His beloved but provides for them the way out in the faithful sacrifice of His Son, whom He sets forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood.

THE CROSS, THE OUTWORKING OF THE MORAL GLORY OF GOD

We remember that when Moses desired to see all the glory of God in order to be reinforced for the ministry of leading the already rebellious Israel up to the promised land, that in Exodus 34:6–7 ‘The LORD passed before him, and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation”’. This truth was taken by Israel to indicate the true nature of God as is seen in Numbers 14:18; Deuteronomy 4:31; Nehemiah 9:17; Psalm 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Jonah 4:2; and other statements. The question for the whole world is, ‘Is this His nature only as it pertains to Israel, but does it not obtain for the whole world?’

Christ is the answer to that. Statements such as John 3:16 and I John 2:2—amongst many others—show that His moral glory is for the whole world. Behind His special love for Israel stands His eternal love for His entire creation. Thus He provides that propitiation in Christ which is for all. We thus are led to look at the Cross as the universal sacrifice in which the Son propitiates the wrath of God upon the world, the wrath which is upon sin, as in Romans 1:18–32 where God gives up the sinner to his own evil. With awe and reverence we say that God cannot make the claim of Exodus 34:6–7 unless He provides for the salvation of the lost human race. Christ bears the entire wrath of God upon all evil, working out the guilt in terms of his inner, moral suffering, leaving nothing untouched, nothing unborne, nothing unpropitiated. None has ever been able to tell the burden, horror and total event of that suffering of love. It alone can be the outlining of the enormity of human sin, as also the dimensions of Divine love. The Cross is the outworking of the moral glory of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

THE RESURRECTION AND THE ASCENSION ARE THE OUTWORKING OF THE MORAL GLORY OF GOD

It is not often that the Resurrection is set forth in the terms of our heading. The Cross was voluntary—if we may use that word. Jesus had authority to lay down his life, and authority to take it again. The manner of his death was not that of a defeated person, but of a quietly confident and triumphant one. He had fulfilled all. He had completed the only true and universal propitiation. He had caused the power of sin to be broken, the walls of sin’s Jericho to fall flat. Some of the most powerful verses of all are Romans 4:24–25, ‘Jesus our Lord, who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification’. This verse declares that the Cross and the Resurrection were not two distinct events, separated from one another, but the one event of propitiation, bringing forth the forgiveness of sins and causing God’s love to come to us in that forgiveness. Let us see if we can explain what we mean. In order to do that we will have to see that often we have given minimal consideration to the Resurrection as a saving event, where we ought to have

seen the force of Romans 4:25,¹⁰ namely that the outworking of God's moral glory in the Cross has brought about the defeat of death, Satan, sin, the evil powers, the world ('the present evil age'), and the flesh, and has pacified the wrath of God and given full payment to the law, the payment it demands of transgressors.

What we have just said may not easily be received. *The moral glory of God in Christ the Victim and High Priest has so dealt with death that it could retain no power to hold Christ in death.* Peter's statement—(I Pet. 3:18), 'For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit'—tells us that Christ was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, thus showing that his death for sins was effective, emerging in his being 'made alive in the spirit'. Romans 4:25 is saying his death was effective for sins, his resurrection bringing assurance of justification. Had he not triumphed over death his work for sins would have been ineffective. This is supported by I Corinthians 15:14, 'if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain'.

It has often been thought that Christ's being raised from the dead means he is affirmed by the Father, that his work of the Cross is vindicated, and that now death is defeated. This is all true, but it is even more than that. That death could not hold him shows that his moral glory working in the Cross, defeated death. If death is still dynamic then the defeat of the Fall is lacking. Romans 8:10 can be properly translated, 'But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are doomed to death because of sin, the Holy Spirit is life-giving because of justification'. Note that in Romans 4:25 justification and resurrection are linked together. Resurrection therefore has a place in saving the sinner, in justifying him.

Resurrection, Ascension and Session at God's Right Hand

When we come to the pronouncements in the Book of Acts, we see that the Resurrection and Ascension cannot be separated, especially in their relationship to salvation, to the forgiveness of sins. In passing let us see that the New Testament presents Christ as

- (i) having been raised from the dead, and
- (ii) as having risen from the dead.¹¹

In this way Christ is shown to have been raised by the glory of the Father and certainly vindicated, but also he rose because he had defeated death in his death. Both elements constitute the whole. Christ is triumphant because of his work! The Father is with him in the act of his rising, thus being said to have raised him. If we read footnote 11, below, then we will grasp both sides of this amazing event. However, we may see in the 'being raised' and 'rising' of Christ, that what becomes clear to us is the truth stated in John 11:25 and Revelation 1:17f.: 'I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die', and 'Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades'. The extent of the moral outworking of God's glory in His given atonement is such as to release the world from all its bondages and liberate it into the full world of grace and love.

