

I, THE MAN!

It is a long time in Christian literature since a book like this has been published. Geoffrey Bingham has had a wide experience of life, let alone the dimensions he has explored in Christian truth. He has the gift of discerning human nature, but it is a gift exercised on-the basis of some fifty years study of the Scriptures. Nothing shocks him about the evil of man. Is this just because he spent some years in war, a concentration camp, and counselling people who have hit the depths, or is it because he has learned from the Scriptures about man's degradation and the uplifting power of the Love of God? It is probably from both that he draws this remarkable study of man degraded and man elevated, man polluted and man purified. To read I, the Man! is to grasp the nettle of human evil and to find that it turns into the beautiful bloom of God's love and grace.

It is a book to stir the mind and heart, and to heal—where that is needed, and it is desired.

New creation publications inc

I, THE MAN!

IN

Creation

Degradation

Elevation

Vocation

Glory

By Geoffrey Bingham

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Angry Heart or Tranquil Mind?
Discovering Your Identity
The Sons of God are the Servants of All
Christ's Cross Over Man's Abyss
Dear Darling Idols
Where I Love I Live
The Things We Firmly Believe
The Wisdom of God and the Healing of Man
Christ's People in Today's World
The Profound Mystery

I, THE MAN!

Geoffrey C. Bingham

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A NOTE ON THE TITLE

Authors like to invent striking titles. The title of this book—I, *THE MAN!*—is not intended to be sexist. It does not mean, I, *the Male*, Nor could it have been, I, *the Female!* Man, i.e. mankind, is composed of a male-female unity, right across the board, with or without marriage. Marriage is simply a special and specialised unity. When, then, we say, I, *THE MAN!* we mean the whole human race and what it means to be persons within that race. In the Bible the term ‘man’ is sometimes used of the male specifically, but mostly it has a generic meaning, namely, ‘mankind’. The pronouns *he*, *him*, and *his* are not in this case masculine but include both male and female elements of our humanity, hence the psalmist’s cry, ‘What is man that you are mindful of him’. He meant the human race, and not merely the male.

It may have been better to call the book, I, *the Human!* but even then we would have missed the generic *man*. We would still be referring to a single human, whether male or female. When, then, I use the pronouns *he*, *him* and *his*, I use them in the generic sense. There is no sexism in this. When I refer specifically to male or female persons, then I use the specific pronouns which are appropriate.

FOREWORD

We might as well start from the point that no human being really understands the nature of evil. Human nature is too involved in evil to be able to view it objectively. Also evil has its own inbuilt deceit. For these and other reasons we cannot know how de-graded and depraved human nature is, and can become. In the welter of our modern psychological delving into the nature of man, we can easily leave out the spiritual dimension, which— whether we like it or not—is powerfully significant in knowing the whole of man.

Thoughtful minds throughout man's history have tried to tackle the problem of human greed, cruelty, selfishness and its effects in the saga of the human race. This book is not really an attempt to give a rationale to human evil. It is an attempt to look at it, and be realistic. If man has gone down, is there then a way up? Well, there is. The problem with every author is that his readers are selective along the lines they determine for them-selves. For example, some readers tell me my books are very simple, others that they are most difficult to understand.

I cannot get away from the thought that when I have a difficulty I am glad and grateful to find a person who has tackled the matter before me. No matter what it takes to understand him, I try. If I need a special sort of goods and the stocklist is many miles away, I will go the distance to obtain the article. It seems to me that our prior need is to understand what a human being is. It is a fact of the truth that we cannot know man properly until we know God who made him. Yet that is quite possible if we really wish to know man. It is possible to know God,

and so to know man.

Time and again I go back to the Puritan writers of the seventeenth century. They have been criticised as being ‘puritanical’—the word derived from their name. The facts of history do not bear out the criticism. They were great realists in regard to our humanity. They were true doctors of the soul. They understood the anguish and sorrows of man, but they also knew the cure, and were prepared to spell out the prescriptions for their diagnoses. I believe that by tackling a book such as you, the reader, now have before you, that you gain insights which—if they do not transform your life radically—can give you a significant enlightenment which could prove to be greatly helpful.

Like all authors who hope fervently their readers will persist to the last page of the book, I enter a plea for you to do so. There is nothing frightening in seeing what man is, even in his depravity. It is what man really is—at core—and what he becomes through God’s loving action, which gives us cause for great joy and even excitement. The practical outcome is of enormous benefit, not only to persons but in general to the whole human race.

Geoffrey Bingham
Coromandel, January 1983

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I, The Man!

A Foreword to the Second Printing

It is thirteen years since the first printing of this book. Most of my books are written, primarily, to persons, readers who do not live in the world of academia. This does not mean they are not intelligent, since, I imagine, most of them are. Also I know that academic theologians do read my publications. It means that a book such as the present one does not come laced and supported with quotations from writers who are attempting to develop the same theme. To a great degree the validity of a book for a student of theology depends upon the academic support of seasoned writers. I, for one, have no difficulty with this fact since I am a reader of thoughtful theologians of all kinds, and enjoy their quotations from fellow-writers. Even so, I feel the need to write to the persons who may be moved by a straight statement of biblical truth. Of course, it is as I see it to be biblical truth.

Following the publication of the present title, one bookstore in Adelaide-perhaps unwittingly-placed it in their Psychology section. An intelligent man, about middle age, and thirsting for anthropological material, bought it. He would not have described himself as a Christian, nor as a churchman, but the book moved him profoundly, and he could not wait to order another for a close friend, so came to our publication Centre. He was immensely excited. 'This book', he said, 'has changed my entire thinking. In fact, it has changed my life and I want others to read it'. He added, 'I never knew a person could die to himself and then come alive to God and others'. That, then,

is what I mean by writing to persons who may be directly touched. In my case the material comes from the Scriptures, but then I have been counselling men and women for almost sixty years, and doing so from much of what I have read that is extra-biblical, as well as deriving from the word of God. I am grateful for the experience, knowledge and-dare I say it?-the wisdom which has accrued over the years as a soldier, a writer of fiction and practical theology, as a teacher, a pastor, a counsellor and as a human being sharing the same experiences of life as do others. My studies of human beings as persons and members of corporate society was enlarged during three and a half years in a Japanese Prisoner of War Camp. Of course one's experience does not authenticate one as a credible theologian, but I would claim I am.

In the thirteen years since the first printing I have gathered so much more material which should be included in any study of humanity that I could rewrite the present volume, but because I have included much of this material in other books, I feel justified in not revising the present volume. I believe that essentially it covers all that is needed for someone making his or her way into simple, biblical anthropology. I recognise that it can be seen in a certain measure to be repetitious but feel that even this can be useful, since repetition, rightly used, can be the soul of teaching.

I trust it will be received as the mind of the Scriptures and evoke good and helpful responses.

Geoffrey Bingham,
Coromandel East, June 1996

PART ONE

DEGRADATION

Chapter 1

PROLOGUE

INTRODUCTION TO DEPRAVITY

COMING; TO SEE DEPRAVITY

Few people escape unusual shocks during their lifetime, and I have had a number along the way. Leaving aside the general surprises which come to us as we grow up in the human race, and face many unusual experiences within the creation, I am sure my greatest shocks came during war-time. The first shock was in battle action. There I saw that under deep pressure man's social unity very quickly breaks down, and the cry, 'Every man for himself!' is often uttered. Mutual security gives way to individualistic attempts to preserve one's own life. More cruel still is the cry, 'Blow you, Jack! I'm all right.'

The sphere of warfare in which I participated happened to be one of defeat, and so it was a climate suited to social breakdown. In the fear and terror of failure men did things that have been done throughout man's history, especially when defeat has loomed before them. If we reflect that this kind of breakdown has happened consistently under similar circumstances down through history, then it becomes less shocking. In the heat of the events, however, it is highly traumatic to watch men breaking down. This is probably because patriotism and humanism build ideal images of what man is, or what we choose to believe he is. These ideal images do not stand the test of reality.

The shock of battle events was superseded by the shock of

what happens when an army is imprisoned. Numerous accounts of prison camps have been written, and these settings have given rise to many novels, so in these terms there is little to add. My specific concern, however, is with the degradation of the human spirit, and this can never be fully described. Having been born into an idealised view of the Australian soldier as the bronzed and courageous Anzac, I was first horrified, and then sickened to see what men could do when under extreme pressure.

Looking back now, I can smile a little sadly. Not, of course, at the depravity I witnessed, but at my youthful naivete. I was twenty-two when I was wounded in battle. I had joined the army from a theological college. Fresh from Australian suburban society, I was ill-equipped to tackle some of the deepest themes of human suffering, greed and evil. My observations were immature, my reactions and decisions of the rawest kind, and so it was no wonder that I was both shocked and perplexed. I was simply not equipped to handle the events into which I had been catapulted.

SHOCK UPON SHOCK

The strange thing about my reaction to man's depravity was that had been brought up in a strongly Calvinistic school of theology. I believed most fervently in the depravity of man. When, however, I saw some of the raw material of depravity, I became quite angry, and in my mind bitterly attacked it. I was, in fact, the usual 'angry young man', quite indignant at my fellow-creatures. I had, of course, forgotten the fact that *all* mankind is basically the same. That is, we are all made of the same dust or clay, and therefore I was no less depraved than my fellow men.

Because of the strong moral upbringing I had received, and my dedication to God's cause, I retained my moral integrity. This was to lead to the second great shock of my life. In fact,

looking back, I think it registered as the greater of the two. It came when, during the course of a conversation, a gracious friend of mine said very quietly, 'Geoffrey, you must be about the greatest egotist I have ever met.'

This friend was a physiotherapist. He was attending to my leg, which was partly paralysed. He had always been so gentle and helpful. Then suddenly this attack came without warning. Because I trusted him deeply I could not really question his statement.

I cannot remember my outward reactions, but inwardly I was stunned. I asked a few questions to see whether or not I had misunderstood him. No! He was quite definite, even adamant: I was a first-class egotist.

For some weeks I dragged myself around in the society of that prisoner-of-war camp. I accepted his kindly ministrations in utter silence. I was full of misery. I wanted to analyse my situation. Was his assessment of me a valid one? Could I escape it? One thing I have always known is that when enemies or friends criticise me, I have to come to terms with what they say. I am probably no more honest than others, but I have always been determined to know the truth, however much it may hurt. And on this occasion it hurt horribly.

A WORD FOR THE READER

Let me assure you that I share these shocks, not to get your sympathy, but simply to catch your interest. As the years pass I realise more and more, in my capacity as a theologian, that few humans are really interested in theology as such. They are, however, most interested in what it is to be a human. So I share my experiences hoping that the theology I use will be apt, and will relate to you as you read. Indeed I hope it will scarcely appear as theology. Not, mind you, that I am ashamed of theology, but I realise it is a study which some of us make in a

specialist way. Others simply absorb the truth naturally as though by some kind of quiet osmosis. I believe, in fact, that every human being is a theologian of sorts, consciously or unconsciously. He must be, since we are all bound to think about God. Someone has said that atheists are 'God-obsessed'.

You may wonder whether I ever accommodated to the fact of my egotism. I guess I did, but it was a slow process. Unconsciously I had been poised on the edge of being a thorough-going Pharisee. I mean that I had seen the evil of others, but little, if any, in me. I was quite aware that *the possibility* of all kinds of evil was within me. But then I had not participated in the moral breakdown that I saw about me, so I became critical of it, and of the persons who shared in it. I kept aloof.

What I was shocked into seeing was that there can be two kinds of evil, roughly speaking: namely, black evil and white evil. A true theologian will not laugh at this crude division. Christ talked of the Pharisees as being like whitewashed graves, appearing clean. He criticised their ritual washing, for within them was deep impurity. Even so this is not quite what I mean. What I mean is that the human being who is deeply involved in obvious evil is rarely a hypocrite. He acknowledges in his weary way that he is far gone in evil. He is the tax-gatherer or the harlot of Jesus' day. The critic who prides himself as one who does not participate in evil does not realise that he gives himself the credit for this impeccable morality. In reality he may be far gone in his own inner corruption and not realise the fact.

In relation to this Jesus once told a parable. It was for those 'who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others.' It was the story of the Pharisee who saw no wrong in himself, but congratulated himself for his religious observances, despising a forlorn tax-gatherer who at that moment was in a state of deep repentance before God. Jesus said the tax-gatherer was the justified one, and not the Pharisee.

I think I would have been horrified to see myself in the role of the Pharisee. If I was not fully in it, then I was perilously close.

Chapter 2

SOMETHING MORE OF DEPRAVITY

A third shock came to me when I returned home from the prisoner-of-war camp. By this time I cherished little human optimism regarding my fellow-creatures. I may have been deeply disappointed, but there was little bitterness. I had cherished the fond thought that when I returned I would find a core of people who had kept their moral integrity under the pressures of war. I guess I was hoping to be replenished in spirit by them. I wanted to share the problems I had faced, and receive help.

To my dismay I discovered that some of the finest people I had known had succumbed to the pressures. I think I might have accepted the fact had they themselves realised what had happened. It seemed, however, that they saw nothing wrong at all in what they had done. Obviously they had missed the implications of their actions. They expressed surprise when I pointed out what seemed to me to be moral failure. They could not agree with me, and I was disturbed by their failure to see the wrong of their actions.

Of course, what I did not realise was that I had virtually become a moral theologian in the dreadful rough-and-tumble of that prisoner-of-war camp. The issues had been in black and white for me, as for others who were fellow inmates. In a land of plenty—Australia—these issues had not been so clear. Had I not suffered as deeply as I had, then the issues would not have become so plain to me. So anger grew at the depravity of human beings, even Christian human beings.

DEPRAVITY IN THE CHURCH

It is strange how much we cherish fond human illusions. I had always been sure that the church at least should be wholly free from elements of sinful depravity. I found myself demanding perfection of the church. One part of me knew that the church is composed of human beings, but the other—the utopian, messianic, perfectionist part of me—demanded a vast difference between the secular world and the spiritual church. I found, however, that religious politics play a large and significant part in church life. Ambition to be someone in religious affairs is quite strong in many churches.

I had, of course, ignored all my resource materials in coming to deep criticism of the church. The first of these materials is the New Testament itself. Its letters are written to faulty men and women who compose the church. In the last book of the Bible Christ is shown writing letters to churches of the day. They had various forms of corruption. Some had elements of immorality, the occult, moral decadence, spiritual blindness, materialism, and the like. Even so, Christ is portrayed as walking amongst these churches, being concerned with them. He certainly rebukes the evil in those churches, but the fact is that evil was there.

Any discerning reader will gather that there are always those who retain their moral integrity. If I were such a one, then there must have been others. I was certainly not the special holy one, and all others defective. I share these things, and partly to my shame. But then I had scarcely stumbled upon the great teaching of the grace of God. That was to come—dynamically—at a later date. Whatever may have been my attitude—and however wrong it may have been—the facts still remained, namely that man is a depraved person, whether in a church or out of it.

It is this problem we wish to face in this book, and facing depravity may be either a scarifying experience, or one which is extremely liberating. The last part of this statement may come as a surprise to some. Yet it is true. When we see grace we must

ever, only see it in the light of God's love and grace. That is why the second part of the book deals with the elevation of man, and man's elevation is thrilling, to say the least.

THE PRINCIPLE OF HUMAN BIOGRAPHY

Recently I was drawn into writing the biography of two persons who are man and wife.¹ Ray Thyer had been a criminal, and his wife Paula, a prostitute. These two asked that their biography be written to show what a change God can effect in the lives of human beings. They are two of the most courageous persons I have ever met. I doubt that, being in their position, I would want to have my biography written. I have found it hard enough to share the few autobiographical details described in this book, sketchy though they be, and unflattering to me as they are.

Paula and Ray made materials of their lives available, and supplemented where I required further information. The book took some months in conflating and writing. It demanded tape recordings, scripts, and many phone calls and interviews. When it was completed I realised, sadly enough, that I had never in my life involved myself so closely with two people as on this occasion. In a way I had lived (or relived) with them in their early childhood through to their present state of middle-age, and had shared in their thought-life to an unusual degree. It was a humbling experience.

What emerged from it was the terrifying truism that man can become very evil. He also easily rationalises his own evil as being the result of various influences. These elements can be called hereditarys parental, environmental and circumstantial. It is a favourite habit of the human race to blame such influences as though they are fatalistic, and automatically effective. Hence,

¹ *FROM CRIME TO CHRIST*. Ray and Paula Thyer's true life story, as told to Geoffrey Bingham (Adelaide Tabor Publications, 1981).

responsibilities throughout life lies not in the human will, but in these powerful influences. Writing the biography has shown me the power of the human will, particularly when it is used perversely.

Even more, biography is an antidote to academic theology.² The best theologians must be men who are not only of the study, but of the street. Their theology cannot be living until they live where human beings live. They must live simultaneously with God and man. The man is very special who can be autobiographical with honesty. Few can be objective about their own lives.

The Bible is, of course, filled with biography. That is why it is a fine source book for authentic theology.

² In one sense all theology is academic. It must be of the intellect. Even so it must also be of the heart to be genuine theology.

Chapter 3

PROBLEMS IN UNDERSTANDING DEPRAVITY

WHAT IS DEPRAVITY?

We have used the term very generally to this point in our study. We need to see more particularly what depravity is. To the nonreligious, that is to the secular mind, depravity may be nonexistent. It is not recognised as a reality. Some secular persons may see it as that which is basically criminal or immoral. They recognise that there is a desirable norm for living in society, and anything anti-social is, in that sense, depraved.

Others may see depravity as that which does not accord with the social and cultural mores in any given society. They do not see it essentially as depravity. Rather they see that society *considers* certain things to be wrong or evil. In another society some of these elements may be acceptable, so that, it is claimed, we cannot speak of essential and absolute depravity.

Roughly speaking, the Christian or Biblical view of depravity is that man who was made in the image of God has denied that Image, and has set out to live life apart from God. Thus his values are not those of God, and so man lives in selfishness, immorality, and often does things which are considered criminal, i.e. against the laws of God, and even the laws of society.

This description is lacking in many ways. We need to supplement it, and must do so. Meanwhile we face a real problem in

communicating the fact of depravity. This problem arises from the innate deceit of depravity itself.

THE PROBLEM OF SEEING DEPRAVITY

We can easily see what is cruel, unkind and selfish in our community. This is so especially when it directly affects us. However, there are real problems in seeing what depravity is essentially. That is, we cannot see what it is innately.

A reader may ask, 'Why cannot we see and understand what is the nature of depravity?' The answer to this question is somewhat complex. Jesus once said, 'He that has an ear to hear, let him hear.' He meant that understanding is not so much a matter of the intellect as of the will. I may or may not want to understand certain things. Understanding may bring upon me some obligation or other. I may be required—even by conscience—to act in accordance with what I have learned.

Take, for example, God! Who really wants to know God? Some may—out of various motives—want to know *about* God. Who then wants to *know* God? To know Him means personal confrontation by God, and with God. Doubtless He will then demand a response to this encounter with His Being.

If we were honest we would admit that the mind of man can be a slippery thing. We all know its ability to rationalise any situation. Indeed rationalisation of itself, and as a principle, is not wrong. We have to make rational what we see and experience and do, because we are rational creatures. Yet we also rationalise, often, in a false way. We excuse ourselves when wrong. We often use this ability to so rationalise in order to escape from demanding confrontation. The truth is too strong for us.

Who then would seek to study the fact and nature of depravity? It would immediately seem to be a morbid preoccupation. We far prefer the lighter, brighter side of things. So then, we can

rationalise away even the fact of depravity. We tell ourselves it is not important.

THE BIBLE AND THE PROBLEMS OF SEEING DEPRAVITY

The Bible is quite clear on the matter. Fallen humanity lives in sin, and innate in sin is deception. By this we mean that sin has its own inbuilt device to deceive us. Just as Adam and Eve rationalised their own behaviour at the Temptation, so do we. We rarely see sin as sin. When, therefore, I was confronted by my friend in the P.O.W. camp as being highly egotistical, I was shocked. Nothing like this had ever entered my head. The following excerpts from Scripture will show us that all evil is deceitful. Hebrews 3:13 speaks of 'the deceitfulness of sin'. Revelation 12:9 (and other verses) speaks of the Devil as 'the deceiver of the whole world'. Ephesians 4:22 speaks of 'deceitful lusts'. Jeremiah 17:9 says, 'The heart of man is deceitful above all things . . .' There are other references, but II Thessalonians 2:7 speaks of 'the mystery of lawlessness' or 'the mystery of iniquity'.

The latter is an intriguing statement because I Timothy 3:9 speaks of 'the mystery of the faith' and I Timothy 3:16 of 'the mystery of godliness'. These statements are intended to show us that the facts of good and evil are, for the most part, hidden from man, until revealed to him by special revelation.

A BIG BOOK ON SIN

C. C. Berkouwer is a famous contemporary dogmatic theologian. He has published a number of books on various Biblical subjects. In his book on sin he has said that the understanding of sin is a complex matter. Almost all his books cover about 300

pages. His book on sin—a subject which we know least about—contains 600 pages. This points to the complexity of the matter.

We know that the Bible gives various definitions of sin. Man's sinful state is really his depravity. Hence we speak more about what we do not know than what we know. The definitions of sin do not really touch us unless they come to us as basic revelation. This is why Paul says, 'The natural (RSV 'unspiritual') man does not receive the things of the Spirit for they are foolishness to him, and he is unable to understand them for they are spiritually discerned.' Christ said that unless a man were born again (of water and the Spirit) he could not see or enter the Kingdom of God (I Cor. 2:14, John 3:3–6). He, too, insisted that humanity without the Spirit of God cannot know the truth.

We may conclude then that understanding sin, evil, and depravity is not a simple matter. When we repeat the statement of Jeremiah 17:9, 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt; who can understand it?' then we see that man's heart is not really set to know his own evil, let alone know God's good.

For this reason it would be good for us to go back to man's origins, his nature, and his fall into degradation, so that we might better understand what it is we are talking about.

Chapter 4

THE NATURE OF CREATED MAN

DIFFICULTY IN UNDERSTANDING CREATED MAN

We have seen that because we are sinners we cannot be detached enough to see the true nature of sin, or man as a sinner. We are compulsively motivated to rationalise this failure of man, and to gloss over his evil. Paul's stated principle—'To the pure in heart all things are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure; their very minds and consciences are corrupted'—must mean that man would have to be innocent of evil if he were to know the truth. Certainly it must mean that man can only understand God's revelation of good and evil when his mind has been made pure.

We say this as an introductory thought because the Biblical truth of man's depravity is appalling to the human mind. This is because (generally speaking) man does not know what he was created to be. If, in fact, he does know, he suppresses this knowledge from himself. Therefore he cannot see what created man was. That is why he cannot understand fallen man. He does not know from what man has fallen. In fact he will deny that man has fallen. In order to understand the matter properly he needs Biblical revelation on the nature of created man.

THE NATURE OF CREATED MAN

The Biblical accounts need to be studied closely. We do not have

to look only at the first few chapters of Genesis. There are other Scriptures which tell us what man is as created. When we say 'man' we really mean 'mankind as male and female.' We mean mankind as a dual male-female entity. The word *adhmah* is used for man in Genesis chapters 1-3. It is not until Genesis 3:21 that the male is called Adam. Hence when God speaks of *adhmah* He is speaking of man as male-female entity. Genesis 5:2 says, 'Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created.' Male and female, then, constitute one humanity.

In Genesis chapter one God creates all things in periods of days, taking six periods to complete His creation. On the third day there is the creation of vegetation, and the statement follows this creation, 'And God saw that it was good.' This happens likewise on the fourth and fifth days. On the sixth day man is created. By that time all things have been created. The statement now is, 'And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good.'

Our conclusion is that God's creation, being 'good' in its various parts, is 'very good' when it is completed. It is *functionally* good. We must, of course, agree that it was morally good, but then *good* must primarily mean that it was a *functional* good. This is borne out by Ecclesiastes 3:11, where the writer says, 'You have made everything *beautiful* in its own time,' meaning 'apt' or 'appropriate'.

MAN IN A FUNCTIONAL UNIVERSE

We cannot understand man without first understanding the creation in which he lives. If the creation is functional, then so, also, is man. This must mean that the creation functions according to certain laws or principles. Man must live also within those laws and principles.

The laws or principles of creation have been called 'the moral

law'. Paul tells us in Romans 3:21 that the righteousness of God is known by the law. Doubtless he is referring to the law of Moses, i.e. the Judaic law, but Paul (along with Christ) says that the law and prophets are summed up in the law of love. Elsewhere in the New Testament this law of love is known as the law of Christ.

It may seem quite a leap to claim that the world was created in love, but that must have been so if created by God. It is reasonable to claim that the moral law is that of love. Man, created by God (as Love), was created for love. Hence the moral law is, rightly speaking, the way of love for man. The principles or laws by which creation worked at the beginning were those of love. When we say they were functional we mean functional in the purposes and operations of love. Hence law is love-law: not merely law based on love, but law which is love, that is to say, the action of law is love.

Doubtless, as we have already said, this is a great leap in argument, for the early chapters of Genesis say nothing about love-law. At the same time an analysis of the Ten Commandments shows us that they can be divided into (a) love to God, and (b) love to one's neighbour, as also love to one's self.

MAN IN GOD'S LIKENESS

If what we have claimed is true, then the functional way of man is love. Man is to love God, to love his neighbour, and to love (care for) the creation. In Genesis 1:26 God says, 'Let us make man in our image and after our likeness.' This is what He did. Other Scriptures also attest this (e.g. Psa. 8:3ff.; I Cor. 11:7; Ecc. 7:29). Genesis 1:28f. then shows that man is a partner with God in His plan for creation. Man is truly in the image of God when he works with God.

What is it then to be in the image of God? The answer is, 'Everything that God is, man is like that, but then anything that

God is, man is none of that.’ That is to say, ‘God is God, and man is man.’ Man reflects God, but is not God. God does not expect him to do what we might call ‘God-things’. He expects him to do ‘man-things’. God has choice. Man has choice. God chooses the right and good. Man likewise is bound to do the same. To depend on God and to do His will is truly to be man.

Man has every evidence that God is good. Everything around man is good. ‘Every tree of the garden was good for food and pleasant to the eyes’ (Gen. 2:9). Paul says, ‘Everything created by God is good and to be enjoyed’. ‘Good’, then, in the Hebrew, means ‘full of pleasures’ (*tob*), whilst evil (Heb. *ra*) is ‘full of pain’. In this good creation man can live the good life. ‘He has given us all things richly to enjoy’ (I Tim. 4:4, 6:17). Man then can have no complaint. He is made as a high creature, for Psalm 8:5 says, ‘You (God) have made him a little less than God’. It adds, ‘You have crowned him with glory and honour’.

Man then—as man—lacks no dignity, no honour. Indeed he is fully furnished to live in this beautiful and functional creation.

MAN HAS HIGH VOCATION

God, we are told, made man in His own image and likeness. This is a stunning thought. Then He gave them a commission: ‘And God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”’ Psalm 8:5–8 describes this as follows:

‘Yet thou hast made him little less than God,
and dost crown him with glory and honour.
Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands;
thou hast put all things under his feet,
all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,

the birds of the air, and the iisil of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the sea.’

In another place it is said, ‘Lord, you have made man upright’ (Eccl. 7:29). All of these things must mean that man, as created, was indeed a high personage. His nature, abilities and vocation were, to say the least, glorious.

How then did man come to be a degraded creature?

Chapter 5

THE DEGRADATION OF MAN—I**THE MEANING OF THE IMAGE OF GOD IN MAN**

No matter where we go in history or the life of man, we find proud persons. We may go to Skid Row and to the gutters of the world where we will view degraded human beings, but even to the last there is something of pride, and even of dignity in them. No matter how low they have fallen, something of the image of God can be seen in them: even the tottering 'wino', seeking to stand straight.

One of my favourite stories is that of a Christian personal worker who was famous for his contacts with needy persons. One evening he boarded a tram, only to be greeted by a drunkard whose clothes were filthy, and who smelled as though he had not bathed for weeks. He was sucking away at a wine bottle. He caught the eye of the Christian worker, and suddenly, impulsively, thrust the bottle towards him.

'Here, mate,' he said, 'have a drink!'

The Christian was momentarily revolted. Then he caught a glimpse of something.

'Thank you for the offer,' he said. 'You are a very generous man.'

In fact the drunk was generous. The Christian had seen a gleam of the gold of the image of God. The fact that the 'wino' was brought to new life that night is not beside the point. Man is degraded, but, in spite of it all, and even in it all, he is still *man*.

