

Christian Community and Ministry

10 STUDIES ON THE LIFE AND MEANING OF THE CHURCH
AS THE COMMUNITY AND MINISTRY OF CHRIST

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Can the Church survive into the next millenium? What forms of worship will be used as the Church tries to relate itself to the needs of society? How can the Church show its relevance to the world, in terms of its mission and ministry? What hope can the Church offer a stressed and distressed world? What would reconciliation mean between peoples, and how could this take place? Could the Church itself know unity, Or must it perpetuate past and painful divisions?

While these questions, and many more, face the Church at the end of the twentieth century, our series of studies will concentrate on the *Church as the correlate of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit*. The apostolic witness to the Church speaks of the Church as the Body and Bride — of Christ; of the sacraments as audio-visuals of the Gospel; of the life and ministry of the Church as expressions of the risen Christ's life and ministry. Again, the gifts and ministries of the Church are under the guidance and governance of the Spirit; the Church is the community of the Spirit; and the Church is even included in the creeds tunder the article on the Spirit. The Church is never considered or seen in isolation from either Jesus or the Spirit. Rather, Christ's humanity provides the ontological ground and basis for the Church, as the Spirit applies the life and ministry of Christ to the people of God.

If this is so, the Church's worship, witness and work in the world is not based on a mere memory of the past (the golden age of the New Testament era'), nor an unfounded hope in the future (God will finally fix everything up). Instead, the presence and power of Jesus Christ as universal Lord ('Lo, I am with you till the end of the age') is assured for both the Church and the world. The prime concern of the Church, then, is not itself but God in and through Christ, its message being **the Lordship of the risen Jesus, and the Kingdom** of God by the Spirit.

Our studies will concentrate on the truth that the community and ministry of the Church is determined by the person and work of Christ. This being so, the key questions will not be 'What?' and 'How?', but 'Who?' The outline and content of the studies will be dependent on the class notes and writings of Ray S Anderson (see the LITERATURE listed on this leaflet).

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Study I

Jesus Christ as Mediator of the Holy Spirit

Introduction

Rather than consider the Church as an entity on its own, our studies will concentrate on the explicit relationships between Jesus Christ and the Spirit of the Father, with the Church as the community of Christ and his continued ministry for the Father in the world, and the Church's ministry to the world on behalf of Christ.

Our first study will survey (i.) the foundations for understanding both the Spirit and the Church, with the incarnation and the Trinity providing the paradigm for community and ministry, for revelation and reconciliation — all these issues treated in relation to Christ; and (ii.) the Spirit of God and Holy Spirit — the nature of Spirit, the Spirit of God the Holy One, and conclude with Jesus Christ as bearer and mediator of the Spirit.

§1. Foundations of a Theology of the Holy Spirit and the Church

1.1 The Inner Logic of the Incarnation

The act of God becoming human (the total event of Jesus' birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection) is known as the Incarnation — the *Logos* becoming flesh (John 1:1-5,14). The incarnation must be perceived as having an inner structure, an intrinsic logic. The question of who Jesus is, is primary to the question of what Jesus has done, although the two cannot be separated, but must be seen as a simultaneous reality of the person and work of Christ.

The life of Israel was the pre-history of the Incarnation. That is, in God's relation with Israel, we can discern the inner structure of the God-human relation which is intrinsic to the God-person union of the divine and human in Jesus Christ. The essential structure of Incarnation is that of *Logos* and flesh. The eternal Word (*Logos*) *becomes* historical conditioned humanity (flesh). From the beginning of the creation of humans, we can begin to see that *Logos* and flesh are not in contradiction to each other, but human beings have their reality of historical existence through the *Logos*, the creative Word of God. That which is truly human is determined by its response to God the creator — a response which is not only demanded by the *Logos* of God, but which is made possible by the *Logos* of God.

In the relation of God to Israel, we seen this inner structure worked out in a progressive manner. God makes possible a genuine response through the law and the cultus, following the sin of Adam and Eve. Israel is chosen as representative of humanity in which the response can be worked out totally through the initiative of God, but not apart from the obedience and faithfulness of Israel. This 'covenant response' begins with an external and physical dimension and progressively moves towards and internal and more personal dimension. All the while, the *Logos* (Word) of God is moving closer into closer identity with Israel's own human and historical existence. As a result, Israel is revealed to be the unfaithful and disobedient covenant partner of God, thus revealing the true nature of all human 'flesh' and providing the content by which the word 'flesh' can be understood in John 1:14 (the Word became flesh). This can be referred to as the 'organic relation of Israel to Christ', that is, the incarnation itself has the same structure, the same interior logic as the relation of God to Israel. As Israel becomes increasingly identified with the *Logos* of God, Israel becomes more and more the 'one Israelite' in whom both judgement and salvation are located. Jesus Christ, then, is the 'one Israelite' who not only represents the intrinsic relation of *Logos* to flesh, but he is that union in his own person and work.

When we speak of the inner logic of Incarnation, then, we refer to the action of the divine *Logos* which constitutes genuine humanity, first of all through a creative act in which the response is made possible, and then through a re-creative act in which the covenant response is made by the *Logos Himself* in the form of Jesus Christ. This double movement, of God moving toward humanity and of humanity moving toward God, is worked out through the life of Jesus Christ. Christ is the God who is for humans, the eternal *Logos* coming to reconcile estranged humanity by taking that humanity as his own mode of being. The Incarnation is, therefore, a reconciling act

constituted by the very *being* of Christ, not merely by the actions of Christ. But Christ is also the human person who is for God. He is the faithful child of God, who as genuine human person, can make the perfect covenant response from the human side. This double movement exposes to us the *inner life* of Jesus as the Son of God is related to the Father. As the eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ lives out a life of obedience and faithfulness consistent with his divine nature. However, in the incarnation, the divine life of the Son has become the historical and human life of the person, Jesus of Nazareth. the Christ.

The very depth of Christ's humanity and his own estrangement ('My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me' Matt. 27:46) reveal the *inner depths* of the divine life itself. In his punishment and death, Christ brought the reconciling act of his own person to final completion by bringing humanity into the depths of judgement, without surrendering his own divine sonship. The resurrection, therefore, is not only a vindication of Christ's divine sonship, but the justification of that estranged humanity which he first of all took to himself in conception and birth (Bethlehem) and then finally brought to judgement on the cross (Calvary). The Incarnation continues to be the reality of a reconciled humanity in the person of the resurrected and living Christ (11 Cor. 5:16).

It is now clear that by the 'inner logic of Incarnation' we do not mean a certain 'life style' or rationale' by which we would attempt to live our own lives modelled after his. Rather, this inner *logic demands of us a radical reconstruction of our own being*. Christ's conformity to our humanity through Incarnation demands our conformity to his life and death on the cross. The 'logic' of the Incarnation confronts us with our own complicity in the humanity of Christ, both in its judgement and death as well as in its resurrection and life. Our *relationship to the world and our own historical existence has been fundamentally altered*. To think of oneself outside the union with Christ is now irrational and without content. A new style of life, no matter how ethical or religious, can never effect the necessary reconciliation which must come totally from God to humans. And, on the other hand, to think of oneself as included in the Incarnation, as part of Christ, is to think of Me new Christian life from 'out of the life' and person of the Incarnate One Himself. No longer are we permitted to think of any human person as estranged from God's love and intention to bring healing and reconciliation. It is the Incarnation which now determines the true content of that which we call genuine humanity, or true personhood.

It has now become imperative to think and live in such a way that the true content of a human existence has already been revealed and set before us in Jesus Christ. It has now become imperative that we see others and treat others as the 'boundary' (or circumference) of Jesus Christ's existence in the world. The imperative of the incarnation forces us to look beyond the racial, ethnic, cultural and religious divisions which separate humanity and seek the unity of humanity in being reconciled to God in Christ.

It is the Incarnation which determines the true dimension of human life in the world. The world and history demand now to be taken as seriously as God has turned toward it in Jesus Christ. No dualism can be allowed, either cosmological or anthropological. There is no eternal tension (or antipathy) between physical and ethical, between social and spiritual. The reality of our human relation to God does not demand a flight from the world or a denial of our own human existence as a genuine 'worldly' one.

1.2 The Inner Logic of the Trinity as Paradigm of Community and Ministry

The double movement of *revelation and reconciliation* which occurs in the Incarnation not only reveals to us the inner depths of God's own redemptive purpose for humanity, but reveals to us the inner life of God as a polarity of relation between Father and Son with a unity of personal being attending that polarity in the form of the Spirit of God. This 'trinitarian' understanding of God's personal being emerges out of the historical unfolding of the covenant relation and redemptive act in the form of God's presence and power. Jesus was not only conceived in the virgin womb by the Spirit of God, but was anointed by the Spirit at His Baptism, so that it was by the Spirit of God that he performed the works of God (Mat 12:28). Paul tells us that Jesus was raised from the dead and declared to be the Son of God with power by the Spirit of Holiness (Rom. 1:4). While the Spirit of God has no personal incarnation, the Incarnation of God itself occurs as a three-fold event of God's personal being — God as one who begets (Father); God as one begotten and sent into the world (Son) and God as Me creative and We giving Spirit of Holiness (Holy Spirit).

The inner logic of God's triune being is revealed to us in God's incarnation whereby the essential and eternal community of God's own being is opened up to create community between persons and God as "all as community between persons. The ministry of God thus becomes the

basis for community with God and with one another. Ministry precedes and creates human life and community.

The paradigm can be stated in Christological terms as follows:

Jesus' ministry to the Father on behalf of the World

Jesus, anointed for his ministry by the Holy Spirit, carries out his ministry not by serving the needs of the world, but by serving the Father in the spirit of his own divine/human Sonship. Jesus does not have to love the world more than the Father. It is the Father who 'so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son' (John 3:16). The needs of the world do not set the agenda for the ministry of Jesus.

Jesus' Ministry in the Spirit for the Sake of the Church:

in receiving the Spirit 'without measure', Jesus carries out the ministry of God through the power of the Spirit in such a way that the Spirit mediates the ministry of Jesus to persons and mediates the needs of persons to Jesus. The formation of the community of Christ occurs through the effectual regeneration of humans (new birth) and baptism into the 'one body' through the proclamation of the Gospel: 'for in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and were all made to drink of one Spirit' (I Cor. 12:13). The 'gifts of the Spirit' to the members of the body continue the ministry of Christ through each member. So, too, the ministry of Christ precedes and creates the Church. The Church has no other ministry than that of Christ as its source and its imperative.

The Church's Ministry to the World on Behalf of Jesus:

The Church continues the incarnational ministry of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, not breaking solidarity with the world for the sake of its own privilege and space, but in solidarity with the world, being conformed to Christ in radical obedience and Spirit-filled power.

§2. The Spirit of God and the Holy Spirit

2: 1 The Spirit of God

- 1) **The Spirit as the source** and power of life *Ruach/Pneuma*: wind, breath, the vital animation that produces life

Ruach as 'wind' commonly refers to the strong wind of the storm, the raging blast from the desert, like the one that divided the Red Sea at the Exodus (Exod. 14:21; cf. Ezek. 13:13-14; Hos. 8:7; 13:15).... At this level, *ruach* is largely an impersonal concept; it has to do with natural or supernatural strength, force, power, and energy. But it could also carry another meaning as applied to influences and moods of a personal kind, or to 'spirit' conceived of as quasi-personal entities (Num. 5:14).... It was part of the same view of things that a 'spirit' could be described as passing from one person to another. So God promises Moses that he will 'take some of the *ruach* which is upon you and put it upon them' (Num. 11:17).... While Elisha asks for a 'double share' of the *ruach* of Elijah (1 Kings 19:16) [Alasdair Heron, *The Holy Spirit*, page 4,5]

Nephesh (*soul*): the animation of a being which gives it life, common to both human and animals. Genesis 2:7 'God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being (*nephesh haya*).'

Ruach (spirit) *is* given by God and the human returns to God (Eccles. 12:7). Thus, though both humans and non-humans have *soul* (*nephesh*), *is* the spirit given by God which orients the human soul to God and marks the qualitative distinction between the human and non-human 'breath of life'.

- 2) The Spirit of God as the enabling and invading power of God.

We do not possess the Spirit: we are at the Spirit's disposal: Judges 6:34-Gideon; Judges 14:6 -Samson; I Samuel 16:14-the Spirit departed from Saul. The evidences of the Spirit were phenomenological: the manifestation of 'being possessed' by the Spirit (cf. I Sam. 19:23-4).

- 3) The Spirit of God as an equipping and empowering agent:

For the endowment of persons with particular qualities of leadership, see Genesis 31:38-Joseph; Numbers 27:18-Joshua: the inspiration of persons with a message from God typical of

the prophetic function in the Old Testament, cf. 11 Peter 1:21-impelled by the Spirit: the equipping of persons for a specific skill and task, see Exod. 31:1-5-Bezalel, for the construction of the Tabernacle: the formation of a community indwelt with God's presence, see Isaiah 63:11-14 -God put His Spirit in the midst; Haggai 2:4-5-Spirit abides among you: the anointing of a person as an eschatological event (Isaiah 11:2; 44:3; Joel 2:28).

2:2 The Spirit of the Holy One: Holy Spirit

1) The interaction of Jesus and the Spirit

Jesus is the 'bearer of the Spirit': Matt. 1:20-conceived by the Spirit; 3:16-received the Spirit, without measure; cf. John 3:34; 4:14-led by the Spirit; 12:28--exorcised demons by the Spirit; Luke 4:14-acted by the power of the Spirit. As Peter summed up: 'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power' Acts 10:38.

The interaction between creaturely humanity and the Spirit of God takes place in the Incarnation of God in Jesus. In Jesus Christ, the human person receives the fullness of the Spirit and full participation in the divine life which the Son shares with the Father.

The Spirit which comes to each person in his or her creaturely humanity does not come other than through Jesus Christ as the mediator of the Holy Spirit to human spirit.

2) Jesus as the sender or mediator of the Spirit

John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7. The Spirit which comes at Pentecost is the Spirit which Christ received **Jos** 211 We 'promise of the Father'), which Christ 'breathed' upon the disciples following the resurrection (John 20:22), and which Christ promised as an outpouring of power for witness and service.

We must remind ourselves that while the Spirit is strictly subject to the historical Jesus Christ (as universal Lord, even over the Spirit of God), and has the task of the effective outworking of the redemption obtained by Christ through death and resurrection, the Spirit also creates a new event which is always contemporary in the progression of God's salvific acts (cf. John 14:12, for the promise of 'greater works'). The Spirit creates a new world of conversion, sanctification, mission, edification, administration, gifts, etc. (1 Cor.12). At the same time, there is a danger of separating the Spirit away from the objective reality of Jesus Christ as the bearer and sender of the Spirit. At the same time, there is a progression, an advance in the coming of the Spirit, for the Spirit is not only sent by the historical Jesus Christ, but by the eschatological Christ, the Coming One.