Adrio König has the following to say:

¹⁰ Essential for our consideration is the 'Introduction' given by Richard B. Gaffin Jr in his book *Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Paul's Soteriology* (Baker, Grand Rapids, 1978) pp. 11–16. In this he points to two books *The Pauline Eschatology* by Geerhardus Vos (Princeton University Pr., Princeton, 1930) and *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* by Herman Ridderbos (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1977). To this we should add Adrio König's *The Eclipse of Christ in Eschatology* (Eerdmans, 1989). These books show that Reformed theology has not always given the soteriological emphasis to the Resurrection that it ought to have given. In its anxiety to show the uniqueness of the Cross it has not always seen that the Resurrection proceeds from the work done in the Cross, as well as affirms it.

¹¹ Without any doubt God the Father is spoken of as having raised Christ from the dead. That he was raised is clear, but also that he rose is likewise clear. For 'raised' see Acts 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40–41; 13:30, 34, 37; 26:8; Romans 4:24; 8:11; 10:9; I Corinthians 6:14; II Corinthians 4:14; Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 2:12; I Thessalonians 1:10; I Peter 1:21. For 'risen' see Matthew 26:32; 27:64; 28:6–7; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:7; 24:34; John 2:22; 21:14; Romans 8:34; I Corinthians 15:13, 14, 20; Colossians 2:12; 3:1; cf. John 2:19; 10:18.

By his resurrection he conquers death itself, so that ‘Christ once raised from the dead, is never to die again: he is no longer under the dominion of death. For in dying as he died, he died to sin once for all, and in living as he lives, he lives to God’ (Rom. 6:9–10). Death is not represented here as a condition but as a power (as in Rev. 6:8, where death rides a horse). Just as in some places sin means evil deeds and in others the evil power which dominates human beings (see Rom. 6:14ff.), so death, too, has a twofold meaning for Paul. And the unique significance of Christ’s resurrection is that he has defeated this evil power, Death, so that it can no longer rule over him. He has, in the ultimate sense, put death behind him.¹²

In Acts 2:22–23 the Cross is certified as a work of God and, as such, authentic, by the raising of Jesus from the dead. In 2:32–33 Christ is said to have been raised from the dead, and exalted at the right hand of God *so that he can pour forth the Spirit at Pentecost*—the Spirit by which the truth of the Cross, Resurrection, Ascension and Reigning can be understood. Here we should see the part the Holy Spirit has in the impartation of the gospel and its forgiveness of sins.¹³ This is fortified not only in the Epistles, but also in the event at Caesarea (Acts 10:43–48; 11:15–18). It is from his reigning that Christ sends forth the Spirit. In Acts 3:15 Israel is told that it ‘killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead’. In 5:30–31 the Cross, Resurrection and Ascension are brought together, ‘The God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Saviour, *to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.*’ This last verse is most important since it shows that the forgiveness of the Cross could not be imparted without both the happenings of the Resurrection and Ascension. In Acts 13:38–39 Paul, having proclaimed the *kerugma*, then shows that Christ being crucified and raised from the dead is the one who *can now give the forgiveness of sins and justification* which could not be given through the law of Moses. It is clear, we repeat, that without the Resurrection, Ascension and Session, there could be no actual defeat of the enemies and so no triumph of the Kingdom of God.

First Corinthians 15:24–28 shows Christ in his Reigning at the Father’s right hand as the one who puts down every enemy, including death, and then gives the Kingdom to the Father that ‘God may be all in all’. The defeat of all evil enemies which comes through the Cross is secured by the Resurrection, Ascension and Reigning. That the defeat of the enemies is first by the Cross–Resurrection work we have seen, time and again, and it is necessary for a full understanding of grace that we comprehend and face the staggering nature of the defeat of Satan, his powers, his world-system (*aeon*), the defeat of sin with all its grip and distortion of the human spirit, the ugly machinations of the flesh in human beings, the dominion of death over guilty persons, the dread of the law and the utter despair that it brings to the human spirit, the cruel reign of conscience by that law and the excitation to evil which sin effects by means of the law.

König¹⁴ sums up what we have been saying:

All things considered, it is now clear why Christ’s entire life on earth (incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection) is described in eschatological terms. With his arrival the end dawns; with his crucifixion all is fulfilled; and with his resurrection the general resurrection begins.

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS, THE LIBERATION OF GOD FOR MAN

It might be thought that we have given little emphasis to the forgiveness of sins, but we have seen that the Cross, the Resurrection, the Ascension and the Reigning are all with a view to the forgiveness of sins. Combined they bring this marvellous treasure to Man—the forgiveness of sins granted first to Israel and then to the Gentiles. We have presentations of forgiveness through

¹² op. cit., p. 80.

¹³ The forgiveness of sins is so deep and vast a matter, so wrought with the extent of evil and the victory of evil powers, that it requires some understanding of the nature of sin and judgment. We have shown above that it is by the conviction of the Holy Spirit and his use of the law that sin becomes known, even if not explicated as a thing in itself. We say, then, that it takes the Holy Spirit in all his powers to bring knowledge of sin, and then knowledge of forgiveness, for both require a strong revelation in order to be understood.