Man, we saw, has a high vocation. He is to be fruitful, to have

families, to rear them. He is to cover the earth with his progeny. He is to care for the earth, subduing its dynamic elements so that he brings them under his rule. He is to rule wisely in the creation and to effect good stewardship for God. This is a high and dignified calling. It also demands that man be stretched out in seeking to fulfil the task he has been given.

THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING MAN

Evidently man has pulled down a blind on his beginnings. If it were not for Scripture he would not know those beginnings. What knowledge he may have he insists on suppressing. When we trace those beginnings from the creation accounts we are thrilled by their beauty. They give high hope for the human race. To regard man's degradation without seeing his lofty origins and destiny is to miss the splendour in which man was created.

Man has voted for different beginnings. His late espousal of evolution—whatever may be its merits or demerits—shows that he does not have a high view of his beginnings. Yet he trusts that evolution may give him a high hope for his future. Be that as it may, man has much invested in not receiving the Biblical picture of his origins and destiny. 'The pagan,' says Karl Heim, 'thinks of life in terms of fate. The Christian thinks of it in terms of destiny. We cannot understand the meaning of creation unless we understand its goal and end. Whilst we may agree that creation was functionally perfect when made, yet it is the purpose of creations i.e. why it was made, that concerns us most of all. We cannot fully enlarge the concept at this point of our study, but we must keep it in mind. The Biblical picture is that man was made to be glorified, and to live in rich immortality. This then gives a deep meaning to creation and the nature of man.

It also explains why man is a creature of guilt. This is especially so when he does not live according to the laws of the creation,

and when he seems to be failing in his attempts to achieve immortality. He feels great shame when he fails to be what he has been created to be.

THE EXPERIENCE OF MAN'S SOCIALITY

The richest picture we have of the love of man and woman is to be found in the Song of Solomon. It is so close to perfect as to make us wistful for a similar love. How beautiful does the man see his woman, and the woman her man. How unashamed they are of their love, their bodies, and their pleasures. Even so they are not a full reflection of man as created in the man-woman duality³, for there the male person saw the female person as 'flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone'. That is, he saw her as his 'other half', and she, likewise, him. They became 'one flesh'. Between them there was no guilt of sin, hence no tension, and so they could relate fully to each other.

We need not be shy of calling their life 'bliss', for that is what it must have been. They had a rich and useful sociality. It began with their fellowship with God, and it was based wholly upon that. They had no cause for anger with God since He had made all things well. Later the Psalmist was to say, 'All your works praise you.' God, as true, can only do all things well.

This primal sociality was evidently intended to be both the paradigm and source for the sociality of all future mankind. We can envisage a society in which there was no selfishness, no seeking for self-aggrandizement. In fact it would be a society in which each served the other. As such it would constitute a beautiful community. No wonder man lived in delight.

No wonder, too, that man has pulled down the blind on this primal joy. It would be agony for him to compare his present lot of living with that which God had created him to experience in

his beginnings. We must not think that man's amnesia is involuntary. He could not bear the pain of being confronted every day with his departure from the original blissful norm. In prison camp days we drew down the blinds on what had been. For us too it would have been painful to live with dynamic memory each day. Only when the days of imprisonment were ended could we bear to remember pre-prison times. Then the blind shot up, and the ecstasy was wonderful. Memory became a nostalgic experience.

³ See Genesis 1:26ff; 5:1-3

THE DEGRADATION OF MAN—II

THE WAY IT HAPPENED

It has often been said that if man had not fallen, the Fall would have had to be invented. Man knows, deeply within himself, that he was made to be greater than what he has achieved in his being. At the back of human minds is a norm for humanity which makes present accomplishments unsatisfying. One existentialist summarised: 'This existence is absurd!' He was right of course, but then how did he know it was absurd? What standard or image did he have in his mind of the true norm, the non-absurd? He surely based his criticism on the fact that *he knew what ought to be!*

The happening of the Fall as described in the Bible has been carefully examined throughout a number of millenniums. Paul has a brilliant passage in Romans 5:12ff. He says simply, 'By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and death passed upon all men for all *did* sin.' Paul evidently sees all the human race included and present in the primal pair. He sees the whole human race participating in what has been called '[the] original sin'.

Be that as it may, the sequence of the temptation is not difficult to follow or understand. The woman was asked the question:

'Hath God said . . . ?' Doubtless there was the insinuation: ' *Why* has God said. . . ?' The woman answers that God has in-deed given all trees for man's enjoyment. Only one—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—is forbidden to man. If he eats of that tree he will die. The Tempter now says clearly that God has forbidden the use of this special tree lest man come up to His level. If we remember that man was *like* God then he could gain nothing by eating of the tree. When he is *like* God he does have a certain knowledge of good and evil, but it is knowledge which he derives from God, and does not have, innately, of himself, for he is not *as* God.

Man, then, is tempted to become *as* God. That is to say he is urged to become autonomous. He can decide what is good and evil *of himself*. He can rule himself without reference to God. He can be rid of dependency upon God. Every one of us can remember the thrill when we thought that at last we were truly free to be just what we wanted to be! We would depend on no one.

The problem here was that man was a creature, and by no means a god. He was a creature dependent upon the Creator. In fact he was a servant dependent upon the King of the universe. Also—as we find out through study of the Scriptures—he was created to be a son of the Father-King. Now he was tempted to set aside his relationship with God, and so to spurn being a creature, a servant and a son.

Doubtless this was not fully the way he saw it. He simply saw a denied freedom, and with it the ability, personally, to discern what was good and what was evil. In reaching this point he, in fact, had doubted God's Word. This Word had created man, and had also informed man of the truth. Man now disbelieved what the Word had said. He saw God as seeking to confine him within his creatureliness. So he rebelled. 'I will be what I will be, was the theme of his struggle for autonomy. In striving for higher glory he really lost the glory that was his by creation, and which shone most brightly when he was dependent upon the Creator Father-King.

THE EFFECTS OF THE HAPPENING

These effects also have been analysed by scholars and commentators of the Genesis passage. Instead of man ascending to giddy heights of glory he 'fell', i.e. he was suddenly ashamed of himself. His nakedness was a thing not of joy but of shame. The man and the woman sought to cover themselves. Their common duality was divided: they saw each other as separate persons. The joys we see later described in the Song of Solomon seemed to have diminished. Furthermore, they were afraid of God and hid themselves.

True enough, their eyes were opened as the Tempter had predicted would happen, but then what joy was there in that? None apparently. In some sense they had come to know good and evil, but then not in the best sense. Their new 'knowledge' was dangerous. For this reason they were cast out of the garden of Eden.

Mercifully they were punished. The woman was dignified by her punishment. She had failed in her role as 'helpmeet', as the man had failed in his role of leader. The woman was told that her husband would rule over her. This was evidently a change in the relationship they had previously held. The woman was to suffer pain in childbirth, and yet she was to desire her husband, and to desire him so passionately that his ruling over her would not separate them.

The man was punished for listening to his wife. This *kind* of listening had been wrong. Also the man had consciously and deliberately eaten of the tree, even though he blamed his wife for his act (cf. I Tim. 2:14). He was to have to sweat in labour to obtain his living. He had been warned he would die, and now his mortality was pressed upon him. He would return to dust. Mankind was doomed to mortality. The threat of death was over them, where before there had been life, and the choice of eternal life.

THE EFFECTS OF THE FIRST GENERATION

The truth is that man died to God *in a relational/ manner*. His whole life had been rich because he related to God. The male and the female had known rich union because of their union with God. They had fellowshiped with Him in the cool of the day. Now that fellowship was gone. In their guilt they had dreaded God. In 'coming short of the glory of God', they had come short of the (true) glory of man!

Even so they coveted the presence of God (cf. Gen. 4:14). To be cast from the Garden was to know a loneliness they had not known. The effects of all this are shown in the story of the first children—Cain and Abel. A commentary on the event of the murder of Cain is given in the New Testament in I John 3:10f. John is saying that from that point onwards—the division of Cain and Abel—the human race knew of two families: (i) the family of God, and (ii) the family of the Devil. We are right, then, to observe that in dying to God, man had come alive to himself relationally. To be alive to oneself is, in God's reckoning, to be dead, for one is thereby dead to God. In II Corinthians 5:14–15 we see the same principle, this time in reverse. Man dies to himself through Christ's death and comes alive to God.

Cain is said to have been a man of evil works, and to have hated his brother. So soon has the noble created child of God become a creature of hatred and violence! So soon has he stooped to murder! The death that passed on to all men from Adam's sin was in the very nature of the evil which had now gripped him.

It remains only for us to see the outworking of that degradation.

THE DEGRADATION OF MAN—III

THE REBELLION OF MAN AND ITS DEADLY EFFECTS

Genesis chapter three and Romans chapter one are virtually parallel passages. They deal with the theme of man's rebellion. Both need thoughtful study. Each passage is illuminated by the other.

Paul does not say explicitly in Romans 1:18-32 that he is speaking of the Fall. It would seem, in fact, that some Jewish readers believed Paul was speaking about the Gentiles and their rejection of God in favour of the idols. Doubtless that, too, was included. Even so Paul is speaking about that continuous rejection of God by all men. He is working towards the point where he will say, 'All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.'

In no sense is Paul abstract in his argument. He is very much down to earth. Something has happened in history which began with the Fall, but which has expressed itself universally. In fact it always goes on manifesting itself, and does so universally. Paul introduces this continuing event by saying that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. He means that God being Creator has righteous moral anger against those who seek to subvert the order of His universe. For

example, they suppress purity by *acts* of impurity, righteous ness by *acts* of unrighteousness, love by *acts* of hatred. And so on.

He says that these people originally knew God. Unbelievably enough they—knowing God—refused to give Him His due in glory, honour and thanksgiving. It is not as if they could not have known Him, or could not currently know Him. All creation in its functionality, its nature, its operations and manifestations spells out the true nature of God. Men not only ignored this. They told themselves that in their rejection of God they were really wise. The darker their minds became, the more brilliant they considered themselves.

Paul then proceeds to do two things. The first is that he shows the incredible degradation of man. The second is that he shows how God's wrath works in the processes of that degradation. We can see the following steps.

1. MAN EXCHANGES THE GLORY OF GOD FOR IDOLS

We must not pass quickly over this first effect of degradation. Man has been created by God's love in order to love. He must have an object of adoration and worship. The true Object is God. In that adoration and worship man is fulfilled. To choose anything less than God is to demean both God and himself. Man sets his level of living by the level of the object he chooses to worship.

We must make no mistake: man is an emotional creature. He is also social. He needs emotional fulfilment. By nature of the case he cannot find emotional fulfilment in his relationship with his fellow-man and the other objects of creation, unless first he relates to God. By truly relating to God he can rightly relate to the rest of creation. By refusing this functional way of worship and service man places himself in a dangerous and desperate state. Man at the same time is a moral creature formed by God for the life of righteousness, holiness, goodness, truth and love.

He is personally and emotionally fulfilled in the pursuit of such moral living. He demeans himself when he does not live a full moral life.

Nor must we quickly pass by the fact that man demeans God in the most vile way by idol-worship. The Scriptures are constantly returning to the debasing theme of man's idolatry in both the Old and New Testaments. Even so it is the *effects* of idolatry which are terrifying, as those who have studied the subject carefully well know.

2. IDOLATRY LEADS TO IMMORALITY

Some commentators point out that all the effects of the rejection of God as Paul nominates them are not necessarily sequential, i.e. that they follow one another as Paul outlines them in this chapter. They are, in fact, simultaneous. That could well be true. Even so it is best to follow the Pauline sequence, for Paul sees one thing as leading to another. His 'therefore' of verse 24 indicates that idolatry leads to immorality, and doubtless this is logical. Man may love his fellow human being truly when first he truly loves God. If he is not fulfilled in his love action, then he must somehow find emotional fulfilment in some relationship or another. Thus he is forced by emotional need into wrong relationships. He uses bodily passion to fulfil the desires for love, but he cannot, in fact, have true fulfilment.

We must also remain aware of the fact that love in a post-Edenic world will always have its problems. The woman will have a desire towards the man, but he will rule her. She will not like the ruling, but will be attracted nevertheless. This tension is a result of human sin, and all man-woman relationships will have to accept this tension and live with it. Human beings, then, will always live in the probability of immorality (sexuality outside its true context, i.e. marriage). Being without God they will find it difficult to maintain true moral functionality.

3. IMMORALITY AND HOMOSEXUALITY

Man, we have seen, is deeply caught in the deceit of sin. He rationalises his failure as the product of alien influences such as heredity, parental oversight, environment and circumstances. Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed Satan. Doubtless the influences we have named are powerful, but the core of the problem is the rebellious Will of man. Immorality is a perversion of true morality. It is the act which suppresses true sexuality. Likewise homosexuality is the act which suppresses true morality, and true sexuality. In fact homosexuality is rebellion, although no less in principle than immorality. It is the perverse choice of expressing sexuality in a malfunctional manner. It is against the functional order of God's universe. It may not appear to be deliberate and overt rebellion, but then the deceit of sin, which is innate to the character of sin, is the factor which rationalises rebellion as non-rebellion.

It is significant that homosexuality in I Corinthians 6:9-10 is in the company of idolatry, adultery, fornication, alcoholism, greediness, reviling and compulsive thieving. Each one of these elements is a form of rebellion against God because it is an active rejection of the functional order of His creation. It constitutes an attack upon the moral law and order of God.

At this point we may join those commentators who do not see all these elements of base behaviour as being necessarily sequential. Verse 25 states a general, basic, and powerful principle: . . .they exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator'. Man then lives a lie. He does not want the truth. This is the dreadful deceit in which he lives. It is no wonder that Jeremiah said, 'The heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately corrupt. This statement of course, must read strangely in the modern climate of weak and tolerant humanism. One wonders—in the light of current violence, exploitation, wars, genocides, rape, rackets and universal greed—how humanists can

still hold out. One must conclude that it is all part of the self-deception man practises within his sinful self.

Chapter 8

THE DEGRADATION OF MAN—IV

THE PROCEEDING PATTERN OF MAN'S DETERIORATION

We need, for a moment, in our study of Romans 1:18–32, to refer back to Paul's statement in verse 18: 'The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven upon all ungodliness and wickedness of men, who by their wickedness suppress the truth'. How, then, is this wrath of God revealed? Paul answers this question by saying three times (verses 24, 26, and 28) that 'God gave them up. . . ' That is He gave them up to what they wished to do, and what they wished to be. That is God's wrath.

Another way of looking at this is to see that whilst God's wrath is not sin, man's sin constitutes (for man) the wrath of God. That is man, by his rejection of God and participation in sin, is not only under the judgement of God, but is caught in the vortex of his own evil. The pain and burden of that is in fact the way God causes him to suffer. Man-in-guilt suffers elements of shame, pain, burden, alienation, fear, loneliness, dread of penalty, and the like. These are the elements to which God's wrath delivers man, thus compounding his sin and guilt which in turn compound his suffering.

This will not immediately become clear to us unless we see the nature and extent of man's degradation. Man does not lose the image of God by the Fall. The image of God is never spoken of in Scripture as having departed. As one theologian has said, 'The image of God in man is irreducible, but reversible.' Man

has gone into reverse, perversely using those qualities God has given him. Thus true love becomes self-love, true righteousness self-righteousness, and so on. Or—to put it another way—man is alive to himself (with all his created faculties) but dead to God. This means he uses his created attributes in his own service, and in a deadly fashion against God.

THE EFFECTS OF THE REVERSED IMAGE

Romans 1:22–32 demonstrates the degradation of man. It shows its operations in practice. We must not pity man as having *lost* something. It is true that the Reformers spoke of sin as *privatio*, but man has deprived himself—by his rejection of God—of the true functioning of his own nature. He is depraved because he is deprived, and vice-versa. He is not so much deprived by God as he is one who has abandoned what he has been given in and by creation.

What concerns us, however, are the experiential elements of degradation. Man was at peace when he gladly conformed to the true functional order of his universe. Genuine obedience brings with it true serenity and tranquillity. Lack of guilt presupposes joy. Vocational assurance brings purposeful living. Love from God brings love to God, and love to God presupposes love to all His creation. Thus unfallen man is in a state of bliss and purposeful usefulness.

When man rebels he is at odds with himself. He is awry in his own creation. He is cut off from God and becomes as a wandering star or a trackless planet. He is creature without Creator, servant without King, son without Father. He is thus disoriented, disjointed, and dislocated. His agony and anguish come from the fact that he can never be totally fulfilled. He is deprived of emotional fulfilment. His vocational drive has no true direction, no real goal. In this state he is in company with all other sinners who are equally bereft of truth and hence of basic reality.

It is impossible for us to compute the pain, tension, fear, loneliness, burden, and constant sense of defilement which man continually experiences. None of this would trouble him were he rid of the image of God, but that is impossible. Man is not truly man when he is not

fully that image. Hence he is in double torture. As yet he is not bodiless, mindless, soulless, and spiritless, although such terms have often been implied to him. Because he is rebelling against the Object of all his created humanity he is wholly at odds with himself. This is what causes his suffering, or—if you will—the wrath of God which comes upon him: painful because from Him!

What is rarely understood is that God's wrath is always in the context of His love. If God did not love the man He created, then man would not suffer so much! That God should pour out His rain and sunshine upon the sinner as upon the saint, upon the unjust as upon the just, is an intolerable matter for the sinner and the unjust (Matt. 5:43–48). Who knows but that the fire of judgement, the very burning lake, is not the fire and burning lake of love?⁴

MAN'S DEGRADATION EVIDENCED BY SPECIFIC ACTS

It remains now for us to view the general evil of man as evidenced by specific acts. Paul has many passages in which he nominates the evils of man. We quote these directly as the substance for later comment. They are (i) Romans 1:28–32, (ii) Romans 3:10–8, and (iii) I Timothy 1:8–11.

Romans 1:28–32:

'And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a base mind and to improper conduct. They were filled with all manner of Wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife,

⁴ Revelation 19:20, 20:10, 21:8.

deceit, malignity, they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God's decree that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them but approve those who practise them.'

Romans 3:10–18:

'...as it is written:

"None is righteous, no, not one;

no one understands, no one seeks for God.

All have turned aside, together they have gone wrong;

no one does good, not even one."

"their throat is an open grave,
they use their tongues to deceive."

"The venom of asps is under their lips."

"Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness."

"Their feet are swift to shed blood,
in their paths are ruin and misery,
and the way of peace they do not know."

"There is no fear of God before their eyes." '

I Timothy 1:8–11:

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

These passages undoubtedly speak for themselves. However, when we remember our inbuilt rejection of stated evil because of the deception of sin, we find ourselves minimising the evils we have just read. We revert to explaining *why* they are there. We think again in terms of alien influences which overpower man. We move away from the centre of the truth which is that man *deliberately rebels against God*, and that *these acts are the manifestations of his opposition to God*.

For the moment we will not analyse the various evils man commits. We will look at their affects upon him and the effects

they achieve. Man, by his own rebellion, is drawn more and more into the vortex of these potent evils. Proverbs 5:22–23 puts it crisply 'The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is caught in the toils of his sin. He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is lost.'

Man then, in his sin, is a craven creature. His degradation is both pitiful and devilish. He is pitiful in his lostness, and perverse in his unremitting rebellion. He is indeed degraded. He may brilliantly rationalise his actions so that he can keep his self-respect. He may also denigrate God so that he—man—feels God is not justified as Creator and Judge, but deeply down man cannot be at peace. He has enough moral sense to keep him in unease. He cannot really be a happy sinner.

Chapter 9

**MAN AND THE NATURE OF SIN:
SIN IS A POWERFUL TYRANT**

The writer of Proverbs has said, ‘The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is caught in the toils of his sin.’

Jesus said, ‘He who commits sin is the bond-slave of sin.’ II Peter 2:19 adds, ‘...for whatever overcomes a man, to that he is enslaved.’

Sin then is a powerful master, a ruthless tyrant. James places the blame for our sinning on no one but ourselves. He says, ‘Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one; but each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full-grown brings forth death.’ What he says is terrifying. We are out of focus with God. We have deep desires within us which are common to all. Our problem is that we have refused God as the Object of these desires. Hence our desires are perverse. From being (by creation) rightful functional desires, seeking true fulfilment, they have now become lusts. They are desires that are out of control. Their objects are wrong objects. Hence when lusts have their way and their expression they can bring only guilt, pollution and dread of coming judgement.

THREEFOLDSIN

It has been long and often said that sin has three aspects or

elements, namely its power, its penalty and its pollution. These three are really one. Man, whether he is conscious of the fact or not, is always groaning under this threefold tyranny of sin.⁵

Whilst we do not propose, in this book, to study the *nature* of sin in any depth, we are concerned to look at its effects and affects in regard to fallen man. For example, in Romans 5:12–21 Paul speaks of the action of sin upon man. He pictures both sin and death as two monstrous companions who enter into the created world through the rebellion of man. Presumably had man not rebelled these two monsters could not have come into the affairs of humanity. As it is they have come, and they exercise enormous power.

The substance of this passage is that man lives under the tyranny of sin because of his sin. Likewise he lives under the tyranny of sin because of impending death. This idea is fortified by passages such as Hebrews 2:14–15 (cf. Col. 2:14–15) and I John 4:16–18, where fear of death and fear of judgement are the one. Man then is a craven creature in the face of death. In fact he spends all his lifetime in bondage because of this fear of death. Doubtless man does not always seem to be craven in the face of death, but his dread—though rationalised—is inherent.

MAN CRAVEN BECAUSE OF HIS SIN

In practice there are people who do not seem to fear death. It would be difficult to assess correctly how they really feel. However, somewhere in man is a fear of leaving this life, and even more than this, a fear of what is to come. Some call it ‘fear of the unknown’ and yet others call it ‘fear of the known’. In

⁵ We do not intend to do a study of sin in this book. The reader is referred to articles on the subject in theological and Bible dictionaries. See also the author’s *THE THINGS WE FIRMLY BELIEVE* pp.69-72 (Adelaide: NCPI, 1981).

Romans 1:32 Paul says, 'Though they know God's decree that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them but approve those who practise them.' He is surely making the point that man knows judgement will come to him for his evil. This was what once caused Paul Tillich to say, 'Man lives in fear of death, not because he *has* to die, but because he *deserves* to die.'

We probably find it difficult to assess the enormous impact that the fear of death makes upon the human race. It would be interesting to calculate how much of our endeavour to gain security in life is motivated by the fear of death. By security we mean all kinds of security. It can mean security in relationships, security that we seek through success, through possessions, money, fulfilled ambition, fame, abilities or talents. For the most part this security is more imagined than real. For example, if we seek security through money we may then live in fear of losing the money. Security can only truly lie in God, and in our surrender to Him, as also in our continuing worship of Him.

All of this leads us to a deeper level on which we have to discuss how man exists under the mastery of his sin, and within its powerful domination.

MAN DRIVEN BY HIS SIN

In following chapters we want to come to specifics. Having dealt with theory we will see how men live their lives under the domination of sin. We will examine persons, especially persons who are portrayed in the Bible. There we will see the practical effects of sin. Yet *in principle* Paul has shown us what sin does in the lives of fallen human beings.

To take one of his cited passages—Romans 3:10–18—we see man as motivated and manipulated by his own sin. Paul commences his study by saying that these sinners simply do not know God, nor do they wish to do so. In Romans 1:28 he says, 'They

did not see fit to acknowledge God,' i.e. they decided to view the creation, man and God in precisely the way they wanted to! They did not wish to retain God even in their minds. This was doubtless because they disliked His confrontation—so utterly moral was He!

Man, then, does not realise his state of being without God. He is alienated from his true centre, his authentic security, his basic fulfilment. In this state he is altogether wrong (Rom. 3:12). Man, fallen, cannot do actual good. That is he cannot do an act of absolute good. Such a statement as this is abhorrent to fallen man, who thinks he is autonomous in his knowledge of good and evil. Of course he can do good! Yet Paul, quoting from the Psalms, says otherwise.

Theologians agree that man can do relative good. That is, many of his acts seem to be good. What we must understand is that only those acts which are commanded by God and executed in the fulfilment of His will can be called 'good'. Of course we agree that in practical fact we would like to see criminals giving huge amounts to help the poor, widows, and the oppressed. We would like to see cruel dictators raise the moral levels of their subjects, and evil people turn from doing crime, but—given all that—we could not call it 'absolute good'. Paul says, 'There is no one who does good. No, not even one.'

Paul, in the passage we are contemplating, goes on to describe what the evil man keeps on doing. He speaks of restlessness, compulsion to reviling and bitterness, even to thoughts and acts of murder. He then concludes:

*In their paths are ruin and misery,
and the way of peace they do not know'*

. The apostle is portraying a sad situation. Man is without rest, without peace. He is driven willy-nilly by sin. Man is wretched. Paul concludes, 'There is no fear of God before their eyes.' He is saying the reverse of what the writer of Proverbs has said, 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,' or, 'The fear of the

Lord is a fountain of life.'

Man is indeed the pitiful and abject slave of tyrannous sin.

Chapter 10

MAN'S DEGRADATION UNDER EVIL POWERS

MAN THE PRIDEFUL PRINCE

We have seen that man—as created—has grounds for genuine pride. He—unlike any other in creation—has been made 'a little lower than God'. Not even the four living creatures of the Book of the Revelation, nor the elders, nor angels—as shown there—are above man in the ultimate. Man is the highest of all God's creatures. One day he will be glorified and will shine as the stars in the heaven. He will perfectly reflect the Father when he is totally in the image of the Son.

Man then has reason for authentic pride. God's command to him to rule over the creation is irrevocable. God has placed all things of the universe under his feet. The powers granted to him were great. Yet this glorious creature has become the plaything of sin and death. He is placed in degrading bondage. Whilst his natural powers may be great, his moral power is as nothing. He cannot even do good.

THE PRINCE UNDER THE PRINCES

The Bible has a sad story to tell of fallen man. Man lies under the power of Satan. Hebrews 2:14–15 tells us this is because of man's fear of death, i.e. his fear of judgement. Satan is able to alarm him, keep him in fear, and play upon his emotions,

manipulating him in sin and rebellion.

In the Temptation the Tempter skillfully drew man apart from God. He lured him into rebellion and death. He entangled him in sin. John tells us (I John 5:19), 'The whole world is in the power of the evil one.' By 'world' he means that system which Satan controls, in which are rebellious men and angels, all pitting themselves against God and His true creational order.

Paul also describes man as being caught in this bondage. In Ephesians 2:1–3 he speaks of sinful men as dead in their sins. He states that they are being forced to follow the pattern or course of this world system as it is headed by Satan. He even says that Satan effects the evil works he plans by doing many of them through men. He 'energizes' or 'works within' captive man. He carries out his rebellion against God through human agencies.

Nor is this all the truth. Fallen angels and (perhaps) other rebellious celestial beings all combine to defeat God. They exercise control of man, and seek to manipulate him. Doubtless man is voluntarily given over to his rebellion, but doubtless also he desires to have complete autonomy. He does not want evil powers or sin to control him. He wishes to rule himself, and by himself. For this reason he must rationalise the forces of evil. He may conclude that there are no evil powers. Many a man who accepts the fact of evil powers imagines himself invulnerable to them. This is not the case. Man who is sinful is shown to be under these powers. We see this in such Scriptures as Galatians 4:8–9; Colossians 2:20; Romans 8:38; Ephesians 3:10; and Colossians 2:14–15.

In practical life these things seem so fanciful. We speak of them scornfully as 'spooky', yet there can be no doubt of their reality. Satan is spoken of as deceiving, as threatening, as seducing, and as giving blindness to men lest they see the truth. He and his powers hold man in thrall.

It is also a Biblical fact that those who worship idols have links with demonic and occultic forces. This is shown in I Corinthians 10:19–22. Israel was warned against links with the occult.

Idols are related to evil powers, as we see in Deuteronomy 18:9–14 and 32:16–22.

POWERS SEEN AND UNSEEN

Modern man (so called) sees the elements of which we have been speaking as simply 'spooky'. In this way he laughs them off. In fact he has an innate drive for knowing more than just the 'natural'. He is fascinated by the supernatural. This may well be because he was never intended to be only a creature of time and space, the three dimensions, and the five human senses. Even so he feels himself to be above occultic forces. Little does he know that he is, in fact, the slave of them.