Study 11

The Church as the Formation of Christ

Introduction

Matthew recounts the confession of Peter that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. In response, Jesus testifies 'I will build my Church' (Matt. 16:18). The focus of our second study is on the incarnation as the means whereby God not only reveals Himself, but actualises Himself within the locus and arena of humanity and the Spirit as bringing the objective being and action of Christ into and through our lives as the Church. This is followed by a consideration of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ, who brings Christ to us, and the Christ who gives to us the Spirit, and the Spirit as the presence and power of Christ to the Church and the world.

§ 3. Jesus Christ as the Objectivity of the Spirit

The first problem to consider is distinguishing the Holy Spirit from our own (human) spirit.

3.1 The Incarnation brings the transcendent reality of God as objective reality within the boundary of a human and historical encounter.

In Jesus Christ, there is a divine 'holiness' which stands among us, with us, as one of us, yet over and against us. This is a kind of objectivity which we do not create by objectivizing, but which confronts us 'objectively'. (See Luke 5:8, and Mark 1:23-4, for the trauma of the holiness of Jesus.)

The Spirit has no incarnation of its own; the indwelling of the Spirit into our humanity is not an incarnation of God, but the fellowship created between us and the incarnate One. Thus, in the person of Jesus Christ there is an objectivity which delimits the human spirit and by which the Holy Spirit itself has an objectivity which grounded in the very being of God which resists our 'subjectivizing' of the Spirit. Jesus Christ is the objective history of Spirit, and the dogmatic content for developing a doctrine of the Spirit.

The doctrine of the Spirit, i.e. of the objective reality and personal Being of the Spirit, stands or falls with the acknowledgment of the active coming and activity of the being of God Himself within our space and time in Jesus Christ. Failure to relate ourselves objectively to the Being and Act of God in Jesus Christ, results in failure to discern the objective reality of the Holy Spirit in his presence and power. [T F Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, page 235]

3.2 The Spirit objectifies Christ in and through us

We do not objectify Christ. The 'fruit of the Spirit' (Gal. 5:23) is not an objective quality that emerges ^{90M US,} but the objectification of Christ.

Everything that the believer hopes for is located in Christ and everything he desires to be is what Jesus is. Both Christ and the Spirit are the present reality on earth of the future reality which is to come. . . . The present reality is the gradual transformation into the character of the resplendent Christ, a transformation already begun. The future reality is the full transformation of our entire existence into the character of Christ... The Spirit represents Jesus Christ, wholly and completely. The invasion of the future into the present is the invasion of Jesus the Lord into the present.

The Spirit represents the present power and dominance within the new order. The new order is obviously not divided from the old order by the calendar: the old order is still here, along with the new; they exist side by side. But Christ is Lord of the present time over "all things" even though He is not "all in all." . . . There is no touch of the Spirit that is not the touch of the Master's hand. There is no act of the Spirit that is not also the action of Christ. [Lewis Smedes, *All Things Made New*, page 68-69]

Thus the church as the community of Christ becomes the objective reality of Spirit, because in this community, the Spirit produces the life of Christ in the members. Herein is a theology of the Church:

'Unless we can gain a clear understanding of the objectivity of the Holy Spirit, it will be difficult to formulate a doctrine of the Church without ... losing the Spirit in the depths of man's own self-understanding in its corporate or in its individualist forms.' (T Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, page 239).

§ 4. The Holy Spirit as the Presence and Power of Christ

4.1 The mediation of Spirit to us by Christ and Christ to us by the Spirit

1. Jesus is not only the bearer of the Spirit, but the mediator of the Spirit

The Holy Spirit in his new coming is mediated to us through Christ in his divine and human natures. It behoved Christ to be God that he might give his Spirit to men, for only God can give God. It behoved Christ also to be Man that he might receive the Spirit of God in our human nature and mediate it to his brethren through himself. We are concerned here not primarily with the continuing presence and operation of the Spirit in the world which have been since the beginning of creation, but with the new coming of the Spirit in the profounder and more intimate mode of presence made possible by the Incarnation, and which the world cannot know or receive apart from Jesus Christ and what happened to our human nature in him. [T F Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, page 245]

The incarnation brought Spirit to humanity in Christ, and in this humanity of Christ the atonement prepares humanity to receive the Spirit. The humanity assumed by Christ is fallen humanity, under condemnation and estranged from God through its own 'spirit of disobedience'. Jesus prepares in his own body a human response which is perfect in obedience and in which the human spirit dwells in perfect harmony with the Spirit of God.

The inner life of the triune God now includes humanity in the form of the continuing humanity of Christ as the basis for the Spirit's life with and through human beings (eg. Dogmatic postulate #03).

2 This mediation has a double action:

a) Christ mediates Spirit to the human person by receiving Spirit into His own humanity: Thus created and uncreated are joined in common life. The *Koinonia* (fellowship) of the Holy Spirit has an objective basis in which our subjective experience of the Spirit is grounded (see 11 Cor. 13:14; cf. Phil. 2:1).

b) Christ is then mediated to us by the SON so that our humanity becomes objectively related to him.

The Body of Christ becomes the corporate manifestation of this life in Christ; the fruit of the Spirit becomes our personal manifestation of this life in Christ. Thus, union with Christ has both objective and subjective aspects, but the actuality (our humanity in Christ) precedes and creates the possibility (Christ in our humanity). Further, the Spirit does not come to us as 'naked Spirit,' but clothed with the character and personality of Christ (cf. the Spirit of 'sonship' Rom. 8:14-15; Hebrews 9:14 for the offering of Christ through the eternal Spirit):

he came not as isolated and naked Spirit, but as Spirit charged with all the experience of Jesus as he shared to the full our mortal nature and weakness, and endured its temptation and grief and suffering and death, and with the experience of Jesus as he struggled and prayed, and worshipped an obeyed, and poured out his life in compassion for mankind. It is still in the Name of Jesus Christ that the Holy Spirit comes to us, and in no other name. [T F Torrance, *Theology 4 Reconstruction*, page 247]

God himself opens us toward himself. He who became man Or our benefit, who Or our benefit descended into the abyss of death, gives himself to be ours and makes us his own. If it is true that God's work in Jesus Christ has happened and is happening, then it is also true that in the Spirit, Jesus Christ makes himself present to us and makes us those who follow him. Calvin was certainly right when he commented in reference In I Corinthians 6:11, where our washing, sanctification, and justification take place 'in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God,' that 'the Holy Spirit is the bond by which

Christ effectually unites us to himself.' The presence of God in Christ is the presence of the Spirit. in the reality of the Spirit, the living and present Lord is 'here.' [O Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics*, vol 11, page 239]

The subjective aspect of the Holy Spirit is largely absent from the New Testament: 'We have become accustomed to think of the coming of the Holy Spirit far too much as the interiorizing in our hearts of divine salvation, with the result that the presence of the Spirit is so often identified with inward and moral religious states. Creator Spirit and our own creative spirituality tend to become confused.' (cf. T Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, page 242).

4.2 The Presence of Christ to the world and the world to God through the Spirit

The Spirit is the eschatological presence of Christ, not merely a historical memory. The Spirit prepares the people of God in the world for the 'last century' (the century in which Christ will return), rather than conforming the Church to the 'first century'. Through the Spirit, Christ continues to 'stand' in the world in the place and time where the Spirit dwells in the people of God. There is no Kingdom of the Spirit and no Body of the Spirit, only the Kingdom and Body of Christ, since the Spirit is transparent and self-effacing.

The other person thus makes a radical demand upon me to recognize Jesus Christ as present. Cf. the problem at the Lord's Supper in the Corinthian church, I Cor. 11. 'Discerning' the body had to do with relating to others, not a spiritual interpretation of the bread and wine! The 'real humanity' of the other person becomes the real presence of Christ, even as my own 'real humanity' is the real presence of the Spirit. The person who 'has the Spirit is not in an extra-human condition.' O Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics*, vol. 11, p 255.

Our inability is seen to be not a lack based on our inherent capacities, so that it is ultimately rendered neutral, but rather our enmity toward grace and our closedness. God is not closed. As the Revealer, as the Reconciler, as our Lord in Jesus Christ, he has gone out of himself. And in every 'today' he emerges out of himself when the Word encounters us and, in the Spirit, demonstrates the capacity to draw us out of ourselves, to grasp us and liberate us so that we can grasp it ourselves. If we were confronting a dead Christ, we would be thrust back to into our own problems. But Jesus Christ is the Living Lord for us in the Word which is wrought by the Spirit and made effective by the Spirit.... How it happens is the mystery. But it is not a barricaded mystery, but is open in the proclamation of the Community. Wherever this mystery is at work in us, we become active in receiving, rich in our poverty, powerful in our weakness (Phil. 4:13; 11 Cor. 12:10). [O Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics*, vol. 11, p 255.]



Study III

The Church and the Kingdom of God

Introduction

Christ constantly spoke of the Kingdom of God (the parables) and effected the works of the Kingdom of God (the miracles), whereas He spoke little of the Church as such. Again, the message of the early Church to the world was that Jesus is Lord, and the Kingdom of God was present in power. This study considers the nature of the Kingdom, and its relation to the Church. Further, while the Spirit is the presence of Jesus Christ to the Church and the world, He is so as the presence of the dynamic rule of God, bring the power and action of the last days and new creation into the present. In this context, the Church bears witness to the Kingdom of God, but is not that Kingdom.

§5. A Theology of the Kingdom of God

5.1 The Biblical teaching on the Kingdom of God.

1 . Jesus had very little to say about the Church, but a great deal to say about the Kingdom of God (or Kingdom of Heaven).

The phrase 'kingdom of heaven' occurs only in Matthew (34 times). Several times in Matthew, and everywhere else in the New Testament, the phrase 'kingdom of God' is used. Ladd says: "'The Kingdom of the heavens' is a Semitic idiom, where heavens is a substitute for the divine name (Luke 15:18)." (*New Testament Theology*, page 64) One can conclude, as Ladd does, that the two concepts are synonymous, and that no significant theological distinction is to be made.

2. The word 'kingdom' (basileia) in the New Testament can designate the manifestation or coming of Gods kingly rule and the eschatological realm in which God's rule is enjoyed. Inheriting eternal life and entrance into the Kingdom of God are therefore synonymous with entering into the age to come.

Cf. I Corinthians 10: 11 "on whom the ends of the ages have come."

<----- (the age to come)

this present age)----->

The coming of God's kingdom will mean the final and total destruction of the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41), the formation of a redeemed society unmixed with evil (Matt. 13:36-43), perfected fellowship with God at the messianic feast (Luke 13:28-29).

3. Jesus saw his ministry as a fulfilment of the Old Testament promise of the coming of the kingdom, short of the apocalyptic consummation (Luke 4:21).

Thus, Jesus proclaims the present manifestation of the kingdom through his own person and ministry (Matt. 12:28). What perplexed the contemporaries of Jesus was the claim that the kingdom had come but that the expected signs and evidences had not appeared as they looked for them. Jesus responded that the kingdom had indeed come, but that its *evidences were hidden in his own presence and ministry* (Luke 17:20ff.). The kingdom is present and hidden as the *mysterion* of God's presence in the world.

The kingdom of Christ is a kingdom that, coming down from heaven above is sunk into the cursed ground. It is here present, but as the hidden treasure in the cursed ground. We pass it by without even knowing it, but the fact that it goes unseen becomes a judgement upon ourselves.... indeed, it is this hiddenness which really constitutes the curse that weighs upon the ground of the earth; not that it bears thistles and thorns, but that it

conceals God's countenance, so that even the deepest furrows of the earth do not unveil for us the hidden God. [D Bonhoeffer, in Preface to *Bonhoeffer*, by Godsey, pp. 32-3]

a) The presence of the kingdom is understood as the presence of God in the person of Me anointed Coe, Me Christ (Messiah) This presence is the rule over the powers of the world, not first of all a specific realm in which the kingdom is operative. 'if the kingdom is the rule of God, then every aspect of the Kingdom must be derived from the character and action of God. The presence of the Kingdom is to be understood from the nature of God's present activity; and the future of the Kingdom is the redemptive manifestation of his kingly We at Me end of the age.' [Ladd, *New Testament Theology*, page 81.]

b) The coming of the kingdom involves both an even of God's power and presence within history as well as the consummation and end of history (the end of this age):

... the Kingdom of God is the redemptive reign of God dynamically active to establish his rule among men, and that this Kingdom, which will appear as an apocalyptic act at the end of the age, has already come into human history in the person and mission of Jesus to overcome evil, to deliver men from its power, and to bring them into the blessings of God's reign. The Kingdom of God involves two great movements: fulfilment within history, and consummation at the end of history.' [Ladd, *New Testament Theology*, page 91]

5.2 The presence of Jesus in the power of the Spirit as the presence and power of the kingdom of God.

1 Entering into the kingdom required submission to the authority of Jesus:

While Israel as a whole, including both leaders and people, refused to accept Jesus' offer of the Kingdom, a substantial group did respond in faith. Discipleship to Jesus was not like discipleship to a Jewish rabbi. The Rabbis bound their disciples not to themselves but to the Tom& Jews bound his disciples to himself. The Rabbis offered something outside of themselves: Jesus offered himself alone. Jesus required his disciples to surrender without reservation to his authority. They thereby became not his disciples but his douloi, slaves (Matt. 10:24ff.; 24:5ff. Luke 12:35ff.). This relationship had no parallel in Judaism. Discipleship to Jesus involved far more than following in his retinue; it meant nothing less than complete personal commitment to him and his message. The reason for this is the presence of the Kingdom of God in Jesus' person and message. In him, men were confronted by God Himself. [Ladd, *New Testament Theology*, page 108]

2 The reality of the Kingdom of God becomes the foundation for the reality of the Church as the continuing of the presence of Jesus in the world:

The Kingdom of God is the reality of which the church is a sign and to which it points. Jesus came to announce the inauguration of the kingdom, not the church. He taught that men should seek first the kingdom, not the church. He taught that men should seek first the kingdom, and before he died he transferred the "keys of the kingdom" to his disciples, who were to become the apostolic foundation of the church.. All this indicates that the church is penultimate to the kingdom, and acquires its identity and role in relation to the kingdom. [Kraus, *The Authentic Witness*, page 163]

§ 6. The Holy Spirit as the eschatological presence of the kingdom of God in the Church.

6.1 The Holy Spirit is the continued presence of Jesus, but as such, he is a presence of the kingdom of God in an eschatological sense.

Christians hope to be one with Christ in the final resurrection and their experience in the Christian community is a partial and anticipatory experience of that end. Their place in this eschatologically oriented community has been brought about by the achievement of Christ (hence the significance of the images of the body and of suffering), and it is realised constantly by the agency of the Spirit which is present as a guarantee or firstfruits of the end — *arrabon* and *aparche*.