¹⁴ op. cit., p. 81.

propitiatory sacrifice in the Scriptures from Abel, through the ancient sacrifices, in the cultus of Israel, and the covenant mercies to that idolatrous nation; then through to the New Testament where Jesus dispenses forgiveness—without sacrifices but in view of his own sacrifice. The people are amazed, the sinners themselves awed and thrilled at the powerful release from sin's bondage. The Spirit comes at Pentecost and because of the Cross–Resurrection, forgiveness now becomes available to the whole world (cf. John 3:16; I John 2:2; 4:10). In every sphere of human life within the community of God's elect, the relief and power of the forgiveness of sins makes itself known. We can spend much time tabulating the matter of forgiveness amongst the nations, but what touches the human spirit strongly and mercifully is the holy liberation which comes to the forgiven person, and the reconciliation that that spirit knows with the heavenly Father, a reconciliation which floods the heart and mind with intimate, personal love. The justification which is never apart from the forgiveness of sins—as we see in Acts 13:38–39, Romans 4:25 and other scriptures—assures us that forgiveness never recedes or becomes lost. Thus we are mightily strengthened and powerfully assured. God is known as love through forgiveness, and the reconciliation given to us (Rom. 5:11) keeps us in the good of forgiveness.

CONCLUSION: THE PROCLAMATION OF FORGIVENESS AND LOVE

The richest gift that we have been given, is to proclaim the offer of God's pardon, to proffer the forgiveness of sins to the human race. It is the most comforting and transforming of all gifts to human persons. By being forgiven men and women actually sense the love of God. To receive the offer brings surprising joy as the recipients come to realise that God loves them. Blessed is the proclaimer as pardon brings blessing to others.

It is the simplest form of the whole gift of salvation. One cannot know forgiveness without being drawn to repentance and faith. The two are also gifts, the gifts which lead to the understanding of forgiveness. The *ordo salutis* has a number of elements—faith and repentance by which comes forgiveness, and also justification which assures the legal conscience. Adoption or 'sonship' brings the Father–son relationship which itself is in the gift of reconciliation. Thus the dread original sin is vanquished and with it all the companionate evil enemies such as 'the serpent'—Satan—his world-system, death, the law, and the flesh. Forgiveness tells us the victory of God is complete in Christ. The Holy Spirit brings the assurance of this to the heart.

As Paul makes clear in I Corinthians 15 and other places, the forgiveness of sins and Christ's resurrection are the prime elements of the gospel he delivers. In Christ's resurrection, the resurrection of believers is the further message which follows forgiveness. The freedom of forgiveness we have pointed out is also freedom from death, and so from the fear of death. Having our ultimate sanctification, glorification and perfection thus in sight, the forgiveness of sins takes away the pain and heaviness associated with death and brings living hope for the eternal life which is ahead of us.

Why then should we not; why then do we not, go to the world and tell it wonderfully that its sins are forgiven? Perhaps we are overwhelmed by the whole matter of human sinfulness, and we are afraid lest we botch the preaching of grace. Certainly this is a matter we will always have to watch, but the Holy Spirit will be there to help us bring the joyful message of pardon to all sinners. If we have lost our sense of joy at the pardon of God, then we may need to traverse the old times when we had joy in it. As we say, the Holy Spirit who brought the forgiveness of sins to us, will surely bring that forgiveness to others, through us.

Proclaiming the Grace of God in Christ

INTRODUCTION: GRACE IN THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the beginnings of the early church were alive with grace. 'Alive with grace' describes what we draw from reading the Acts, the Epistles, and the Revelation, to say nothing of the powerful endings of the Gospels where the Resurrection gripped the minds of the apostolic days. For the apostolic community grace was a calculable factor in their ministry: 'And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth'; 'And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace'; 'grace and truth came through Jesus Christ'; 'great grace was upon them all'; Barnabas 'saw the grace of God'; 'commended to the grace of God for the work'; 'Paul and Barnabas . . . urged them to continue in the grace of God'; 'But we [Jews] believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ'; 'to testify to the gospel of the grace of God'; 'the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace'; 'When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed'; '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'.

The statements above are taken from John's Gospel and the Acts. Put into their contexts, they reveal how much the idea of God's grace was in the mind of the apostolic church. Daily its members thought of the grace of God, and lived in that ethos. As for the Epistles, they have 110 mentions of grace, with quite dynamic expositions and expressions of it. 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ' is a thought central to it all. Abundancy is an idea strongly associated with grace. Grace is not a static term, but one of the powerful actions of God. In the salutations and blessings grace figures persistently. The Revelation opens with such greetings, and the torrid experiences of the church require grace for the 'endurance and faith of the saints'.