The New Testament Gospels show some human beings as possessed by demons or unclean spirits. This seemed until recently to be a rare phenomenon in Western countries, but not so in what we call 'the third world'. The same phenomena that existed in Palestine at the time of Christ are witnessed in many third world countries, and particularly those where idolatry is rife. Yet Western countries are not really exempt. If, for the word 'materialism', we read 'idolatry', then demonic powers can be said to manipulate much of Western society. That this is so ought not to be doubted. In Western countries we find the most terrifying forms of evil. Family breakdown is sharply accelerating. Divorce is most common and easy to obtain. Shattered families lead to shattered personalities. Whilst some battle against these relational odds, many succumb to them. Anger and hatred and open violence are on the increase. Rapes, homicides organised rackets and stealing are in proportions that are almost unbelievable. Attributing this evil to human action alone is to miss recognising the manipulative forces that stand behind sinful man.

Modern man, then, is not as free as he would consider—let alone wish—himself to be. Demonic forces should not be

visualised as ‘spooky’ and bizarre. They are brilliant powers who know every move that human beings are able to make. They have been in the business of degrading man for many centuries and are not likely to be checked by the modern intelligence and current technology of man. Deluding man into thinking he is free, they thus manipulate him in his sinful bondage.

THE PROUD PRINCE IS IN CHAINS

This beautiful creature—man—was once given a mandate to rule the world, and to subdue those forces which needed to be controlled. Now he often cannot even control his temper! He is the object of powers which know how to manipulate him. Christ when he became man was ruthless towards the evil powers which had controlled sinful human creatures. He liberated persons from demons and devils. He healed them of diseases which occult powers had visited upon human beings. He liberated men and women from the torturing guilt of sin and memories of their defiling deeds. He also emancipated many from the fear of death.

These acts of his only serve to delineate the actual state of degraded man. Groveling before death, subject to evil spiritual powers, and the abject slave of sin—where then is the once glorious creature God created?

We are forced to echo, ‘Where indeed?’

Chapter 11

THE DEGRADATION AND ITS HUMAN ANTIDOTE

MAN IS NEITHER DEVIL NOR ANGEL

Man is man. Not a devil; not an angel. Whilst he is wholly depraved, his depravity does not mean he has no knowledge of God, good, or law. True, he does not wish to retain God in his knowledge, but that does not mean he can erase God from his mind. He may desire to break the laws of God, but he must know them in order to break them. He may seek to suppress the truth in acts of unrighteousness, but he must know what it is he suppresses. This does not mean he knows in the sense that he fully understands, but it does mean that he has ideas of God, law and morality. He has been created *essentially* as a creature, servant and child of God, and he cannot change his essential functional structure. He can only go against it, and seek to pervert it, or use it for those things which are forbidden to him.

This means that sinful man is not so wholly lost in his sin that nothing of the truth is recognisable to him. Whilst his idolatries may be basically foolish from God’s point of view, they are to man a brilliant rationalisation of God. His religions are not idiotic. They are shining inventions of the mind of man. He may have lost his sense of original glory, but he insists on having glory. He seeks to make all his works glorious, whether they are ancient Babels, not-so-ancient Babylons, or modern Romes,

New Yorks, and Moscows.

THE COUNTER GLORY OF MAN

When Satan tempted Jesus he tempted him as a man. He offered him the kingdoms of the world, which, he said, had been placed under his authority. Jesus refused them, preferring to redeem man by way of a Cross, and not by means of power. Even so Satan knew that man was made for glory. This has in fact always been man's pursuit. He seeks to restore the glory he has lost. We see it as glory misused. Hence at Babel God said, 'Let us go down and disturb them. If we leave them to their own devices there is nothing man will not be able to do.'

Man then has great powers. These powers were creational gifts to him, to be used in pursuit of the mandate God had given man to be fruitful, fill up the earth, subdue and rule over it. Man, separated from God, became a contradiction as a human being. His real self lies in his total dependence upon God.

Man then has sought to build his kingdoms without God. He cannot, however, build them without the powers of evil. They insist on having their part in the operations. Nor, for that matter (although in another way), is God absent from kingdom-building. All creation is His. The world is His Kingdom. What He permits He permits. The other—the operation of evil—that seems to be out of His control, is very much within it. Evil powers think they build as they wish. Man too is proud of his achievements. He does not even learn from his own history that his great endeavours shrivel to defeat and nothingness.

That is not to say that man has not been impressed by what man accomplishes. For this reason archeology, the antiquarian studies of scholars, and the museums of man all attest to two things: (a) the great abilities, gifts and powers that God has given to the human race, and (b) the uses to which man has put these gifts and powers. Man in his imagined autonomy presses

on to convince himself that he is fulfilling his destiny.

MAN LIVES COSMETICALLY

Much of man's living is cosmetic. Somewhere he has an image of what he ought to be, and how he ought to live. He also has ideas of what he ought to accomplish. Hence he strives to fulfil these images. Some part of him is aware—even if unconsciously—of the person he/she ought to be. Hence his cosmetic living. He seeks to add to himself the glory he lacks. He seeks to arrive at the goals which are good goals. He endeavours to reassure himself that he is what he ought to be.

Cosmetics are—roughly speaking—of two kinds. They are of the 'make-up' variety or the 'cover-up' kind. There are things we wish to cover up. There are deficiencies we wish to make up to the norm. How much of human living, then, is occupied with these two elements? It would be difficult to say. Man has fallen short of the glory of God. This is the same as saying he has fallen short of his true glory as man. Hence the need for cosmetics.

There is a cosmetic which is an adornment. It simply delineates the beauty and form already present. It is not gilding the gold or painting the lily. It is the gift of delineation and as such has its aesthetic value. Man was given these gifts. Hence his various arts and crafts, his talents and gifts to beautify the world by means of its innate materials. However, the moment man falsifies or distorts through his arts he has wrongly used his gifts⁶ He has set about creating more idols. He has set about altering the true nature of things instead of delineating them.

Cosmetic living relates to all that we do. It relates to speech, to actions, to endeavours. We cover up the evil. We pretend to do

⁶ We must concede that an artist may portray the distortion and evil that man has brought about without his work of portrayal being wrong in itself. This revelation of evil is valuable. It is only the promotion of distortion, dislocation, (etc.) which is wrong

good. We manufacture additional glory. We justify ourselves by what we do or create. This is man's immediate endeavour when he seeks to justify himself in the eyes of the world, in his own eyes and—it may well be—in the eyes of God. So we ask the question again: 'What percentage of our living is not, in fact, cosmetic?'

THE RELIGIOUS JUSTIFICATION

This is an extremely difficult subject. Jesus was always on the alert for cosmetic living by the religionists. He attacked the Pharisees for their ritual acts, by which they sought to cover up their real selves. 'Whitewashed graves' he called them, drawing attention to the corruption within the graves. He insisted that nothing man swallowed defiled him, for all foods were in fact clean. This was because they had been created by God. No, it was what was in a man which defiled him, especially when it expressed itself overtly.

Jesus was not opposed to law. He did not much care even if the Pharisees pronounced that law. What he did care about was the way in which men understood the law. They had to get to its essence. They had to obey it from the heart. They must not be mere legalists. Above all Jesus would not have any man justifying himself before God or man by what he did. He said (Luke 16:15), 'You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts; for what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.'

In Luke 18:9–14 is the famous case we have already cited. In this the outcast Jew—the rejected tax-gatherer—seeks God's mercy in confession of his sinfulness. He cannot use the means of sacrifice for he is confined to the court of sinners. Because he believed in God's propitiating mercy, Jesus said he went down to his house justified. His opposite number was a Pharisee. He congratulated himself before God on the basis of his many

prayers, much fasting and much tithing. Jesus said this was rejected by God. He was anticipating Paul, who later was to show, powerfully, that justification is never by the works we do, but by the work Christ has done for us in the Atonement.

MAN'S FIERCE AND PASSIONATE ENDEAVOUR

We must never underrate man's cosmetic endeavours, whether they be through his religions, his ideologies, his utopian attempts, or his fierce insistence upon justice. He is out for righteousness—let us never forget that. However his insistence upon justice is not justice as administered by God, but as administered by man. He will crawl over broken glass; he will ambulate on his belly; he will cry and cringe before idols; or he will draw up plans for proud empires. Whatever he sets out to do he will seek to execute magnificently.

And it is only man who will deal with his own feelings of inferiority, insecurity and guilt. He will build temples, shrines, and churches, as well as the great monuments of commerce and finance. He will shape up his own munitions, plan his own technology, shape and reshape nations, and even plan to exploit the entire creation. Behind it all will be the compulsive endeavour to justify himself, come what may of all his plans and attempts.

Let us make no doubt about it. Man is busy justifying himself. Man is an expert on cosmetics. Let no man, then, or even God, get in his way!

MAN AND THE GREAT ANGER

MAN ANGRY IN HIS GUILT

Man is an angry creature⁷. We might be excused for thinking that man is a pitiful person, lost in his failure, disoriented, disjoined, the plaything of the maelstrom into which sin has landed him. It is a testimony to the persistent spirit of man that even in the midst of his problems he has time and insistence to blame everything else except himself for his human failure. Without doubt he associates these alien influences with the bumbling Creator Himself.

Cain is the paradigm of the angry man. If we may generalise, anger comes when things do not turn out as we wish them to. In other words our anger is our insistence that things should work the way we will them to be and do. Pride refuses to accept the reality that other wills must also work, and even God's will! Cain saw no fault in himself. God ought to have accepted his sacrifice as He had accepted that of Abel. Yet apparently Cain came with the wrong attitude. The acceptable sacrifice to God is a broken spirit, a humbled and contrite heart (Psa. 51:17). There was none of this in Cain!

His anger was both at God and man. I John 3:10-11 helps us to understand the principle. Cain did not love his brother. Hence he did not love God. It does not much matter what the sequence

of hatred is. We see then the origin and basis of violence. It is to requite oneself for wrong that is done—whether real or imagined. It is the getting of justice (so-called) by force.

DEPRIVED MAN AN UNEASY CREATURE

We need not seek too deeply in order to see why man insists upon justice. Cain had thought God unjust in the matter of the sacrifice. He felt justified in killing Abel. When God apportioned retributive punishment to Cain he argued that it was too heavy for him! *He was still seeking justice*. Even so we can understand that to be critical of another helps us along the road, seemingly, to self-justification. To be critical of God is a shortcut to justifying ourselves. God has not handled His universe properly, otherwise we would not be in the sorry mess in which we now exist!

When we look at man objectively and see the distress caused by sin, the dislocation of his person, and the loss of his serenity and vocational fulness, we can understand his sorry state. All of it is self-caused. No one else should be blamed. Yet man blames God. He is compulsive in proving God wrong so that he can prove himself to be right. Hence he is always busy collecting data against God.

We have seen that the pure in heart see all things purely. Psalm 18:25–26 underlines this truth, adding that 'with the crooked thou wilt show thyself perverse.' God, of course, is not perverse, but seems so to those who look at Him perversely. They really believe He is wrong in the way He created, and now handles His creation.

Jonah is an interesting case. He is angry with Nineveh because it is the enemy of Israel. Doubtless the Ninevites had been cruel to Israel. God had commanded Jonah to prophesy against the city, pronouncing its doom. This Jonah refused to do. He had travelled away from Nineveh, towards Tyre. His experience of

⁷ For a wider treatment of this subject see *ANCERY HEART OR TRANQUIL MIND?*, Geoffrey Bingham (Adelaide: NCPI, 1981).

being cast into the sea and being swallowed by a great fish seemed to have taught him little. Reluctantly he goes to Nineveh and prophesies its doom. No doom eventuates. Nineveh repents and God forgives the people. Jonah is enraged. This is precisely what he thought God would do. Having been protected by a fast-growing vine from the rays of the hot sun, he is angry when the vine is suddenly killed. God says to him, 'Do you do well to be angry?'

He says angrily, 'Yes, I do well to be angry, even unto death.' His rationalisation is, 'God has withered a poor vine. Why should He do this?' What he is really saying is, 'I like this vine more than the many inhabitants of Nineveh. I would rather see them die than this temporary vine.'

This is how angry man can be. He imagines God to be perverse in the matter of justice. He, man, is in no way perverse, of course!

IS GOD TRULY THE GOD OF JUSTICE?

That God is truly just is imprinted on every page of Scripture, in one way or another. That there is much injustice in the earth is a fact known to us all. Who then is to blame? Is God to blame? Scarcely. Injustice would be against His nature. Then injustice must primarily come from man. This is true. However, what man argues is that God can irrupt into human affairs and straighten out things which are crooked. This, however, cannot be the case. Men must be allowed to use the wills given them. The perverse use of those wills is the truth of injustice in all the earth.

Abraham asked rightly, 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' The answer must be, 'Yes!' Jesus once asked, 'Shall not God vindicate his elect who cry to him both day and night?' The answer must be, 'Yes.' God has forbidden men to take vengeance. 'Vengeance is mine,' says the Lord. He alone could

be impartial, and judge righteous judgement. *No human being is impartial enough to give true justice.* Nor for that matter has any human being wisdom which equals the wisdom of God. He is the Lawgiver. He alone makes true judgements (James 4:11–12, cf. Matt. 7:1–5).

There is something sad and wrong about a human being who carries constant anger in his heart and memory. Anger in the New Testament is linked with bitterness, malice and slander. Another word is added, namely 'clamour'. It is most expressive of angry and vicious people. The writer of Hebrews says that bitterness can start from a small root, and springing up can defile all of life for its host. Our whole point regarding anger is of course that man is an uneasy creature. Not only is he prone to anger which is destructive of genuine peace, but anger keeps him perpetually in a state of unease.

CONCLUSION ON ANGER

It is an indispensable presupposition that God is righteous, and that His judgements are true ones. The Book of the Revelation is the outworking of this theme in great detail. In 11:17–18; 15:3–4; 16:5–6, and 19:1–5 angelic creatures, and indeed all creatures at-test to the righteousness of God and His judgements. They say, 'Just and true are thy ways, O King of the ages!' 'Just art thou in these thy judgements.' 'His judgements are just and true.'

Probably, deep in their hearts, even the most sinful men know this (Rom. 1:32), but they insist on self-righteous indignation. Indeed the most dangerous people in the universe are those who seek to assert justice by their own powers. There is no lack of these utopian messiahs who ultimately work even more injustice.

However, our main point is this: that part of man's degradation lies in his insistence upon justice, his reactionary anger, and the violence which attends his attempts to assert justice for himself, and sometimes for others. The misery of his anger is

deep and as corrosive as acid. This is the dangerous area of his corruption and depravity.

Chapter 13

THE DEGRADED AND THE DEBASED

DEGRADATION IN THE ABSTRACT

Theologians in their studies may be more than mildly disturbed by what the Scriptures say concerning the baseness of sinful man. Even so they are not—so to speak—in the midst of this evil. They are not directly and always confronted by it. Not unless the child of one has gone the way of the flesh, and is a grievous transgressor. For the most part they do not mingle with others on Skid Row. They do not face up to the things the police Forces are constantly witnessing. Unless they exercise a recovery ministry they rarely meet the seamy side of life. Even if they counsel folk who have been deep in sin and crime they see them as counselees needing help. The evils of their counselees are not really present in the study. There may be graphic descriptions of evil, but the counsellor has not been there, at the scenes of the events.

So when we see degradation in the abstract it may not greatly move us. Let us, however, have a wife or daughter who is raped, a father who is murdered, or a near relative who is charged with forgery, embezzlement or some other crime, and we will suddenly see degradation in the raw. The Bible is not at all squeamish. Long ago—indeed always—it has been realistic in regard to the evil of man. It reveals the bare and angry facts of human sinfulness. It has no idealised history, and no canonical saints. For this reason we can discover from its sources those

materials which help us to see the degradation of man.

Some readers of this book will have given up reading by this time. Indeed the subject is certainly depressing. Some may see it as being morbid. Even so it must be said that we cannot understand the greatness of grace, or arrive at its true nature, unless we see its wonderful power to redeem men from their evil. We cannot see how far man has fallen unless we see how high he was created. Nor can we see the wonder of his elevation through Christ unless we see how far he has fallen! For this reason we need to study the accounts of depraved men, or of saints who were honest enough to reveal their own elements of corruption.

DEGRADATION IN THE CONCRETE

Cain and Abel: The Degraded and the Elevated

We have already seen that Cain was debased in his attitude, thinking and action. We cannot fully understand, however, what was the actual horror of the murder he committed. We must face that squarely in order to comprehend the intensity of emotion which comes when man's desires are directed towards wrong objects. Only then will we understand the back-lash of unfulfilled desire which follows. The frustration through unfulfilment can be highly dangerous. Man becomes dreadfully irrational in his thinking, and what may once have been legitimate emotions (or affections) now become blind passions which manipulate their object—angry and sinful man.

Nevertheless light shows in all this darkness. Abel is an elevated man. He is elevated by grace, for he offers his sacrifice by faith (Heb. 11:4). Like the tax-gatherer in Luke 18 he is justified before God. His guilt is erased. He is the paradigm of the man dependent upon grace who loves his brother (I John 3:10–11). What to us is shocking is that one human being can be loving and righteous and yet his brother be a violent and bitter murderer. These are the facts and must be accepted, however

shocking we may find them.

Man in the Days of Noah

Jesus said that in the days of his coming—his second appearing—man would be about the things men were about in the days of Noah. They were 'eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage.' We can surely see little wrong with this. Yet it was not *what* they were doing—for men must eat and drink, marry and give in marriage—but was the *way* they were doing it. It had become the be-all and end-all of their living. God did not figure in their thinking. The moral and spiritual dimensions of their lives were missing. Genesis 6:5 says of the generation of Noah: 'The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.' Verses 11–13 add, 'Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh; for the earth is filled with violence through them; behold, I will destroy them with the earth." ' It is doubtful whether a deeper indictment of man in his active evil could be made. After the judgement of the Flood God says of man, 'The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth' (Gen. 8:21). This is seen in the sad act of Noah and his drunkenness, and the evil thing which Ham did whilst his father was in a drunken stupor (Genesis 9:20–27). Some commentators interpret this event as a homosexual act. Others see it simply as degrading to view parental nakedness. Its effects, however, were to last for many generations.

Nimrod and His Fellows

It is Nimrod who is the paradigm of the arrogant man who had 'no fear of God before his eyes'. Man's arrogance is the expression of his depravity. The thrust of Genesis 10:9 is that Nimrod acted flagrantly in the sight of God, hunting men rather

than animals, making a kingdom, and so rejecting the mandate God had given man at creation and reiterated after the Flood (Gen. 9:1 ff.). The land of Shinar was the province of Nimrod and it is there, later, that the attempt is made to build the tower of Babel. Men seek to build a city, make a name for themselves (as against taking the name of the Lord), and a tower, up to heaven. These are signs of man's deliberate independence of God. Nimrod's cruelty in hunting men is the paradigm for the terrible conflicts of the kingdoms of the East which form much of the material of the Old Testament.

Depravity amongst the Godly: a Selection

When we come to the stories of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob we meet evil within these godly persons and their families. Abraham twice betrays Sarah, once to King Abimelech and once to Pharaoh. Yet the real tragedy is when Sarah sends her handmaid Hagar to Abraham to act as a concubine. The son Ishmael is a cruel person, and must be cast out of the family at the age of thirteen. Isaac is a fine son, yet not a wonderful father. He favours Esau over and against Jacob, even knowing the prophecy which preceded their birth. Hatred springs up between Esau and Jacob. It is even possible that this enmity began in the womb (cf. Gen. 25:19–26).

Jacob's children cause him much pain. He himself has a history of deceit, but—for the most part—triumphs over it. At the same time he favours Joseph above the others, and this leads to the planned murder of Joseph by his brothers. Whilst they do not murder him but sell him into slavery for gain, their cruel nature is again shown in the massacre of the male Hivites because of Shechem's taking of their sister Dinah. Jacob's reaction to their cruelty and deceit is strong. They defend their action on the basis of justice. Jacob's assessment of the evil of his sons is realistic, as we read in Genesis 49:3–7.

We pass over the history of Israel in the wilderness, their idolatry, their orgies of gluttony and immorality, until we come to

the days of the Judges. In these days we are told that men did that which was right in their own eyes. This is a repetition of what we read in Romans chapter one, where men exchange the truth of God for a lie. Some of the reading of Judges is acutely depressing, revealing as it does the evil which is active in the midst of the people of God.

In fact the history of Israel recorded from Joshua to Nehemiah is—for the most part—a sad chronicle of depravity. This evil is present where the true revelation of the moral law has been given by God. They too are His chosen people. Stephen in later years claimed that they had never rooted idolatry out of their hearts (Acts 7:42–43, 51–53). In any case time would fail to tell the dreadful things that were done in Israel. It is a story of savagery, and butchery, of lusts and orgies, moral and spiritual defilement, and the like. It is no different, of course, from the things we see and hear every day on our T.V. and radio reportage. In fact life to ancient as to modern man might seem dull if the horrors and perversions of man were not retailed to us. One modern communicator has said, 'The only news that sells well is the bad news.'

So much then for the depravity found amongst those called 'God's people'. Of course it was not all depravity. Even so, the good we read of serves to further delineate the evil and corruption.

Chapter 14

THE DARK MEN OF DEPRAVITY

There are many people in Scripture about whom one is uneasy. On the one hand they show little indication of immorality. On the other hand they are what we might call 'dark persons', i.e. they do not glow with light. One never quite knows who or what they are.

KING SAUL

Such a person is King Saul. We are told that when he was chosen to be king he hid himself amongst the baggage. It may have been humility but it seems to stem from a sense of inferiority. Saul had protested that he was from the smallest of all the tribes—Benjamin. Samuel later said to him, 'Though you are little in your own eyes, are you not the head of the tribes of Israel?' It seems that Saul felt greatly inferior. This was a failure to agree with God's assessment of him in choosing him to be king. This element persisted with Saul and out of it arose his great jealousy of David and his evil anger against him. More than once he tried to murder him. Saul himself was a man of imposing stature and great natural talents. He had no need to feel inferior or threatened.

In I Samuel chapter fifteen we have a full picture of Saul, not as a man of nobility but as a vacillating and remorseful person. On previous occasions he had done foolish things such as laying a

curse upon any of his army who should eat before the battle was completed. One cannot help but read an uncertain mind in this. Saul was bargaining for victory through some expiatory act. Jonathan his son had eaten, not knowing his father's injunction. The story of Jonathan's eating was told to Saul, but the people saved Jonathan from his father's curse, so foolish it was.

When then they battle against the Amalekites and God demands total destruction of that people, Saul weakens and saves the king, Agag. Saul was also told to destroy all the cattle, including the sheep. This he does not do. Samuel arrives and Saul greets him, insisting that he has done the will of the Lord. Samuel asks dryly, 'What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?' Saul replies that the people had insisted that they wanted to sacrifice to God. In fact the stock was God's, and had to be destroyed. Such animals would be unclean for sacrifices. Samuel attacks Saul on this score, but Saul does not repent. Finally, when the whole thing is seated down to him he admits his failure.

'I have sinned,' says Saul, '...because I feared the people.' Whilst this was probably true, it was also an excuse. When Samuel reveals that Saul will lose the kingdom, Saul says, 'I have sinned; yet honour me now I pray, before the elders of the people and before Israel. . . ' Saul has not repented. He has simply come into remorse. Repentance is a cleansing and liberating gift of God. Remorse is man's sorrow at being discovered in his sin. It has no virtue as such, and can lead to death (II Cor. 7:10).

Samuel has Saul's measure. In I Samuel 15:22-23 he says, 'Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry ' We can see that at the bottom of Saul's so-called humility is an intransigent stubbornness. He is a man who is an

idolater. He will never give in. Nor does he. The rest of his story is dark. He tries on occasions (as we have seen) to murder David who is his son-in-law and of whom he is insanely jealous. He does more foolish acts. Eventually—in accordance with what Samuel has said—he seeks out divination. Finally, in battle, he dies by his own hand. Saul then shows us a frightening side of man's depravity. At one stage this very Saul had prophesied under the Spirit of God. Slowly but surely anger, jealousy, inferiority eat away at him until he is a shattered hulk of his former self.

JUDAS

The story of Judas seems to have aroused sympathy in many, as though he were the fated victim of some prophetic utterance. However, an examination of the Gospels will show that the man was a thief, and a covetous person. Paul calls covetousness 'idolatry' (Eph. 5:5, Col. 3:5). Doubtless Judas was disappointed because Jesus was not going to be a great king. He had probably calculated that there would be profit in such an anticipated event. We are told clearly that Satan entered his heart at a certain point. Later—in another situation—Peter challenges Ananias by asking, 'Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?' He places the responsibility on Ananias and not wholly on Satan. So it is with Judas. He too has given entrance to Satan, and is responsible.

Judas, then, is a dark man. When he discovers his error he seeks to return the thirty pieces of silver, but without success. We are told that he *repented* and went and hanged himself. Whilst we must not lay too much stress on words, it is right to point out that the word used for *repenting* is not the general one used in the New Testament. Whilst its primary meaning is not that of remorse, the whole story of Judas's suicide is that of remorse. Whilst it is not for us to stand in judgement on Judas, his story is a shocking one. The apostles later describe it in horrific terms (cf. Acts 1:16–20). They call his death, 'the reward of his wickedness'.

ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA

We know little of these two. At first we might wonder why they are killed as judgement for their sin. Peter, however discloses that they have lied not simply to men, but to God. We cannot understand the matter unless we realise what a miracle Pentecost had wrought in history, namely that the unique community of love had been created. They were of one heart, one mind, and one soul. They shared voluntarily what they had. Now this miracle was about to be corrupted by this man and his wife. They are about to introduce flagrant hypocrisy into the community. They do not even see the evil they are doing.

Peter sees these two as instruments or means by which Satan can enter the community and set about destroying it. The Holy Spirit is the Lord of this community, but these two demean him by their connivance. Hence their judgement. It is only when we ponder the whole matter that we see the evil which was about to penetrate the community of true and pure love.

SIMON MAGUS

Acts chapter eight tells the dramatic story of Philip's preaching of the gospel in Samaria. He has a most effective ministry, as it is attended with signs and wonders. People are set free from demonic forces, and many illnesses. How filled they become with sheer joy! Even so the Holy Spirit has not been given as a gift to this Samaritan people. When Peter and John come from Jerusalem they pray for the people that they might receive this wonderful gift. They do receive the Holy Spirit, and obviously with certain manifestations accompanying the gift.

Simon Magus had let people know, prior to Philip's coming, that he was 'some great one'. He is impressed by Philip, who clearly did greater works than the self-styled magician. Simon now sees a way of becoming great, or greater than he had been. It is by being able to give the gift of the Spirit. He is sharply

rebuked by Peter when he offers to give money for this ability. Peter says, 'Your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.' What a dreadful proposition Simon had put forward. How fearful then was the state of Simon as exposed by Peter: '...you are in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.'

Chapter 15

THE EVIL IN SPIRIT

THE SECTARIANS

We may say, then, that there is no end to the varieties of depravity which man knows. We have already seen Jesus' rebuke to the Pharisees for their self-righteousness, and their condemnation of others. Even so he has strong warnings against them on other scores. In Matthew 23:1-12 he warns his listeners against the sectarianism of these religious leaders.⁸

The matter we are dealing with is the depravity of spiritual pride. Satan's problem is one of high-handedness. He seeks to be as the Most High God, and to be ruler over all the angels, and to have the kingdoms of this world. His sin lies in thinking he is competent to be such, and justified in seeking the rulership he covets. Jesus shows that persons who want to be known as 'Father', 'Teacher', and 'Master' are of the same ilk.

If we study the passage closely we will see that God's *Fatherhood*, the *Teacherhood* of Father, Son and Spirit, and the *Masterhood* (or *Leadership*) of Messiah are all necessary to us as human beings. We can say they are functionally necessary for they correlate with our beings as children of God, needy students of true wisdom, and our discipleship of Christ. If then we make a human being a substitute for the Father, the Teacher, or the Master, then we are virtually giving Deity to human persons.

This is exactly what happens in the sects. It is well known that

⁸ For a wider treatment of these forms of sectarianism see *TRUE GOD OR NEW GURU?* by Geoffrey Bingham (Adelaide: NCPI, 1978)

the terms 'Father', 'Master' and 'Teacher' are used within the sects. Sometimes all three are used, and that sometimes of the one person. Hence we see the high-handedness of men who seek to be 'as God'. They seek to usurp His position. What is tragic is that they consider they have the powers as well as the prerogatives. Such persons quickly become proud and present a level of personal danger to their adherents. We still remember the horror of the 'Jonestown affair' when nearly 1,000 people shared in a mass suicide at the command of their 'father', Jim Jones. Like Simon Magus he had given out that he was 'some great one'.