{Wesley Carr. 'Towards a Contemporary Theology of the Holy Spirit' in *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol. 28, No. 7 1975, page 5061

The dynamic force within this eschatological community is the Spirit, which creates the community and sustains it and at the same time gives to each person within the community his own individual personhood.... Thus the Spirit becomes for the believing community more the environment in which it lives than an object of its consciousness. In particular, the importance of the Spirit as an eschatological phenomenon reminds us that its relation is both to the risen Christ and to the community which is oriented towards God. [Carr, 'Towards a Contemporary Theology of the Holy Spirit', page 507, 508]

The Spirit is the down payment or first installment (Ephesians 1:14; cf. Romans 8:23; 11 Cor. 5:5; 1 Cor. 15:20), the pledge of all that is offered to the Church. The pledge is nothing 'of itself': it signifies the relation between the holder and the giver of something much bigger to come. This seal reassures us of the reality and certainty of the promised fullness. And the 'guarantee is not the fine print of a legal document, but the dynamic of at correlation between Christ's Spirit and our faith.' [Smedes, *All Things Made New*, page 67]

In short, everything that the believer hopes for is located in Christ and everything he desires to be is what Jesus is. Both Christ and the Spirit are the present reality on earth of the future reality which is to come. The Spirit, then, is the down payment and first fruits of the life and existence that is embodied in Christ. He brings into reality within our lives nothing other than the reality of Christ.... The invasion of the future into the present is the invasion of Jesus the Lord into the present. The Spirit is the ascended Lord in His earthly action. [Smedes, *All Things Made New*, page 68]

6.2 The Church as a 'sign' of the Kingdom of God.

1 The Church is not the Kingdom but points towards it.

... the Kingdom creates the Church. The dynamic rule of God present in the mission of Jesus, challenged men to response, bringing them into a new fellowship. The presence of the Kingdom meant the fulfilment of the Old Testament messianic hope promised to Israel; but when the nation as a whole rejected the offer, those who accepted it were constituted the new people of God, the sons of the kingdom, the true Israel, the incipient church. The church is but the result of the coming of God's Kingdom into the world by the mission of Jesus Christ. [Ladd, *New Testament Theology*, page 113]

As a sign of the Kingdom, the church provides a place and presence of the kingdom within history here on earth, and yet is it also a mixture of the 'wheat and tares', and does not perfectly represent the kingdom in its membership (Matt. 13:24-30). . . . the empirical church has a twofold character. It is the people of the Kingdom, and yet it is not the ideal people, for it includes some who are actually not sons of the Kingdom. Thus entrance into the Kingdom means participation in the church; but entrance into the church is not synonymous with entrance into the Kingdom.' [Ladd, *New Testament Theology*, page 113]

2 The church is a servant (witness) not the manager of the kingdom.

The church has no executive power of its own, but rather becomes the historical expression of the kingdom's power. Christ continues as the 'head' of the church as his body, and the Holy Spirit as the executive power and presence of Christ (Eph. 1:22-3; 4:7-16).

3 The church is the presence of the kingdom in a penultimate sense.

If Jesus' disciples are those who have received the life and fellowship of the Kingdom, and if this life is in fact an anticipation of the eschatological Kingdom, then it follows that one of the main tasks of the church is to display in the present evil age the life and fellowship of the Age to Come. The church has a dual character, belonging to two ages. It is the people of the Age to Come, but it still lives in this age, being constituted of sinful mortal men. This means that while the church in this age will never attain perfection, it must nevertheless display the life of the perfect order, the eschatological Kingdom of God. [Ladd, *New Testament Theology*, page 115)

4. The kingdom of God present in the world through the presence of the Holy Spirit, brings judgment upon those 'principalities and powers' (Rom. 8:38; Col. 2:10,15), bringing the ultimate power of God into the penultimate.

One aspect of the final consummation at the end is that of judgment, and the Spirit, an eschatological phenomenon, must therefore be associated with judgment. It stands thus in the present as a permanent question mark over all that Christians claim to do in the name of God. The question for the structuring of the Church is whether these witness to an awareness of the judgment of God. If the Church is to witness to this constant relevance of the future for its existence and to the breaking in of that future to the present in the act of God in Christ, then that witness must be substantiated in the structures of the Church. These structures need to be charismatic, i.e., they must reflect the Spirit both as formative force in the community and as representing the judgment of the end upon that community. [Wesley Carr, 'Towards a Contemporary Theology of the Holy Spirit' in *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol. 28, No. 7 1975, page 5131



Study IV

The Church as an Apostolic Community

Introduction

One of the attributes or 'marks' of the Church, as expressed in the Nicene Creed 'I/We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church', is its 'apostolicity'. From within the disciples Jesus chose the twelve 'apostles' (with Paul a 'late addition': I Cor. 15:8-11), who provided the continuity of the community and ministry of COOL as well as the authentic witness to Him. As with previous studies, the Church as an Apostolic Community will be considered in relation to Christ and the Holy Spirit.

§7. The Foundation of the Apostles

Ephesians 2:19-22 '... members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone . . . ,

7.1 Jesus Christ - The True Israel and Cornerstone of the People of God

1. Incarnation - the Messianic Community

Jesus receives the Spirit as Israel in the flesh; he prepared a place in his body for community; he prepared a community to become his body.

2. Resurrection - the Eschatological Community

John 20:22-23 Jesus 'breathed on them'; Ephes. 2:15 'one new person' in the place of two.

There is a point of discontinuity - the grave of Jesus is the end of the historical, cultural, and religious factors as determinative for those who belong to the people of God - the discontinuity of death and resurrection.

There is also a point of continuity - it is the same Jews who is alive after death, but no longer subject to the determination of historical factors. Paul clearly saw this in the case of circumcision, the law, and male/female gender identity, all removed in Christ as determinative of relation to God's people (Gal. 3:28). The resurrected Christ is therefore the eschatological criterion for interpreting the revealed will of God for the formation of the Church as the people of God.

3. Pentecost - the Witnessing Community

Acts 1:5, baptized with the Spirit to be witnesses. The Spirit does not take over where Jesus left off, but Jesus himself returns to be present through the Holy Spirit; his self-testimony and witness continues as the core of the witness of the Holy Spirit.

In the baptism, obedience, faithfulness, and service to God rendered by Jesus as the divine Son of the Father, there is a *presentation* of God to the world and the world to God. Following Pentecost, Christ comes in the power of the Spirit to inaugurate a *re-presentation* of God to persons and persons to God. The witness of the Spirit is thus grounded in the objective ministry of Jesus Christ.

7.2 The Mystery of the Church

1 . The *mysterion* of Christ and the church: Ephes. 1:9; 1:17-18; 3:3; 3:9

The church is the revelation of that *mysterion*, so that it no longer is hidden, but a revealed 'mystery'. The Gentiles are 'fellow-heirs' of the promise of Abraham. The church is the visible and concrete form of the *mysterion*.

2. The mystery of election establishes both the uniqueness of the church as grounded in the sheer determination of God that it constitutes the dwelling place of the Spirit as well as its imperishable existence, even though fraught with the ambiguities and disorders which attend its historical and sociological situation. The church exists by God's gift of the Spirit as Christ's body on earth - the veil is only lifted in Christ (11 Cor. 3:4).

The discontinuity between the church and the world is eschatological in nature, not sociological or institutional. This is the same kind of discontinuity which existed between Israel as the people of God and all other nations and people. The discontinuity is not between Israel and the church.

7.3 Christ - the True Apostle

1 The nature of an apostolic commission

The Greek word *apostolos* is based on the Hebrew, *shaliach*, from *shalach*, to send. The emphasis is on the sender rather than the one sent. The one sent was viewed as an extension of the personality of the sender.

The *shaliach* received a specific commission in the nature of a function rather than a status or office, and could (must) return the commission only to the one from whom it was received.

2 Jesus as the 'first apostle'

Hebrews 3:1 '. . . consider that Jesus, the apostle (*apostolos*) and high priest of our confession was faithful to the one who appointed him . . .'

Jesus' own life was marked by his self-conscious testimony to the fact that he had received his appointment and commission directly from the Father. As the 'sent one' he bore in his own person the very personality of the Father (John 14:7). Cf. Mark 9:37 'Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.,

The chosen ones (the twelve) are brought within the circle of Jesus' own 'sending and returning' and thus become bound into his own apostolic ministry as the Son of the Father. 'You are those who have stood by me in my trials; and I confer on you, just as my Father has conferred on me, a kingdom, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.' (Luke 22:28-30)

The apostleship of Jesus continued after his death and resurrection, and will only come to an end when he 'hands over the kingdom' to God the Father, having completed his commission as the Lord of the kingdom (I Cor. 15:23-28).

3. The 'marks of an apostle'

The key mark of an apostle is the commission received directly from Christ. The early church, immediately following the ascension of Christ, sought to develop specific criteria by which to continue the apostolic tradition of the twelve by selecting one to replace Judas - Acts 1:21-26: he must have been with Jesus from the baptism of John until the ascension; must have been a witness to the resurrection of Jesus; must have the appointment or commission from the Lord himself (thus the casting of lots for the final selection).

Not all who saw the risen Christ became apostles, but only those commissioned by Christ. The eleven were re-commissioned by Jesus following the resurrection (John 20). Assumably, their apostleship came to an end when the one who commissioned them died. This means that there is no direct continuity between the twelve selection prior to the crucifixion and the apostolic commission following. Paul argued his own apostolic authority on the fact that the risen Christ had also appeared to him as he did to the eleven, giving him a direct commission to be an apostle (Galatians 1).

In the New Testament, there appear to have been several levels of apostleship with many more than the original 'twelve' called to be apostles. James, the brother of Jesus, was considered an apostle and one of the 'pillars' of the church in Jerusalem (11 Cor. 11:5; 12:11). Barnabas was called an apostle (Acts 4:4,14) as were Andronicus and Junias - a woman (Romans 16:7).

§8. The Apostolic Character of the Church

The basis for determining the apostolic character of the church rests on Jesus' own self-testimony as the one sent by the Father. As the primary apostle, Jesus is the basis for all apostleship. As the resurrected Christ, and head of the church, he continues his apostolic ministry through the members of the body as gifted by the Holy Spirit.

In his high priestly prayer (John 17), Jesus prays: 'As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world' (17:18). This becomes the 'hinge' on which the apostolic mission of Jesus turns outward into the world through the sending of the Spirit at Pentecost.

8.1 The Holy Spirit and Apostleship

The reception of the Spirit and the giving of the commission are simultaneous (John 20:21ff.). The Holy Spirit gives to the apostles the pattern of his life and work, and of what God, or Christ, works through them: cf. Acts 1:4-5,8; 3:11ff; 10:26; 14:15.

The Holy Spirit *gives* to the apostle the power to live the Christian life and witness (11 Tim. 1:7). The Spirit gives the power of fulfilling the commission and successfully evangelizing among the unsaved (I Cor. 9:2). The Holy Spirit *guides* the apostles in concrete ways (Acts 16:6-7; 9-10; 19:21; 20:22; 23:11). Cf. the manner in which Philip met the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26ff.), and the manner in which Peter is summoned to the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:1ff.).

8.2 The Question of Apostolic Succession

It is a matter of historical record that the title and office of Apostle was generally restricted to those witnesses of Christ's self testimony of the first century. Nonetheless, some continue to make the claim for apostolic succession and transmission of apostolic authority through the office of presbyter-bishop, by a direct chain of official transmission through the laying on of hands. This form of apostolic succession (Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican) carries with it a presupposition with regard to the relation of the Holy Spirit to the office.

Barth refers to such an attempt as the 'canalization' of the Holy Spirit; by restricting the Spirit to the mechanical transmission of title and office, an official 'canal' for the Spirit is traced through historical succession of office (C.D. IV/I, pp. 717ff.)

Forsyth argued that the true apostolic succession is the evangelical:

'The strict successor of the Apostle is the New Testament, as containing the precipitate of their standard preaching. It is not the ministry that is the successor of the Apostolate, but the ministry plus the true apostolic legacy of the Bible - the ministry of the Word... The Apostolic succession is the Evangelical succession. Its continuity lies not in a due devolution but in a common inspiration, a common ministration of God's grace as mercy. It is (so to say) not a vertical continuity descending in a line, but a solidary, spreading through a mass; not a chain on which the Church is hung, but a nervous system pervading it and, by the Word, continually creating it. [P T Forsyth, The Church and the Sacraments, page 137, 139-40]

8.3 The Question of Apostolic Authority in the Church

The question of authority cannot be separated from that of apostolicity. For the word of the apostle is legitimated by the Lord Himself, and carries the authority of Christ.

'Anyone who claims to be a prophet, or to have spiritual powers, must acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord.' I Cor. 14:37; cf. 11 Cor. 10:8ff. However, Paul makes it clear that the authority which constituted apostleship was not inherent in the person or the office but in the message: 'But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed, let that one be accursed! (Gal. 1:8).

It thus follows that there can be no apostolic succession beyond the gospel of Christ, because the gospel is given in its totality, once and for all in Jesus Christ. 'All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me,' said Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:18). This authority has not been transferred to the Holy Spirit or to any human person. Rather, through the Holy Spirit this authority of Jesus Christ, the 'chief apostle,' continues to be the guiding authority of the Church.

8.4 The Contemporary Apostolic character of the Church

While the original apostles occupy a unique position in the church as those who participated in the incarnational event, and thus are foundational for the church, it is Jesus Christ who continues to define the apostolic nature of the church as the living apostle and head of the church. The Holy Spirit continues the apostolic witness and authority of Jesus built upon the foundation of the apostles. The eschatological nature of the apostolic character of the church must be acknowledged, based on the fact that the Holy Spirit is the presence of the Christ who is coming, as well as of the historical Christ. The apostolic character of the church will be more clearly outlined by what Christ wishes the Church to be in the last century (i.e. when Christ actually returns), than in the first century.

Study V

The Church as a Charismatic and Worshipping Community

Introduction

One of the significant issues which has stirred the Church throughout this century, and especially since the middle of the century has been the Pentecostal or Charismatic movement, and related aspects and aberrations. Coupled with the desire or demand to express the charismata (or gifts of the Spirit) has come a new aspiration and assertion of forms of worship and liturgical expression. This study considers the Church as a charismatic and worshipping community, suggesting that the foundation for both areas is Christ and the Holy Spirit.

§9. The Church as the Community of Christ

9.1 The Church as the 'fellowship of the Spirit'

The key to the primitive (first century) church is not 'historical memory' but the fellowship of the Spirit' [Brunner, *The Misunderstanding of the Church*, page 24]. 'Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them' (Matt. 18:20): cf. James Denney's comment of Christ:

It might sound, perhaps, too paradoxical to say that no apostle, no New Testament writer, ever *remembered Christ*; yet it would be true in the sense that they never thought of Him as belong to the past. The exalted Lord was lifted above the conditions of time and space; when they thought of him, memory was transmitted into faith; in all the virtue of the life they had known on earth He was Almighty, ever present, the Living King of Grace. [James Denney, *Studies in Theology*, page 1541

The life principle of the church as the ecclesia is Christ's continued presence through the Spirit. 'Because I live, you shall live also' John 14:19.