When we recognise the living understanding and participation in grace, we have reason to ask ourselves whether we live likewise. Is grace the mainspring of our actions, of our assurance and of our hope? Do we see the Father as 'the God of all grace'? Do we think continually of 'the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ', and is the Holy Spirit 'the Spirit of grace'? Are we on the one hand suspicious of grace as a liberating moral force in our lives, or, on the other, a cover for a libertine, antinomian way of life?

What, then, is grace? It is not a force, a power, an available supply of virtue (power) which we can obtain and then use according to our ideas of living and working in grace. It is really God's holy love in action; it is God going towards us continually to do us good; it is God's graciousness in redeeming us who have forfeited our right to such mercy and love. It is not a moral 'hand-out' to graceless creatures, but the love of God determined to redeem them. This grace is God, Himself,¹ in action, in all kinds of actions. It is Him indwelling us and empowering us to do His will, to be one with Him in His purposes for creation and the human race.

The Endless Debate Regarding Grace

This is too vast a subject to take up fully, but we need to look at it lest we, ourselves, have unknowingly erred regarding grace. We have the direct opposites of grace mentioned above, that is, nomism or addiction to law which really cancels grace, or antinomianism which claims that grace has cancelled law, so that now 'all things are lawful'! This term used correctly by

¹ See the hymn on the last page of this study, which seeks to bring through the same thought.

Paul is an ironic contradiction when used by antinomians—how can things be ‘lawful’ if there is no law? What is dangerous is the innate opposition of fallen Man to the matter of grace. When he refuses to see himself as ‘exceeding sinful’ or depraved, then he sees no need for grace, that is, grace which is monergistic and not synergistic. If he allows for the obvious sinfulness of Man he will still insist that he take part in his own salvation, thus the idea of self-help justification by law comes into view, or he will accept the matter of synergism—that God and he will work out the salvation. Countless systems have been worked out to save the pride of Man. Nomism insists on the continuance of obedience to law as the true way of life, and although this, as principle, may have validity, it virtually becomes for most nomists salvation by the grace of the Cross, but then law-obedience as the continuing way of salvation. Here we cannot deal with systems which, being sacramental and sacerdotal, see grace as communicated *ex opere operato* through the sacraments and via the intermediary priesthood.

As we have said, we need to examine thoroughly our understanding of the grace of God in Jesus Christ, lest we have erred, have ‘fallen from grace’ and have essentially departed from it or are receiving ‘the grace of God in vain’—in an empty way. For this reason we need to understand the grace of God as we have that action of love in Christ.

WHAT WAS AND IS THE PATHWAY TO GRACE?

There Is Nothing of Man’s Work in Grace

There have been debates theologically over a period of time, especially regarding the differences between Lutheran and Reformed theology, as also debates within the Lutheran and Reformed traditions. One debate has been whether we are justified by grace or by faith. Romans 3:21–26 sets forth both the matter of grace and faith as requisites for justification:

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.

The passage clearly shows that primarily Man is justified by grace—‘they are justified by his grace as a gift’. At the same time, ‘through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe’, and ‘to be received by faith’, and ‘justifies him who has faith in Jesus’, seem to confirm the need for faith. It is true that verse 22, ‘through faith in Jesus Christ’, is literally ‘through faith of Christ’ and so it can mean it is through Christ’s faith that ‘the righteousness of God’ is shown ‘through faith of Christ’, yet the emphasis on belief in the whole passage seems to make the order to be

- (i) we are justified by the grace of God, since God takes the initiative and justifies us, and
- (ii) that we believe this act of God in Christ, we believe Christ for his propitiatory act, thus our faith is in Christ the Redeemer, and so by faith we receive the grace of justification.

Ephesians 2:4–10 likewise speak of the free action of God’s grace:

But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

The first mention of grace and its first act in this passage is of making us alive together with Christ, and also of seating us with Christ in the heavenly places (vv. 5–6). What immense grace is this!

The *aim* of doing this is shown in verse 7, ‘that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus’. Of course such an action as portrayed in verses 5 and 6 is of an extraordinary nature. We need to keep in mind that Paul portrays Man in verses 1–3 as being greatly depraved and in the grip of Satan, worldly and lustful.² Verses 8 and 9 then reiterate what has happened and protect grace from in any way being connected with, or resulting from, fallen Man’s works. It would appear that the ‘*this* is not your own doing’ refers to the salvation accorded by grace through faith, and so there is a sense in which faith is a ‘given’, paralleling Philippians 1:29, ‘it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake’. To ‘believe in him’ is a thing granted, so that faith is the gift of God. Since faith is a gift it cannot be said to be a work of Man. Thus justification is primarily of grace, and faith, coming giftwise, is included in this grace. Of course Christ is the *object* of faith, but then the living object, the object which works upon the subject, affecting the subject, evoking faith, so to speak, and in that sense the Object, Christ, too, is the Subject of faith—the Doer of grace. If the term ‘the faith of Christ’ is really the one present in both Romans 3:22 and Galatians 2:20, then ‘faith *in* Christ’ really springs from ‘the faith *of* Christ’. This grace is wholly pure, wholly free.