We see then that one of man's evils is that he seeks to substitute for God, whether in religion or politics, whether in a secular group situation or even in his (her) own family. How deeply seated, then, is the depravity of man. How degraded is this one who once shone as the image of God!

THE FALSE PROPHETS: MEN OF EVIL

Man's urge to have something to do with godly things whilst he himself is ungodly is not difficult to understand. Since man's drive is to be 'as God' it is natural he should seek to show godly elements. We have also seen that this is a self-justifying device. In the wilderness when the children of Israel made their golden calf they claimed that it was really Yahweh their God. They likened Him to a strong bull. Down through history man has seen no problem with worshipping idols, for he thinks that in some sense he is worshipping the true God.

Prophecy has always fascinated man. He thinks of it primarily as prediction. He is attracted by the idea of the future. This is natural enough, since the future is the basis of hope or informed despair. Man must know where he is going. Hence his absorption in prophecy. Evil powers are aware of this fascination and feed it with all the elements of the occult, fortune-telling, divination and the like, which are false forms of prophecy. Only God can know the future, and only He can impart what is necessary

for man to know.

Israel always had the problem of false prophets. Some kings desired prophecy to go the way they wished. Formally they sought a word from God, but in fact they often made sure the prophet they hired would predict things according to their desires. Yet it was not always after this manner. Some prophets were compulsive in their need to prophesy. There is great power in prophecy. One is the very voice of God when one is a prophet (cf. Exod. 7:1-2). Who then would not wish to cry, 'Hear the Word of the Lord!?' Or, 'Thus saith the Lord!?'

In actual fact for the most part the true prophets found their task very demanding. Some of them wished to opt out of their office. Even so, they knew they were true prophets. Jeremiah 23:23-32 has a speech by God in which He condemns the false prophets. We should read it now and see the deceit and depravity of the false prophets:

'Am I a God at hand, says the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? says the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth? says the Lord. I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in my name, saying, "I have dreamed, I have dreamed!" How long shall there be lies in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies, and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart, who think to make my people forget my name by their dreams which they tell one another, even as their fathers forgot my name for Baal? Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? says the Lord. Is not my word like fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer which breaks the rock in pieces? Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, says the Lord, who steal my words from one another. Behold, I am against the prophets, says the Lord, who use their tongues and say, "Says the Lord." Behold, I am against those who prophesy lying dreams, says the Lord, and who tell them and lead my people astray by their lies and their recklessness, when I did not send them or charge them; so they do not profit this people at all, says the Lord.'

If that passage speaks of false prophecy in the Old Testament, then it is not confined to that part of the Bible. The New Testament is greatly concerned with prophecy, especially as this is

a true mark of the new community of God (Acts 2:17–18). Paul insists that prophecies must be tested when given in the assembly (I Cor. 14:29–33). However, it is in the Book of the Revelation that we see the power of false prophecy. It can lead the unwary into idolatry and immorality. Hence in Revelation 2:20–23—'But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and beguiling my servants to practise immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her immorality. Behold, I will throw her on a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her doings; and I will strike her children dead.'

How evil then are those who are evil in spirit! Man is always compulsively striving for special powers and proofs of his (so-called) deity.

THE JUDAISERS

Something of the Pharisaic approach to law passed over into the Christian church. We can be grateful that it was not at the core of the community, but the people of grace were constantly harassed by those whom we call Judaisers. They declared that whilst there was salvation in Christ, yet it was fully authenticated only when the new adherents came under Mosaic law. Paul and others had long seen that the law of Moses was given only to the Jews. They had also seen that Christ's sacrifice was not for Jews only but for Gentiles.

Wherever Paul went preaching the word of grace, the Judaisers sought to follow, trying to make the new converts become circumcised so that they would be as Jews. They were also to obey the law of Moses. Paul saw this as no less than a blasphemy. He said, 'If we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, *le him be accursed!*'

It is not our intention to follow the whole battle that was

fought by both sides, nor to enter into the theological details of the debate. It is enough simply to show that depraved man, unless fully gripped by grace, will seek to bring people into legalistic bondage. This is his denial of the God of grace and love. It is the expression of his enmity to the Father and His gospel, even though he has deceived himself into thinking it is the truth.

CONCLUSION ON THOSE WHO ARE EVIL IN SPIRIT

If we wanted more material for this section we could easily find it. The writers of the letters of the New Testament mention many of their opponents, some of whom are in the church. Paul says, 'Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm.' He spoke of Hymenaeus and Alexander who, though members of the Christian community, indulged in blasphemy. He could say that the word of Hymenaeus and Philetus ate like gangrene into the community. (see I Tim. 1:20; II Tim. 2:17; 4:14.)

If we go to the letters to the churches which are written in the Book of the Revelation (chapters two and three) we find all kinds of evil which have penetrated the church. They make sad and astonishing reading. Man's degradation, then, takes many and varied forms. Yet we do not look at these elements in order to confirm pessimism, but to be realistic about the evil of man. Such evil is not confined to those who are aggressively opposed to God, or those who seem indifferent, such as hardened persons who take the secular approach to life. No, we can find man's depravity wherever we go, and sometimes it is seen to be deepest within the realm we call 'spiritual'.

Chapter 16

**MAN IN HIS DEGRADATION:
THE DEAD AND THE LOST**

Words fail us when we seek to draw all the elements we have examined, and try to unify them. To do this we need to face evil in the concrete situations of life. We must leave the abstract for the concrete, the general for the specific, the idea for the reality. Yet when we are thus confronted we are truly sickened in heart. Indeed we too are driven to rationalise the evil of man. We are always in danger of falling back on the old device of blaming evil on to evil powers, on to hostile influences, and even on to God. This is because we, too, are caught up in the elements of our own depravity. Without clear revelation, the Word and the Spirit, we cannot accept the dreadful fact of human depravity.

NO NEED FOR PESSIMISM, DESPAIR, OR ANGER

In this first section of the book, we have seen how evil is man. We have had glimpses of his created glory, and that has delineated the nature of man's evil. We have seen what heights there were in man from which he fell. In tracing his depravity we may have erred in thinking that since God has allowed it all to happen, then He must have accepted the fact of this evil and come to terms with it.

That is not true. However evil the rebellious celestial forces are, and however vile man is in his rebellion against God, yet God has planned that His grace shall show through in its

wonderful powers to redeem. In this connection the entire chapter of Isaiah 59 is a paradigm of man's problem and God's solution. It was, of course, written concerning Israel, but its *principle* concerns all mankind.

In this chapter the prophet tells us that our sins have separated us from God. They remain as a permanent barrier. He then shows how evil has taken over in the people of God. Finally he shows God's indignation that there is no one to visit this people and oppose the evil, liberating the nation from its bondage. It is then that God Himself intervenes. Look at the strong description of this intervention (verses 9–20):

'Therefore justice is far from us,
and righteousness does not overtake us;
we look for light, and behold, darkness,
and for brightness, but we walk in gloom.
We grope for the wall like the blind,
we grope like those who have no eyes;
we stumble at noon as in the twilight
among those in full vigour we are like dead men.
We all growl like bears,
we moan and moan like doves;
we look for justice, but there is none;
for salvation, but it is far from us.
For our transgressions are multiplied before thee,
and our sins testify against us;
for our transgressions are with us,
and we know our iniquities:
transgressing, and denying the Lord,
and turning away from following our God,
speaking oppression and revolt,
conceiving and uttering from the heart lying words.
Justice is turned back,
and righteousness stands afar off;
for truth has fallen in the public squares,
and uprightness cannot enter.
Truth is lacking,
and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey.
The Lord saw it, and it displeased him
that there was no justice.
He saw that there was no man,
and wondered that there was no one to intervene;

then his own arm brought him victory,
 and his righteousness upheld him.
 He put on righteousness as a breastplate,
 and a helmet of salvation upon his head;
 he put on garments of vengeance for clothing,
 and wrapped himself in fury as a mantle.
 According to their deeds, so will he repay,
 wrath to his adversaries, requital to his enemies;
 to the coastlands he will render requital.
 So they shall fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from
 the rising of the sun;
 for he will come like a rushing stream,
 which the wind of the Lord drives.
 "And he will come to Zion as Redeemer,
 to those in Jacob who turn from transgression,"
 says the Lord.'

PROPHECY IS THE KEY

Finally we come to this point, that prophecy is the basis for genuine hope: hope that man will be elevated from his degradation, that he will be lifted from the gutter to glory, from defilement to total purity.

It is not our intention to trace out the prophecies, but simply to say that even in Eden God had promised emancipation from evil. The seed of woman was to crush the Tempter at his head. Whilst he, the Seed, would certainly suffer, he would triumph over all evil. II Peter 1:20–21 pronounces the principle of this prophecy: 'First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.'

Peter, in his first letter, describes the heart of such prophecy: 'The prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired about this salvation; they inquired what person or time was indicated by the Spirit of Christ within them

when predicting the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things which have now been announced to you by those who preached the good news to you through the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.'

It only remains then to say what Paul said: ' . . . we say nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass.' In other words, 'The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy' (Rev. 19:10). He who came in accordance with the prophecies, and lived and died in and for their fulfilment, is the Great Intervenor who has come to destroy evil, and lead his people back to God. God Himself was 'in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses against them'.

It would be extremely simplistic to discuss prophecy without stressing that God planned man's redemption from depravity, and planned it before even He began to create. Redemption must never be looked upon as an expedient to meet a contingency, foreseen or unforeseen. Redemption springs from the nature of the God of grace who is ' . . .our Father, our Redeemer from eternity' (Isa. 63:16; cf. Eph. 1:3–7; II Tim. 1:9).

For this reason we must not be dismayed or depressed by the evil of man's depravity. God is not defeated by evil. He is the God of all grace and will redeem His elect people.

I, THE MAN

INTERMISSION—I

INTERMISSION—I

LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARDS

You, the reader, have trudged your way through what may be called the sludge of man. Whether the evil of man has gripped you or not, you have at least read about it. This first section has been an attempt to show—mainly from a Biblical vantage point—how evil and depressed is man.

The treatment of the subject would not be honest if it were not set out against the glory of man's original creation in the image of God, for this is the true foil. Also it would have been unfaithful if it had not pointed out that man has not lost that image, although it works in reverse when he is in depravity.

Modern views of man, and especially that of humanism, show man to be evolving ever higher. Some say he must go down to go up: he must descend to the depths of evil in order to be finished with evil. There is, of course, a truth in this. Even so man does not go up by first going down. He was up: he has gone down. And there he would stay but for the grace of God and His plans before time to renew man. Any modern analysis of man which cannot give a viable prescription for his renewal is to no great point. Paul's statement of fact concerning God's grace is a good starting point as we look to the ascent of man. He said, 'He gave himself for our sins that he might rescue us up out of this present evil age,' If this is true then man has hope and we can look forward to a rehabilitation of the human person. Such a hope is tremendously exciting. Anyone merely caught up in the present optimism concerning man will not be greatly attracted, and certainly not excited.

It takes some time for youthful idealism to receive its death-knell. Man dies hard to the fact of his inability to change human nature. Cynicism and dreary bitterness generally follow in the wake of disillusioned idealism. Yet this need not be so. The Bible knows no optimism about man, but then also it knows no pessimism or cynicism, and certainly no bitter criticism. It is realistic in seeing what man has become,

and knows how he can be restored as a human person and gain more than he has lost.

CLOSE EXAMINATION OF THE PROMISE OF RENEWAL

The first section of this book—the portion just completed—has within it a certain motivation for the reader to apply himself. If he has had the courage to look at the facts of man as the Bible presents them, then it would be natural for him to consider also the facts of man's restoration. There is, however, a problem, and I propose to the reader that he face it. I suggest that firstly he simply scan the chapters ahead, looking at the chapter titles and section divisions. These will show him where he is heading. Indeed a look back at the index of contents would give a bird's eye view of what is ahead in this second section.

Whilst I admit to a certain inability to make the truth of human renewal so simple that 'he who runs may read', yet I also maintain that because of the complexity of our sinful lives we find the truth itself not simple but complex. This intermission is not a foreword to the book but to the second section of it. It is a 'midword' and is most necessary to encourage the reader to complete his reading task.

If the second section should prove more difficult than the first it is because we see the practics of evil, but we do not know the principles of human renewal. We have tried the ways of reform, of resolution, and of self-effort, only to realise that they do not work. The rosy promises of modern cults and esoteric religions have failed. We must see God's way if we are sincere and genuine in wanting to know the way up and out.

On this basis I exhort you to make your way through the chapters which follow. Read them quietly, patiently, and thoughtfully. They are seeking to open up a realm not known to many, and taken too lightly by some.

I am quite sure they will be revolutionary in their effects if we try their prescription.

Having read the prescription you will then be faced by a confrontation. By the time you reach this objective exhortation you may already have responded to the simple truth as it is set out. You will not, then, need direct confrontation. Truth confronts, of itself. How marvellous; but then the truth, after all, is God Himself!

PART TWO

ELEVATION

Chapter 1

THE PLANNED ELEVATION**THE PLANNED GLORIFICATION**

What we have to see at the commencement of this section of the book is that long before God created man He had planned his redemption with a view to his glorification. That is He had planned man's glorification. Man's glorification was to glorify God. In fact man cannot know his glory until God manifests His own glory. So then the glory of God can be seen in the way that He—glorifies man.

A key passage for our thoughts is Ephesians 1:3–14. Here Paul tells us that God chose us—His elect people—from before the foundation of the world. Even so He chose us *in Christ*. That is He did not expect the fulfilment of His plan apart from Christ. He then tells us the purpose of God—'That we should be holy and blameless before Him'. That is He planned to bring us to holiness.

Paul then adds that He set our destiny, namely that we should be His sons. Again this is to be *through Christ Jesus*. That is *not* through Adam. All of this is to fit with His plan which is (i) to unite all things in Christ, i.e. to unify the creation in Christ, and (ii) to make both Jew and Gentile to be to the praise of His glory. His work of making us holy, blameless and sons will delineate His great grace. When we are to the praise of His glory it will certify what God was about in creating us in His own image. That is, in the ultimate He will have succeeded in His work of creation.

This thought is not confined to the first chapter of the Ephe-sian Epistle. In Isaiah 43:5–7⁹ we find the basis for the Ephesian statement: ‘Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made’. Again in I Corinthians 2:7–10 Paul speaks of the planned glorification in the following terms: ‘But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him,” God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.’

The idea is further stated in Romans 8:28–30: ‘We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.’ Already in this chapter Paul has spoken of our expectancy of glory, i.e. ‘the glory which is to be revealed to us,’ and, ‘the liberty of glory of the children of God.’ We would expect the same thoughts elsewhere, and surely enough we find them. In Philippians 3:21 Paul speaks of our bodies of humiliation being so changed that they will be like his

⁹ Note the tone of Isaiah 46:8-10. What God has purposed, that He will do. This is affirmed in Ephesians 1:11 and 3:11. God does what He wills (cf. Isaiah 48:3). Doubtless rebellious man is enraged by this kind of talk. He proposes to despise it as ‘philosophical determinism’ or ‘sheer fatalism’. In fact he is simply objecting to God doing what he seeks to do, i.e. exercise his will freely

(Christ’s) own body of glory. This thought is further repeated in I Corinthians 15:51ff. John also speaks of it in I John 3:1–3. In fact much of the New Testament has this rich theme running through it.

Linked with glorification is also the idea that God planned our salvation. Thus Paul says, ‘God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our own works, but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago’ (II Tim. 1:9). In fact it would be difficult to think of ultimate glorification if there were no penultimate salvation.

THE END DETERMINES THE PRESENT

We look at the goal because God has shown us what that end will be. When we look at man’s magnificent beginning, we are then depressed by his fall. When we examine his degradation as we have examined it, then we are shocked by his current evil. We could be excused for thinking that there is no hope for man. Certainly we could easily believe that God might abandon him. However, against this thought we have the assurance that God will not abandon man. Rather He has planned a glorious future for him. God’s work will succeed.

We must not read these statements as implying some kind of universalism, i.e. that all will ultimately be redeemed and glorified. This will not be the case. The finally impenitent, by nature of the case, will not be glorified. Those who will not receive the grace of God cut themselves off from God’s redemption and glorification. When they refuse the forgiveness of sins they must live with the judgement which is upon sin. Also evil powers will not have redemption. This grim truth has to be kept in mind. It also needs to be considered in view of (a) the holiness and righteousness of God, and (b) in the light of God’s righteous judgement of all evil.

For our purposes, then, we may consider what God has to do in order to bring man to redemption and glory. God has planned redemption. This is certainly the thrust of the Old Testament, as it is also the substance of the New Testament. It is not our intention to develop a doctrine of redemption.¹⁰ What we are concerned to see is (i) man's dilemma before God, man being a sinner and God being holy, (ii) the act of redemption which God effects in Jesus Christ His Son, and (iii) the application of this redemption in the life of sinful persons.

We might entitle these last two things, 'GOD'S INTERVENTION'. The first, we could call, 'MAN'S UNHAPPY CONDITION'.

¹⁰ This can be studied more closely in articles on the subject in Bible and theological dictionaries, as well as other works on Salvation. It may also be followed in *THE THINGS WE FIRMLY BELIEVE* (op.cit.), pages 73-118.

Chapter 2

GOD INTERVENES FOR MAN

MAN'S UNHAPPY CONDITION

We mean that man—sinful and fallen man—is caught in a dilemma. He must be judged by God and punished. Because of his rebellion he is already under wrath. He must face ultimate judgement. In no way can he escape this, and he has no excuse for his sinfulness and his sins.¹¹ God for His part must not acquit the guilty (Exod. 34:7, cf. Nah. 1:3). In fact He cannot (and will not) by nature of the case, for this would mean going back on His own law, and hence denying His own righteousness.

Man for his part has no means of justifying himself. In fact rebellious man does not even wish to do this. It must be understood that man does not wish to repent. Even should he wish to do so, repentance of itself could not save him. There must be a basis for God's forgiveness. Even God may not forgive unless a basis is laid to make forgiveness legally valid. When we say 'legally valid', we mean that the law must not be held in contempt by God or man. Its demands must be met. Its debts must be paid. There is no such thing as a gratuitous forgiveness which is opposed to law.

¹¹ Modern man is revolted by the thought of a God who punishes. For this reason he sees Godly wrath as crude and inadmissible. He rejects the Cross as a place of propitiation or expiation. He regards such teaching as repugnant to his idea of God as a God of love. However modern man will have to—so to speak—'grasp the nettle'. The conscience will deny him genuine peace until he boldly faces the issue of the penalty of sin and evil.

In addition to this there is the question of the unremitting wrath of God. Many moderns scorn the idea of such wrath. They have, they say, higher views of God. Such ideas, however, do not tie in with Biblical statements concerning the wrath of God. In any case we have seen that God's wrath is already revealed from heaven upon ungodly sinners.

We have said that whilst God's wrath is not sin, yet sin—in some sense—is God's wrath. Its working in man—especially as it affects his conscience—is linked with the suffering of man in his sinfulness. Sin and wrath are closely joined. Hence if sins are in some sense borne by man, then wrath is also borne.

How then shall man escape? The answer, 'Not, obviously, from the manward side of things. Man cannot bring about his own acquittal. Nothing can happen unless God intervenes.' How then *can* God intervene, and how *does He act* to effect intervention?

THE ACT OF REDEMPTION

God intervenes in history in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. The New Testament is quite plain in its statements concerning this fact. At the same time this truth of God's intervention is also the thrust of the Old Testament, especially in the prophecies. We quote again I Peter 1:10–12:

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

A quick summary of the action of Jesus Christ is that he comes to put away sin. This is described as 'bearing the sins of many', and 'bearing our sins in his own body on the tree'. It is also stated that 'he bore the sins of many and made intercession

for the transgressors.' Other statements are, 'He shall save his people from their sins'; 'He was made sin for us'; 'He died the just for the unjust'; 'He (God) condemned sin in his (the Son's) flesh'. Jesus said, 'This is my blood of the New Covenant which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins' (Heb. 9:26, 28; Isa. 53:4ff., 12; Matt. 1:21; 26:28; II Cor. 5:21; I Pet. 2:24; 3:18; Rom. 8:3; cf. Jer. 31:31–34).

What do all those statements mean? They mean that Christ identified with sinners, became one with them in his suffering, and did what they could not do, that is bore their sins to exhaustion, extinction and obliteration, so that they—the sinners—might be relieved of the penalty, burden, shame, pain and pollution of their transgressions. Put in other language it means they were purged or purified from their old sins, from the dead works which had lain upon their consciences. Now, by faith, they are justified, and have peace with God, and hence have no condemnation. They are forever reconciled with God. They also have the gift of eternal life from Him because of the saving events of the Cross and the Resurrection.

In yet other terms it means Christ has borne the wrath which was justly upon evil. He has brought about an effective propitiation by the sacrifice of his life. We may find such language difficult to understand. We may not fully comprehend even the principles of the Cross and Resurrection. We do know, however, that God the Father initiated that work of Atonement. We can then believe it is satisfying to Him. If it is satisfying to Him then surely it must be satisfying, also, to us.

This act of redemption not only delivered man from sin—its powers, penalty and pollution—but also from Satan, his principalities and powers, and the entire Satanic world system, in whose control sinful man has been. We mean that redeemed man is under no obligation to continue in evil. Christ has made him a free person. He has lifted him from a life of degradation. He has created him as a new person. This is the meaning of

Paul's famous statement in II Corinthians 5:17:

'Now, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away. Behold! They have become new.'

There are many similar passages, and we shall examine them in detail for they are important. The point, then, is established, that *God has elevated the degraded human being through the work of the Atonement*. A Jewish theologian once said, 'Messiah cannot yet have come because man has not yet been radically changed.' He was correct in the principle he stated, i.e. when Messiah comes man is radically changed. He was wrong in his conclusion. Messiah has come for men and women have been radically changed. That great Jew, Paul, would have been the first to testify that he himself had been radically changed.

Chapter 3

GOD INTERVENES FOR MAN (CONTINUED)

THE APPLICATION OF REDEMPTION

In order to cover the extent of the work of the Cross and its application to man we need to understand the Godhead. We mean we need to know that all work done by God is Trinitarian. That is, that creation, God's care for His universe (often called 'providence'), and His work of redemption are carried out by Father, Son and Spirit. They work together. That is to say they act simultaneously. The work of each Person of the Godhead is different, e.g. the Father works Father-wise, and the Son Sonwise. The Spirit is the Agent—so to speak—of both Father and Son. He works Spirit-wise.

So then behind all history is the deliberate Trinitarian working of the Godhead. Each Person works in creation. Each assists in sustaining this magnificent universe. Also the Godhead works in epochs or aeons. These are sometimes called 'dispensations'. The same Triune God works differently in the varying epochs. Israel in its era knows the presence and action of the entire Godhead Prophecy is uttered by God through His prophets, yet the prophets are moved by the Spirit of God (II Pet. 1:20–21), and yet that Spirit is the Spirit of Christ and prophecies concerning Christ (I Pet. 1:10–12, Rev. 19:10).

This, then, is how the Godhead works. It is not surprising, then, to discover that the work of redemption is also wholly Trinitarian. The Father initiates the Atonement. The Son mediates this great work of the Father. The Spirit is the Agent in it all.

That is why the application of redemption must involve the whole Godhead. How it does we shall now see.

THE FATHER AND REDEMPTION

It goes without saying that the Father initiates the work of salvation. Often quoted Scriptures such as John 3:16, I John 3:16, I John 4:9–10 make it clear that the Father initiated the plan of salvation *before* creation, and then brought it to pass *within* creation. This knowledge is comforting. For example, when Paul says, ‘God has set him forth as a propitiation,’ and John adds, ‘. . . he has sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins,’ then both are saying we can be sure the work of salvation has been properly done. Such work is acceptable to the Father for He executed it (see Rom. 3:25, I John 4:10). It satisfied Him as the One who is holy and loving. That is why it can satisfy us.

Paul can also say, ‘God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not counting their trespasses against them . . . God made him (Christ) to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in him’ (II Cor. 5:19, 21).

What we need to see is that the Father Himself freely gave up His Son for us all (Rom. 8:32). In grasping this, we need to know His purpose for so doing. His purpose was twofold, as we see in Ephesians 1:3–5, (i) to make us holy and blameless before Him, and (ii) to make us His sons through redemption. This means that when the work of the Atonement is supplied and applied, then it is the Father’s work and His action.

Later we will discuss the problem human beings have with approaching God as Father, for in fact *this is man’s most difficult exercise*. Jesus said, ‘No man comes to the Father but by me. ‘He also said, ‘No man can come to me except the Father draw him’ (John 14:6, 6:44, 65). The work of the Cross opens the way for us to come to the Father, who thus draws us to Himself, making us sons. This thought is filled out in Galatians 4:4–6:

‘But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” It is the Father who makes us sons, although both Son and Spirit combine to make this truth real to the believer.

In this context we must also realise that the degraded person comes to the Father via the gifts of repentance, faith and forgiveness. These are the Father’s gifts (Acts 5:31, 11:18). Yet not only does the Father give these gifts but He personally works in His new children. This is shown in Philippians 2:12–13, ‘It is God who is working within you’, and Philippians 1:6, ‘. . .he who has begun a good work within you will go on working it right up until the day of Jesus Christ.’

We must understand that this work of elevation or renewal is both a delicate, as well as a dynamic one. Without the loving and competent Father it would be impossible. The miracle at which we have hinted, and which we shall disclose shortly, requires all the powers of the Godhead to bring it about.

THE SON AND REDEMPTION

Whilst the Father gave up His Son, freely, the Son also gave himself for us, freely. This is the message of Galatians 2:20, and Ephesians 5:2. In fact it is the thrust of the Son in his earthly life in Palestine. That life we can study from the New Testament accounts. It is clear that the Son is the Mediator of redemption. It is also clear that he had the Father’s plan in mind, namely the work of forgiveness and cleansing of sins, of coming to new life in himself, in the Father, and in the Spirit. He also had in view our coming to the Father as new sons. Behind all this was the plan for man’s ultimate glorification.

As the Father not only initiated redemption but also currently applies it, so likewise does the Son. The great Pauline doctrine of our being ‘in Christ’, and Christ being ‘in us’, is most powerful.

Jesus himself stated it on the night of his betrayal. John 15:1-8 says in principle, 'Without me you can do nothing, and for this reason you must continually dwell in me.' Hence in the Epistles it is the power of Christ which brings the fruits of redemption to the new believer. 'We are more than conquerors *through him* who loved us'; 'I can do all things in *Christ*'; 'Be strong in *the Lord*', are some of the statements that are made. Paul can say, 'God . . . revealed his Son in *me*', and prays that 'Christ be formed in you' (Rom. 8:37; Gal. 1:16; 4:19; Eph. 6:10; Phil. 4:13).

In I Corinthians 1:30, in speaking of God, Paul says, 'He is the source of your life in *Christ Jesus*, whom God has made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption'. This means that all of these elements which elevate us, and cause us to grow in the elevated life, are in *Christ Jesus*. Similarly in Colossians 1:19 Paul speaks of the fulness of God dwelling Christ, and says, earlier (Col. 1:9-10), 'And so, from the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.' This means that the believer draws on Christ for all his life. This stands to reason, for the New Testament tells us that by baptism we are united with Christ, implying that all that is Christ's, and all that is Christ, is now ours.

Finally, we see in Colossians 1:27 the statement, '. . . Christ in you, the hope of glory'. This agrees with what we saw in I Corinthians 1:30, although there glorification was not specifically mentioned. It is, however, mentioned in the list given in Romans 8:30, where the order is '. . . predestined . . . called . . . justified . . . glorified'. Glorification is a process in the present as well as a climax in the future. II Corinthians 3:18 says that as we look at Christ so we are being changed from one stage of glory to another. Doubtless this process of current glorification is unseen

by us, but it is nevertheless proceeding.

It is correct, then, to conclude that our life is Christ. Not only is he the one who gives redemption to us, but he is the one who also makes continuous application of that redemption in the processes we call sanctification and glorification. These are all elements of elevation.

GOD INTERVENES FOR MAN (CONTINUED)

THE APPLICATION OF REDEMPTION (CONTINUED)

The Spirit and Redemption

The work of the Spirit commences, of course, in the work of creation, and continues, daily, in the work of providence. However, for our purposes we must see that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of prophecy. This prophecy leads up to, and prepares the way for, the coming of Jesus to be the Redeemer. What we should expect to find in the early pages of the Gospels we in fact do find, namely that the Spirit is preparing Israel for the appearing of its Messiah.