Christ exists in the world as the community of Christ, wrote Dietrich Bonhoeffer (*Sanctorum Communio* [The Communion of Saints], page 160). The church is in Christ and Christ is in the church; and to be in Christ is the same as to be in the church, wrote Bonhoeffer (p. 100). The church is a community of love in which new social relations are created (pp. 120ff.). Concerning the unique character of Christian love as formative for the community of Christ, Bonhoeffer said: (i.) Christian love is not a human possibility, (ii.) Christian love is only through faith in Christ (obedience), (iii) love, as an ad of the will, is purposive and intentional, (iv.) Christian love loves the real (concrete) neighbour), and (v.) Christian love knows no limits (pp. 120ff.).

The community is not Jesus Christ, wrote Karl Barth, but he is the community. He does not live because it lives, but it (the community) lives because he lives in and through it (*Church Dogmatics* IV/2, page 655).

9.2 Church formation as the community of Christ the work of the Spirit

The formation of the church as the community of Christ is the work of the Spirit, not human intentionality or agency (cf. John 1:12-13).

The Community is a fellowship solely because of what it receives. It receives the Holy Spirit through the empowered Word. That the Word finds faith is an inherent characteristic of the Word, and not dependent on man's own decision. The fellowship of believers is not the fellowship based on the religious condition present in the believers, but based on the Spirit who reaches the Community in the Word. The individual believer does not bring his faith with him to the Community; rather in his believing he is a member of the Community. The Community does not add anything to his faith, but it accepts him. [0 Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics*, Vol. 11, page 539]

In its concrete social and historical occurrence, the church is the reality of the body of Christ in its visible, not its invisible nature. Christ is present, not as an idealized form of the Church, but in the concrete reality of the social relations and structure of its members.

For the Reformers, Luther and Calvin, there was a concern to establish the 'truth' of the church over and against its concrete ambiguous existence. For Luther the 'essential' church is found in the 'office of the pure gospel' which tended toward 'pure doctrine' as the mark of the Church. For Calvin, the purity of the church was to be found in its essential moral and spiritual integrity as the community of faith (cf. Weber, page 545).

9.3 Ordering the Community for its life and worship

1. The Christological basis for the order of the church is clear: it is the Lordship of Christ, or the 'headship' of Christ over his body (Ephes. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). The dispute between differing orders of the church is not over this christological basis for order, but rather how the headship of Christ is recognized and administered in the church.

T F Torrance suggests that there are three ways of viewing the concept of 'order' with regard to the 'law' of the church.

- i. The first 'order' is the will and command as revealed in Christ. This 'order' stands in absolute authority over the church and all human concepts and structures.
 - ii. The second 'order' is the attempt on the part of humans to conform to this order, to construct 'means' to administer this divine order. Where the church attempts to 'create' a true order of life and ministry as a way of fulfilling the divine will, it tends to absolutize its own relative and imperfect forms, causing division and conflict between the various 'orders' of the church.
 - iii. Torrance argues that a 'third order' be understood as Christ's own life of obedience, and 'ordering' of human response to the perfect will and command of God in praise, thanksgiving, and service rendered to God on behalf of all humanity. This 'third order' as completed through Jesus Christ becomes then the objective way in which the divine will and human response are joined, with the church brought into this 'order' through the Holy Spirit (see T F Torrance, 'The Ministry' in *Theological Foundations for Ministry*, Ray S Anderson, ed., pp. 390-429). This enables the actual order of the church to be viewed as grounded in Christ's own order of life and ministry, despite the provisional and ambiguous nature of the church's concrete historical existence (cf. Weber, page 569ff.).
2. The struggle within the first century church over the ordering of the church and its ministry.
- A. The Pauline concept of the Church as a charismatic community. Paul subordinated 'government' (*kybernesis*: 1 Cor. 12:28) as one among several charismata. There is no hierarchical order based on an office (so Brunner, *The Misunderstanding of the Church*, page 33). The Holy Spirit is directly involved in 'ordering' the community. He suggests three ways of understanding the Spirit's 'ordering' of the church:
- i. The organic unity of the community, with its rich life of fellowship;
 - ii. The multiplicity of functions within the body and diversity of gifts; and
 - iii. the infectious propagation of its life, as against a calculated pragmatism.

People draw near to the Christian community because they are irresistibly attracted by its supernatural power.... There is a sort of fascination which is exercised mostly without any reference to the Word, comparable rather to the attractive force of a magnet or the spread of an infectious disease. Without knowing how it happened, one is already a carrier of the infection. [Brunner, *Misunderstanding*, page 52]

The Spirit does not create 'offices', says Brunner, but 'ministries'. The intrinsic order of the church is thus *diakonia* - service. The Spirit produces and exists in *koinonia* (fellowship), but perishes in an institution. The absence of formal authority, legal structures, and canonical law characterizes the life of Spirit.

Does this charismatic order actually work? Was there not perpetual strife, or at least uncertainty and the awkward question - what was to happen now? But this strange, even this wonderful charismatic ordering by the invisible Lord alone, did work. Precisely that is the miracle of the Ekklesia, which certainly Paul and the other Christians themselves

regarded with ever renewed astonishment as a miracle. Even the worldwide scope of the Ecclesia was not able - and that is a second miracle - to call the charismatic leadership and order in question. (Brunner, *Dogmatics, Vol. 111, page 45*)

B . The Jerusalem community and the theocratic Ecclesia

While there were other 'pre-Pauline' concepts of Ecclesia, none gained the stature of the Jerusalem community. It was the natural centre and was formed on the basis of the apostolic continuity of the 'tradition of the twelve' (was the comment about the 'pillars' of the Church in Galatians 2:9 sarcastic or ironic?!).

Here in Jerusalem was the 'mother' ('Jewish') church and movement which Paul acknowledged had its rightful place, but not its superiority (cf. the council recorded in Acts 15). By the end of the first century, argues Brunner, Paul's vital charismatic order of the Ecclesia (especially within the 'Gentile church') had given way to the more hierarchical and organizationally structured form as found at Jerusalem. The Acts 15 council resulted in an uneasy truce, but no real theological basis for agreement [see also Paul Achtmeier, *The Quest for Unity in the New Testament Church*, (Fortress Press: 1987)].

The Pauline Ecclesia was not deeply enough rooted to survive, says Brunner, and finally gave way to an order in which:

- i. salvation was linked with sacrament;
- ii. the Ecclesia became a dispensing entity rather than a ministering fellowship;
- iii. the act of administration of the eucharist became separated from the act of reception, with authority vested in the former;
- iv. a distinction emerged between the holy place and the profane people, with a priestly caste mediating grace;
- v. fellowship became institutionalized and legalized; and
- vi. the Word surrendered centrality to the sacrament, the fraternity to the hierarchy, the charismatic to the juristic, and the diakonal to the dogmatic. [*Dogmatics, 111, pp. 6066*]

As evidence of this early movement, Brunner cites the fact that **Clement of Rome** (end of first century) wrote reminding the Corinthians that the ecclesiastical office held authority over the local charismatic community. So too **Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch** (d. 107), stated that the priestly *episcopos*, or bishop is the central point around which the church is built. 'Only the Eucharist may count as the true one which takes place under the bishop's authority,' wrote Ignatius, 'and where the Bishop shows himself let the community also be, just as where Jesus Christ is, there also the universal church is.' [*Dogmatics, 111, page 67*]

The result was that it only requires two further steps: **Irenaeus (Bishop of Lyons, 130-200)** stated that the guarantors of the trustworthiness of tradition are the bishops, and **Cyprian (Bishop of Carthage, 248-258)** stated that the Holy Spirit is bound up with the office, and therefore, that church cannot err which is episcopally organized and guaranteed by the continuity of transmission of office. [*Dogmatics, 111, page 69*]

Nothing less than returning to the original, Pauline concept of the Ecclesia can recover the true nature of the church, argued Brunner. The Ecclesia cannot survive without the 'outer shell' of the institutional church, even as the Holy Spirit can only be present in the Ecclesia, and not in the organizational structure of the church.

Karl Barth counters Brunner's views of such a charismatic and communal of the church by asserting that such a 'miraculous' church never existed, apart from a 'romantic' misreading of the New Testament, and that the true source of authority in the church cannot operate apart from being under the order and authority of the Spirit.

§ 10. The Church in the Power of the Spirit

10. 1 The Gift of the Spirit and the formation of the Church

Following Pentecost, the Holy Spirit became the formative presence and power which resulted in the community of God's missionary people - the Church.

Acts 2:38 'repent and be baptized ... you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit': Romans 5:5 God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us': Rom. 6:23'. . . the free gift (*charism*) of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord': I Cor. 7:7 ' . . . each has a particular gift from God, one having one kind and another a different kind': I Cor. 12:4 'now there are varieties of gifts (*charismata*) but the same Spirit.'

The Book of Acts demonstrates clearly the role of the Holy Spirit from Pentecost to the spread of the gospel through the missionary efforts of Paul and others.

10. 2 The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ (Romans 8:2)

Romans 8:2 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death.'
Rom. 8:11 'the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you . . .'

1 . There is no place for setting the Spirit over against law, nor for setting the spirit over against form and tradition. The true spontaneity of the body is found in the head; where members of the body (hands and feet) act spontaneously without co-ordination or direction, the result is a spastic condition, not freedom.

Thus, there is a 'rule' of the Spirit as contrasted with the 'rule' of legalistic form. The rule of the Spirit yields freedom from legalistic rules, but not from rule (law) altogether.

2. Christ is the primary *subject* in the church, and acts through the power of Spirit to effect a liberated and free community.

11 Corinthians 3:17 'where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom': Galatians 5:1 'for freedom Christ has set us free': Gal. 5:25 'if we live by the Spirit let us walk by the Spirit.'

The 'present Christ' is understood, under these circumstances, as a given already invested, so to speak, in the Community. He is not primarily the Expected One in faith in his presence; rather he is 'there' just as anything in the world might be 'there'. This passive 'being there' on the part of Jesus Christ is then actualized in the functions of ,off ice', in the activity of preaching, and particularly in the 'sacraments,' which come to the foreground in this situation. This actualization takes place on the basis of the possibility already established by virtue of the fact that Jesus Christ *is* 'there' already. [Weber, Foundations of Dogmatics, Vol. 11, page 514]

Anderson, on the other hand, considers that the *possibility* of our experiencing Christ as present is due to the *actuality* of his presence in the power of the Holy Spirit. The sacraments and preaching do not actualize Christ, but are only possible as 'real presence' of Christ because of the actuality which precedes the possibility.

3. The charisms of the church are Christ's gifts to the church. Ephesians 4:7-11 'But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift ... to equip the saints for the work of ministry. . .'

Hans Kong ('The Charismatic Structure of the Church' in *Theological Foundations for Ministry*, Ray S Anderson, ed., pp. 479ff.) states that the charismata are basically:

- i. everyday, rather than sensational;
- ii. serviceable, rather than merely miraculous (cf. I Cor. 12:7; Rom. 12:7-8);
- iii. profane, rather than sacred; that is, not restricted to holy orders, but are fully vocational', related to the entire membership of the body;
- iv. diverse, rather than uniform; that is, there are potentially as many different charismata as the needs of the body, and the contribution of the members;
- v. extensive, rather than intensive; that is, rather than being concentrated upon particular positions or people, they are found throughout the membership of the body.

Kong concludes: they are phenomena not exclusive to the early Church, but present and essential elements in the Church. Hence one can speak of a charismatic structure of the Church, which includes but goes far beyond the hierarchical structure of the Church.' Kong defines a charism as 'the call of God, addressed to an individual, to a particular ministry in the community, which brings with it the ability to fulfill that ministry.' [Kong, *The Church*, page 188]

4. The continuing charismatic nature of the church.

All of the charismata are rooted in the single, great charism of God; the new life which has been given to us in Christ Jesus. 'The gift (*charism*) of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.' In the fulness of Christ's grace the riches of spiritual gifts are revealed to us (cf. I Cor. 12:4-6; Ephes. 4:8,11; John 1: 16). Thus, the unity of the charismata as given to the members is established in the unity of the Spirit: I Cor. 12:4,7.

Every member of the body of Christ is 'charismatic' in the sense of having the 'gift' or charism of the Holy Spirit. Subsequent to this gift of salvation, each member also contributes to the life and ministry of the community through being gifted by the Holy Spirit for the edification of

the church and the work of its ministry. See too other charismata - faith (Rom. 12:3), love (I Cor. 13), service (Rom. 12:7); cf. I Cor. 7:7 and I Peter 4:10 for all members being charismatics.

10. 3 Christ as the *Leitourgos* of the Church's life and ministry

1 . The ministry of edification. ' . . . since you are eager for spiritual gifts, strive to excel in them for building up the church.' I Cor. 14:12. The root metaphor of 'edification' (building up) is common to Paul (I Cor. 8:1; 10:23; 14:4,5,12,17,26; 11 Cor. 12:9; Ephes. 4:12, 16, 29; 1 Thess. 5:11). The purpose of spiritual gifts is clearly that of 'serving' Christ, which means to serve and build up the body and ministry of Christ.

Edification is the total ministry of the community, says Karl Barth, and offers up a comprehensive outline of the ministry of the community under the heading of edification (Church Dogmatics, IV/3, page 865-898):

- i. praising of God; the liturgy being the concrete event of service to God;
- ii. proclamation of the gospel;
- iii. instruction;
- iv. evangelisation;
- v. mission;
- vi. theology: theology in solidarity with the world; and theology as a 'way of life' on the part of the community;
- vii. prayer,
- viii. the cure of souls;
- ix. production of examples - Christian life in action;
- x. diakonia - service;
- xi. prophetic ministry;
- xii. fellowship; baptism and the Lord's Supper as significatory actions which establish fellowship.

2. The ministry of divine service - *latreia*

Jesus is the high priest and minister (*leitourgos*) in the sanctuary (Heb. 8:2). The *leitourgos* originally meant a public officer acting for the good of the people, serving at one's own cost or experience. In the greek translation of the Old Testament (LXX) it is used to refer to the priestly service rendered to God. In the New Testament it is used

- of Christians serving Christ (Acts 13:2)
- of those who aid others with their resources (Romans 15:27).

Paul speaks of a service (*latreia*) which is rendered not only to God but to others. 'present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship (*logika latreia*).' (Rom. 12:1). To the Philippian church Paul writes: 'but even if I am being poured out as a libation over the sacrifice and the offering (*leiturgia*) of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you . . . ' (Phil. 2:17). Here Paul sees his own life and ministry as being offered up to God in the *latreia* of the faith of those in Philippi.

The point is this: There is a two fold *latreia*, or service. The first is that *latreia* of God through the gospel where God turns to the world and 'serves' sinful and estranged humanity by ministering grace and mercy through Jesus Christ. There is then a corresponding *latreia*, or service, in which there is offered back up to God the praise and honour due to his name.

In the worship of the church, then, as the true order of Christ's own *latreia*, service to humanity and service of praise to God are joined together. If there is no participation in Christ's service to humanity through the gospel, there can be no real participation in Christ's service to God in the sanctuary.

Barth says that in its worship, the church 'exchanges its working clothes' for its 'festal attire' (Church Dogmatics, IV/2, page 697). The 'working clothes' as well as the 'festal attire' are both part of the divine *latreia* which takes place through Christ.