The Grace of God Has Come to Man in Christ

We have seen that grace came, epochally, in Christ. We saw in John 1:14 that the Word was ‘full of grace and truth’; in 1:17 that ‘the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ’. It is a prodigious thought; Moses was the means of giving the law to Israel; Jesus Christ the means of giving grace to the whole world. Thus Paul says in Titus 2:11–14:

For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men, training us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions, and to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world, awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

By this he shows us that grace came by none other than Jesus Christ, and that it *did* come by him. He also shows the dynamic of grace in effecting salvation, creating holy living, and making a holy people who await the Saviour’s *parousia*. In the next chapter of Titus (3:4–7), he states the sinfulness of Man before Christ’s appearing and the action which happened with his coming, which cannot be called less than grace:

when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life.

The references we have just used show that in the history of the world there is, at one point, a decisive entrance of grace into the world as clear as the decisive entrance into the world of the Son of God at his incarnation; of course, the two are the one. It may seem that in His salvation history God took a long time in bringing grace to the human race. This is not the case. Grace was with Abel, and has always been with the people of God, for they have been the people of faith and of love, to say nothing of hope. Romans 5:20 gives meaning both to the law and grace, ‘Law came in, to increase the trespass; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more’.

² Elsewhere see the principle of Romans 5:20, ‘Law came in, to increase the trespass; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more’. Repentance could never happen until first the law reveals sin, yet only reveals it in the light of the gospel. That is, law is dynamic for sin-revelation only where grace is present to highlight the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

Whilst this refers to the epoch of Christ, yet the principle is discovered as active in the covenant with Israel, indeed in God's grace-covenant with all mankind.³ At the same time we agree that developing the coming of grace in an epochal way did require all pre-history to be the precursor and preparation for Christ's incarnation. This serves to show how vast is the salvific work of God, what expanses of human evil were intended to be covered by grace, and the extent of lost humanity which needed to be served savingly by grace.

The Way to Grace Is of Grace in Repentance and Faith

In the two passages quoted from Titus, we have not spoken of the way in which the grace of God comes upon Man and is received. The Romans 3:21–26 passage certainly speaks of an act of faith being involved in justifying grace, and we have suggested that it is of grace that faith comes to us. In our previous Study (2/11/98) we have said that the forgiveness of sins is either rejected by the natural Man as being unnecessary and objectionable to him, or that it has to be gratuitous, and therefore can be received without the exercise of repentance and faith, in which case it is a pathetic nonentity. We also spoke of Man not seeing his sinful state and his acts of sin as the expression and proof of his total depravity, in which case the idea of salvation is a nonsense. The most the natural man will concede is that if salvation is necessary then it will be a synergistic work of God and Man, if indeed it cannot be a monergistic work of Man.

In Luke 24:44–49 Jesus taught his disciples from the Old Testament and added the necessity for the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. His key words were, 'repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem'. Jesus said that the proclamation would commence at Jerusalem, and this is what happened. It began on the Day of Pentecost when Peter, being filled with the Holy Spirit, told his Jewish audience of what they had done in their rejection of Christ and their crucifixion of him. So empowered by the Holy Spirit was he that they were convicted of sin and righteousness and judgment⁴, so that thousands cried out to the apostles, 'what shall we do?' Peter's answer was, 'Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'. From this we conclude that repentance was essential to

- (i) receiving the forgiveness of sins, and
- (ii) to receiving the gift of the Spirit, and thus the full truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In Acts 3:12–26 Peter delivers his second recorded sermon and one of the key verses is his injunction, 'Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord'.⁵ Note that here both repentance and conversion are linked. They are also linked in Acts 26:17–20. In Acts 5:29–32 Peter enjoins the Sanhedrin to such by saying that Jesus was exalted to God's right hand so that he could give (the gifts of) both repentance and the forgiveness of sins to Israel. In Acts 10:43 Peter tells of the forgiveness of sins, and at the same moment the Holy Spirit falls on all. The Jewish Christians at Jerusalem recognised that God has granted to the Gentiles the gift of 'repentance unto life'. 'Unto life' is a quite significant statement. In Acts 13:38–39 Paul proclaims, 'Let it be known to you therefore, brethren, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him every one that believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses'.

Enough, then, has been shown to verify the need to repent and to have faith in order to receive the forgiveness of sins, that is, to come into the full grace of God in Christ.

³ We would make the point that God's eternal covenant, inherent in the creation of Man, was not initially of grace, but of creation—the gift of creation. When Man fell then the covenant showed its provision of grace for Man in his fallen state. In a secondary sense, then, covenant has always been of grace.

⁴ The text of Acts 2 does not say this, but it would not be difficult to argue successfully that this was the case.

⁵ Note in this context that Peter adds in 3:26, 'God having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you in turning every one of you from your wickedness'.