John the Baptist is a Spirit-filled prophet, and he points to Jesus as being anointed by the Spirit. Jesus is visibly anointed by the Spirit at his baptism. Two Isaianic prophecies are applied to him, these being 42:1,¹² and 61:1–2a. Already in the first two chapters of Luke the Spirit has been closely linked with the birth of Jesus (Luke 1:35), as indeed with John's birth and ministry. We mean that Jesus was always filled with the Spirit, although not anointed as Messiah until the baptism in the Jordan River.

As the Gospels proceed we see that the Holy Spirit not only

¹² The statement in the synoptic Gospels, 'Thou art [this is] my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased,' comes from a conflation of Psalm 2:7 (the first part of the verse), and Isaiah 42:1 (the second part), 'Behold my servant in *whom my soul delights* ['beloved']. I have put my Spirit upon him and he shall preach judgement to the nations'.

anoints Jesus, but leads him into the experience of the Temptation in the wilderness. Jesus emerges from this 'in the power Of the Spirit', and from that point conducts all his ministry in the same dynamic of the Spirit (cf. Matt. 12:28). He offers himself on the Cross through the Spirit (Heb. 9:14), and is raised from death through the Spirit (Rom. 1:4, cf. 8:11). Finally he ascends to the Father by the same power (Eph. 1:19-20), i.e. the enablement of the Spirit.

On the night before his death Jesus taught his disciples much concerning the Spirit. It seems that he taught very little regarding him during his earthly ministry. Now he made it clear that the Holy Spirit would be the one who would bring about in men 'conviction of sin, righteousness and judgement'. He would also wholly reveal both the Son and the Father (John 16:12–15).

At Pentecost all that Jesus had said the Spirit would do, he commenced doing. It is clear from the Acts and many of the Epistles that the revelation of God as Father and the Son as Redeemer and Lord is made through the Holy Spirit. So much so that many use the gifts of repentance and faith, and in so doing receive the gifts of forgiveness, salvation and eternal life. It is in the Spirit that they are regenerated and begin living the new life.

The Father, the Son, and the Spirit

Galatians 4:4–6, which we read above, gives a clear sequence of the work of God in redemption: (a) Christ is sent, as Son, to redeem us from the law. (b) As a consequence repentant, believing man becomes a son of God, i.e. he receives the adoption. (c) Because he is a son, God sends His Spirit into the heart of the new believer and the Spirit cries, 'Abba!' which means 'Father!' The person so visited then realises he is truly a son of God.

Other Scriptures attest to the united work of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. For example, I Peter 1:2 speaks of believers as 'chosen and predestined by *God the Father* and sanctified by *the Spirit* for obedience to *Jesus Christ* and for sprinkling with his

blood'. A similar thought is contained in II Thessalonians 2:13: 'But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning to be saved through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.'

When it comes to the work of redemption, we have seen that the Spirit aided Christ in both his passive and active obedience to God. Active obedience means his keeping of the law, and doing the will of God. Passive obedience means the work of Atonement which was not explicitly demanded of a man by the law. The Spirit then is wholly familiar with the work of redemption, having shared in it 'on the inside'. This means he is informed enough to share it with man. As Spirit of the Father and the Son he is competent to apply it to sinful man.

The processes through which he does this are: (a) the conviction of sin, righteousness and judgement (John 16:7-11); (b) the revelation of the truth as it is in Christ (John 16:12-15); (c) the bringing of the gifts of repentance, faith, forgiveness and eternal life, i.e. bringing of the complete gift of salvation (Acts 10:43f.; 11:15-18; 15:8-9; 26:18; I Pet. 1:21; cf. I Cor. 2:3-5; I Thess. 1:5); (d) the effecting of Christian liberation from the law (Rom. 8:1-3, II Cor. 3:15-17). Redemption then is wrought by the Spirit through the cleansing and renewing process of regeneration (I Cor. 6:11, Titus 3:3-7, cf. I Thess. 2:13). This is often called the new birth. We mean that through regeneration one becomes a new creation. All of this is brought about by the Spirit through the power of the Cross (John 3:1-14; Titus 3:5; cf. II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; I Pet. 1:3; 23). The Spirit himself applies the power of the Cross to the person of man.

CONCLUSION ON THE INTERVENTION OF GOD

We are about to look at what man is made to be by the intervening

act of God in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. We can see that this work must be dynamic. Otherwise it could not bring about a new creation. When we remind ourselves that Father Son and Spirit labour for this, not merely at the time of Christ's incarnation, but through the millenniums, then we can see what special work is required for the elevation of degraded and depraved man.

We do not wonder, then, that Paul uses the statements, 'the riches of his grace which he lavished on us, and 'the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus'. No wonder also that Peter says, 'Jesus Christ, whom not having seen, you love. Whom seeing not you believe and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.'

the revelation of what it is to be truly human.

THE PARADIGM FOR ELEVATED MAN—I

CHRIST IS THE PARADIGM

The study of the person and work of Christ is not a simple one. It involves his pre-creational being, his work in time and space of both creation and providence, his incarnation—the Word becoming flesh—and then his work as man. Christ crucified, Christ risen, Christ ascended, Christ glorified, are all rich themes. His current work is also to be understood, namely that he is working out the victory of his Cross in the practical defeat of his enemies in history. Having done this by bringing all evil to final judgement, he will then participate in the renewing of the heavens and the earth. His people, who constitute the Holy City, will then rule in eternity as kings and priests. In this sense his work will have been completed.

What will come as an unbelievable revelation to man is the fact that Christ is true man. That is to say, *he is the pattern for all God's people*. Each person should see him as the paradigm or pattern of true humanity. What he was on earth and is in heaven is the true humanity. So when Paul calls us to be imitators of Christ he means just this: that what he is, each of us should be! Given that Jesus had a unique vocation to fulfil which is not the vocation of any other person, it remains true that humanity is

ADAM, THE PARADIGM FOR CREATED MAN

In our earlier studies we saw that man was created in the image of God. I Corinthians 11:7 informs us that man is still 'the image and glory of God'. This is somewhat bewildering to us because we know that man has fallen. He has become fearfully depraved. He is given over to a reprobate mind. He acts contrary to God. He is perverse in his view of God. This guilty, angry, hateful and hating creature can scarcely be said to be in the image of God, and so to reflect God.

True as all this may be, it still stands that man is the image and glory of God. We saw the statement that 'the image of God in man is irreducible but reversible.' In other words, the image of God still operates. Like God it is dynamic, not static. If reversed, then it is doing evil, even though it is the image of God. We admit this is an apparent contradiction in terms, yet it is so

When we understand that the image does not change essentially, but that man perverts the *use* of the image, then we see that regeneration is *re-generation*. In other words, man is restored as a person through the work of redemption, especially as 'the Holy Spirit applies this work. So we conclude that all that is spoken of created man is true. He is the image of God. He is a child of the Father, a servant of the King, a creature of the Creator. The terms 'son' (or 'child'), 'servant' and 'creature' (or 'creation') are freely used of redeemed man in the New Testament.

If then we scour Scripture, sifting out all the verses that pertain to man as created, we make exciting discoveries relating to what a man really is. That is, we know (insofar as the material reveals) what is true humanity. There is, even so, a better way of discovering this truth. It is to realise that Jesus was True Man.

That is, he is true humanity, unvarnished by Deity, truly flesh as created humanity is flesh. He is the correct humanity. He is truly man.

A PROBLEM WITH THE PARADIGM

Church history tells us that the early church, especially from the second to the fourth centuries, had problems with the facts of Christ's humanity and his Deity. Because history has no such precedent of God becoming man, or of a man becoming God, we have no frame of reference. Hence we find it difficult to discuss the person of one who was at the same time both God and man. Naturally enough heresies grew very quickly. Some saw Jesus as man only, although his humanity was unique. Others saw him—so to speak—as 'God in a skin'. He was really God, and used the outward form or appearance of humanity but remained God. He was never essentially man.

There were variations of these heresies. All of them had problems with the doctrine of the Trinity. One heresy (Docetism) could not accept that God would come in human flesh, so it claimed his humanity was *an appearance* and not a reality. In fact this heresy is rife today, although it is rarely stated explicitly in the old terms. Many church folk still think Jesus temporarily assumed humanity, but did not really live as man. His Deity enabled him, easily, to live as man, but in his glorification this humanity—so to speak—was dissolved. Thus many think of him by means of the human symbol, but do not see him as being truly man.

In fact, Jesus is truly God, and always was. At the same time, it must be firmly insisted that he is truly man. In his life he did not draw upon his Deity in order to carry out or effect his humanity. He did, of course, draw upon the aid and help of his Father and the Holy Spirit, but then that aid is available to all men, were we to call upon it. Whilst we cannot explain the

co-existence of Christ's humanity and his Deity, we cannot deny he had both—It is simply that their coexistence in the one person is a mystery—What, then, is wrong in being faced with a mystery?

WHAT HE REALLY WAS—MAN

The Word became flesh. That is, the eternal Word, the Son of the Father, became man without surrendering his Deity, and without prejudicing his humanity. He was really man. Romans 8:3 speaks of 'God . . . sending his own Son *in the likeness of sinful flesh*'. What we must see is that he did not come *in the likeness of flesh* (Docetism), nor did he come *in sinful flesh* (debased humanity), but he came *in the likeness of sinful flesh*. He came *in flesh*, but *not sinful flesh*.

The famous passage of Philippians 2:5–7 speaks of him as 'being born in the likeness of men', and 'being found in human form'. Add to this, 'the Word became flesh' and, 'being born of a woman, born under the law,' and you have the certain fact that he was truly man. If to exercise his humanity he had to draw upon his own essential Deity, then he was not man as are we. If he drew upon God as Father, and upon the Holy Spirit, then he was as we are essentially, or could be if we really would be. In other words, there was available to Jesus what is available to us, even though we may never avail ourselves of it.

JESUS THE TRUE PARADIGM FOR MAN

We may rightly conclude, then, that Jesus was truly man. True man is not sinful. Sinfulness was not part of created man. When man chose to sin, he then *became* sinful. Jesus was made *like* sinful man, but was not made a sinful man. The best we can say is that he inherited the problems that come to man through his sin, but in saying this we must except those results of sin which

are guilt, pollution, fear of judgement and the like. These facts are well-presented in Hebrews 2:14–18, 4:15 and 5:7–9.

With this understanding in mind we can now see what true man really was.

Chapter 6

THE PARADIGM FOR ELEVATED MAN—II

TRYING TO SEE WHO JESUS REALLY WAS, AND WHAT HE REALLY WAS

We previously noted that if we wish to see what a created human being really is then we should look at Jesus. This being so, we can now usefully take into our thinking those Scriptures which talk about man as originally created. We do have a problem, however. It is that of our human prejudice. We mean by this that man does not see God as He really is, man as he really is, and the creation as it really is. His sin and guilt have prejudiced him against God. His mind has become darkened (Rom. 1:21–23). Hence he cannot see clearly. This underlines the fact that man needs revelation in order to understand the truth.

Certain problems have come to man through his pride. For example, he cannot understand submission. He cannot wholly accept authority. He does not see service to others as the highest expression of true humanity.¹³ And so on. This is why Christ had difficulty communicating his message. His modes of communication were not deficient, but the opposition he met made the true reception of the message impossible.

We need to see that the things Jesus said, as also the things he did, were too confronting. When he did not act as sinful man would act (or react) under similar circumstances, the contrast of

¹³ This whole principle is examined in the author's book, *THE SONS OF GOD ARE THE SERVANTS OF ALL* (Adelaide: NCPI, 1982).

sinful and true humanity was unbearable to his onlookers. They had to use their age-old rationalising devices to explain him away. Hence they called him ‘wine-bibber and glutton’, ‘a sinner’, and said, ‘He has a devil.’ Even so, when challenged, none could convict him of sin. They crucified him because he said he was the Son of God, but they never sought to see whether or not his claim was true! They started with the presupposition that he was not what he claimed to be. When he spoke of God as being Father his audience had problems. Fatherhood is always a problem to man, because it represents the issue of authority, amongst other things. By this time ecclesiastical authority had no place for God as the Father-Authority at the Temple. So we could bring many similar elements to light, whereby men were prejudiced against him. The greatest indictment against his critics was uttered by Jesus when he discussed their enmity with his disciples.

‘Remember this,’ he said. ‘If the world hates you, know it hated me before it hated you . . . But all this they will do to you because *they do not know him who sent me*. . . He who hates me *hates my Father also* . . . now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. It is to fulfil the word that is written in their law, “They hated me without a cause.” ‘ Jesus is saying clearly that *there was no authentic cause to hate or judge him*. This attests the fact that they did not see him as he really was. Their human rebellion against God blinded their eyes to the revelation the Son was bringing to them, i.e. the revelation of the loving and redeeming Father.

WHAT THEN IS THE TRUE PARADIGM?

Theologians have tried to discover what they call ‘the historical Jesus’. Many of them cannot accept as factual the entirety of the accounts of the four Gospels. They see many elements in these writings as having been read back into the accounts from the

days of the early church. They believe some elements were ideas, myths and concepts developed by this church which—as we have said—were read back into the Gospel chronicles.

Some theologians start off with certain presuppositions. For example they cannot believe that Jesus actually prophesied the fall of Jerusalem. Likewise they have other presuppositions such as non-acceptance of the miraculous and the supernatural. These presuppositions certainly must colour and even determine their conclusions.

If we take the Gospel accounts as they stand, and believe they are valid accounts, then we will still find problems in seeing Jesus as he was. We too have our personal prejudices, our likes and dislikes. We like some of the things Jesus says, but we do not like some other things. Also most of us come to Scripture with our own presuppositions and prejudices, some of which we are not even aware. We have to be honest and say that some Scriptures we meet seem to say things with which we do not agree. We are even guilty, at times, of bending these Scriptures so that they fit the ideas we have! This may not be the case with all readers, but few if any are wholly free from it.

One way of seeing what a man really is, is to study the life of Jesus when he was on earth. If from this study we could abstract an image of *the kind of man he was* then that would be helpful. We also need to formulate what we believe man as true man really is. It would be interesting to compare the two, i.e. Jesus as man, and our idea of true man!

We cannot here spend a lot of time in discovering Jesus as the true paradigm, i.e. what his humanity really was. Perhaps we can never fully know this. However, there are many practical things we can know, such as the points we now state:

- (a) Jesus upheld the moral law of God, not only in its given form but in its true essence. His sermon on the Mount showed that he had penetrated to the heart of law. When we see that he lived a life wholly consistent with that sermon,

then we know what true man is.

- (b) In this respect when Jesus taught that to love God with all your being, and your neighbour as yourself was what God required of man, he was really saying afresh what he had said in the sermon on the Mount. He insisted that this twofold law was the substance of the law and the prophets—a profound insight which Paul and James also use in their letters.
- (c) Jesus held that to be great was to serve. The greatest in men's sight was the one served. The true leader was the one who did not covet this place but served others. True humanity, then, is humanity which serves. We could show, from the Scriptures, that God is great not because of reserves of supernatural might and power but because He continuously serves His creation, and in this, mankind.
- (d) Jesus said the new commandment he gave was to love one another as he had loved them. He did not mean this was a *new standard* but that a *new demonstration* (a true demonstration) of the commandment was now before them. He said, 'Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend.' That was what he was about to do. Who would believe that to be truly man one must be imbued with the spirit of laying down one's life for his friends? We have noted that this is not explicitly commanded in the law. One may lay down one's life without it actually being taken in death. There are not two kinds of love—one where you will not lay down your life and another where you do!
- (e) Jesus said it was his food and drink to do the Father's will. He—as Son—would do nothing but what the Father told him, and all that he was told by the Father he would do. This is true humanity. It is true humanity to do (only) the will of God.

CONCLUSION

We could keep digging at this vast goldmine of truth. We could find many more elements which are incongruous with our fallen human approach to life, God, or the creation. It does not matter. The rich truth that we must hold to is that when man is elevated from degradation he does not become transformed into an angel. We may nevertheless say *he is transformed into a man!* What a thought! Transformed to be a true man!

GOD'S ACTION IN ELEVATING MAN—I

THE WORK OF ATONEMENT

We have dealt very simply with the work of redemption. In line with the objectivity of the New Testament we have simply pointed out the facts as we find them stated. There has been no attempt to interpret them. Also we have not tried to explain their relevance particularly, except to point out that man in his sinful dilemma needs God's way. We have also said that this is God's unique way to bring man out of his dilemma. We might add that God could have no other way. In conformity with His being, only a cross and an empty tomb can accomplish the salvation of fallen man.¹⁴

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE ATONEMENT?

The New Testament gives many reasons for the coming of Christ. I John 3:8 says it was to destroy the works of the devil. Hebrews 2:14–15 repeats this thought, whilst Galatians 1:4 says Jesus gave his life to deliver us from the present evil age, i.e. the current and corrupt world system. II Corinthians 5:15 says it was that we might no longer live to ourselves but to him who

¹⁴ It could be argued that God had the choice of many ways. This is probably idle speculation. It is obvious that there can only be one way, by nature of the case. The plain fact that confronts us anyway is that this is the method God used!

died and rose for us. Verse 21 of the same chapter says, 'that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ.' I Peter 2:24 says, 'that we might die to sin and live to righteousness'. So then, his coming was important.

Even so we need also to know what happened on the Cross. We can discover what happened there if we read Scriptures relating to the Cross. I Peter 2:24 says that he bore our sins in his body on the tree. For degraded man this is most important. If Christ really bore his sins, *then they are no more!* Their punishment, their burden, their pain, shame and pollution have no longer to be borne by the sinner, seeing that these things have been borne conclusively by Christ. Believing man is freed from them! Seeing this we should not be hurried in our contemplation. We should try to understand—if only in part—what it actually means to bear sin. We know in practice that it means anguish, heaviness, fear, alienation, shame at pollution and the like. The Old Testament certainly confirms this understanding of guilt bearing.

Put another way it means that when Christ bore the sin, then he also bore the wrath—sin and wrath being unable to be separated. We cannot really comprehend the wrath which springs from God's holiness, but we know it must be fearful. Also we cannot measure the anguish the human spirit feels when it is impure. We know something of the shame which attends this state, when our consciences have become defiled. How then must *he* have suffered to take upon his pure sinless self the muck and filth of the human race!

One event in the happenings of the Cross will never be wholly comprehended by men. It is the forsaking of Jesus by God at one point of his suffering. Human beings can understand this fact of rejection. We know—if we are honest—that our sins have separated us and God. We can then guess at what must have happened on the Cross. The rejection of Jesus by God tells us the measure of our own guilt and evil. He, however, was in himself the pure and innocent Lamb. There was nothing in the

Son which caused the Father to reject him. It was because he was man-for-men that he was rejected.

THE PRACTICALITY OF THE CROSS

Whilst it is useful for us to know something of what Christ suffered, it is more profitable to know what this suffering accomplished. Of course Christ's voluntary suffering is the proof of his love, but then what did that love accomplish? The answer—in conformity with I John 4:9–10—is 'life-giving propitiation'. We mean that Jesus set the true basis of forgiveness and justifying grace. God's pardon was not gratuitous. It did not flout the law. It did not let sin and evil off the hook. God's love was shown in the practical accomplishment of the Son in bearing the guilt of sins, in cleansing the impurity of evil, and in liberating fallen man.

When we say 'liberating' we include the defeat of evil powers. They had had their hold on man and over him by reason of his guilt. When this guilt was removed so too was the grip and hold of evil. The New Testament talks in graphic language of the old humanity being crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6, cf. Gal. 2:20). It speaks of the world-system likewise being crucified (Gal. 6:14), and shows that the power of Satan and his principalities was thus rendered null and void (Heb. 2:14–15; Col. 2:14–15; cf. Gal. 1:4). Jesus fought his moral battle with these foul hordes of evil and unarmed them by the work of the Atonement. He took away their power over man when he himself bore man's guilt and dissolved it.

THE PRACTICALITY OF THE RESURRECTION

Had he not risen from the dead it would have been clear that he had not succeeded on the Cross. It would have been seen that

death and sin were stronger than he. That, of course, was not the case. His resurrection, which was a mighty event in itself, proved that he was Lord both of death and life. Death now lost its terrors. So then did conscience, and so also the condemning law. In being released from the guilt of sin man was freed from the tyranny of death, law and conscience.

What is more, the person of Jesus was now invested with great authority by reason of his successful conflict with sin and evil. He was attested because of this victory by the Father. Resurrected, he was also raised to heaven. He was seated in the place of authority over all powers, and this primarily not by his right as the Eternal Word, but as the conquering Jesus, the victorious Messiah. No wonder confession of him as Lord brought salvation to the confessors! They were confessing that he was Saviour-Lord of all debased creatures, and King-by-right over all lesser powers. It was, after all, true, loving, humble, serving and obedient humanity which had triumphed!

When we know that the elevation of man is contingent upon this objective work of Christ, then we are greatly heartened. Nothing of redemption originates in sinful mankind. It is all bound up in the objective victory of the Cross and Resurrection. We can now go on to see how the benefits and fruits of the Cross come to man, that is to say to debased and fallen man.

GOD'S ACTION IN ELEVATING MAN—II**THE FRUITS OF THE ATONEMENT**

Isaiah 53:11 says, 'he shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.' This means that Christ did not suffer in vain. The stakes, both of man's needs and Christ's suffering, were high. He had a mighty task to accomplish to satisfy the holiness of God, the unswerving demand of high law, and to effect the cleansing of the human race from both guilt and impurity. Already in John 12:24–25, prior to going to the Cross, he had stated the principle of fruitfulness, namely that the grain of wheat must be buried, that one must not love one's life but give it for others. Only then would one be fruitful. Only then would authentic fruit be borne.

By the term 'fruits of the Atonement' we mean the elevation of debased man to the level of true humanity. We might think that God with His special powers could do this thing with a flick of His hands—so to speak. We might think He could effect this by some naked power He possesses. How wrong we would be to think this! It takes a Cross and an empty Tomb to do this. Nothing less than the cost of the Son's life will accomplish the great moral and spiritual conquest that is required.

Man—for all that he is dust—is not a slight thing. Nor is he a pitiful creature. He was created in the image of God, and destined to be a lord over the creation. His problems, then, are deep. We have said little of man's personal suffering, that emotional suffering and dislocation which comes through his

rebellion, but here we must pause to see something of his sorry state. We cannot measure it quantitatively, but we can penetrate it qualitatively. Man suffers deeply by reason of his sin. No one can compute his anguish. His loneliness is beyond description. However, it is the suffering which he has brought about by his rejection of fellowship with God which is his deepest pain.

By nature he is a creature but denies his creaturely being. He refuses to relate to God on this level. He is too proud to resume dependency. He becomes a very devil as he seeks to rule the universe. He is in competition with God, and at the same time with every other human being. His fears of failure run deep. He stings with attacks on his pride. Refusing to live in his true glory he yet aches for such glory in his being. Hence his pathetic cosmetic living, his striving for a current glory which can only be false.

By nature he is a son of God, but cannot repent, cannot come back to the Father. He is proud, arrogant, and critical of the Source of his life. One part of him cries for total emotional fulfilment, but pride will not let him fly home to the Source of all comfort. By nature he is structured to be a servant. His pride will not allow him to be this. God and others must serve him! He denies himself the true fulfilment which would come with vocational accomplishment. He manufactures other vocations. He seeks his fulness in abortive endeavours.

Even so, all of this is not his greatest problem. It is his departure into evil which gives him anguish. In departing from the human norm he becomes a perverted creature. He is caught in his idols, he is the plaything of evil powers. On the one hand he gives away to moral degradation, and on the other he seeks to equal God in his morality and religious achievements. How sickened he is within by his fear, his lost hopes, his dwindling enjoyment, his anger and bitterness against God and man.

How foolish he is, too, as caught in the deceit of sin. As we have already said, he cannot live in the truth. Inwardly he dreads its confrontation. A divided and dividing creature, he must seek .

to hold himself together. Guilt compounds his hatreds and hatreds compound his guilts. This 'child of wrath' has become an aged and weary creature in God's beautiful universe, totally unable to help himself.

So we could go on, and yet we have said so little. So much then does man bear in himself. Now we understand—at least in part—what Christ bore on the Cross. Now we can go about seeing what this work did to release man from his bondage and rehabilitate him into true manhood.

REPENTANCE, FORGIVENESS AND JUSTIFICATION

Repentance

No theology is worth its salt which does not major on these three elements. We have said that these three are gifts of God, and so they are. However, they are also fruits of the Atonement. In the New Testament *repentance* is not wrought by frightening a person—unless it be the fear that is the beginning of (Gospel) wisdom—but repentance is evoked by something beautiful. This most beautiful thing is the great love of God, the most glorious grace which He lavishes upon us. The Holy Spirit opens the eyes of debased man to see that God loves him in Christ. He is undone by this. So in the Gospels Zacchaeus is caught to repentance by Christ's loving acceptance of him. The prodigal son is drawn by sudden loving memories of the father and the home. The thief on the cross hears Jesus say, 'Father!' and understands the nature of God. He also hears the plea for forgiveness, and repents.

Repentance is *metanoia*, i.e. 'change of mind'. What then can change the mind of the debased? What can change the mind-set of the self-righteous man? What breaks down the human spirit but the love of God, whether seen simply as love, or love-through-wrath. Repentance is a cleansing thing, as it was in the Book of the Acts where multitudes received the Word. The

Word of grace brought them to repentance.

Total Forgiveness

What does *forgiveness* do but relieve us of our guilt? What does the relieving from guilt do but set us free in our consciences? What does a clean conscience do but help us to live freely? What then did Paul mean when he said, 'Love which issues from a pure heart, a clean conscience, and a sincere faith'? Forgiveness tells us what is the love of God. Forgiveness that is abstract or academic has little effect. Love which is borne down into the heart of man by the Holy Spirit causes the principle of forgiveness to work. 'He that is forgiven much loves much,' and that no doubt because he has seen God's love as 'much' and not 'little'.

The New Testament shows that man sees who God really is when he sees Him forgiving. Love is known through forgiveness (I John 4:10; cf. Matt. 26:28; Jer. 31:31–34). Once one is loved, one loves (I John 4:19). Again, when one is forgiven, one forgives. We can see how powerful this would be for tangled human relationships. Not only is a man liberated from his bondage to sin, and from his fear of judgement, but he liberates others from his own unforgiveness. They too are freed, and he is free in freeing them!

With forgiveness comes total cleansing. 'When he had made purification for sins he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high' (Heb. 1:3). Hence we are told, '...the blood of Christ purify your consciences from dead works to serve the living God' (Heb. 9:14). How dynamic an act that is in the human spirit! The old programming data is utterly cleansed. It may remain, but not as impure data. Its defilement has been cleansed. That is why, 'Old things have passed away. Behold! *They* have become new!' Hence the writer of Hebrews says, '...let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience...' (10:22). Titus 2:14 informs us that 'he gave himself for us to

redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify for himself a people of his own. . . . Peter speaks of 'having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth...', and Paul, again, speaks of 'the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit' (I Pet. 1:22, Titus 3:5). He has spoken to the Corinthians, many of whom had been idolaters, fornicators, adulterers, alcoholics greedy and thieves, telling them, ' . . . you have been washed, you have been sanctified, you have been justified. . . ' (I Cor. 6:9–11)

What bliss, then, for the unclean who are cleansed, for the guilty who are forgiven, for the heavy-laden who are relieved of their burdens! How will they cope with such joy?

Justification

In the New Testament justification is perhaps the greatest of all powers for new living. As long as a man lives he is under law. To live under law is to live under its curse, for no man can or does keep that law. The law in one sense is ruthless. It knows no compromise of its demands, and no softening of its judgements. Intended to be the way of life, of true human living, the law horrifies the disobedient. We saw Paul's powerful passage concerning law in I Timothy 1:8–11. The law incites the rebellious and increases their guilt.

Law, however, is not separated from the Law-Giver who is Himself the Judge. We cannot then talk of law as an entity separated from God. We can understand why sinful man either throws himself into law-breaking on the one hand or on the other seeks to impress the Judge by his (so-called) keeping of the law. Because his heart is not in it, but only his religious pride, he breaks the law in its essence as well as in its precepts. He can quickly become a legalist, a nit-picking Pharisee, a dry lawyer-type.