Study V1

The Sacramental Life of the Church

Introduction

While some groups and denominations within the Church believe the sacraments to be critical for the life and ministry of the Church (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and some Anglicans), others see them as either unimportant or irrelevant (eg. Quakers, Salvation Army). This study considers the notion that Jesus Christ is Himself the Primary Sacrament, and that the function of the sacraments for and in the Church is to re-present Christ to us.

§ 11. Jesus Christ as the Primary Sacrament

11.1 The Concept of Sacrament

1. Sacrament as *mysterion*

The Greek word *mysterion*, as found in the New Testament, was translated by Jerome into Latin as *sacramentum*. In Ephesians 5:32, for example, where Paul speaks of marriage and the 'one flesh' relationship as a great *mysterion*, Jerome used the word *sacramentum*, thereby creating the theological concept of marriage as a sacrament.

The word 'sacrament' originally meant a 'thing set apart as sacred,' and 'a military oath of obedience,' where a citizen of Rome was inducted into the army and loyalty to Caesar, who was considered to have divine status. (cf. Ronald S Wallace, 'Sacrament' in *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*)

Augustine later defined sacrament as a 'visible word,' or an 'outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace: The similarity between the outward form and the hidden grace tended to be stressed. As a result, the ritual of a sacrament came to be regarded as 'conveying grace,' rather than relating humans to God through participation in Christ through faith.

The technical term for this direct mediation of grace through the elements and ritual of a sacrament was described as *ex opere operato* (on the basis of the work wrought). In other words, the grace of God conveyed in the sacrament was not dependent upon the recipient, nor the officiant, but the act itself (see, Berkouwer, *The Sacraments*, page 62).

2. Sacrament and the Word of God

Both Luther and Calvin rejected this doctrine and agreed upon the effective relation of Word to Sacrament and the importance of faith. However, they also wanted to protect the sacraments against an undue subjectivising, a charge which Rome made against the Reformers in their rejection of *ex opere operato*.

Berkouwer points out that the Roman Catholic doctrine contains within it a subjectivising factor itself - there is the necessity of a certain disposition, or rather, the absence of a 'negative disposition' which constitutes the effectiveness of the sacrament. Supernatural grace is prevented from entering the soul if an obstacle is in the way (*The Sacraments*, page 68).

Reformed theology, particularly as found in Calvin, reached beyond the synthesis of objectivity/subjectivity in the Roman doctrine of *ex opere operato* and posited a third possibility. The objectivity in the sacrament is not in the elements or the act but in the 'object of faith,' Jesus Christ, the true *mysterion* (Berkouwer, *The Sacrament* page 72ff.). Thus Calvin took the outward form of the sacrament with full objective seriousness, but did not locate the *mysterion* in the relation between physical sign and grace, but in the person and work of Christ himself. Thus, the grace of the sacrament is the same grace as in justification. For Calvin, the sacrament is directed toward faith in order to nourish and strengthen it. This is what Barth described as Calvin's 'cognitive sacramentalism' (Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV/4, page 130).

3 Sacraments as signs

By the 12th century, the medieval church had concluded that there were 7 sacraments, and the Council of Trent made this a dogma of the church. In addition to Baptism and the Lord's Supper,

Confirmation, Holy Orders, Marriage, Confession, and Extreme Unction. The Reformers rejected the additional five as having no Biblical basis. A sacrament is a sign, but not all signs are sacraments (Berkouwer, *The Sacraments*, page 24). Therefore, the doctrine of the sacraments cannot be based on a phenomenological base, but must be a recognition of those signs through which God has determined to act.

Here we must heed Berkouwer's warning against developing a general concept of sacrament, and then applying it to Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The Bible does not speak of sacrament, but only of those concrete actions directed by Christ (Berkouwer, *The Sacraments*, page 9).

11 :2 Revelation as Sacrament

'Revelation means sacrament' (Barth, C.D., 11/1, p. 52). For God to reveal Godself, this revelation must be disclosed in creaturely objectivity, adapted to our creaturely existence and knowledge. The theological concept of sacrament is thus bound up in the structure and nature of God's revelation.

Thus, there is **ambiguity** from the perspective of the human person the objectification of divine revelation, is not a predication of the creaturely mind - and a **provisional** aspect to revelation - the final Word of revelation encompasses the 'end of history' as well as its significance. This means that there is an eschatological tension between the revelation of God in its historical form and its ultimate reality. This is true both of revelation and sacrament a sign of revelation.

1. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the primary sacrament Jesus Christ is the *mysterion* through which all sacramental 'mystery' is mediated and objectively confirmed (I Tim. 3:16).

In the New Testament *mysterion* denotes an event in the world of time and space which is directly initiated and brought to pass by God alone, so that in distinction from all other events it is basically a mystery to human cognition in respect of its origin and possibility. If it discloses itself to man, this *will* not be from without, but only from within, through itself and therefore once again only through God's revelation.... Faith as a human action is nowhere called (in Scripture) a mystery, nor is Christian obedience, nor love, nor hope, nor the existence and function of the *ecclesia*, nor its proclamation of the Gospel, nor its tradition as such nor baptism, nor the Lord's Supper. [Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/4, page 108-9]

The human nature of Jesus is the sacramental reality of revelation on the ground of the hypostatic union between the divine and human in the one person. **There is attestation, or witness** of God to humans and humans to God in this primary event which is determinative of all secondary occurrences of the Christ event.

For, in the light of the attestation which occurred through the man Jesus, we find the attestation of God wherever it is the attestation of that occurrence. That the eternal Word as such became flesh is a unique occurrence. It happened only once. It is not therefore the starting point for a general concept of incarnation. But its attestation through the existence of the man Jesus is a beginning of which there are continuations; a sacramental continuity stretches backwards into the existence of the people of Israel, whose Messiah He is, and forwards into the existence of the apostolate and the Church founded on the apostolate. The humanity of Jesus Christ as such is the first sacrament, the foundation of everything that God instituted and used in His revelation.... And, as this first sacrament, the humanity of Jesus Christ is at the same time the basis reality and substance of the highest possibility of the creature as such. [Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 11/2, page 54]

2. The true *mysterion* is located in the single event of the incarnate presence of God in Jesus Christ.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are regarded in the New Testament as two aspects of the one event. There is, therefore, properly speaking, one sacrament, of which Baptism and the Lord's Supper are correlated expressions.

The language that the New Testament uses about Baptism is interchangeable with that it uses concerning the Lord's Supper. cf. Mark 10:38f; I Cor. 10:1ff.; 12:12-13.

Thus, the relation between Baptism and the Lord's Supper is bound up in the Word of God as incarnate, inscripturated, and proclaimed. This locates the objective reality of the sacraments in the presence of Christ both as an event within salvation history and as the Lord of the Church. There is a primary objectivity through Christ to which both the objective (physical) and subjective (personal) nature of the sacraments are bound.

Here it is important to see that the true *mysterion* is located in the primary objectivity - the incarnation - and not in the secondary objectivity, the physical aspects of the sacrament. In the sacrament, undergirded by the Word of God and attended by the Spirit of Christ, the sacramental action of the church itself takes place, through which the mysteries of the Kingdom concerning Jesus Christ are made known. The original **presentation** of God to humans and humans to God becomes a **re-presentation** in the sacramental life of the church.

§12. Sacrament as the Re-Presentation of Christ

12. 1 The sacrament gives to the church a 'communion in the mystery of Christ,' and thus the sacrament is a true sign of this mystery.

Matthew 18:20 'for where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.' John 14:21,23 'They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.... Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.'

According to Torrance, Calvin meant by the term 'signify' as used of a sacrament, or the term 'present,' not merely that which recalls to memory, or that which symbolizes a thing, but that which designates the thing itself, that which re-presents a thing; thus the sacrament is an act of re-presenting the same Word which is given in the incarnation (*Conflict and Agreement //*, page 140-141). . . . *kerygma* is in the fullest sense the sacramental action of the Church through which the mystery of the Kingdom concerning Christ and His Church, hid from the foundation of the world, is now being revealed in history ... in *kerygma* the same word continues to be 'made flesh' in the life of the Church.' [T F Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement //*, page 158-159]

The very withdrawal of Jesus from visible and direct relation to the world casts the church into an eschatological relation with Christ the head of the church. The church lives between the cross and the *parousia* and thus the original sacramental relation of the creature to the creator in the hypostatic union (incarnation) is now re-presented through the enactment of the life of the church itself. But in this re-presentation the full presence of the *parousia* is screened, permitting the church to have a genuine history in relation to the world. In God's revealing to and through the church in Jesus Christ, God also is concealed in order to be present, not merely as another 'presence' alongside the existence of others, but in and through their existence. (Barth, C.D. II/I. page 55).

Here is the danger of idolatry in the sacrament - 'The call to worship can be the temptation to idolatry,' said Barth, but this is a call which cannot be avoided (*C.D.*, III, page 55). The work and sign of Christ's presence is not frustrated by unbelief, however, precisely because the re-presentation is governed from the side of divine action, 'offense can be taken' through the substitution of the sign for that which is not signified (Barth, C.D. , II/1, page 55-56). This danger of 'offense' seems to be greater for one who stands within the church than the one who comes in from without, and may actually be an 'unbeliever' in the church's eyes (cf. I Cor. 11).

12.2 The Eschatological aspect of Sacrament

1 Jesus, is the *eschatos* - the one who is the 'end of the age,' the final Word of God to humans, who has already come, us present, and yet to come.

In Christ, the eschaton broke into the present and yet the final Word of judgment and present redemptive action of the Word are 'held apart' to leave room for repentance and faith. Cf. Mark 2: the healing of the paralytic. An interval of time occurs between the word of forgiveness and the healing of the body. This is what Torrance called, an 'eschatological reserve' between the Word of the Kingdom and its power (*Conflict and Agreement //*, page 159).

The church is redeemed, not in Word only, but in power, and yet it waits for the redemption of the body. The sacrament functions to preserve this unity between Word and power while maintaining the eschatological tension. The word of forgiveness is proclaimed, yet the healing of

the body (resurrection) is delayed. As we shall see, this means that all healing is provisional, and a miraculous healing may be understood itself as a kind of sacrament of the resurrection.

2. There is a 'presence in absence,' associated with the sacrament.

Paul says, 'from now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way.' 11 Cor. 5:16. In the words of the institution that Paul received for the Lord's Supper he says, 'Do this in remembrance of me.... For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes' (I Cor. 11:24, 26).

The 'until he comes' portrays for us the provisional nature of the sacramental life of the Church. With the ascension Christ withdraws from one form of presence to enter into a new form of presence, attested in the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, among other forms.

The sacraments point to their own disappearance as interim events sustaining the life of the church between pentecost and resurrection. 'The really significant event in Baptism is a hidden event; it recedes from sight in the ascension of Christ and waits to be revealed full at the last day.' (Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement* //, page 167).



Study VII

The Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Introduction

John the Baptist announced the coming of the Messiah, who would baptize with the Spirit and fire. He was astonished by the Messiah coming to be baptized with water. This study considers the baptism of Jesus as the basis for Christian baptism, and as an expression of obedience and hope. Then it covers the Lord's Supper as inauguration of the 'new covenant', with this event as fontal for the life the community of the Kingdom, in history and future, and the Supper as signifying the faithfulness and freedom of God. It also focuses on Jesus as the objective reality of both sacraments.

§13. Baptism as an Event within Covenant/Salvation History

13. 1 The baptism of Jesus is the basis for Christian baptism

Jesus is baptized by John in the Jordan (Matt. 3:13ff.). The Baptism of John was a polemic against the Jews who assumed that they had standing within the Kingdom of God by virtue of their circumcision. Proselyte baptism of Gentiles was on the basis of their non-circumcision. Thus, for a circumcised Jew to be baptized by John was virtually to say that one was a 'gentile' in the eyes of God! (Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/4, page 45ff.)

Behind the motif of proselyte baptism lies the powerful theology of participation in the Exodus event the crossing of the Red Sea, and the sanctificatory cleansing in the establishment of the covenant of Sinai. Torrance states that Paul uses the language of proselyte baptism in I Cor. 10:1ff; 11 Cor. 5:17; 6:14ff.; 7:11; Romans 6:15ff; Ephes. 2:11ff (Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement* 11 pp. 961).

For We Jew to be baptized was a blow struck at the heart of the security claimed by adherence to Mosaic law, drawing the Jew under the judgment of the law and driving them to repentance and hope in the one who baptizes with the Spirit. The baptism by John had its counterpart in the cleansing of the temple by Jesus in preparation for his sacrifice as the Lamb of God, a cleansing which points to the sanctification of the church. For Jesus to submit to John's baptism, was an act of obedience and hope through which he drew his own humanity into the judgment which the law demands, offering up through that humanity the obedient response in hope to the Father. In this sense, Jesus' baptism by John was substitutionary and was completed in his baptism of blood on the Cross when he died as the representative of all.

Luke 12:50 'I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed!' (cf. Mark 10:38). To reject John's baptism was to reject the very counsel of God: Luke 7:30 'But by refusing to be baptized by him, the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves.'

In baptism, the church binds itself to the covenant/salvation history of Christ. Jesus is the baptized one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit (John 1:33), thus continuing the work of his own baptism.

13.2 Christ as the objective reality of baptism

1. Baptism is salvation through reconciliation as a divine act.

In rejecting the *ex opere operato*, the reformers were careful not to separate baptism from salvation, for the New Testament directly links baptism with a salvation event.

I Cor. 10:11ff. - baptism corresponds to the Exodus; Titus 3:5 'He saved us ... by the washing of regeneration'; I Peter 3:21 'baptism ... now saves you - not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ'; cf. also Galatians 3:27; Rom. 6:4; Ephes. 5:26; Acts 22:16; John 3:3-5.

Baptism, says Berkouwer, is indeed 'a cause of grace' (*The Sacraments*, page 112). However, the objective character of baptism as saving grace is bound to the redemptive event of Christ's life, death and resurrection. The original 'regenerative' aspect of baptism is the 'regeneration' of the body of Christ in resurrection. It is the humanity of Christ that is regenerated through his baptism (death and resurrection). Our baptism is a sign and seal of our participation and regeneration in his own new life, but always with the eschatological tension between Word and power of this act.

Thus, the regenerative aspect of baptism is associated with the 'baptism of the Holy Spirit' (1Cor 12:12-13), not with the physical act itself.

2. Baptism is salvation through faith as a divine act of grace.

There is no disjunction between the objective aspect of baptism as a divine work and the human appropriation of baptism as a subjective act through faith and water on the part of the human subject. Faith is not a condition which effectually causes baptism to regenerate, but regeneration through the Holy Spirit effectually binds the human subject through faith to the salvation of Christ. Paul repeatedly refers baptism to the historical work of Christ in obtaining salvation. There is no 'second cause' of salvation through baptism allowed in the form of faith as a subjective act. The fact that faith is indispensable to baptism issues out of the fact that baptism of the Holy Spirit is the effective cause of faith, apart from which there would be no sharing in the baptism of Christ.