The Nature of Repentance and Faith

Repentance—*metanoia*—is literally ‘a change of mind’, ‘a change of *nous*’, that is, a change of mind, understanding and attitude. So far as the gospel is concerned this change takes place when it is seen as ‘the good news’. The change is vast in all its dimensions. It has to be because the enormity of sin’s evil is recognised, the horrific nature of human depravity is opened by the Holy Spirit and a radical change takes place in the recipient of the gospel. When we say the Holy Spirit portrays to Man his horrific depravity, then this has first to be by bringing the law to bear on Man, so that ‘the trespass is increased’ (Rom. 5:20; Gal. 3:19), otherwise the nature of sin and its extraordinary extent is never comprehended, and so grace is marginalised. The ‘great love with which he loved us’ is then recognised under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and so grace is seen in all its magnificent, amazing and glorious reality. If this revelation of sin’s mystery is not comprehended then grace has no substance. We need to understand the enormity of Man—Adam—breaking the eternal covenant of God, thus violating the righteousness and holiness of God and denying the One in whose image he had been made. It is enough to see the misery, suffering, loneliness, dread and unease of Man to see how broad must be the dimensions of repentance. In this regard we must distinguish remorse from repentance. Remorse has no ‘repentance unto life’, but is a ‘regret unto death’ as Paul points out in II Corinthians 7:10. Repentance is healing and living. Remorse brings only ‘worldly grief’ and death.

If ‘genuine repentance’ is not evoked then ‘gratuitous forgiveness’ will become a poor substitute, and *no radical change of mind will have resulted* in the recipient. Converting only takes place along with genuine repentance.

Faith, we have already suggested, is brought into play by the true revelation of grace. Of course it is faith in God, faith in Jesus Christ, faith in the person of the Son, and not the result of reasoning persuasion. One does not have faith in a doctrine, in the Person about whom the gospel has spoken. With faith in the Person comes deep belief in what one sees to be that person’s work. It is the faithfulness of God which evokes a response in the believing person. Faith, like repentance, is a gift of God.

THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

As always we say that all God’s actions are Trinitarian. Whilst I Peter 5:10 undoubtedly refers to the Father as ‘the God of all grace’, nevertheless the Son is ‘full of grace and truth’, and the Holy Spirit is ‘the Spirit of grace’. With that in mind we will be mostly thinking of ‘the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ’, recognising that the exercise of that grace is because ‘God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself’, so that when we will look at the person and work of Christ as being ‘all of grace’, then we will think of God in Christ, and the Holy Spirit as one constantly guiding and empowering Christ—all Three combining in the one work of grace. Thus we will see that the Father was—and is—active in the life and ministry of him whom we call ‘the Son’, and ‘the Lord Jesus Christ’. I am sure this fits our general theology, that which we call ‘the saving work of Christ’. Even so, we have often looked to the work of the Cross as the completed work of salvation when we should see it as the completed work which then requires the resurrection of Christ, his ascension and reigning and his parousia to bring that salvation into full action. Thus we say that all of Christ’s work was—and is—soteriological.

Here a quotation from **Thomas Torrance** in his Essay ‘Justification in Doctrine and Life’ is apt to what we are saying:

Justification is interwoven with Incarnation—the union of God and Man in Christ, and with the fulfilment of that union in Reconciliation and Mediation between God and man which was wrought out in the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ—although the final execution of it so far as we are concerned awaits the coming again of Jesus Christ. Justification is rooted in the Incarnation and therefore it reaches out

to the final Advent of Jesus as the Incarnate Son—it is both Christological and eschatological. In none of the Reformers was the stress upon incarnational union so strong as in Knox; and in none of them was the place given to the *Parousia* so powerful; while it is Knox’s highly distinctive doctrine of the Ascension that links those two together, or rather reveals the relation of the Incarnation to the *Parousia*. It is in the Ascension that we have *the fruit* of the Incarnation (including the Death and Resurrection) of Christ, and it is in the *Parousia* that we have the full *fruit* of the Ascension.⁶

Torrance is saying that the saving work of Christ begins with the Incarnation and is completed by the *parousia*.

Adrio König in his book *The Eclipse of Christ in Eschatology: Toward a Christ-Centered Approach*⁷ says of G. C. Berkouwer:

Berkouwer is absolutely correct when he concludes from these New Testament statements that the birth and earthly ministry of Jesus are ‘not just a highly significant phase that turns out to be relative after all, or a subdivision of the total time-continuum with the character of eternity. No, it is the “hour of all hours,” because it has the weight of eternity.’ The events of the first coming are not merely a promise but rather the fulfillment, the end of the road, the accomplished purpose, the unique and decisive time. Indeed, Berkouwer goes so far as to call the time before Christ’s birth—the history of Israel—‘the period preceding the eschatological time of salvation.’