How wonderful for the meticulous law-keeper with his multiplied minutae of the law to suddenly find himself in grace! What glorious freedom! Paul has the right idea. 'But now we are

discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we might serve, not under the old written code, but in the new life of the Spirit' (Rom. 7:6). The Cross has made this possible. 'By works of the law shall no man be justified'. However by the grace of God, the demands of the law having been met by Christ in his propitiatory death, we are now justified. When Christ died, we died. 'He that has died is *justified from sin*' (Rom. 6:7). 'Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ'. 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus' (Rom. 5:1, 8:1).

This message is no less wonderful for the sinner who knows himself to have been far gone in sin. He is like those who came to Jesus: the woman at the well, the woman taken in adultery, the woman who was a sinner, Zacchaeus, and many others. Somehow they smelled the sweet scent of grace about this calm man. Justification starves the ego of the self-righteous man and gives new self-esteem to the inferior and insecure person who was a sinner. He can now lift his head. She can suddenly feel she is a true woman in the world where formerly she had lost her true being. A self-flagellating Luther, a holiness-seeking Wesley, and a firm Pharisee such as Paul can find their peace in the Cross, in repentance, faith, forgiveness and justification.

Really it is not so much in these gifts that sinners become elevated persons, but in the very Person of the Father, the Person of the Son, and the Person of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 9

THE ELEVATED MAN

Now we come to the most fascinating part of our study. We simply give ourselves to seeing who and what is the elevated man. The psalmist once said simply, 'He lifted me out of the desolate pit, and out of the miry clay' (Psa. 40:2). He added, 'He put a new song in my mouth'. This describes the new creation in Christ. He is a graced person, full of gratitude and love. This love is expressed in adoration and worship.

What we have to keep in mind is that grace has done all that is required. Whilst it is true that we respond to grace, it is also true that even that response is evoked by grace. If grace had not already done the basic work, there could be no response.

Let us see what we mean by what we have just said. It is this: that God has placed the formerly degraded person into a new situation, into new categories of being and doing, and has given him new powers. Also he has rehabilitated in him the powers originally given to man at creation. He has reversed the reversal of the image!

We now set about seeing what God has done, and the responses that are required of the new man.

THE ELEVATED MAN IS HOLY

We have already seen that the new man in Christ has been purified by the work of the Cross. This purification is total, is through the Holy Spirit, and is by faith (Acts 15:8–9). It means

that man's moral pollution has been cleansed from him. Dead works have been purged from his conscience. He has a clean heart in accordance with the promises of Ezekiel 36:24–29 and Zechariah 13:1.

We saw in Ephesians 1:3–4 that God's ultimate intention for man is that he should be holy. Hence the principle that only the pure in heart shall (truly) see God. Also to the pure in heart all things are pure. God is the Holy Father. He will have holy children.

The purification of the Cross takes away the shame of the past. It also takes away the psychological climate in which sin thrives. Sin is miserable and ineffective in the presence of purity. Moreover the Cross is always working—'The blood of Jesus Christ his Son goes on cleansing us from all (every) sin.' Secondly, the absence of guilt breaks the current power of sin. Sin's power lies in guilt. The principle of 'no condemnation' thus guards us from sin's power. Love which grips the will also bids us say 'No!' to evil.

THE ELEVATED MAN IS SANCTIFIED

'Holy' and 'sanctified' mean much the same thing. Even so the word 'sanctified' primarily means 'consecrated'. On one occasion Jesus said he consecrated himself (John 17:19). He meant that he dedicated himself in a certain way. He made the proposition sacred. In the New Testament Christians are called 'saints'. Probably this came from Daniel 7:14ff., where the term 'saints of the Most High' means 'God's ones'. Some see them as celestial beings, others as God's people. It matters little. The early Christians called themselves saints, for in Daniel the Kingdom is given to the saints, and the Christians believed they had received the Kingdom.

In Deuteronomy God tells Israel that they are His chosen people. In Exodus 19:5–6 He tells them they are 'a kingdom of

priests and a holy nation'. This is transferred or applied to the church in I Peter 2:9–10. I Peter 2:4–5 speaks in the same vein, namely that the church constitutes a worshipping and serving priesthood. This sanctification, Peter tells us (I :2), was planned long ago. We were predestined by the Father, and sanctified by the Spirit with a view to our conversion. In I Corinthians 6:11 Paul tells us we are washed (purified, made holy) and then sanctified, i.e. consecrated as God's people. This preceded justification. We are then in the situation which is holy, i.e. God's situation. In the Old Testament it was said that 'the altar sanctifies the gift', meaning that what comes in contact with God is made holy. It is not holy without that contact.

THE ELEVATED MAN WALKS IN HOLINESS

We are using general terms which are fairly abstract. We are not talking of the practical ways in which a man is holy, or the acts he does when he lives in holiness. Paul uses this calling into holiness as a lever for a life of practising holiness. In I Thessalonians 4:1–8 Paul shows what is required for holiness. In I Thessalonians 5:23 he invokes the work of God to aid the new man in the processes of holiness.

In Ephesians 4:17–24 Paul says that formerly as non-Christians (i.e. Gentiles) the Ephesians had been morally callous, and lived in all kinds of uncleanness. He points to the radical change that has been brought about in them, and in the light of the change shows them that they may and must walk in holiness. In 4:25—5:14 he shows the practical ways of living in holiness. Galatians 5:13–26 contrasts walking in holiness with walking according to the flesh.

We saw in I Timothy I :5 that the most important thing is 'love that issues from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith'. Philippians 1:9–11 and I Thessalonians 3:12–13 show the way of love produces holiness of life, and both bring great fruit

fulness. In John's first letter, light and love are twin companions. What we must understand is that holiness is not a legalistic stint we undertake desperately, trying not to do wrong things. To the contrary, it is a joyous drive for true living motivated by love. Also it is simply a good and gratifying experience to live cleanly!

THE ELEVATED MAN LIVES WITH THE HOLY PEOPLE

The new man has a new environment. He still lives in the same physical world, the one he knew before. Even so he has been placed in the midst of a special community. It is the community of holy love. The Book of Acts tells us how transformed were the people of that community. Hence the new man is not an isolated person. He becomes the member of a living community.

This is greatly strengthening for him. Were there no such community he would have no basis from which to work. They are the ethical people. They are the people of love. Properly speaking, they are those who encourage one another in holiness. Seeing themselves as 'a holy nation' and a 'royal priesthood', then they live in accordance with that status. They 'exhort one another daily, lest through the deceitfulness of sin' their 'hearts be hardened', and they 'provoke one another to love and good works (Heb. 3:13, 10:24). They walk together in the Spirit, and 'perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord' (Gal. 5:25, II Cor. 7:1). Whilst we have not spelled out the actual deeds they do in holiness, we recognise them when we see them.

PERSONS, BUT NOT INDIVIDUALS

The ideas of an individualistic spiritual pilgrimage, an individualistic salvation, and an individualistic holiness need to be corrected. An individual thinks primarily of himself, and this

generally over and against others, even others of his own ilk. Man is a person who is more a person when he is in the context of other persons. The more he is a person, the less he is an individual. Hence he is a member of Christ, and all members of Christ are members of one another. As Paul has taught us, when one member suffers, all suffer, and when one rejoices, all rejoice. Without any doubt there is rich personal security for each member in the whole body of believers. No truly elevated person is fully himself if he lives only as a freelance. The holy community is his spiritual habitat.

THE HOLY COMMUNITY AS THE HOME OF GOD

Paul speaks of the true people of God in Ephesians chapter two. He shows how Jews and Gentiles have been taken up into the Cross and have been—so to speak—melted in its crucible and minted afresh as a new people. This people can be called the family or household of God. From the point of view of redeemed man he is in the house of God. God also dwells within this house. He is the Father dwelling with His children. Ephesians 2:21–22 says, ‘. . .in whom (Christ) the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.’

Likewise Revelation 21:1–5 pictures the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, the True People of God. Verse 3 says, ‘...and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them. . . .”’ ‘Whilst, then, the dwelling place is a future event in Revelation 21, it is a present matter in Ephesians 2. This makes sense of Paul’s statement, ‘One God and Father of us all, who is above all, and in all, and through all.’

This is the Holy Father dwelling with His holy children,

encouraging them. Who would have dreamed that the Judge would be Father, and at that, Father-Helper?

Chapter 10

THE ELEVATED MAN LIVES RELATIONALLY**IT IS LIFE TO RELATE TO GOD**

This is the message of John 17:3 and I John 5:20f. To know idols is to live in death. To know God is the very experience of His life, eternal life. Likewise, 'We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren' (I John 3:14). Life then is a wholly relational matter. For us it is an incredible thing that fallen man who lived under the tyranny of Satan, and who once was 'hateful and hating' now looks upon God with great love. The truth is that man is a correlative person, that is he correlates with God in the ways we set out below.

CREATURE TO CREATOR

If we study the doctrine of the creation closely we see that man was created a creature. Whilst this seems so obvious, its reality or substance is not immediately obvious. A creature is a dependent creature. If man is true creaturely then he delights in dependence. However, most of us believe that true delight is experienced in independence, that is in so-called freedom. Jesus showed us in the Sermon on the Mount that creaturely dependence is the true order of the Kingdom of God. We are not to worry about food, drink, and clothing. In fact we must not spend our lives trying to ensure security of tenure in this world.

We are to trust God. He is our true security. The proud person who has to succeed, the compulsive 'do-gooder' who is trying to prove himself to God and man, and the person who fears death and so compulsively pursues life-security, are persons who are missing out on the joys of dependent creatureliness. The tired child is glad to return to the warm parental arms, the person weary of passion is glad to lay down his fruitless endeavour. The proud wife is glad to relax in her husband's love, and the independent child secretly envies the creaturely child snuggling up to its loving father. The elevated man has come home to his Creator. He seeks first the Kingdom of God, knowing that creaturely comforts and the like will be added to him as God sees best.

SUBJECT TO KING:SERVANT TO MASTER

This is a wide subject.¹⁵ If man has a prejudice generally against being a creature and sees it as a weak affair, he is no less prejudiced against being a servant. This he considers as servile. In that judgement he is greatly mistaken. We have seen already that Christ said the greatest among men was the one who served, so that the least was really the greatest. Doubtless man links work with disgrace, seeing it as part of the curse of man. Of course we do not mean that modern man thinks consciously in terms of the curse, but it is there as an underlying racial memory. In any case man generally desires to sustain himself in the easiest way possible.

The truth is that God is the greatest Servant of all. He has served in creation—a vast labour. He has served through the millenniums of time in the matter of sustaining the universe. His providential work is a ministry to His creation. We have seen the

¹⁵ See the author's *THE SONS OF GOD A RE THE SER VAIVTS OF ALL* for a fuller treatment (Adelaide: NCPI. 1982).

cost and power of redemption. In this too He has served. His culminating labour will be the making of the new heavens and the new earth. God is the Ultimate Worker.

Innately by creation man too is a worker and servant. Unemployment for most of us is torture. Work is satisfying. Of course monotonous work is not enjoyable. The matter of production lines is a subject to be considered. Even so soulless labour does not invalidate the general principle of work and servanthood. Many of us wish to work autonomously. We cannot stand a boss. Sometimes this is because we do not wish to work *under* someone, or *for* someone. Man, then, often will work, but does so not in order to serve others. He wishes to serve only himself, or perhaps his family.

Christ is the servant *par excellence*, that is the paradigm for servanthood. Philippians 2:6–8 is one of the most beautiful statements concerning true serving humility: ‘who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.’ He took ‘the form of a servant’. He served by his death on the Cross. He said, ‘I have not come to be served, but to *serve*, and to give my life a ransom for many’ (Mark 10:45).

Service to man is, first, service to God. The Son served the Father, and served Him lovingly. ‘The Son does nothing but what the Father shows him.’ ‘It is my food and drink to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work.’ ‘We must do the works of him who sent me, whilst it is day’ (John 5:19; 4:34; 9:4)

It is not by accident that the second half of the prophecy of Isaiah is concerned with the Suffering Servant. He is described from many angles. One is being the triumphant Servant—‘A light to lighten the Gentiles and to be the glory of thy people Israel.’ Another is the Servant who suffers deeply, bearing our

griefs and carrying our sorrows. A number of these Servant prophecies are linked with Jesus in the New Testament, for he is their fulfilment. There is no doubt, then, that he is the Servant.

In the Epistles believers are often called the *douloi* (slaves) of God. Such a slave knows only the will of his Lord. He delights to do it. Again, in the Epistles every believer has a *diakonia*, i.e. a ministry or servanthood. It may manifest itself in a gift-office, in being a deacon or elder, or through the gifts and talents exercised by each member. The principle is, ‘By love serve one another.’ This is in the context of ‘Be subject one to the other.’

So we could go on. What we must realise, then, is that the elevated man is raised to servanthood, as also he is lifted by it. The one who serves knows the delight of ministering. We serve both God and man. Work is not just for ourselves, but also for others (cf. Eph. 4:28). What is most wonderful of all is that we resume the mandate of work originally given by God (Gen. 1:28). The new mandate given by Christ is to preach the Gospel to every creature, and to make disciples of all nations. This too is part of our serving

SON TO FATHER

We have already touched on the personal and emotional fulfilment experienced when a degraded man is received—filth and all—into the arms of the true Father. The deprivation he has felt in human relationships—paternal, maternal, familial or marital—is more than compensated for by this inflow of pure love and acceptance. The degraded man of Romans 1:20–32 is the prodigal stumbling home to the father who prepares for him a bath, dresses him in the finest robe, and celebrates his repentance with joy.

Man is made for sonship. He is lonely and at a loss until he is in the Father’s arms. Then he can relate—in his new acceptance—to the whole family of God. He can be a true brother to

his lost Adamic brother, as he can be a brother to his brethren in Christ. No man can say that he loves God as Father when he hates his brother. Sonship and brotherhood come to elevated man in the one parcel.

CONCLUSION

Life then is a matter of relationships. Eternal life is a matter of relationships with God, and with man. In his first Epistle John begins writing on the wonderful fact that they—the apostles—have looked upon and touched the very Word of Life, Christ himself. He says, joyously, ‘We write so that you may have fellowship with us, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ.’ Fellowship is at once (i.e. simultaneously) with the Father, the Son, and the brethren.

We accept the fact that we correlate with God in the manner indicated above. In such full relationship then, the elevated man is deeply satisfied and quite fulfilled. His elevation is beyond all his former dreams.

Chapter 11

THE ELEVATED MAN HAS VOCATION—1

THE NEED AND VALUE OF VOCATION

We have seen that man was created for vocation. By creation he was called into being, and by redemption he has been recalled, so to speak. We saw in Ephesians 1:3–7 that God had set man’s destiny beforehand, namely that he should be holy and blameless. Being holy and blameless is not merely his condition. God is holy. This is His Being. It is also His vocation. Holiness is dynamic, destroying evil and forging what is true. Man’s vocation is to be holy.

God has also set man’s destiny as a son. To be a son is not merely to inhabit a category. Sonship too is dynamic, as Christ’s Sonship so powerfully demonstrates. Man then has vocation. That vocation is spelled out in the work mandate of Genesis 1:28f. It is further spelled out in the mandate often called ‘the Great Commission’, that is to say, the proclamation of the gospel. This proclamation is not only to save persons from everlasting degradation. It is to bring people into the family of God. It is to redeem the nations of the world to Christ. It is to build the Holy City, the company of the Redeemed.

It is a fact of human living—even fallen human living—that man is pointless without vocation. The Austrian psychotherapist

Viktor Frankl¹⁶, has amply demonstrated that man must have purpose and a goal. Also he must see purpose in his personal history as in the corporate history of the human race. He must participate in that purpose to be a whole being. Even more, the Scriptures portray man as a creature of destiny, and not as the plaything of a ruthless and alien fate.

MAN'S DESTINY IS IN CHRIST

What then is man's destiny? The answer is, 'Christ!' When we ask what this means, the answer is that the destiny set out for man in Ephesians 1:3–14 is all *in Christ*. That is to say, man comes to his fulfilment *through* Christ and *in* Christ. We *cannot think of man as man apart from Christ*. Ephesians 1:22–23 speaks of 'the church, which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all.'

This Ephesian reference is capable of a number of interpretations which we need not go into. We can, however, see one clear fact: 'Christ has given his fulness to his people, the church.' They derive their fulness as persons and collectively as the corporate body from none other than Christ the Lord and Head of the church.

In Ephesians 4:7–16 we see that Christ in his work of the Cross has triumphed to that point where he will 'fill all things full'. Obviously apart from him these things remain empty. Created in him (Col. 1:15–19, Heb. 1:3) they can only be full and authentic when related to him, and when contingent upon him for their true being. Out of his fulness then, he fills all things full. Paul then proceeds to say that Christ gives gifts which equip

¹⁶ Viktor Frankl is the inventor of the therapy called 'Logotherapy'. He has written a number of books, but his *MAN'S SEARCH FOR MEANING* (New York: Beacon Press, 1962. Formerly published as *From Death Camp to Existentialism*), speaks of man needing meaning, purpose and goal in order to be healthy

his people for the work of servanthip, and by this the church upbuilds itself into fulness and maturity by love.

The upbuilding of the people of God is wholly dependent upon Christ's fulness which he gives from himself through his Spirit (cf. I Cor. 12:13).

THE FULNESS OF CHRIST

Three things are clearly predicated of Christ: (i) He is Prophet. (ii) He is Priest. (iii) He is King. Notice that we do not say, 'A prophet, a priest and a king.' He is Prophet par excellence, as also Priest and King, par excellence. He is the archetypal and fountal Prophet, Priest and King. This is the whole point. We too are prophets, priests and kings, but we are only these things insofar as we have them within the fulness of Christ. We draw from his offices as Prophet, Priest and King. Moreover we are not little prophets, priests and kings, individually, but we share in a corporate prophethood, priesthood and kingship. This will become clearer as we examine the subject.

Let us then look at Christ's three offices.

CHRIST IS PROPHET

'The witness (or, testimony) of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy'¹⁷ (Rev. 19:10). Without Jesus there is no basic witness, and so no basic prophecy. This thought is strengthened by Peter's words in I Peter 1:10–12. It is also undergirded by Jesus's conversation with his two disciples when on the road to Emmaus: 'O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!'

¹⁷ The witness of Jesus can be (a) witness to the Father, or (b) witness which he gives himself of himself. To witness to Christ (Acts 1:8) is what redeemed man does, but his own witness (way of life) is also involved. We may conclude that the witness of Jesus is his own way of life which witnesses to the Father and to the truth (John 18:37).

Was it not necessary that Christ should suffer all these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and *all the prophets he* interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.' Jesus is then—we might say—the substance of the prophets.'

He is more. He pronounced John 'a prophet, yea, and more than a prophet' (Luke 7:26). John the Baptist was the last in the line of the prophets who had predicted Christ and the Kingdom. He not only predicted but saw his prediction—along with that of the other prophets—come to fulfilment. In fact John was prophesied by the prophets! Jesus quoted Malachi 3:1 of him (cf. Luke 7:27), and the Gospellers quote Isaiah 40:3, as also Malachi 3:1, whilst Jesus refers implicitly to Malachi 4:5–6 (cf. Matt. 11:14, 17:12).

If John is 'more than a prophet', then Jesus is 'more than more than a prophet'. John denies that he is *the prophet* (John 1:21). This must refer to Deuteronomy 18:15–22 where the true prophet—after the order of Moses the prophet—will arise. One must hear his words under pain of death to obey them (Deut. 18: 19–20). Acts 3: 19–26 expounds this prophet as Jesus. He is, therefore, *the prophet*.

We know that he was the *substance* as also the *subject* of the prophets. We also know *he fulfilled* the prophecies. And, more than these things, he was the founder of the new prophetic community. This is clear from Acts chapter two. In verse 33 we read that Jesus received the gift of the Spirit from the Father and poured him out upon his people. Peter applies Joel 2:28–32 to the event of Pentecost and to the new community. Two statements in this quotation by Peter are important, viz.,

'And it shall come to pass afterwards, (God declares),
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions

Dreams and visions, according to Numbers 12:6, are the

means God uses to convey prophecies to the prophets. Hence young and old shall receive these communications through the Spirit and they will prophesy.

Peter adds,

'Yea, and on my menservants and my maidservants
in those days
I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.'

So then the new community is prophetic. It has a corporate prophethood—to coin a term. Not everyone is a prophet in the sense that he has a prophetic *office*, but all ministry has its prophetic element. There are those with the office of a prophet, and some have the charisma come upon them of prophetic utterance (cf. I Cor. 12:28–30; Eph. 4:11; and I Cor. 14:24–25; 29–33; cf. I Peter 4:11).

To be the prophetic community means to be the community which is the mouthpiece of God, uttering His oracles, confronting mankind with the exhorting and predictive word of the Lord (cf. Ex. 7:1–2, I Peter 4:11). Our point here is that degraded man is now elevated to participation in the prophetic ministry of the community. This is a high calling. It means the sinner is no longer caught in the false prophecy of the occult and evil powers, but participates in the true Word of the Lord to humanity, and, what is more, both lives and proclaims it. Of course his witness is the very witness of Christ himself, called in the Book of the Revelation, the testimony of Jesus'. Jesus had said, 'You will receive power, the Holy Spirit coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem and all Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth' (Acts I :8). This is the true prophetic ministry, given to the entire new community. This is the current prophetic operation of Messiah out of his fulness given to the church.

Chapter 12

THE ELEVATED MAN HAS VOCATION—II**CHRIST IS PRIEST**

If we need proof of this we simply have to read the Epistle to the Hebrews. The writer of this letter has given a brilliant exposition of the matter. It needs, however, to be examined closely. If what he says is true then we have to say, with Calvin, that this exposition finishes the matter of other religions. Phenomenology of religions may tell us how religions work, and what are the elements common to many of them, but if Christ is the true High Priest—after the order of Melchizedek—then the matter is completed. It means that there is only one Mediator between man and God, the man Christ Jesus.

The church has always seen Christ's prayer on the night of his betrayal (John 17) as his High-Priestly intercession. He prays for the church elected, the church protected, the church militant, the church unified, and the church glorified. It is a prayer which goes on being answered in every decade of history. Christ has interceded for us, and he has intervened for us. He goes on intervening and interceding at the right hand of God.

It is not our intention here to examine this great High-Priesthood. We certainly need to know it, otherwise we will not know our own priesthood. It is from Christ's Priesthood that we derive our own. Better put, it means that we participate in his Priesthood, just as we participate in his Prophethood. We draw from the true source. We share in the action. We live in the reality.

OUR CURRENT PRIESTHOOD

We are a priesthood. A line of a hymn says, 'He maketh the rebel a priest and a king.' We have seen that Israel as the holy people of God was a priest nation (a kingdom of priests) among all the nations. Doubtless they were to be God's priest-nation for (and among) all the nations (Ex. 19:5–6). We saw in I Peter 2:9–10 that this designation of Israel now applies to the church. It is best for us to see the whole passage in which Peter speaks of the priesthood of all believers, i.e. I Peter 2:4–10.

'Come to him, to that living stone, rejected by men but in God's sight chosen and precious; and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scriptures:

"Behold I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and he who believes in him will not be put to shame."

To you therefore you believe, he is precious, but for those who do not believe, The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner," and, "A stone that will make men stumble, a rock that will make them fall"; for they stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. 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.'

At the time of the Reformation this passage became important. The doctrine of the priesthood of *all* believers became prominent. Notice that it is not the doctrine of the priesthood of *every* (or, each) believer. All participate in the priesthood, but it is a corporate matter. The priesthood is composed of *all* believers. It is not merely the aggregate of individual believers as priests. This is the equivalent of being the prophetic community. We are the priestly community

When it is asked, 'What does the priestly community do?' both Peter and the writer of Hebrews give clear answers. Peter says:

- (a) *We offer spiritual sacrifices.* When we want to know what these are we have answers in Romans 12:1–2. There a living sacrifice is a life which every day walks, talks, eats, drinks, thinks, and does everything to the glory of God (cf. I Cor. 10:31). *The way we live is the mode of our worship.* Hebrews 13:15–16 says something similar: ‘Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.’ Overflowing praise to God and overflowing good to all men constitute spiritual sacrifices. Paul has a similar thought in Philippians 2:16–17, where he sees his life’s ministry as part of the sacrifice, and ‘the offering of (your) faith’ itself the sacrifice in which he shares.
- (b) *We declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvellous light.* We represent the true nature of God to the people, and on the objective basis of what he has done. This will cause them to draw near to Him.

Nor does the priestly ministry end there. Just as the Holy Spirit intercedes for us within us (Rom. 8:26–27), and the Son intercedes for us at the right hand of God (Rom. 8:34, Hebrews 7:25), so we intercede for the world (I Tim. 2:1–4) and for one another (Eph. 6:18–20). This ministry of intercession is most powerful, as the Book of the Revelation shows, for no true intercession is ever lost, and each prayer is powerfully effective (cf. Rev. 5:8; 8:3–5). James 5:16 underlines the truth of this fact.

We see then that the spiritual lay-about, the immoral freebooter, the degraded human being has been transformed from self-serving into a ministry which can be said to be rendered to God, and *on behalf of* all men. What a high calling!

What dignity of this new and rich vocation and office!

THE PRIESTHOOD TO COME

What we are we will be, and what we will be we will already have been being! I John 3: 1–3 tells us that we will be glorious and holy. So we set about the business *now* of being holy. We will be a kingdom of priests. This is seen in Revelation 5:10: ‘and hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on earth.’ The kingly priesthood will be evident throughout the millennium. Finally in Revelation 22:5 we are told concerning the saints, ‘and they shall reign for ever,’ that is, as royal priests. Gradually we are piecing together all the elements which tell us what our vocation really is. Looked at as an abstraction we truly wonder that God should plan these things for us. Shared in the practicalities of life we see how exalted is our office and of what great dignity. There are no grounds for heady pride. There are only the grounds for a humbled spirit. So much does God for the degraded as He elevates them beyond their richest dreams!

Chapter 13

**THE ELEVATED MAN HAS
VOCATION—III****CHRIST THE KING**

The Book of the Revelation proclaims him as ‘the ruler of kings on earth’ (1:5), and ‘Lord of lords and King of kings’ (17:14; 19:16). Doubtless this is what we would expect of the glorified Christ. Yet it is Jesus the man who is born to be King. What we must remember is that man was created to be a lord. This is implied in the mandate given to him to rule the earth and care for it. It is also explicit in Psalm 8:5 where man is crowned with glory and honour and everything is under his feet. Unless there is basic creational lordship in man he can never fit the role of kingship which the Father has for him.

Christ made it clear that he came into the world to be King. The passage of John 18:33–38 gives us a clear picture. When Pilate asks whether Jesus is King of the Jews he throws the question back on him, Pilate. After being questioned again by Pilate Jesus affirms his Kingship. In verse 36 he has explained the nature of the Kingdom: ‘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.’ Now in verse 37 Jesus speaks plainly: ‘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. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice.’

Christ’s Kingship is clearly of a moral spiritual Kingdom, but we must not think the Kingdom is any less substantial for all

that. Paul says that the Kingdom of God is not (arguments about) eating and drinking, but is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. This, of course, indicates what kind of King would head up such a Kingdom.

In the Old Testament prophecies we have a number of references to a coming King. One of the most famous is Jeremiah 23:5: ‘Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.’ This is generally taken as referring to Messiah. In Psalm 2 God refers to one who is ‘His anointed’ (verse 2), and who is ‘My King’ and ‘My Son’ (verses 6–7). The New Testament often refers to this Psalm in connection with Jesus. Again Isaiah 9:6–7 is a much quoted Messianic passage where ‘great David’s greater son’ is shown ruling eternally. In Daniel 7:13ff. It is the Son of man who has rulership of all the kingdoms. Also pertinent is Zechariah 9:9: ‘Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on an ass, on a colt the foal of an ass.’

This latter reference is of course one used in the Gospel accounts. It heralds Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem. There is no doubt in anyone’s mind that Jesus is being welcomed as Messiah, i.e. the King of the Kingdom. The Kingdom of God figures largely in the Gospels, both in its announcement of John and Jesus, and by the special teaching given by Jesus both before and after his resurrection. There is no doubt that Jesus sees himself as King, especially when we consider some of the material used in the parables of the Kingdom. In the Epistles the term ‘King’ is not used directly, except of God the Father, but the use of the Father as King, and of Jesus as both Lord and Messiah, indicate that he is head of the Kingdom, and so is King. In Ephesians 5:5 we read of ‘the Kingdom of Christ and of God,’ and in Colossians 1:13 we read of ‘the Kingdom of the Son of his love.’ The early church avoided the use of ‘King’ because it was so misunderstood-

stood. It could be construed as disloyalty to the reigning Caesar of the day. It was on such grounds that the high priest and the elders forced Pilate's hand to commit Jesus to the Cross.