The unity, the point of juncture between faith and baptism, is not found in the sequence of human or interpersonal acts but in him. That removes them from the realm of manipulation. We can neither see faith based in baptism, nor see baptism grounded in faith. Both are based in the salvific act of God in Jesus Christ which is effectively communicated to us through the Holy Spirit. The error of the Anabaptist view is that it places this conjunction of human faith and humanly given and received baptism in a temporal sequence, whereas they can only be understood in a pneumatic way in their conjunction. What they failed to see is the surpassing significance of the Covenant, concluded in Jesus Christ and directed towards the Eschaton, still to come in terms of its visibility. This failure will always arise when human behaviour, faith, and a human-ecclesiastical action, baptism, are brought together as such. In that situation, faith will be examined for its controllable correctness and durability. And in that situation, baptism becomes an inner-worldly, calculable consequence of faith, but only in that situation! The Covenant of God surpasses both faith and baptism and comprehends them both. [Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics* //, page 609]

The temporal or chronological sequence of faith and water baptism are both relative to the baptism of Christ. As the base of the 'triangle,' faith and water baptism converge in the 'apex' of Christ as the objective reality and content of both baptism and faith.

13.3 Baptism as obedience and hope

1. Obedience

There is a place for a truly human response in salvation, objectively made possible by the human response (obedience) of Jesus, and subjectively made possible by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1Cor. 12:12-13). Thus, baptism carries an imperative, a command, to be conformed to the death of Christ and to his resurrection (Romans 12:11ff.). To ignore this imperative is to forfeit the place given to our humanity by the work of reconciliation accomplished in Christ.

Baptism may therefore be linked with conversion:

- i. it is concrete visible act, by which conversion becomes a matter of public knowledge;
- ii. it is a social, communal act, by which the church as the community of Christ attests to its sanctification and cleansing by the Word and Spirit;
- iii. it is a free, obedient act, by which the true beginning of a human decision is directed to its proper goal - Jesus Christ (Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/4, pages 135-136)

Thus, Barth concludes that baptism involves both renunciation and pledge, by which the human act of obedience follows justification and sanctification as the objective grounds for salvation.

2. Hope

There is a goal announced in baptism, which is the eschaton - the reality sealed by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The goal of baptism does not lie in its administration in a teleological sense, as though one could produce or determine a 'result.' Rather, the goal is eschatological, baptism directs us to baptism by the Holy Spirit, which as both source and goal, is transcendent and yet present.

It would be strange if Christian baptism were plainly better and stronger than that of Jesus in the sense that it had its goal somehow within itself, in the faith of the community, in that of the candidates in an efficacy proper to the act because somehow imparted to it or change which they undergo in, with and under the baptismal water. Christian baptism, like John's, is in no sense a self-sufficient act which is in some way divinely fulfilled or self-fulfilling itself. [Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/4, page 70-71]

Baptism is the foundation of the Christian life from below, in correspondence with its goal as already achieved in the event of redemptive history - God's act of judgment and grace, of salvation and revelation through Jesus Christ. Luther, when under stress and temptation, took a chalk and wrote on his table: *baptizatus sum* - I have been baptized; thus the goal becomes itself a source of strength and hope.

§14. The Lord's Supper as an Event within Covenant/Salvation History

14.1 The inauguration of the 'new covenant' in the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

The antecedents of the Lord's Supper can be located in the history of redemption as portrayed through Israel.

- i. the Passover meal with its commemoration of the exodus from Egypt, with its meal of unleavened bread;
- ii. the assimilation of the covenant meal (*Kiddush*) at Mt Sinai which took account of the mighty events of Israel's redemption to the Passover, with the addition of the rite of sanctification using a cup of wine (Exodus 24:11);
- iii. the rite of thanksgiving (*Chaburah* meal) or blessing along with the breaking of bread at the start of the meal along with the cup of wine at the end (cf. Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement II*, pp. 134-5).

Jesus seems self-consciously to draw these elements together in his own identification with the messianic implications of these rites.

Jesus must have followed the Jewish custom of passing round a cup of wine in token of thanksgiving to God; but before that was done, a piece of bread and a cup of wine were set aside for the Messiah in case He should suddenly come to His own in the midst of the feast. Then at the end of the meal, fully charged with pascal and covenantal significance, Jesus took the bread and wine set aside for the Messiah, and said, 'This is my body broken for you. This is my blood which is shed for you.' By breaking the bread and giving it to the disciples, by passing round the cup, He associated them with His sacrifice, giving their existence in relation to Himself a new form in the Kingdom of God, indeed constituting them as the Church congregate with Himself. [Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement II*, page 170]

14.2 The apostolic recognition of this event as foundational for their new life in the mystery of the Kingdom.

After the resurrection and ascension the disciples understood why, again and again, Jesus had gathered the lost sheep of the House of Israel, the cultically unclean and those debarred from the temple liturgy of sacrifice, and although it scandalized the priests He deliberately broke down the barriers erected by the cultus, and enacted in their midst a sign of the Messianic Meal, when many would come from the east and the west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven. That eschatological meal was not an eating and drinking between holy priests and people, but the marriage

supper of the Lamb, who because he had come to bear their sin, gathered the poor and the outcast, the weary and the heavy laden, the publicans and sinners, and fed them with the bread of life and gave them living water to drink. The disciples remembered also the parables of the prodigal son and his feasting in the father's house, of the bridegroom and the wedding feast and the final judgment which would those who had given or not given food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty, and they understood their bearing upon the Lord's Supper as the great eschatological meal of the Kingdom of God through which that very Kingdom is realized here and now, as far as may be in the conditions of this passing world. The disciples recalled, too, those Galilean meals of fellowship with Jesus, the miraculous feeding of the multitudes by the Great Shepherd of the sheep, and the equally wonderful words He spoke about manna and water, about His flesh and blood, and the lifegiving Spirit, and they knew that what had been parable and sign and miracle then had at last materialized in the Eater breaking of bread. [Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement II* page 1691]

The resurrection qualifies the last Supper, and transforms it into an eschatological representation of Christ; his presence continues to be with the, yet it is a 'presence in absence.' Thus, we have to distinguish, in a doctrine of the 'real presence' of Christ in the elements of the Lord's Supper, between the eschatological *parousia* and the final *parousia* in judgment and new creation. It is the same Jesus who is present through re-presentation, and yet this presence is veiled so as to create a space between the Word of forgiveness and the final power of healing for the church to reach out and bind the lost into this fellowship.

Certainly bread and wine are signs, in contrast to 'something' else. They remain what they are - it is senseless the speculate about whether their 'substance' is transformed. But, on the other hand, they are certainly no random 'signs.' . . . They are elect signs, destined for their meaning. What gives them their validity is neither our faith, nor their symbolic power, nor any salvific effectuality which inheres in them intrinsically, but solely the intended historical act of Jesus. There is no 'something' which is present in them. He has determined that they will be the 'elements' of the Supper which he conducts with his disciples, 'until he comes.' Therefore, the 'est' is to be understood neither significantly nor synedochally, but 'salvation-historically,' historical in the sense of eschatological history. he has determined himself to give his own a share in himself in that they receive these 'elements' within the context of the Meal. In the Meal, that is, in the giving and talking of bread and wine, he desires to be present among his own - and 'to take them into the victory of his lordship by the power of the Holy Spirit.' [Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics II*, page 627]

14.3 Jesus Christ as the objective reality of the Lord's Supper.

1 The mode of sacramental relation reflects the mode of hypostatic union between humanity and deity in Christ.

Christ as the objective union of human and divine in his own person is also the objective **presence** of God to humans and humans to God. All forms and theories with regard to this 'presence' are relative to this objective 'presence' of God in Christ. Again, we must say that the *mysterion* is located in the Incarnate One, not in the mechanical or supernatural relation between physical element and spiritual grace.

2 The medieval doctrine of **transubstantiation** was confirmed in 1215 as official dogma. This formulation of the relation of Christ to the elements takes the is, 'this is my body' with the strictest literalism. Philosophically, this miracle was explained by Thomas Aquinas on the basis of the Aristotelian distinction between the accidents of a thing (its perceptible characteristics, such as taste, texture), and the essence or substance of a thing (the true reality of a thing). Thus, in the miracle of transubstantiation, when the prayer of the Priest invokes the presence of Christ into the elements, the substance of bread is transformed into the substance of flesh, while the accidental qualities of bread remain. Thus Christ is assumed to be actually present as real substance in the bread and wine, leading to the adoration of the elements as well as a propitiatory immolation of Christ in a 'sacrifice.' (cf. Geoffrey Bromiley, 'Transubstantiation', in *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, page 531 see also Berkouwer, *The Sacraments*, page 219ff.).

The Reformers agreed on the rejection of this notion of 'real presence' and sacrifice based on the doctrine of transubstantiation, with Luther holding that Christ is truly present 'under and with the elements,' in such a way that the humanity of Christ becomes capable of omnipresence wherever the Lord's supper is held due to the doctrine of the ubiquity of the human nature of Jesus.

This is explained in Lutheran theology by the concept of *communicatio idiomatum* - where the properties belonging to one of the natures of Christ is fully incorporated into the other. Some have termed this Lutheran view, 'consubstantiation.' 'What is the sacrament of the Altar? It is the true Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, given unto us Christians to eat and to drink, as it was instituted by Christ Himself.' (Luther, Small Catechism, Book of Concord 1, page 374.)

Calvin, on the other hand, while denying 'real presence' in terms of substance, spoke in terms of a 'spiritual' presence of Christ in the form of the assembled company of believers who receive the elements. . . . he has favored his church with another sacrament, a spiritual banquet, in which Christ testifies himself to be the bread of life, to feed our souls for a true and blessed immortality.... Now, the only food of our souls is Christ, . . . '(Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.17.1)

The view of Zwingli tended to be more of a memorial supper focussing on the historical event of Christ's death and resurrection, with his presence 'in the Spirit,' so that the sacramental elements themselves were totally symbolic, possessing no qualities of 'presence.' 'The presence of Christ' in the Lord's Supper is understood by Zwingli in an 'idealistic' fashion, so to speak, by Luther in a tangible-'objective' fashion, by Melancthon in an actual fashion, and by Calvin in a spiritual fashion.' (Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics II* page 632)

Karl Barth adds a warning: 'from the standpoint of the community itself, of the company assembled round the table of the Lord, what takes place will always be highly problematic.' *C.D.*, IV/2, page 704.

3. The eschatological union between creature and creator grounds the church both in a history as well as in a future.

The Lord's supper reaches back into the event of Christ's death - 'On the night on which he was betrayed.' It also reaches forward into the future - 'Until he comes' (I Cor. 11:23,26). 'Through the Eucharist the Church becomes, so to speak, the great arch that spans history, supported by only two pillars, the Cross which stands on this side of time, and the coming of Christ in power which stands at the end of history.' (Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement //*, page 171)

David Watson suggests that the Lord's Supper causes the Christian to look in four directions:

- i. to look *back* by remembering God's mercy when he delivered his people from bondage; and to the Cross, the great event of deliverance from sin;
- ii. to look *in* by purifying oneself from everything evil;
- iii. to look *around* by including one's entire household as well as the stranger;
- iv. to look *forward* by anticipating the coming of Christ and the completion of the Messianic age. (Watson, *I Believe in the Church*, pages 237-241)

14.4 The Lord's Supper as faithfulness and freedom; as upholding and uplifting (See Barth *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, pp. 702ff.)

1. Faithfulness: 'where two or three are gathered in my name, there I will be with them.' (Matt. 18:20).

There is an 'upholding' of those who bear the name of Christ, a faithful act on the part of Christ, binding himself to our time and place. We are affirmed and 'named' even in our inability to believe. Christ comes to us through the act of receiving the elements, we do not 'ascend' to Christ through the elements. Thus, to 'discern the body' (I Cor. 11), is to perceive the presence of Christ in each other. The issue of the presence of an 'unbeliever' at the Lord's table is not dealt with by Paul in I Cor. 11. His emphasis is on the 'unworthy' partaking, not an 'unworthy person.'

Wesley considered the Lord's supper to be a 'converting ordinance,' where non Christians would come to know Christ.

One of the salient features of the Methodist Revival was the fact that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper came to be regarded not simply as a confirming, but as a converting ordinance. . . the Lord's Supper can mark the beginning of the Christian life. It would be possible to give a lengthy list of early Methodists who were, like Susannah Wesley, the mother of John and Charles, converted at the Lord's Supper. It was the actual experience of the Lord's Supper as a converting ordinance that led the Wesley's so insistently to contend for its use by men and women *before* conversion. They took this stand against the Moravians who would have denied the Sacrament to all except those who had received full assurance of faith. [John C Bowmer, *The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in Early Methodism*, (Dacre Press: 1951), pages 106-7; see also John R Parris, *John Wesley's Doctrine of the Sacraments* (Epworth: 1963), pp. 68ff.)

Weber argues that the Lord's Supper should not be viewed in this 'evangelistic' way:

The Meal is not a means of mission; it has never been that. The totality within which and in which Christ through the Holy Spirit gives himself to us is a mystery. But in this it is important that the proprium of the Supper in comparison with baptism, which is also physical, is that it deals with us in our supra-individual (and not just trans-subjective) existence as the Community. [Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics II*, page 636]

At the same time, Weber says further:

The New Testament has no trace of the tea of 'partaking on the part of unworthy people.' There is also no reason to interrogate the participants at the Supper about their 'worthiness' or 'unworthiness' or to investigate it. This is all the more remarkable since otherwise there is definitely the practice of 'ecclesiastical discipline.' What we do find in Scripture is the term 'unworthy' (*anaxios*) in I Corinthians 11:27. There is the 'partaking' which is itself 'unworthy' (*manducatio indigna*), but there is no trace of the idea of 'partaking by those who are unworthy . . . The question of the 'partaking by the unbeliever,' or as it is put in the Wittenberg Concord, the 'partaking by the unworthy' (*manducatio indignorum*), is not raised by the New Testament. It is a question which arises in the practice and teaching of the Church. [Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics II*, page 6451]

2. Freedom

There *is* an 'uplifting' of our own humanity, a freely given participation in the life of God.

This in turn transforms the whole conception of the analogical relation in the sacramental participation. Not only is it one which has Christological content, but it is an active analogy, the kind by which we are conducted upward to spiritual things, and are more and more raised up to share in the life of God. This is an elevation or exaltation into fellowship with the divine life through the amazing condescension of the Son who has been pleased to unite Himself with us in our poverty and unrighteousness, that through redemption, justification, sanctification, eternal life, and all the other benefits that reside in Christ we may be endowed with divine riches, even with the life and love that overflow in Christ from God Himself. [Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement II*, page 145]

In the Lord's Supper we 'celebrate' divine service as an act of thanksgiving for God's rendering of service to us through Christ (Barth, C.D., IV/2, page 702) This *eucharist* is properly that of the Son to the Father into which we are uplifted as we fellowship with Christ in the Spirit through the communion (*koinonia*) of the meal. cf. John 16:32-33; 17:24.