König at the same time points out in a footnote that Berkouwer has, nevertheless, not worked out the eschatological significance of the Christ events of the Incarnation, earthly ministry, Crucifixion and Resurrection. This leads us on to the thesis we have to present, namely that the total work of Christ is soteriological: prior to his incarnation,⁸ his incarnation, the ministry of Christ prior to the death of the cross, the Cross, the Resurrection, the Ascension and Enthronement, and the Session at the right hand of God, all constitute ‘the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ’. Nor does this grace terminate in heaven. The work from the throne has in mind his *parousia* and the ultimate heading up of all things in him—the things of the *telos*. We remember that Peter wrote, ‘Therefore gird up your minds, be sober, set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ’ (I Pet. 1:13). The Apostle envisaged a magnificent era of grace that was coming and which was a present strengthening of hope.

We need to keep in mind all the time that all these elements of the work of Christ *are really one work, one work of grace*. We also need to understand that a study of them, and a theological grasp of them, does not mean that we are necessarily in the existential grace of them. They are the grace-work of Christ and the reality and the benefit of them can only be known by one who believes them, one who is in Christ, and in whom Christ dwells. With this in mind, then, we will proceed in future Studies to deal particularly with each part of the whole grace, namely the work of Christ prior to his incarnation, the ministry of Christ prior to the death of the cross, the Cross, the Resurrection, the Ascension and Enthronement, the Session at the right hand of God⁹ and Christ’s *parousia*, his appearing to conclude the *telos* when all will be summated in him, filled in him, reconciled in him.¹⁰ We need to recognise that in one sense the eschaton begins when things protological are brought into being—as in the first three chapters of Genesis—and as such anticipate the things eschatological. We reiterate: the whole

⁶ See *Theology in Reconstruction* by Thomas F. Torrance (Wipf & Stock, Eugene, 1996,) p. 152.

⁷ Adrio König, *The Eclipse of Christ in Eschatology: Toward a Christ-Centred Approach* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1989), p. 70, quoting from G. C. Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1975), pp. 99f.

⁸ Often called ‘Christ’s Work in the Old Testament’, or ‘Christ in the Old Testament’, it is clear to us that Christ has ever been present in salvation history. I Corinthians chapter 10 makes that apparent. Christ’s incarnation is not only prophesied in the Old Testament, but it is essential for the fulfilling of many prophecies linked with his person and work. The history of salvation does not commence with the act of his becoming man.

⁹ This session is not just the royal seating of Christ but also his work in history—the work from his ascension to his *parousia*—for it is all a work proceeding from grace and effective for grace in the community of his people, the Church.

¹⁰ See Ephesians 1:9–10; 4:10 (cf. Rom. 8:18–25); Colossians 1:19–20. In this we include all things teleological, such as ‘the day of the Lord’, the descent to earth of the Holy City, the Marriage of the Bride and the Lamb, the Holy City itself and its temple, as also the Eternal Paradise of God.

work of Christ from creation to the *telos* constitutes the work of his grace—‘the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ’. That is why it is effective; that is why it covers the whole of salvation, that which we sometimes call ‘the need of fallen Man’. Its ultimate outcome is the total salvation of fallen sinners so that they are not only forgiven and justified, but also adopted as God’s sons, sanctified, glorified and perfected. Only when we know the extent of all these works do we realise the unfathomable depths of God’s grace, the illimitable dimensions of His love in action. It is incumbent upon us as proclaimers and pastors to know this whole work of grace, for whilst we do not have to teach every element of it, we do have to have its dimensions livingly in our understanding. This is to know, livingly, ‘the God of all grace’.

THE PASTORS AND THE PEOPLE IN THE MINISTRY OF GRACE

We gather from the New Testament that the preaching of grace was fraught with dangers. What the apostles preached was not merely misunderstood. It was, in fact, understood by many opponents who heard the message, and its dangers stood out to them. There was not only the danger of antinomianism but also the greater danger—to their mind of thinking—of human effort and energy having no part in salvation. A monergistic salvation to them was no salvation. Man must be permitted a part, or pride of humanity would have no place. So the preaching of grace was strongly opposed. It seemed, also, to do away with the law of God. In spite of all our research into the New Testament we cannot be sure that the Jerusalemising party of Galatians 2 and Acts 15 was ever resolved into a grace-party. We know the warnings against receiving the grace of God in vain (II Cor. 6:1), falling away from grace (Gal. 5:1–4) and sinning against the Spirit of grace (Heb. 10:29), needed to be given in those days, and even more in our days.

So, then, how does grace go in the proclamation of the pastors and the people today? Is it really being proclaimed? In the early chapters of Acts it is the people as well as the apostles who proclaimed the gospel of the grace of God. Great grace was upon them all, not only on the apostles and evangelists, but also very much on the people. Is this how it is today? Reading from Acts to the end of the Epistles we find the following terms, ‘great grace’, ‘the grace of God’ (many times), ‘the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ’ (many times), ‘the word of his grace’, ‘the gospel of the grace of God’, ‘grace wherein we stand’, ‘abundance of grace’ (the word *abundant* is used many times), ‘election of grace’, ‘riches of his grace’ (twice), ‘surpassing grace’, ‘grace is sufficient’, ‘the glory of his grace’, ‘immeasurable riches of his grace’, ‘speech . . . with grace’, ‘grace . . . overflowed’, ‘strong in the grace’, ‘the Spirit of grace’, ‘God’s varied grace’, and ‘God of all grace’. These brief quotes indicate that the understanding and love of grace was in the minds of all. The questions are, then, ‘Is this the way it is with us? Do we have that strong surge of grace, and a love for it in our hearts? Are we on fire with it?’