We are not so much concerned with establishing the fact that Jesus was and is King, as we are in seeing the nature of his Kingship. It is the Son's Kingship under the Kingship of the Father which claims our interest. Jesus said, '. . .my Father has appointed to me a Kingdom.' I Corinthians 15:26–28 shows the Son securing this Kingdom, and then turning to the Father and giving it to Him that 'God may be all in all.' Revelation 11:15 presents a similar picture where the kingdom of this world has become the Kingdom of our Lord (God) and His Christ (Messiah).

The Kingdom is simply the reign and rule of God. In Psalm 2 the *old* King makes His Son to be the *new* King. The new King is given all the nations and peoples of the earth for his inheritance and possession. Yet in the New Testament it is not political rule that Jesus exercises. It is rule over the forces which would destroy his people. It is the rule of light. John 18:37 calls it the declaration and rule of truth. His reign is in order to vanquish all evil enemies from controlling the affairs of men. This Kingship can be seen to act in so many ways.

MAN THE KING

The statements in the Revelation, 'made us a Kingdom, priests unto our God'; 'I will grant him (who conquers) to sit with me on my throne'; 'he (who conquers) shall rule them (the nations) with a rod of iron'; 'hast made them a Kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth'; '. . .they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they shall reign with him a thousand years'; '. . .and they shall reign for ever and ever', all indicate that the people of God shall be both priests and kings. If we like to see it another way, they shall be priest-kings, or kingly priests.

We have seen the three correlates by which we find fulfilment in God, i.e. the son-Father, servant-King, creature-Creator correlates. Man has also been made a lord, as we have also seen. Thus the functional basis for kingship is his lordship. We remember at the same time that we are a kingdom of priests rather than kings and priests. That is why we can speak of the priesthood of all believers, the prophethood of all believers, and the kingship of all believers. We mean that we participate in Christ's Kingship. We are not only the beneficiaries of it. We also participate in its conquering action. The fulness of Christ is that of his Prophet-nature, his Priestly person, and his Kingly being.

Now we are being brought to see the high status the Father is giving to formerly debased and degraded creatures. We begin to realise what this high calling means to us in our lives. Our given nobility is both by nature and grace, by creation and the Cross. That man should have such noble structure speaks of a lofty ontology of man. In practice, it means that already he is seated with Christ in the heavenlies (Eph. 2:6), that is, he is already sharing in the Kingly victory and reign of Christ (cf. Rom. 5:17).

CONCLUSION TO THE VOCATION OF THE ELEVATED COMMUNITY OF GOD

The threefold status and being of man is his prophetic, priestly and kingly character and designation. From having an attitude of rebellion and from opposing all authority, he has come to espouse the authority of God and to love the hierarchy of function. This is what we mean by true holiness. This is what we mean by the humility of obedient service to both God and man. This is what is meant by Christ's people being in him, and he in them. This is, of course, man's true identity. Not only does

I, THE MAN

each person have a *unique* identity which the Father gives specially, but all have a *common* identity which issues from that with which they identify, namely the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, as also the creation of which they are part.

It now remains for us to examine the practices both of the debased life and the elevated life.

INTERMISSION—II

INTERMISSION—II

There are two worlds, the world of faith, and the world which we call reality. The former is the world as truth portrays it and informs us of its nature and being. The world which we call reality is the world as it comes to sight. It is the world of the five senses and the three dimensions. If we were to see this world through the lens of truth, then the two worlds would be one. However, we see this so-called world of reality through the lens of the lie. We need faith to see it properly, i.e. faith in God which is the starting point of true knowledge. The forces of evil are most powerful in telling us that the world of spiritual reality—which in fact includes all reality—is a myth, a chimera, a delusion. It tells us that this is for the religiously imaginative and the mentally gullible. It urges us to live life up within the five senses and the three dimensions.

In our first section we saw in the light of Biblical presentation how glorious a person was created man when unfallen and unsullied. We saw how terrible a creature he became when he fell, believing he was *as* God and so able to discern good and evil. We saw that he exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and now fights to maintain the lie as truth over and against the truth itself, i.e. the Truth Himself. When we proceeded to our second section—the section just completed—we saw that God's Plan of redemption in Christ was His plan to renew man, to restore to him the full shining image and likeness of Himself in which man was created. How thrilling that is!

As a person and also as a writer I have learned that truth is truth, and if we tell the truth simply then at least our listeners (or readers) will know what is the truth, even if they reject it as truth. I mean, they will know that this is what I insist is the truth, even if their living in the lie moves them to scorn regarding it, and they outrightly (or guiltily) reject it. Now everything lies in the clause just above—'if we tell the truth Simply—because I have come to see that although God has given us the inscripturated truth in the Bible, yet He has also placed apostles, teachers, prophets and evangelists to tell out the truth of the Scriptures, and without any doubt every messenger is in some sense a translator of

the truth, and every translator cannot avoid—by nature of the case—also being something of an interpreter. In fact I think every theologian is to a greater or lesser degree an interpreter of the truth. He never only tells the truth simply.

As I see it, this is my problem. The element of interpretation should be kept to its minimal point. Theology should never shape the truth into its own patterns of thinking and insist on its own conclusions. The good theologian does not improve on the truth, or even improve the truth. He lets no personal element intrude which is not part of that truth. It is so easy for him to expound his ideas *about* the truth. The older he becomes, and the more reverence he has for Scripture, the less he will intrude these elements upon the truth, and the more simply he will tell the truth.

In the first two sections there has been interpretation—how can one avoid it? Right interpretation is part of the apparatus of proclamation: God proclaims through our humanity and delights in doing so. He utilises the uniqueness of each of His children in so doing. This is the condiment which spices the feast, so to speak. However, the proclaimer of truth is always fighting the indolence that comes with the lie, the reluctance to face the truth, and in seeking to combat it he often adds inducements to arouse interest. He unconsciously explains and substantiates where—at the most—he should further clarify. He can confuse and even obfuscate (darken or obscure) the truth. This is always my fear. My fear is that in the second section I have so tried to explain, that I have taken the reality of the matter away from human experience, and put it up into that theological realm, where it is now abstract and so unreal in the down-to-earth world where we live.

Whether this is so or not (I leave you to judge), our third section is written in order to show in principle and practice where the elements of creation, fall, degradation, renewal (regeneration), present holiness of life and ultimate glorification relate to us now in this life which we live. We live our lives in the context of eating, drinking, clothing, sleeping, waking. We live it in relationships, and we move in homes, schools, supermarkets, Local, State and Federal politics. We live it in the context of art, literature, electronic and other media: and so on. No wonder these things which press up against our five senses make all the talk of a book like this present one seem so unreal and so abstract.

The only plea that I can offer is a witness. I witness to the reality of

the things I have written. They began to be with me from infancy, as far back as I can remember. Even when their reality seems to fade in the light of the material life about us, they persist in coming back, and how glad I am, for all of that so-called material world is bewildering without the rationale of the Spirit, without possession of the truth. That is why I urge you to keep reading. I also exhort you to look at the Scriptures that go with the teaching. Don't see them as support texts or support proofs but rather study them for themselves. However feeble I may be as an interpreter-translator, be grateful for these jewels of truth.

I imagine that the reluctant dragons who are readers will have dropped out before this, and will not press on anyway. To the near reluctant dragons I say, 'Persist and read.' Embarking as we have upon a subject that is at once repellent and attractive to us as sinful human beings, I think the rewards are incalculable. There is no pot of gold at the end of the rainbow: there is just glory everywhere!

PART THREE

MAN THE DEBASED
AND MAN THE ELEVATED

Chapter 1

HOW MAN IS DEBASED

In our two previous sections we have attempted a theological rationale of man degraded and man elevated. Whilst man degraded is below the level of true humanity, man elevated is not above the level of authentic humanity. This can be seen practically in that Jesus is true man, and the correct paradigm for all human beings. When we compare ourselves as persons with him, we see how far short elevated man is, in practice, from his true fulness. There is no doubt that Adam, in the eschatological sense, was not fulfilled or complete. In the creational sense, as created, he was complete. He did not need to be more than he was, where he was, in time and growth. His rebellion caused him to recede as a human person.

We must understand then that in one sense man has always been a 'becoming' creature, and as a sinner always a 'receding' being. Man redeemed is always a becoming person in the eschatological sense, although he is a 'become' person through regeneration. He is all that God requires of him because of all that God's grace has elected him into. Yet he has continually to fill out, in practice, what he already is, so that he may become what he is destined to be.

THE PROBLEM OF THE BECOMING PERSON

Following the publication of the book, *From Crime to Christ*, I received a letter from a person close to me. He was impressed by

the book, and moved by its contents. ‘But,’ he said, ‘I doubt whether the man and woman—Ray and Paula Thyer—will make it. I know criminals and prostitutes. They always revert.’ Notice that he was giving his personal impression, not the Biblical view. Possibly his feelings were motivated by some experiences he had had of similar situations.

His criticism outlines the feelings we have about man debased and man elevated. We decry the fall of man, and we espouse the grace of God. At the same time we do not believe homosexuals can become healed, and so live heterosexual lives. We think a former alcoholic is only a thin line away from resuming his drinking orgies. We are always suspicious of people previously sexually illicit in their actions, and we cannot be sure a former thief does not have his eye on our jewellery, or whatever. For this reason we need to examine the practices of the two areas we are contemplating, namely the living of debased persons, and the living of rehabilitated persons.

WHY DOES A DEGRADED PERSON LIVE A DEBASED LIFE?

We need to understand that by ‘degraded’ we do not mean horribly evil, vile, and loathsome. We do not mean one practised in low immorality, sunk in vileness, murderous in action and intent, and filthy in morals. To be degraded from God’s point of view is to be one of Adam’s children. This degradation may manifest itself in rigid legalism, intense religiosity, and striving for the perfect. By the same token it can also manifest itself in terrible and horrible evil, evil which we call ‘radical’.

It is at this point that we need to consider the person who rarely if ever manifests evil, and who seems to know God and have a good acceptance of Him. To put this another way: some persons never seem to need conversion or regeneration. They live as though that had somehow happened. They seem to give

the lie to the doctrine of the universal depravity of man.

The answer may be on two levels. The first is that they may already be regenerate! The concept of covenant is that *God works* within His people. For those who hold to covenant baptism (as against what is called ‘believer’s baptism’),¹⁸ there is the view that in child-baptism God works. It is not that man (the child) does something so much as God does something. This is, of course, in the context of the faith (and hope and love) of the parents. Peter’s statement on the day of Pentecost was, ‘. . .or the promise is to you, and your children . . .’ A child of believing parents may receive, even from the womb, the new life God gives. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit when in his mother’s womb. Jeremiah and Paul both speak of God knowing them from (i.e. in) the womb. The child who lives after a godly fashion is in many ways a greater miracle of grace than the one who becomes a prodigal of the Father.

The second level is that much so-called good living may be cosmetic. This may or may not be conscious. It is only when a person is subjected to undue stress and tension that the mind or attitude of the person is really exposed. Compliant children may toe the line’ without obeying. They may even hide anger in the heart until, in later years, it explodes. Some unconsciously sense that it pays to be good! And so on. Not until some incident or accident exposes the true mind of the person can we detect the difference between those who have come to early regeneration, and those who appear to live elevated lives but are not regenerate.

Generally speaking, in every community, there is a thrust to honesty and respectability. When we speak of man being depraved we must not forget that he was made in the image of God, so that in one sense he is always fighting that image. It will

¹⁸ By the same token those who hold to believer’s baptism may hold the same view of covenant—promises, without seeing the need for child-baptism. They, too, believe that children of believing parents come into all the benefits of the New Covenant. Sometimes they dedicate their children to God in a church service, or simply believe they belong to the Lord.

always be thrusting him towards standards of goodness. For the most part, human beings are conditioned to live to certain social and cultural standards. This is why it is difficult for some of us to see man as radically debased. Yet the truth still remains that none of us is better than another essentially. We may have handled our depravity in a way which is comparatively better than the way others do, but our state is still that of lostness and deadness to God if we are outside of Him.

That brings us to the point we have raised: 'How does a degraded person live a debased life?' The answer lies in another question: 'What degrades a person?' The answer to this question is that man in Adam cut loose from his mooring with God. God had warned man that in the day he decided to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would die. Doubtless this death was ultimately to prove physical, but primarily it was a death in relation to God. Man died to God and became alive to himself.

Jeremiah said, 'The way of a man is not in himself. It is not in man to direct his own footsteps' (10:23). He is saying that man can only be truly man when he is wholly related to God and fully dependent upon him. There is no such thing as true man apart from unity with God. Man, now, is on his own. Whilst we know that God did not destroy him, and in fact has always sustained him, yet man has refused to have intimacy with God. As the father said of his (prodigal) son, 'My son was lost! My son was dead!' The Bible speaks of fallen man in the same way.

ALONE, MAN MUST LIVE A DEPRAVED LIFE

My own experience in the Japanese prison camp was that I became angry at man's depravity. I was so angry and so judgemental that I became angry with God. I then said that He did not exist, or if He did then He had not handled the world very well. I made an attempt to cut myself off from God—the God that

didn't exist! I shall never forget the months of misery when I felt I was utterly alone. It had little or nothing to do with the fact that I was a prisoner. In some ways I was grateful that I was imprisoned, sheltered from the gaze of intimate friends. I can still recall the horror of being (though only *seemingly*) without God. Man then is the image of God without truly reflecting Him. He is child without Father, creature without Creator, servant without King, and a lord who has abdicated his responsibility. He is egocentric, no matter how much he may protest to the contrary. Now we begin to see his existential misery, loneliness, despair and personal structural dislocation. He has function without purpose, movement without goal, relational and emotional needs without congruity and fulfilment. He is fearful in the world created for him. Death is always in his mind, and it is not a dear friend. It is always a dark intruder, mocking him, for it is meaningless. What is more, the prospect of death makes life meaningless. Unless we enter into an understanding of man's state as separated from God, we will not know why he is so angry, so rebellious, so resentful, so avaricious, and why he can easily come to violence. We will never begin to understand the dynamics of guilt, or states of neurosis and psychosis. We will never see why and how he has become the victim of evil powers.

THE ACTION OF DEBASEMENT—I

MAN AND ORIGINAL SIN

The idea of original sin is rooted in Romans 5. There Paul says (verse 12), ‘Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned . . .’ Notice the last part of the verse, ‘. . .for all men sinned,’ or, ‘for all *did* sin’. Paul is saying that when Adam sinned we sinned. That is we participated in his sin. Another way of saying this is that the whole human race, being in Adam’s loins, was one with him in his act.

It is difficult for Western man in his individualism to understand this racial act, and the responsibility of man for it. Paul acknowledges in verse 14 that we have not separately committed the kind of sin that Adam did but he says we are all caught in its consequences, namely death. The sense of the passage of Romans 5:12–21 is of the corporate nature of Adam’s children, and the corporate nature of Christ’s people. Adam was disobedient, Christ obedient. In Adam we are one with his disobedience. In Christ we are one with his obedience.

David’s memorable cry was, ‘Behold I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me’ (Psa. 51:5).

Job 14:1–4, and 15:14 are filled with cold despair: ‘How can man born of woman, be clean?’ There seems to be no reference to woman being unclean, as such, but reference is made here to the human race as being depraved from birth. It does not mean that the statements in Job are necessarily true. They are made by two men, Job and Eliphaz, and contain a certain cynicism. They do, however, outline the fact that men believe they are sinful from birth. There is certainly a mystery in birth. God tells Jacob (Israel), ‘. . .I knew you would deal very treacherously, and that from birth you were called a rebel.’ This is echoed in Deuteronomy 9:24: ‘You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you.’ We should be wary of pressing these verses too literally, as they refer to a nation. God could be saying that when the nation came to birth it was already a rebel. Even so, something of this is related to natural birth. For example, Psalm 58:3 says, ‘The wicked go astray from the womb, they err from their birth, speaking lies.’

MAN SINFUL FROM THE CRADLE TO THE GRAVE

When we understand that the whole human race is dead, so far as God is concerned, then we find that man being born in sin is not really a teaching difficult to grasp. When we believe that each child born is pure and innocent, without propensity to sin, then like all other Pelagians (sic!) we believe that man learns to sin. He is a *tabula rasa* on which sinful thoughts and acts now become inscribed! It has been well said that if the Fall and original sin had not been Biblically revealed then we would have to invent them to explain the behaviour of children.

As for what happens in the womb, we have to remember that on the one hand John the Baptist became filled with the Spirit, and on the other Jacob and Esau had a struggle in rivalry! (See Gen. 25:21–26.) Modern depth-psychology and gynaecology combine to inform us that the fetus in the womb is impres-

sionable.¹⁹ It may well be that the child's mind is made up about life before it even emerges. Biblically this would seem to be the case.

The Godward side of this case is seen in Psalm 139, especially in verses 13 to 18, which we should also study closely. The Psalmist speaks of God as intimately concerned with each fetus. He forms it in every detail. It is verse 16 which is especially intriguing: 'Thy eyes beheld my unformed substance; in thy book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.' The writer sees that all his life is planned even before he is formed. God is intimately relating to him. What then is the meaning of Psalm 58:3 in the light of these words? 'The wicked go astray from the womb, they err from their birth, speaking lies.' What also of that wonderful yet fearful proverb: 'The Lord has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble'? The mystery of the womb is a deep one.

In effect we are saying that children are sinful from the womb, if not in the womb. This opens up other statements of Scripture. Genesis 8:21 says, '...the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth'. David implores God, 'Remember not the sins of my youth' (Psa. 25:7), and Job tells God, 'For thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me inherit the iniquities of my youth' (13:26).

The writer of Ecclesiastes has a famous and profound passage. Reading from 11:7 to 12:14 we see that one has to remember his Creator from youth, i.e. from the beginning. *What the young person does determines what the aged person will be.* In this sense Wordsworth is correct: 'The child is father of the man.' Some of the Scriptures' most beautiful and poignant words show the tragic state of old age which has issued from a sinful and rebellious youth. Brokenness of spirit and

emptiness of life are the sorrowful outcome. Our point is made, however, that man sins from the cradle to the grave.

MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY OF CHOICE

Man, made in the image of God, is moral. That is he has to make choices. These have to do—amongst other things—with righteousness, holiness, goodness, truth and love. No one can make such choices for him. When, then, does he begin making choices? We debate as to when the age of responsibility arrives for human persons, but in fact choice is made by us all from the womb, and perhaps in the womb itself. In this regard Ezekiel 18 (cf. Jer. 31:29–30, 14:20, 16:10–13; cf. Lam. 5:7,) is most relevant. Israel had been using the excuse that 'the fathers have eaten sour grapes and [so] the children's teeth are set on edge'. They had twisted God's statement that He would visit the sins of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of them that hated Him (cf. Exod. 20:5–6).

The point God had made in the commandments was that where idolatry persisted God would judge. Where any generation turned and loved God there would be no such visitation. Those in Israel who were excusing themselves were using the age-old idea that the sorry situation in which they lived was the fault of the previous generation (or generations). God therefore was making the clear statement that 'Every man shall bear his own sin. The child shall not bear the sin of the father, nor the father the sin of the child.'

The Ezekiel passage (and related passages quoted) brings us to the clear conclusion that (i) man has participated in Adam's racial choice, and (ii) that every person from the womb makes choices for which he is responsible—whether they be good or bad.

¹⁹ See, for example, *THE SECRET LIFE OF THE UNBORN CHILD* by Dr. Thomas Verny and John Kelly (London: Sphere Books, 1982).

THE ACTION OF DEBASEMENT—II

Now we can see man's sorry plight. He lives the life he lives because of the choices he makes. The human race is set in its attitude to God, creation, and to itself. It may use the excuses of parental relationships, heredity, environment, and life's many circumstances to excuse its behaviour, but at core man is depraved. He has conscious moral choice. He knows he should will to do good, and will *not* to do evil, but he chooses to do evil. Much of his so-called good is tainted with this egocentric effort and expression.

MAN LIVES IN A CLIMATE FOR EVIL

Ephesians 2:1–3 is an important and revealing passage. If read with Romans 1:18–32 it makes much sense. Paul speaks of man being dead (cf. verse 5) through his trespasses and sins. In Adam we died to God, but in choice we have gone on dying! We have acted in deathways. Hebrews 9:14 speaks of 'dead works' being on our conscience. Dead works are sins, actions done by dead persons! Paul also speaks of us as being 'children of disobedience' and 'children of wrath'. He speaks of being forced to follow the prince of this world (Satan), and of us giving ourselves over to the passions (lusts) of our flesh and the desires of body and mind.

We talk of air and noise pollution. Noise pollution ceases with noise. Air pollution can be cleansed away. But moral pollution

cannot be cleansed by known human means. Man is not only born sinful, but comes into a world already laden with moral pollution. In this sense the task of cleansing is made difficult. Even so, it is the climate and atmosphere which man espouses.

Given all these extremely depressing elements, is there any excuse for man? The answer is, 'None.' Ezekiel 18 makes it clear that one will say, 'I will not follow the path of my evil father,' and another will say, 'I will not follow the path of my good father.' *Somewhere, in the depths of the heart, man decides for good or evil.*

This last statement seems to cut across all we have said about the depravity of man. It seems to say that man can make good choices. In one sense he can, and in another he cannot. What do we mean? We mean that God has not abandoned man. In Romans chapter one, verses 18, 24, 26, and 28 it seems God has abandoned him. No, God has deliberately given him up to the evil he determines to do. Yet Paul is showing us that God's wrath is to be known and seen so that His immeasurable grace might be recognised. This grace is shown as He deals with that wrath in the propitiation of Christ. Whilst God is wrathful He is also patient and longsuffering, and His goodness is intended to lead men to repentance. That goodness is primarily in the Cross.

Peter saw the truth that 'in any nation anyone who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him' (cf. Rom. 2:9–10). He does not tell us how fallen men can come to this point, but seems to indicate they do. Surely what he is saying is that God so works with man that man wishes to be finished with his depravity and to do God's will. If God does not work in that way, and has not worked in that way, then the history of man is tragic beyond all conception. The fact is that we dare not write about depravity *unless first we have seen the grace of God*. To speak of man's depravity without any hope for him is cruel, to say the least, and most dangerous. As it is, the suicide rate in the world is high, and doubtless much of it must come from despair of the human race, as also from personal despair.

MAN'S HATRED FOR GOD, MAN, AND HIMSELF

Paul said we were dead through our own trespasses. He also said (Col. 1:21), ' . . .you. . .once were estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds'. Some translations have 'hostile through doing evil deeds.' The general meaning is that man is hostile to God *from the heart*, and so does evil deeds. Doing evil deeds doubtless increases his guilt, and his guilt increases his hatred, and so compounds his evil deeds. In this way the matter of hatred also compounds itself. Doubtless Isaiah 59:2 stands true, that our sins have separated us from God. But we see God as our Enemy. We do not see that He is all love and no matter how much we sin does not cease to love us. Paul says that while we were enemies God reconciled us to Himself.

If we hate God then we hate the works of His hands which are the creation, our fellow creatures, and ourselves. Modern man talks of increasing his 'self-esteem', or gaining a high view of himself. Doubtless his cosmetic efforts are unremitting, but nothing comes of them. As we have said, his hatred compounds itself, and so his dislike of creation and man also increases.

In all of this we are simply trying to show that man cannot separate himself from God and properly handle his own life.

THE END OF THE TETHER

God is working towards us all the time, to do us good. Sinful man will not believe this fact. He sees God through the lens of his own guilt. He interprets God's good actions as not good. In the words of Isaiah 5:20–21 he calls good evil, evil good, darkness light, light darkness, bitterness sweetness, sweetness bitterness. It is the principle that to the pure in heart all things are pure, but to the corrupt all things are defiled. Essentially all things are of God. Nothing is unclean *of itself* (Rom. 14:14). So then there is no cause to hate God.

Even so we must recognise that although there is no authentic reason to do so, yet men do hate God and thereby increase their misery. Their true home is God Himself, and they are denying themselves emotional fulfilment. They are increasing their anger and suffering, hence they give more and more expression to their perversity. Yet in all of this God does not retaliate. He may of course bring calamity. Certainly he gives man up to his self-compounding misery and evil. Yet He is always working. Indeed by these ways He is working.

Finally a person will come to the end of his tether, such as did the prodigal in the pigsty. Others such as Paul fight the divine grace until suddenly it confronts and overcomes them. This brings 'the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom'. Man may find that 'the way of man is not in himself'. He may be beaten by life, by failure, by the cruelty and injustice of his fellow man. It may be anything which signals that he is at the end of his tether. He may be a Zacchaeus undone by love, a prostitute who suddenly becomes a woman of hope, or any alcoholic who, discovering he is a slave, wishes to be freed and is suddenly and wholly emancipated.

There is, of course, a mystery here. Why does one respond to God, and not another? Did God work less? Was the non-responder predetermined and fated for non-response? Cannot God make every man respond? So the questions continue, but the practical facts are that many a person who was in degradation has turned, and the ascent has begun, or rather, the elevation has been commenced. Grace has begun to triumph.

THE ACTION OF ELEVATION

We have seen, theologically, what happens to elevate man. Now we must come to it personally. In degradation things seem so hopeless. The leopard cannot change its spots. Black cannot become white. Man in slavery cannot effect his own emancipation. And so on.

How then does the bitter, angry heart, the lustful person, the degenerate mind change into a wholly new person? We must realise this change comes only at the point where God's grace has successfully operated.

Jeremiah once said, 'Restore us to thyself, O Lord, that we may be restored!' (Lam. 5:21.) Other translations have, 'Turn us, O Lord, that we may be turned!' We might argue that since we cannot (of ourselves) turn, then God must do it, and when this does not happen that God is then to blame. This is perverse arguing. God demands our turning ('God commands all men everywhere to repent') and so we should turn, even though the power to do so does not lie within us. The power to turn is inherent in the Word, especially when it is the Word of command. Jesus says to the man with the withered arm, 'Stretch forth your hand.' Now, he cannot do that, but he does it. The Word has brought faith to life, and faith is—amongst other things—responding obedience. The gospel in the New Testament is

primarily a command.

COMING TO USE THE GIFTS

Some Reformers would say that grace is irresistible. They mean that grace must effect what it sets out to accomplish. We must remember that grace also effects judgement. Either way it cannot be resisted, but will do its work. However, in practice men repent when they see the grace and love of God in Christ. The Holy Spirit brings the gift of repentance because in history this gift has been given to both Jew and Gentile, that is to all the world (Acts 5:31, 11:18). It might be argued that since it is a gift then God withholds repentance from some because they do not repent and believe. This is a doubtful argument. Some may reject the gift, but none who felt the need would lack it.

The gift of faith (Eph. 2:8–10, Phil. 1:29) comes to man in the preaching of the Word (Rom. 10:17) and the work of the Spirit (I Thess. 1:5). Faith is commanded, but it is liberating to exercise faith by obeying its injunction. It is not merely the power of positive thinking. Faith is trust based on the objective work of Christ. He has borne the sins, endured the guilt—penalty, taken into himself the moral impurity and destroyed it in his holy love. This alone is the basis for faith. We are justified by the grace of God, not by our faith in the grace of God. Our faith in the grace of God is simply the instrumental reception of that grace which, anyway, has overwhelmed us, and evoked its own response. As we have said, the power lies in the Word. We stretch forth our withered arms and they are made whole!

What then does this do for us, in practice? The answer is that it destroys guilt and so neutralises our hatred, angers, resentments. It banishes our fear of death and bodily dissolution. It relieves us of the heavy burden of sins, and the apprehension of judgement. It thus reveals God to us as the loving Father. Misery

is thereby transformed to love, joy and peace, and in fact all the fruits of the Spirit come to us, gift-wise, as a result of our acceptance by God, our reconciliation with Him, our being one with the Creator, King, Father and Judge.

What has really happened is that our anger at never being totally emotionally fulfilled has melted away, because in fact emotional fulfilment has now taken place, and can be continual if we will have it that way. Anger at others for having deprived us of what appeared to be our rights is also dissolved. We are told that at this point the love of God floods our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who also is given to us as a gift—the ‘promise of the Father’.

Somewhere along the line in this whole process *we have taken responsibility for all our sins*. We have not excused ourselves by talking about ‘unnatural original sin’, or the unfairness of the things of life which have come upon us. We have not used parental oversight, heredity, environment and circumstances to evade responsibility for what we have done. In remorse we would do that. In repentance we *are free to be utterly wrong* without subterfuge. We are now out in the open. Our sins have been forgiven and cleansed. Our consciences are free of judgemental accusation.