Thus the sacrament is an action in which we receive Christ and feed upon His Body and Blood by faith, giving thanks for what He has done in the whole course of His obedience, but it also an action in which we set forth the bread and wine and plead the merits of Christ, taking shelter in His sole and sufficient Mediation and advocacy on our behalf, and lift up our hearts in praise and thanksgiving for His triumphant resurrection and for His ascension, in which we cling to the royal intercessions of the ascended Lord who is set down on the throne of God Almighty.... It is our entering within the veil through Christ, who ever lives to make intercession for us and our consecration before the face of the Father. [Torrance, *Conflict and Agreement II*, page 145]



Study VIII

The Church as Incarnational Community

Introduction

Just how is Jesus related to the world, and how should the church engage in its life and ministry, in the world, yet being distinct from the world? This study considers these questions, concentrating on the way in which Christ is currently present in and to the world, taking seriously the implications of the incarnation for God's continued solidarity with the world in the humanity of Jesus. Issues to be treated therefore include the fact of the church, experiencing the fullness of God in Christ, yet sharing in the self-giving and self-emptying for the world, the obligations the church has to God and to the world, and the differences which continue to obtain between the church and the world.

§ 15. The Form of Christ in the World

15. 1 The Church as a 'kenotic community'

There is at the heart of reconciliation the solidarity with the world which the church does not take on as an extra-curricula activity, but which is constituted of its very existence as the 'kenotic community.' (See, 'Living in the World,' in Ray S Anderson, ed. in *Theological Foundations for Ministry*, chapter 19, pages 567-594). The 'kenosis' of Christ is the 'self-emptying' (Phil. 2) which constitutes the inner movement of condescension and humility which characterizes the life of the Son to the Father (see *Historical Transcendence and the Reality of the God*, Ray S Anderson, pages 227-238; 252-276; Barth, C. D., IV/3, pp. 769ff.).

As Jesus drew his disciples into his own 'self-emptying' life and ministry of obedience and service to the Father on behalf of the world, he formed them into a 'kenotic community.' As the continuing presence of Christ in the world following Pentecost, the church exists as the 'place' where the world can discover and experience its own participation in the 'self-emptying' of God in Christ for the sake of their reconciliation and salvation.

1. The reformation of human existence in the form of Christ.

The church is not 'formed' by its own efforts, nor is it 'conformed' to the world (Romans 12). Rather, the church is conformed to Christ, who 'though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.' (Phil. 2:6).

The 'form of Christ' in the world thus become the paradigm for the church in the world. This form is not a principle or style to be adopted by an already existing institution, nor who is in the world as one who shares in human solidarity as the incarnation of God in human flesh.

The form of the church is thus 'incarnational', not another incarnation, but a continuing of the one incarnate life of God in the form of Jesus Christ.

2. In this presence of the church in the world as incarnational community, it confronts the world in its true nature.

The world must be known as it really is; but the world itself does not know this:

The world does not know itself. It does not know God, nor man, nor the relationship and covenant between God and man. Hence it does not know its own origin, state or goal. It does not know what divides nor what unites. It does not know either its life and salvation or its death and destruction. It is blind to its own reality. Its existence is a groping-in the dark. [Barth, C.D., IV/3, page 769]

Thus, the revelation and knowledge of God in Christ is also the revelation and knowledge of the world as to its true nature. This is to know the world as:

- i) affirmed by God, even in its fallenness (I Tim. 4:4; Gen. 1)

'Whoever sets eyes on the body of Jesus Christ in faith can never again speak of the world as though it were lost, as though it were separated from Christ.; he can never with clerical arrogance set himself as apart from the world.' [Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, page 205]

- ii) brought under judgment through revelation of grace.

In the cross all human possibility is brought to an end; Jesus brings the whole of human under judgment; this cuts through all presumption based on the intrinsic ability of the creature apart from the Creator. This is a judgment against human ideologies as well as human institutions and human religions.

- iii) reconciled in the humanity of God.

Easter is the affirmation of hope in the face of all possibilities.

'... in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.' 11Cor 5:19.

'... (in) the incarnation of God in Christ ... all men are taken up, enclosed and borne within the body of Christ, and that this is just what the congregation of the faithful are to make known to the world by their words and by their lives.' [Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, page 206]

However, Bonhoeffer goes on to say that this testimony is 'foreign' to the world, and will actually be a threat when announced. Because this is a reconciling word it carries as its presupposition the judgment of God. **Grace first kills and then makes** alive.

15.2 The formation of Christ in the world

1. The church does not 'possess' Christ as its own.

'Everything would be ruined if one were to try to reserve Christ for the Church and to allow the world only some kind of law, even if it were a Christian law. Christ dies for the world, and it is only in the midst of the world that Christ is Christ.' [Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, pp. 205-206] Cf. the parable in Matthew 25:31-46. The formation of Christ in the world occurs through the outcast, through the imprisoned, through the poor, the hungry, the naked.

It is not as though the world needs the church in order to have Christ; the church also needs the world in order to know Christ.

2. Christ's existence in the world is thus 'non-religious' or 'worldly.'

Here we find Bonhoeffer's endeavour to think out the form of Christ in the world at its most radical and incarnational.

What do a church, a community, a sermon, a liturgy, a Christian life mean in a religionless world? How do we speak of God - without religion? ... In what way are we 'religionless-secular' Christians, in what way are we the ekklesia, those who are called forth, not regarding ourselves from a religious point of view as specially favoured, but rather as belonging wholly to the world? ... What is the place of worship and prayer in a religionless situation. [Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, page 281-2, pp 369ff.]

Thus there is a certain 'boundary-lessness' to the church in the world. Because Christ is the true centre, there are no longer any boundaries by which one can determine or define the existence of God in the world. A boundary mentality for the church becomes, insular, positivistic, and distorting. This raises the question of church membership, participation in the Lord's Supper, as well as all religious distinctives which are turned outward toward the world in order to create this 'boundary.'

§16. The Reality of the World for the Church

In Christ we are offered the possibility of partaking in the reality of God and in the reality of the world, but not in the one without the other. The reality of God discloses itself only by setting me entirely in the reality of the world, and when I encounter the reality of the world it is always already sustained, accepted and reconciled in the reality of God. This is the inner meaning of the revelation of God in the man Jesus Christ.... One is denying the revelation of God in Jesus Christ if one tries to be 'Christian' without seeing and recognizing the world in Christ. (Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, page 195f.)

16. 1 The solidarity between the church and the world

'... the true community of Jesus Christ does not exist esoterically and invisibly but visibly and exoterically, so that it may be noted by the world around.' (Barth, C.D., IV/3, page 772.)

0 Weber says:

Seen Christologically, every rejection of the world by the Community would have to place in question 'docetically' the incarnation of Jesus Christ. It would have to have been the case that God did not become 'true man' in Jesus Christ if the Community were intended not to be 'truly' in the world. But above all, the victory of the Resurrected One over the 'cosmos' (John 13:33) would have to be disregarded if the Community were supposedly to understand the 'world' solely as a confusing, alien reality, to be held at a distance and excluded. [0 Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics* //, page 525-6]

The incarnational solidarity between Christ and the world binds the church to the world and the world to the church in a critical but positive tension of judgment and reconciliation, of sin and grace.

Solidarity with the world means full commitment to it, unreserved participation in its situation, in the promise given it by creation, in its responsibility for the arrogance, sloth and falsehood which reign within it, in its suffering under the resultant distress, but primarily and supremely in the free grace of God demonstrated and addressed to it in Jesus Christ, and therefore in its hope ... Solidarity with the world means that those who are genuinely pious approach the children of the world as such, that those who are genuinely righteous are not ashamed to sit down with the unrighteous as friends, that those who are genuinely wise do not hesitate to seem to be fools among fools, and that those who are genuinely holy are not too good or irreproachable to go down into 'hell' in a very secular fashion ... since Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, [the church] can exist in worldly fashion, not unwillingly nor with a bad conscience, but willingly and with a good conscience. It consists in the recognition that its members also bear in themselves and in some way actualise all human possibilities. [Barth, C.D., IV/3, page 773-4]

Barth adds, that the church may have often to engage in tactical withdrawal from the world, but never strategic withdrawal (C.D., IV/3, page 780.)

16.2 There is an obligation which the church has to the world

This obligation is the responsibility for the world, or to the world which Christ assumed in coming to the World. One cannot discharge obligation to God and at the same time be irresponsible toward the world. James makes a scathing indictment of such a contradiction: James 2:14-26; cf. I John 3:11-18.

'You are not at all like my rose,' he said, 'as yet you are nothing. No one has tamed you, and you have tamed no one. You are like my fox when I first knew him. He was only a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But I have made him my friend, and now he is unique in all the world.... Men have forgotten this truth,' said the fox. 'But you must not forget it. You become responsible forever, for what you have tamed. You are responsible for your rose.... One runs the risk of weeping a little, if one lets himself be tamed.' [from, *The Little Prince*, by Antoine de Saint Exupery]

'I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, ...'(John 15:16).

16.3 There is a contradiction which must be borne within the 'Same body'

The tension between Christ and the world is an irreconcilable contradiction. The darkness does not know the light; those who are part of Christ are 'not of the world' (John 3:19-20; 17:9, 16, 25).

This contradiction cannot be synthesized into a 'religious' humanity. This dissolves the contradiction and leads to presumption and self righteousness (cf. the Pharisees in Jesus' day).

The reconciliation of the world to God produces and sustains the contradiction for the sake of its healing. Thus, the 'kenotic' community exposes the contradiction by virtue of its solidarity with the world - the Christian and the world are in 'the same boat.'

Barth discusses the problem between the reconciliation actualised in Christ and the contemporary situation of the Christian in the world as the 'divine problem,' and says that God takes up this 'problem' and solves it in the presence and action of the Holy Spirit (*C.D.*, IV/2, pp. 3421).

16.4 There remains a 'difference in solidarity.'

'In Jesus Christ the community and the rest of humanity constitute a differentiated, yet in this differentiation firmly integrated, whole.' [Barth, *C. D.*, IV/3, page 826]. Thus Barth says:

- i) the world would be lost without Jesus Christ and His Word and Work;
- ii) the world would not necessarily be lost if there were no church;
- iii) the church would be lost if it had no counterpart in the world. (*C.D.*, IV/3, page 826).

The 'difference' is the presence of Christ - 'Where two or three are, there am I . . .' (Matt. 18:20).



Study IX

The Church as a Ministering Community

Introduction

The thesis of this study is that the ministry of the Church is the continuation of the service of Jesus Christ, who continues to serve the Father on behalf of the church and the world. We will consider the calling (through baptism) of Christians to be servants, and the church's ministry of proclamation, sacramental life, fellowship, healing the sick; finally the church as a community of intercession, witness, and reconciliation.

§ 17. The Ministry of Christ for the World

17.1 Jesus Christ is the *diakonos par excellence*, the one who serves the Father on behalf of the world.

(See, 'Service in Jesus Christ', T F Torrance, *Theological Foundations for Ministry*, Ray S Anderson, ed. chapter 26).

The world must be known as it really is; but the world itself does not know this:

Christ was Himself the *diakonos par excellence* whose office it was not only to prompt the people of God in their response to the divine mercy and to be merciful themselves, not only to stand out as the perfect model or example of compassionate service to the needy and distressed, but to provide in Himself and in His own deeds of mercy the creative ground and source of all such *diakonia*. He was able to do that because in Him God Himself descended to share with men their misery and distress, absorbed the sharpness of their hurt and suffering into Himself, and poured Himself out in infinite love to relive their need, and He remains able to do that because He is Himself the outgoing of the innermost Being of God toward men in active sympathy and compassion, the boundless mercy of God at work in human existence, unlimited in His capacity to deliver them out of all their troubles.[Torrance, 'Service in Jesus Christ', *Theological Foundations for Ministry*, page 718]

1. The diakonal nature of Jesus' life and ministry: cf. Barth, C. D., IV/3, pp. 604ff. 831ff .

Jesus came 'not to be ministered unto, but to minister (Mark 10:45)'. 'I am among you ... as one who serves' (Luke 22:27). Jesus assumes the role of a servant in the footwashing of the disciples (John 13:2ff).

- i). He condescended to share and absorb human hurt, taking upon himself the sicknesses and weakness of humanity;
- ii). he allied himself with persons against evil, as their advocate, casting out the demons, restoring health and wholeness;
- iii). he hazards his own existence, placing himself in the judgment which falls on the sinner, taking upon himself the sins and weaknesses of the people (cf. Mark 1:40ff);
- iv). he places himself in concrete situations of human existence, where he serves God by extending mercy and serves humans by raising up a response of prayer and faith to God;
- v). he creates a healing reconciliation in his body, uniting both judgment and mercy, creating a new humanity out of old estrangements.

2. The diakonal nature of the disciples

All of this is the incarnational nature of *diakonal* existence. He drew his disciples into his *diakonal* life, and made *diakonia* the essential mark of the church (cf. *Historical Transcendence and the Reality of God*, Ray Anderson, pp. 275-276).

17.2 The diakonal nature of the Christian's life and ministry.

1. The role of the *diakonos*.

The role of the *diakonos* in Greek society was not an honorable one. The only person with lower status would have been the *doulos*, the bond slave, a term which Paul likes to use in referring to his own indentured relation to Jesus Christ (cf. Rom. 1:1). While the term *doulos* refers primarily to one's status, *diakonos* referred primarily to one's role or function.

'in the eyes of the Greeks such service (*diakonia*) was undignified and menial ... the only *diakonia* regarded as honourable was that rendered to the State.' (C E B Cranfield, 'Diakonia in the New Testament' in *Service in Christ*, James McCord and T H L Parker, eds. Eerdmans, 1966, page 37). In the New Testament, *diakonia* is used to refer to the service of Jesus to others (Mark 10:45); of service rendered to God (Rom. 13:4; 11 Cor. 6:1); of service rendered to Christ (John 12:26; 1 Cor. 11:23; Col. 11:7; 1 Tim. 4:6); of service to the Gospel (Eph. 3:7; Col. 1:23); of service to the fellow disciple of to the Church as a whole (Mark 9:35; Col. 1:25).

The term *diakonos* refers to the person rendering this service, and in some cases, to one who holds the office of a *diakonos* (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8,12). In Romans 16:1 Phoebe is described as a '*diakonos* of the church that is at Cenchrae. 'This indicates that women as well as men held this office. Phoebe is called a 'deacon,' not a 'deaconess.' The masculine ending for the noun being used by Paul, indicating that in this case he made no distinction between the gender of the one holding that office.

2. Christians called to be servants

The diakonal nature of the Christian life is bound up in the calling of the Christian to share in Christ's own life of service and ministry.

Even as the servant-existence of Jesus was his true mode of existence if the freedom of the Son to serve the Father on behalf of the world, so the servant-existence of the Christian is the true mode of Christian freedom. Once we were 'slaves' of sin and of the law, writes Paul, but now we are 'slaves' of Christ through obedience. This calling into the servanthood of Christ is a calling to share in his own freedom of being a child of God.