We are grateful for every indication of grace in the churches, but is it apostolic in the sense that it is as the apostolic church was? We are aware that there were problems in their churches, but often they were raised in the tussle for great grace to have its way and its effects. We are aware that the same problem exists today, but it is not always the only problem churches face. We see many churches which are flourishing in regard to numbers and attendance and even in seeking to bring outsiders to their ministry.¹¹ It does happen that such churches are not really preaching grace as it is known in the New Testament. In some cases churches have become monadic, that is, they foster their own congregation, their own fellowship, their own development, protection and their own social life. Most of these churches are not deliberately separatist, nor would they think of themselves as ecclesial narcissists—worshipping their own church. Indeed they would be shocked to be accused of that. Even so, they do not overflow their own boundaries.

¹¹ It is here the question arises as to whether we are evangelising or proselytising; whether we are gathering converts in order to enlarge our churches, or to simply bring grace to them.

They are not much alive to the community outside their churches. The freedom of grace to flow out to all—sinners and saints alike—is not something they even envisage. They are not troubadours, singing, as it were, the gospel.

Again, we are faced with the fact that there are churches which do not proclaim the gospel of grace within their own congregations. Because of the encroachment of liberalism they have been weakened, and substitutes have been made for the message of grace. We cannot deal with this complicated problem here. Indeed it is not my intention here to analyse the troubles we are in, and of which we are perhaps unconscious. I just point to the old parable of the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee. The Dead Sea is dead because though much flows into it, nothing flows out of it. The Sea of Galilee is always fresh and sweet because there is at once an inflow and an outflow. ‘Fresh and sweet’ describes grace. The 47th chapter of Ezekiel takes up this theme. It speaks of the fresh water issuing from the temple which, in effect, overcomes the Dead Sea. The commentator on the abundant, flowing river tells Ezekiel:

This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah; and when it enters the stagnant waters of the sea, the water will become fresh. And wherever the river goes every living creature which swarms will live, and there will be very many fish; for this water goes there, that the waters of the sea may become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes. Fishermen will stand beside the sea; from Engedi to Eneglaim it will be a place for the spreading of nets; its fish will be of very many kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea. But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they are to be left for salt. And on the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing (vv. 8–12).

Those interested in the geography of the event will see the Dead Sea is enlivened, ‘wherever the river goes every living creature which swarms will live’, and this surely is the great wonder of God’s grace. I personally wonder how many proclaimers of God are locked into good churches, which being ‘good’ nevertheless never overflow the boundaries they have set for themselves. All this year we have talked about declaring ‘the whole counsel of God to the whole world’, and we are grateful that thousands are out in the world doing just that. How incredible it is that we now have the opportunities to do so, and opportunities such as may never before have been available in this way. The whole world is being increasingly Internetted, media are alive and well and at our finger tips. We need to be liberated from those things which hold us back. We need to be the adventurers and the troubadours of grace, without fear or favour, telling and singing the grace of salvation. What if it entails the whole battle of the truth, and what if it demands the whole of us, uncompromised? His grace is sufficient for us for the telling of His grace. Amazing grace is God Himself.

Amazing Grace is God Himself,
The Father of us all,
And from His heart there flows Himself
Who flows in full to all.
The angel told the Mary maid,
‘You are the maid of grace,
For God has given His grace to you
For every time and place’.

The angels sang their lovely score
To shepherds in a field,
Of ‘peace to all who are of grace—
The love the Father yields.’
Grace came in Christ—the Father’s love—
And from His heart it flowed
Where men and women followed Him
Until in grace they glowed.

Dark, dark was sin in human hearts,
Deep, deep was Man's despair,
Yet deeper still was healing grace
To heal the turmoil there.
That grace was reigning on a Cross
Where spattered hate and gore,
But Christ, the living grace of God,
Our Shepherd went before.

Great grace poured down upon His Church
To make us one in love,
To share that grace with all Mankind
And lead His saints above.
This grace is unsurpassable,
God with us in His love;
The Son and Holy Spirit too
Forever in us move

Until that day when all are one,
When human warfare's ceased
And we in grace are one in Him
As favoured kings and priests.
Ah, Grace that's love to all mankind,
You glow as Spirit, Son,
And in Your Fam'ly's grace and light
We shine as wholly one.

Amazing Grace is God Himself,
The Father of us all,
And from His heart there flows Himself
Who flows in full to all.

(The hymn is from the *New Creation Hymn Book*, volume 2, number 103. Number 23 is also excellent.)