As a result, our motivation for living the new life is powerful. The sheer wonder of being loved by God, loving Him, and so loving others is a thrilling matter. Even though all of this is contested from time to time by doubt and accusing evil powers, yet it is the new reality which transports us from degradation to a wonderful elevated living. At no point are we above what it means to be human, but then we come more and more to be truly human!

We are also placed in the stream of true vocation. We have purpose. We have the goal (or goals) of God before us. We share these with other persons who are Christ’s persons, and the Father’s children—our new brethren. We become willing servants of others. We find the sheer joy that there is in giving, i.e.

giving our possessions, giving our gifts in use for others, giving ourselves for others, and also to others.

THE ELEVATED MAN IS A SINNER, YET NOT A SINNER

What has to be kept in mind is that conversion (turning around) which follows repentance (change of mind) and which involves being forgiven by God, does not make a person perfect. It does, however, lead him towards maturity. As a newborn babe the elevated person has to live with the knowledge that sin dwells within him like some active quivering. He has to learn, as Paul outlines in Romans 7: 13–25, that he is not strong enough to overcome sin *of himself*. *Sin of itself is stronger than he is*. However, in the power of Christ and of the Spirit he can overcome sin (Phil. 4:13, Rom. 8:37; 8:13). A young Christian can be mature at each stage of growth, just as a seedling can be perfect (mature) at its rightful or appropriate stage of growth. Every believer faces the opposition of evil, and most believers fail many times. This does not invalidate elevation. Grace is sufficient to cover our failures after conversion, as it has the sins which occurred prior to that conversion.

When we say that elevated man is a sinner we mean he can still sin, but if he does then he has an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ His Son, and Jesus is (always, continually) the propitiation for our sins. When we say that elevated man is not a sinner we mean his heart desires to do the will of God, and not to sin. This again is the message of Romans 7:13–25. The new person desires not to sin, and desires to do good.

THE ELEVATED MAN IS GLORIFIED AND SOCIALISED

Finally the elevated man knows he is in the process of glorification (II Cor. 3:18, cf. 4:16-18), he has hope of a wonderful

conclusion to his life. Other vocations are secondary to this greatest of all goals. All the time, too, he knows that he is part of a great people—the People of God—and of a great Kingdom—the Kingdom of God. He is an integral and needed member of the Body. He both gives and receives. He is supported and he supports others. His service is a joy and not a stint. All of this, too, will be contested by the enemy, that is Satan and his evil hosts. Old habits will come, from time to time, to claim him, but he will shrug these away on the basis of his new elevation.

This then is what it means to be changed from degradation to elevation, from debasement to exaltation, from depravity to righteousness. It is a great marvel. It is the greatest miracle that can be seen by man.

Chapter 5

THE CONCLUSION OF THE MATTER

The autobiographical note—the prologue—of this book was deliberate. I wanted to launch into the subject without theological abstractions. Heaven knows that there are plenty of those in this volume! Now, having come to the end of the writing I am, to a great degree, frustrated. The vision I had of the beautiful and yet tragic contrast of degradation and the elevation is much like the vision an artist receives only to find he cannot fully depict it on canvas. It evades his art. Yet the vision still troubles him. He will try, time and again, to communicate it. He is convinced he has an artist's mind and heart, but his hand does not seem to have the skill to portray what he has seen and is ever seeing.

In one way it does not matter. The artist will increase his skill. Even so he may never be able to convey what he has seen. His painting, though completed by his art, will prove to be but a sketch of the beautiful vision. Some other artist—more qualified and competent—may catch the vision through the sketch and produce the masterpiece. The artist himself knows not. He refuses to destroy what he has painted, even though it confronts him with his failure. In some strange and unforeseeable way he hopes it may yet provide an element of communication. To make no communication is tragic. Better a deficient communication than none at all, especially when the matter is important and even urgent.

So, of course, with this book. The contrast of a man living under degradation and then coming into elevation, is a simple

and profound contrast. It needs no embellishing. To see it with open and glad eyes is to see the grace of God as it reaches men and women and transforms them. We learn the lesson—even if slowly and painfully—that nothing can sink as low as a human being. A human being can sink lower than angels, for he is created higher than the angels in the ultimate purposes of God. Therefore a human being, having fallen can rise—by grace—higher than angels, for that is God's destiny for mankind. Hence the spectator of this event is astounded by the miracle. He wants to tell it to the world because it is the most newsworthy of all human happenings.

Like the artist, I too have failed. I have to leave behind me a meagre sketch, whilst my heart is still crying with the wonder of what it sees. Perhaps one day I will be competent enough to convey it, yet even as I write these words I know this will not be. There is no skill or cunning in all the world which can fully communicate the truth. The elevated person himself is the *witness* to the grace of God. He is 'to the praise of the glory of His grace'. He is the evidence of the 'immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus'.

What then of my own experience, especially the shock of discovering my own unsensed egotism? What of my horror and sense of scandal at seeing the depravity of man? The answer must be that one accepts the fact of human evil in the light of the revelation of God's grace. To see degradation apart from that grace is terrifying. One dare not face oneself. One dare not live in a world of degradation if one does not see and know grace.

The tension we must live in is that of seeing evil as it is and yet never accepting it. Whilst we must come to terms with it, we must never cease to see its evil nature. At the same time we must never cease to see the grace of God. Love covers the multitude of sins in that it is not accusatory. It does not delight in the evil of others. To the contrary, love graces the sinful person, not seeking by that person's guilt to have a hold over him. It does not gloss over the failures of others yet accepts them as though they

were covered by God's grace. Whilst it is true that repentance and faith are required by the person in order that grace be effective in his life, yet God requires of us all that we should love and accept the sinner whether he be repentant or unrepentant.

Chapter 6

POSTSCRIPT CONCERNING CONFRONTATION

HUMAN RESPONSE TO THE WORD OF TRUTH

Jesus said, 'Thy word is truth,' as he talked with his Father. We have seen that man cannot expect the truth to come through via the unaided human mind. That mind is closed to the truth since man 'exchanged the truth of God for a lie'. He cannot—even if he would—know the pure truth. Hence when the truth comes to him as God's word he reflexively rejects it.

Even so God has never left Himself without a witness. Conscience cannot be conscience unless it has some inner grasp of the truth. In the secret heart man knows the truth, but spends his time either refusing to know it, or inventing and shaping up what we call 'counter-truth'. *He must have truth of some kind*, but then there is no truth of any kind which is not *the* truth, i.e. the word, nature and action of God.

The problem with the reading of the word of God is that man rationalises it away. It would be too shocking a thing to the human spirit to take the word at face value. It would mean that what is said about man's depravity would be true, and that is certainly demeaning to the humanist or the run-of-the-mill moral person who doesn't think he does too badly. Harlots, criminals and other similar sinners are often prepared to admit to their depravity, and seek refuge in God's love and forgiveness.

Equally a problem are the people who sincerely believe the Christian teaching of man's renewal, but accept it and live it in so mediocre and pedestrian a fashion that spectators feel put off by it. A shining example of human elevation by the gospel is certainly an aid to believing.

There is also the interested person who reads the sort of book that this volume is and sees the reasonableness of its argument. In fact this person can read it all and even agree that it is Biblical in the main—give and take a few differences of opinion and expression—and yet *do nothing about it*. There is a danger inherent in this kind of reading. The reader does not think he or she is insincere, but there must be a certain insincerity. As the writer I would expect the truth—of itself—to confront the reader, and for the reader to make his response, and not simply evaluate what he has read and leave it at that.

MAN TO MAN IS THE NATURE OF PROCLAMATION AND CONFRONTATION

I have learned over the years that human beings can be manipulated, and sometimes fairly easily. Gullible people can be manipulated by clever words, plausible arguments and human persuasiveness. Some can be manipulated through guilt, especially if they are *preached at*. I believe in preaching to persons, but not *at* them. I believe we contact people on the issues of this book through their conscience, but not by manipulating the conscience. What we have written here has been written (one trusts) in grace and not in the grimness of legalism. One has not sought to stimulate remorse, but indicate the way to repentance.

Strong as is the written word of the Scriptures, and the spoken word of the sincere preacher, it needs human contact with humans to stress the importance of the word of God and its dynamic. Every true preaching (this not necessarily from a pulpit!)

is itself a witness to the truth, and so part of the word of God.

On this basis then, as a human being who has been lifted up out of depravity into renewal (forgiveness via repentance, faith via the word of God, regeneration via the gospel and the Spirit), I personally confront you now as one human being to another and say specifically, ‘Repent and believe. Receive Christ as Lord, and with him the gift of the forgiveness of sins. Be exposed to the loving Spirit of God for the gift of new birth (regeneration of heart and mind) and so be gripped in your will by the love of God. Come now to be a child of God, seeing God as your heavenly Father, and join the family of God.’

When you do this then you are in the business of being elevated by God. Make no mistake. Your elevation will not place you in some monastic situation where you do not still have to grapple with problems of good and evil. The Essay which follows this chapter will make this quite evident. But the wonderful fact is that each one of us can be lifted up from where we once were into a realm of life that we have not previously known.

MAN IN HOPE THROUGH ACCEDING TO CONFRONTATION

Those of us who have come out of darkness into light will be the first to admit that there is a new struggle. However, there is now a true goal where once the only goal one had was a longing for wish-fulfilment, or a goal that was less than eternal and lower than the created dignity of man. Now—through regeneration—we see and enter the Kingdom of God and live in it. True, we still see—comparatively speaking—‘as in a glass darkly’, but that for us is brilliance by comparison with the old life. I trust that those patient readers who have persisted this far will accede to the confrontation now presented, and come into the new life of healing, renewal and elevation.

THE UNCHANGING POWER THAT EFFECTS TRANSFORMATION

Paul said that the word of the Cross was ‘to those of us *who are being saved*, the power of God.’ He means that the power that changed us—the death of the Cross—is the power that goes on keeping us changed and even changing us ‘from one stage of glory to another’. We have been radically changed. That change will not go into a reverse but be filled out as we progress in maturity.

Along with what God has done for us is the truth of how we must respond—the plea for which we have just made above. Paul says, ‘Do you not know that if you yield yourselves to any one as obedient slaves, you are the slaves of the one who you obey, whether of sin which leads to death or obedience which leads to life.’ He urges his readers to surrender themselves: ‘I exhort you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies (to God) as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your spiritual worship.’ Jesus said, ‘No man can serve two masters, for either he will love the one and hate the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other.’ James said, ‘A double-minded (two-hearted) man is unstable in all his ways’. Paul said of his converts, positively, ‘You have obeyed that form of teaching (truth) to which you were committed’.

There is then a response, but note that it is motivated by the love of God, or as Paul puts it, ‘the mercies of God’. John says, ‘We love because he first loved us.’ Confrontation then is no grim pressure exerted by forceful threats. Rather it is the strong presentation of the truth with a loving exhortation to accede to it and receive the transforming gifts of God.

The outcome, as we have said so many times—even in danger of being repetitious—is from depravity to elevation, from darkness to light, from death to life, and from the gutter to glory.

EPILOGUE

—ESSAY—

A Day in the Life of an Elevated Person

The following essay is written, not about every day in the life of a person under grace, but it is given as a typical day, especially when at home. There are many days which are not like this one.

The main purpose of the essay is to debunk the idealised image people have of an elevated {redeemed} person. Some have the idea that when a person is born again (regenerated) then that person is—or should be—perfect. This kind of image can be harmful. It can frighten away someone who longs to become a Christian, and it can put a Christian under intolerable bondage, thinking he must be impeccable in life and perfect in action and accomplishment.

God has justified him, and God will also make him holy, as He will ultimately glorify him. For the present, man lives in dependence upon God. He is not yet perfect or impeccable. He is a redeemed sinner living under grace. Of course that is no mean thing; it is wonderful.

So please read on.

The day dawns. The grey of the barely born day penetrates into my room. My wife is asleep so that I move gently, not wishing to disturb her. She is busy during the day expending herself for others. So I leave her. I make my way to my own room, a study. On my desk there is a Bible, open from last night. I flick thro-ugh the pages and settle at the point where I wish to read. Before reading I bow my head for a brief prayer. Sometimes when I do this I fall asleep, but then I do not mind. My Father knows me,

sleepiness and all. Sometimes I do not fall asleep. I keep praying. I was told once that prayer is a means of grace.

Sometimes I read avidly, other times slowly, and often musingly. I am not put upon by God to accomplish a ritual. Often I do not read the Bible. I push it away in favour of a book written by a human being who knows God. This, too, I find helpful. A means of grace, you might say.

Generally, after a time of praying and reading, I walk out into the garden. I like to sense the earliness of the day, and the quietness. I hear an odd car speeding by. Here and there are faint cries, but they are minimal: a cat or a dog, or a night bird returning to its roost. Otherwise everything is quiet and I can peacefully meditate.

Some mornings I wake with a sense of loss and even of misgiving. Perhaps I have had a stray dream, one that does not comport with my general sense of freedom. I know that evil is lurking somewhere, and so I seek to deal with it by prayer and faith. Often it goes quickly, and sometimes lingers on until faith throttles it. I know by its nagging sensation that it is not God or His Holy Spirit who is at me. It is Satan, no doubt.

Other mornings I awake with a surging sense of expectation. Great things are about to happen. Often dramatic things do not happen, or events which we call 'big'. But something happens. There is no doubt about that. A tiny event can be significant. It can be a smile, a tear, or a friendly squeeze of a hand. This is significant—communicating love, kindness, concern. So I do not expect the dramatic thing to be the big thing. When it is that I am glad also.

Sometimes I compare the old days—the days of my human degradation. I am tempted to shudder and grow sad at the thoughts which begin to invade my mind. If I look back at those times I am tempted to think that I am what I was. What I appear to be at present then seems like an empty charade. It seems like an imitation of the real without itself being authentic. Then I find myself moving towards depression.

I stem my feelings, and look hard at the past through the eyes of faith. These eyes tell me that what is of human sight may well deceive me, whilst what is of the sight of faith is undoubtedly real. So I seek to walk by faith and not by sight. I am glad, then, to remember what I used to be. It is not that I revel in it, or derive some unhealthy excitement from that past. To the contrary, I see now what grace has done in rescuing me from that past. I see the grace of the Cross in cleansing those events of their evil and pollution. I am reminded not of my failure but of the love and the work of Christ which covered that failure and cancelled it out. So then the past cannot get at me. It cannot frighten me, or make me ashamed. The more I remember the past, the more I am reminded of His great grace.

A day is not all morning—not, anyway, all early morning. Early morning prayer, reading and meditation is a preparation for the day ahead. Sometimes one has it, and sometimes not. Occasionally I sleep longer because of the late night I have had. Generally speaking, however, it is early morning which prepares me to live during the day. My wife has another time of day in which to bathe herself in God's regenerating power.

The day is normal for the most part. Normal means I go about my work as every other person goes about his, whether employed in a position, or whether simply living out the hours that are available. I know it differs from country to country, nation to nation. I can only tell how it is for me. Once I was a degraded person. I lived selfishly for the most part. I used to tell myself that I cared for my parents and family, for my country. Later, when I was married, I told myself I cared for my wife, and then for my children. On the surface that was true. Only now do I see how a degraded person can live for himself or herself and not know that that is what is happening. Living for oneself is done under many guises, and human beings are past masters at the art of cosmetic living. They know how to make

up, or to cover up, and for the most part they find agreement in their fellow creatures. Much of life is cosmetic. Much of it is shallow.

Sometimes during my day I see other people who remind me of what I once was. Some of them are doubtful characters, some are criminal. Others are very ordinary looking: suburban, you might say. They too remind me of myself. I had my days of being a respectable citizen. I had my days of intense religiosity. I was a good man, living a life of good works and endeavours. I had high ideals.

Now I see the sham in most of that. I see that criminals are people who have gone wrong, and almost all the rest are people who have gone wrong in another way, but who pretend that they have not. Some of them believe they have by no means gone wrong. They would be angry if you inferred that they had. For the most part they believe in their own goodness. Many of them are quite religious.

Other people remind me of my old pursuit of pleasure. Pleasure is a most attractive thing, seeing it promises us so much. It is of course only temporary in its effects, and often lets one down. On the other hand, I am sure God has so structured His world as to give us pleasure for much of the time. His pleasures, though, are not ones which wear us out, which exhaust us, and which bring us to reactionary boredom if all the time we cannot obtain immediate pleasure and agreeable sensations.

I also look at the others: the crushed, the beaten, the disappointed, the wearied, the suffering. I remember those elements too. It is amazing how one human person can experience almost the entire gamut of the emotions. I really understand the pitiful, the disoriented in life. So many are out of joint with God, man and creation. They try to make sense of what goes on around them, but are unable to do so.

Some suffer great tragedies. I have experienced these also, so that I can empathise with the ones who suffer. How mixed up

they are in their minds and hearts! How hungry they are for authentic love, and rarely they see it, let alone experience it. So few love selflessly. Many of them are waiting for love, and never giving love to others. Indeed they do not know how to do this, and so their pain increases. This is how and why many are bruised, hurt and wounded. Some of them have become bitter. Others are cynical, tight-lipped, angry, and even violent.

Some whom I see are cruel. They vent their spite and spleen and malice where they can, as though damming these things up is intolerable, and they must needs pour it out on others. Especially on God, whom they do not know. They rage inwardly about Him and often shout and carry on outwardly about Him, since they must give vent to these feelings.

When the evening comes I have varied experiences. Home, wife and family have been wonderful. Sometimes they have been painful, for other sinners live in our home besides myself. So we are sinners together, and we must keep remembering this. I must not forget my strong insistence upon my own self-rule, for this dates back to early childhood. I must not judge my children if they seek to do the same things. I must, however, help them, but then I must be alert to the way in which I seek to do this.

But—given this difficult side—home is a wonderful place. It is a place where you can serve others by love. You can do this outside of the home also, but first you must do so within it. So the evenings can be refreshing times, whether in talk and chatter, listening to or looking at the electronic media, or reading a simple book. Often I read books which are not simple. Sometimes I just stroll in the garden, thinking about God as the evening draws in. These are wonderful times, but they are few. One can be busy at any time. Often one is compulsively busy.

Nevertheless, in all of this, one is an elevated person. The effects

of degradation have largely gone. Old habit-tracks are there for some things, but they too are fading. New and finer habit-tracks are forming. Some of them are deep. They are ways of living which please the Father and build up His people. They are the ways of emotional maturing, the ways of sensible holiness, and self-giving love. They are ways of worship and adoration. They are the ways of gratitude.

When one walks in these ways one is partly secure, partly insecure. The security comes in doing the will of the Father. The insecurity comes because every such endeavour seems to be marked down by Satan as a personal insult to himself. He gloried in my degradation, and now he is angry at my elevation. The word he hates most of all is 'grace', and he attacks its actions and the utterances I give to it. He makes even my friends become my enemies when I speak of grace. Some of them find this warm, soft word altogether too hard.

To me it is a beautiful word. It reminds me that when I was degraded and had lost hope, God came and annulled my degradation, putting in its place the new life of regeneration. All this at no cost whatever to me, though at great cost to Him and His Son, as well that old Cross will tell if given a voice.

So, then, in the evenings and even in the quietness of sleeping night, I remember my friends who have alienated me from themselves, or have turned a phrase of mine, twisting it to dark heresy. I do not thank them for this, but in the still of night the Father has taught me that when I pray for them, and love them, and do not have mental debate or conflict with them, that the very serving of them is helping me to put them before me, and we will both benefit. I will learn more how to be a servant, and they will not have enmity or hostility from me. Instead they will have the strong practical love that God has put within His children.

This then is a day in the life of an elevated man. Not very exciting,

you may think, but then you would be wrong. You will have missed the fact that grey despair has gone, that hurt, pain and shame no longer make their depredations within my spirit. Oh yes, I suffer from time to time. I often grow cold with sadness when a person displays hatred, enmity or hostility. I still wish to be loved by all, but I am learning not to demand this. Rather, I am learning to give love rather than expect it.

Many will tell you I have not changed much. They see some of my old habits, my curious idiosyncrasies. I must admit some of them remain, and they may always do so. Yet I know what it is to feel the glory of God in my head and my heart. I am learning that the sweetest thing in all the world is to serve others. Each time I do this I find that I am becoming more and more a man, more fully a person, more truly what God created me to be.

I have thoughts, too, of home. I am thinking now not only of my earthly home—although I do think much concerning it—but of the home that will be mine along with the rest of the Family of God. There will be a numberless multitude there, from every tribe and culture of the world. Because of elevation from degradation, they will be a grateful people, spontaneously praising and adoring their Father, and being led by their Elder Brother who also is Lord. I think of that home and that family and I know that creation is going somewhere, and that God has set this marvellous goal for His people.

I keep remembering that the Son has gone to prepare a place for me, and for each one of his people, and that doubtless he will shape that place according to the unique being of each person. Although we will all be in his likeness, we will not be homogenised. We will express and radiate the love, goodness, holiness, righteousness and truth of the Father and the Son, but the manifestations will come through our personal uniqueness.

I suppose I most covet the idea of being wholly raised from mortal humanity, from the arena of continuous temptation, and the troubling thought of bodily corruption. The idea of being wholly glorious, and yet very human and quite substantial, grips

me. I also delight in the idea of living on the earth with heaven not requiring me to commute, since both seem indivisibly the one. Thus to be one with celestial creatures and to receive their respect does much for me here in the now-time, because sin still tries to snatch dignity from me. My heart is warmed by the thought of seeing the Father, and having come home.

Given in all these wonderful things, I have not told the whole of this life of elevation. Although I have spoken of being a servant and so finding my true identity in a creation which was made and structured for such serving, I have omitted to tell you of the deepest thrill of all for a regenerated man. It is to bring others from degradation into elevation. When I have said that, I have said almost everything. For me the greatest joy was to come home from the far land. I imagine it would be the greatest joy that another could know.

So then I tell others of the miracle of grace. I tell them about the Cross where the Son suffered, and, no less, the Father. I share with them the love that must have drawn the Triune Godhead to redeem man. It is not only pity for the suffering men know from their sin, but it is also the desire to bring men into fulness of being. It was for this they were created. I can scarcely comprehend the fact that God calls man to share with Him in His plan for history, that history might reach God's preset goal, but I know that is how it is. God has called us to be partners in His cosmic endeavour. Part of that participation is to proclaim the gospel to other sinful persons.

I must draw my day to an end. It may come to its termination in talking to my wife, or the children, or both. Since my children have left the nest it may be on a phone, or in a visit from them or with them. It may be in the dying time between surrendering up oneself to sleep and actually coming into that sleep. It may be muttered words to one's wife, or the last jumbled thoughts in the mind itself. It may be a drifting off into sleep, or the underlying

meditation which never seems to cease, not even in sleep. It may even be anticipation of the new morning.

What it is does not matter. I have shared a typical day, albeit it is synoptic of many and varied days. Yet it is a day lived in the elevation of grace, and not in the domination of sin.

Only this truth can justify the writing of an impossible book.

I, THE MAN: IN DEGRADATION AND ELEVATION

1. CREATION

*Poised in the pristine glory—man!
True man; full man; the Adamic one;
Male and female, true, one in flesh,
Noble and royal, regal and complete;
The world beneath them, theirs to own,
To fill and to conquer—
They being fruitful—
And finally to subdue.*

*Man the dependent creature;
God not giving—
By sheer nature of the case—
The way of man to man—autonomy—
For man must be the way of man from God,
Rich creaturely delight, pure joy,
Tranquillity unlimited
And pursuing pursuit purposefully:
This was the unspoiled humanity,
The male-female entity—
The knitted-in-one anthropos,
Man, the true man!*

2. DEGRADATION

*Subtle temptation, smooth, snakelike,
Tempted to be as God,
To abdicate the essential humanity
In favour of the imagined godhead.
Here the spirit sank low,*

*Trembling with unaccustomed fear,
And suddenly heavy with angst
The guilt-fear, the strangeness
Of a dependent relationship severed
The realised inability to cope alone,
Separated from the true anchor sheet—God!*

*This equals degradation,
This is the sum of the fall
Of lofty spirit tumbling down
To where the true passions change to lusts
Having their own way in a harsh tyranny.
The noble mind sinks also,
Achieving a mean pettiness,
A piffling anti-god bias
Until the spirit carps and yawps
At the High Deity. Frustrated,
Its angers grow and flourish
Like dark weeds on a brackish bog;
Bitterness flits and rolls
Like vagrant tumbleweed,
Unstable, never authentic; lost.*

*If gold celestial creatures weep
Then tears are shed for man depraved.
Man's glory fades as the gentle petals
Die delicately under the burning sun,
Shrivelled; the unsatiated heart cries high
From its desolate depths.
Remorse cries wrath
At the unwinking, the still bowl
Of the silent heavens. So God is hard
As bitterness is man's response
To his own evil, the foisting upon Him
Of the self's internal cruelty.*

*Tell not the strange story
 To heavenly immortals: cry no tale
 To galaxies and worlds unknown.
 None will believe the perfidy of man
 Or comprehend his heady pride.
 Despising his vaunted hauteur
 And senseless ambition they will say,
 'How then could man relinquish and abdicate
 The glorious form, the high calling and dignity
 Which God had bestowed? How then could man
 Cease to reflect the living God
 And be His glory in creation?
 Who would exchange the vibrant glory, inner glow
 For dusty sinful deathfulness?'*

3. PATIENT CRACE & THE NEW ELEVATION

*See then millenniums roll
 And patience have its perfect work
 In Christ the Word, in Christ the Man:
 See him descend to where the lowest depths do lie
 Of man's mean madness, mind defiled
 In sin irrational. Here purity recoils
 At sight of Christ—Pure Conscience—
 Under the foul pollution,
 Groaning that abject alienation
 In pain and separation
 From God the Immaculate, God the pure.*

*See too the fruits of holy love
 In the changed manners, the faith-placers,
 The new lives—of repentant tribes,
 The freshly forgiven, the wholly purged,
 The new saints whose minds are changed,
 Whose hearts abhor the old—the deity*

*Of proud remorseless minds. Now changed
 The miracle enlarges in the high exaltation
 The elation of the new true man,
 The undreamed of creature now
 From the new power, the grace
 Of the completed Cross by the complete Christ.*

*Not where the prideful (empty) worship is,
 Not where men think to grace their God
 Or carry their lofty proud success
 Or moral life and moral acts,
 But where the humbled spirit weeps
 For its own dark sin, its falsities,
 Concealed rebellion—the darkest sin—
 And knows its own deceits, sin's inner self.
 Here there is now no hatred deep,
 No anger gnawing at the tongue
 To counteract the deeper pain
 Of judgement justified: no shaking fist
 Raised at the patient Deity, the high Creator,
 The loving King; but grateful quiet acceptance.*

*Think then, and watch! The proud man,
 The evil one, the lustful soul
 Changes in the motions of sweet grace,
 Coming to light in great surprise
 And worshipping in unaccustomed praise,
 And transformed adoration, weeping
 For what has been, with tearful sight
 Seeing the old and living in the new,
 True life, fresh restoration,
 The rehabilitation full
 Of grace that never ceases,
 Flowing its constant flood of life
 And bringing its transformation*

*This is the new life, radiant within
And glowing in its new found glory.*

*See too upon the wings of time—
Pinions that bear us to the End—
The glory that shall be. Angels in wonder fall,
And all celestial creatures cry their joy
For grace that turns the fallen image back
To pristine purity, adding too
The plus of grace, making the man both priest
And king, flooding with prophet power
This rich new voice of God to fill
The reign and rule of new eternity.
Love fills the realm of God and man
Making all one, one irreversible unity,
Drawing together the shattered parts
Into love's whole, healing the wounding
Of the life that bled. The dead
Now come to life. Fresh glories blaze
Across the eternal skies
As Holy City gently moves
And lowers the ramparts of its love
To grace the world where once was sin
But now is holiness afresh. New Earth,
New Heavens, New City, New Jerusalem.
This is the glory God has built
Through man redeemed, through man made new;
This is the beauty He has wrought
Through love's quiet acts
In hours unseen, in deeds unknown
Until the whole is one.*

*No word was ever full enough,
No poem nor paeon of praise,
No skill on earth or heaven above*

*To tell the many splendoured truth
Of grace illimitable.
Yet walk these fruits of grace and love
In elevated man: the high and lofty
Reigns as king, as priest to God on high
And all creation here below:
Dry dust of flesh is glorified
To serve for all eternity,
And serve in holy love.*