For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him ... Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedience slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. Romans 6:7, 16-18.

The Christian, and the church, is called out of the world in order to be sent into it:

Called out of the world, the community is genuinely called into it. And the reality of its-being-out depends upon there being no gap between it and the called which ineffectually follows, upon the separation from and the turning to the world taking place in a single movement. [Barth, C.D., IV/3, p 764]

The distinctive between the Christian and the world is not so much a boundary as a centre, a source of life in communion with Christ who always come to the centre of humanity in order to serve them by offering up to God as his Father in heaven, the lives of those who are loved by God and redeemed through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

§18. The Church as the Continuing Ministry of Christ in the World

All ecclesiology is grounded, critically limited, but also positively determined by Christology; and this applies in respect of the particular statement which here concern us, namely, that the church exists for the world. (Barth, C.D., IV/3, p 786).

18.1 Christ continues his ministry through the members of the church

The Church cannot be in Christ without being in Him as He is proclaimed to men in their need and without being in Him as He encounters us in and behind the existence of every man in his need. Nor can the Church be recognized as His except in the meeting of Christ with Himself in the depth of human misery, where Christ clothed with His Gospel meets with Christ clothed with the desperate need and plight of men. [Torrance, 'Service in Jesus Christ', page 9; Theological Foundations for Ministry, page 724]

1 The charge upon the church

Christ must be re-presented to the world as he is in his own *diakonal* existence and ministry. There is thus a mandate which lays upon the church, a commission which determines the very existence of the church to be the continuing ministry of Christ through the members of his body.

There is a two-fold temptation in carrying out this mandate: (T F Torrance, 'Service in Jesus Christ', pp. 11 ff. *Theological Foundations for Ministry*, pp 727ff).

- i). to use worldly power to fulfill this commission; to build up a power structure of its own; to institutionalize and politicize human need in order to perpetuate the existence of the church as committed to ideological cause and task.
- ii). to abandon the world in its physical and temporal life to its own resources, and to limit its ministry to that of announcing forgiveness of sin as merely a spiritual word.

The incarnational life of *diakonia* avoids these temptations by seeing ministry as two-fold:

- i). as the service of the Word, in which Christ is re-presented as Saviour, offering himself in the Spirit, through proclamation (*kerygma*), sacramental life, and fellowship (*koinonia*)
- ii). as the service of response to the Word, in which Christ is re-presented in his ministry of binding up the wounds of the broken, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, acting as the representative of the sinners, lifting them up toward the Father. But this is not only the service of 'deacons' as appointed representatives of the church, but of all Christians as the re-presenters of Christ in life, word and deed.

Through his baptism Christ was initiated into the ministry which led him to the cross and resurrection.... Similarly through our baptism Christ incorporates us and ordains us for participation in his ministry.... Baptism is the ordination into the apostolic, charismatic and sacrificial ministry of the church. [ENCOUNTER, 'Christ's Ministry through His Whole Church and Its Ministers', *Theological Foundations for Ministry*, page 432, 434]

2. The church as ministering community.

A Intercession.

'Even within the world to which it belongs, it (the church) does not exist ecstatically or eccentrically with reference to itself, but wholly with reference to them, to the world around. It saves and maintains its own life as it interposes and gives itself for all other human creatures.' (Barth, C. D., IV/3, page 762)

In the ministry of intercession there is certainly prayer, but prayer without *diakonia* is not true prayer, even as *diakonia* without prayer is not true *diakonia*. In this intercession there is a struggle against evil; identification with those who are estranged and alienated, an 'argument' with God on behalf of those who have become disenfranchised. Cf. Moses: Exodus 32:30-34. Moses intercedes for the people who have worshipped the golden calf. In this intercession there is responsible action which entails guilt:

... the structure of responsible action includes both readiness to accept guilt and freedom.... In this Jesus Christ, who was guilty without sin, lies the origin of every action of responsible deputyship. It is responsible action, if it is action which is concerned solely and entirely with the other man, if it arises from selfless love for the real man who is our brother, then, precisely because this is so, it cannot wish to shun the fellowship of human guilt. Jesus took upon Himself the guilt of all men, and for that reason every man who acts responsibly becomes guilty.... If I refuse to incur guilt against the principle of truthfulness for the sake of my friend, if I refuse to tell a robust lie for the sake of my friend.... if in other words, I refuse to bear guilt for charity's sake, then my action is in contradiction to my responsibility which has its foundation in reality. [Bonhoeffer, 'Christ, the Church and the World', *Theological Foundations for Ministry*, page 561, 564]

B. Witness

In the ministry of bearing witness there is certainly a declaration of the gospel, even 'evangelical address' (Barth, C. D., IV/3, pp 844-50); the divine Word must **be heard** in the world, therefore it must be spoken. Yet, this Word, this witness must be enfleshed, incarnated as *diakonia*. Here again, witness without *diakonia* is not true witness, even as *diakonia* without witness is not true *diakonia*. Cf. James 2:14ff. Also,

because the source and content of witness is love, this witness only abides in actions and attitudes of love (I John 3:14-18).

C. *Reconciliation*

The diaconal service of reconciliation has its scope in the whole of creation, viewed from Christ as its centre and now brought by his service to God and humans under his dominion (II Cor 5:18). To live in Christ, therefore, is to have one's own small being rooted in that service which gives cohesion to all things. 'For in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.' (Col. 1:19-20). (See further, W A Whitehouse, 'Christological Understanding,' in *Theological Foundations for Ministry*, chapter 7)

Only by rooting the ministry of reconciliation in Christ's own *diakonal* existence, by which human motives and possibilities are brought under judgment before being raised to new possibility, can the taint of a patronising attitude be eradicated from Christian ministry.

We do not give as those who have something to offer to those who have not, but as those who have not ourselves, **we receive for and with** all others what God gives abundantly and without favour, through Jesus Christ.

Reconciliation is not the church's 'task.' The reconciliation of the world to God, the divine covenant, the kingdom of God, the new reality of the world can only be the accomplished *diakonia* of Christ, for which the church, as John the Baptist, prepares the way, making smooth the road, levelling every hill, filling every valley. (Barth, C. D., IV/3, page 835)



Study X

The Church as an Eschatological Community

Introduction

This final study covers the church as the community determined by its final destiny, the resurrection of the incarnate Word-Son of God, Jesus Christ. God's kingdom rule is known in the, 'now,' yet its consummation is expected. The presence of Christ in the church and world as the Coming or Last One, and His ministry of reconciliation and liberation are investigated. Issues of love, social justice, friends and enemies, and mortality conclude the study.

§19. The Church as Ek-static Community

... God is the measure of all reality and propriety.... eternity exists first and then time, and therefore the future first and then the present, as surely as the Creator exists first and then the creature. He who understands that need take no offence here.' (Barth, C. D., 1/1, page 531)

The Church is simultaneously the kenotic community and the ek-static community. See Ray S Anderson, *Historical Transcendence and the Reality of God*, pp 238-251; 277-305. The ek-static dimension of the church's life is its orientation toward the ultimate destiny, by which it 'stands out' (*ek-stasis*) of its existence in solidarity with the world toward the source of its life and being in the Christ who is coming.

Imagine that geese could talk, Kierkegaard once said, and that they had arranged things so that they too could have their church services and their worship:

Every Sunday they would assemble together and a gander would preach. The essential content of the sermon was the exalted destiny of geese, the exalted goal for which the creator has destined geese (and every time his name was named all the geese curtsied and the ganders bowed their heads). With the help of their wings they could fly away to far countries, blessed countries, where they really at home: for here they were just like exiles. And so every Sunday. Then the gathering broke up, and every goose waddled home. Then the next Sunday off they went to the service again, then home again. That was all. They throve and grew fat, they became plump and tender ... that was all. For while the sermon sounded so exalted on Sundays, on Mondays they would tell one -another of the fate of the goose who wanted to take his destiny seriously, with the help of the wings the creator had given it. And they spoke of the horrors it had to endure. But they prudently kept this knowledge among themselves. For of course to speak of it on Sundays was most unsuitable, for as they said, in that case it would be obvious that our service would be a mockery both of God and of ourselves.

There were also among the geese some that looked ill and thin. Of them the others said, 'You seem that's what comes of being serious about wanting to fly. It is because they are always thinking of flying that they get thin and do not thrive, and do not have God's grace as we do. That is why we get plump and fat and tender, for it is by God's grace that one gets plump and fat and tender.' [S Kierkegaard, *The Last Years*, Ronald G Smith, ed. pp. 292-3.]

So it is with Christians, added Kierkegaard: they conclude that the domesticating grace of God is not meant to take seriously the wings of the Spirit, for to do so emaciates one's well-being and destroys one's peace as an earth-bound creature. Whereas, in fact, the wings are meant to be used - humans have Spirit, and thus are destined to live a transcendent life of ek-stasis.

19. 1 The tension between the 'now' and the 'not yet.'

There is both an 'on-look' (kenotic community) and an 'out-look' (ek-static community). Cf. Acts 3:1-9 Peter and John arrive at the Temple to enter and pray:

v. 4 'Peter looked intently at him This is the 'on-look,' the person in need becomes visible and the object of an intense concentration. There is no hint here of a quick glance as if to see the cripple only indirectly.

v. 5 'and he [the cripple] fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them.' This is the 'out-look' which was created by the words of Peter 'look at us' (v. 4).

The cripple is a symbol of the needy world in which the Christian (church) lives in solidarity. Not only is there a recognition of this needy person, but a new 'out-look' is created and an expectation beyond merely a few alms for daily existence. 'I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk' (3:6). 'Jumping up, he stood and began to walk, and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God' (3:8).

This incident is a parable of the ek-static dimension of the church as the eschatological community of Christ. The church lives in that tension between the promise of forgiveness of sins and the ultimate resurrection of the body. Mark 2: the healing of the paralytic. There is first of all announced the forgiveness of sins, and ten after a delay, the miracle of healing of the body. T F Torrance calls this interval the 'eschatological reserve,' where the ultimate healing is held back so that faith lives by the promise and expectancy of that glorious event ('Eschatology and the Eucharist' in *Intercommunion*, page 308).

Romans 8:18-25, where the world (cosmos) itself is portrayed as sharing in this 'out-look,' longing and waiting for its redemption.

19.2 The Ek-static Community is one characterized by:

Faith - Hebrews 11:1; Ass 60; Spiritual perception -- I Cor 16:6; II Cor 15; Worship (*latreia*) -Romans 12:1, the ministry of serving God and others, offering up sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to God; Presence of the Kingdom - Matt. 18:20; John 3:3; Matt. 12:28; Luke 17:21.

19.3 Resurrection as the Eschaton of History

. . . Eschatology [is not] a matter of the last locus of dogmatics, or the last chapter of a text book on systematic theology, but ... a matter of the Kyrios - the Lord - as the Eschatos... The message of Jesus' resurrection *is* the foundation and source of all Christian eschatology.... Eschatology *is* not a projection into the distant future: it bursts forth into our present existence, and structures life today in the light of last things.' [G C Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ*, pp. 18-191

§20. The Eschatological Presence of Christ as Reconciliation and Liberation

20.1 The Kingdom of God will come and is coming.

'Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven' (Matt. 6:10).

The Christian faith does not supplant history so that history would become an indifferent matter to believers. Because the Christian can hope in the new future through faith in Christ, he begins to suffer in the unredeemedness of the present and realizes solidarity with all who suffer consciously or unconsciously in this unredeemedness. But neither does he become absorbed into history so that the future would become indifferent to faith. Because he can hope in this future, he begins to oppose the 'scheme of this world' and the systems of the present and to change them.' [J Moltmann, *Religion, Revolution and the Future*, Eerdmans, 1969, pp. 198-9.]

The church as the eschatological community of Christ seeks the conversion of sinful structures which oppress as well as persons who are caught in the futility and frustration of sin. The kingdom of God in the form of the eschatological presence of the people of God in the world is 'powerless' in the face of the world's power, but not passive in the face of the world's evil. The 'meekness' of those who are children of the kingdom strikes at the very heart of the 'piled up' contradiction of sin found within all human societies and structures, exposing their sickness, violence, and oftentimes demonic efforts at resisting God.

The liberation of social, economic and political structures is not an ideological mandate, but is grounded in the reconciling act of God by which all sinful structures are grasped by God for the sake of liberation and restoration. [See John De Gruchy, 'No Other Gospel: Is Liberation Theology a Reduction of the Gospel?,' in *Incarnational Ministry*, ed. Christian Kettler & Todd Spiedell, (Helmets and Howard: 1990), chapter 12, and J B Torrance 'The Ministry of Reconciliation Today: The Realism of Grace', chapter 8.]

1. The ideological approach to social justice:

Appeals to universals, absolute historical action, operates out of a polarity between innocence and guilt, good and evil, and seeks self-justification for its actions in moral principles;

2. A theological approach to social justice:

Appeals to the command of God as the absolute, relativises historical action, for the sake of making intervention into evil and sinful structures, accepts guilt and complicity, and seeks justification by faith in God's grace and forgiveness.

For Bonhoeffer acceptance of responsibility and freedom entail also the acceptance of guilt, with no appeal to universal principles and no attempt to remain 'innocent' over and against evil. The ultimate reconciliation must come from God; we live and act in the penultimate.

Radicalism hates time, and compromise hates eternity. Radicalism hates patience, and compromise hates decision. Radicalism hates wisdom, and compromise hates simplicity. Radicalism hates moderation and measure, and compromise hates the immeasurable. Radicalism hates the real, and compromise hates the word.... In Jesus Christ we have faith in the incarnate, crucified and risen God. In the incarnation we learn of the love of God for His creation; in the crucifixion we learn of the judgment of God upon all flesh; and in the resurrection we learn of God's will for a new world. There could be no greater error than to tear these three elements apart. [Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, pp. 130-131]

20.2 Love as the Content of the Ek-static Community

'God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them' (I John 4:16). God abides in every work of love. Every work of love abides in God. (see Barth, C. D., 111/2. pp. 275-285, for a discussion of the difference between 'human love' and 'Christian love'.) Christian love is not 'human nature' with its intrinsic possibilities rated to a higher power. Human nature is the created freedom to be for the other. It exists without regard to the gift of the Holy Spirit and the operation of the Word of God. The 'children of the world' may, in fact be wiser than the children of God (Luke 16:8). That is, they may sense the expediency of love and practice it out of self-interest.

When Paul says, 'love never fails,' this cannot be said of human nature (I Cor. 13:6).

If he lives in Christian love, he lives in the power of the this divine Yes which frees and saves himself and his humanity from sin and death. he owes it to the faithfulness and constancy of the covenant which God made with the creature if his heart is not merely free for this or that togetherness with the other, but free in the peace and joy and holiness and righteousness of a commonly obligatory service to be together with him in the community of those who may live by the forgiveness of sins and therefore for the magnifying of this grace. Hence humanity and Christian love are two very different things.

But it must also be said of Christian love that in it and it alone is it a question of the freedom of the one for the other. This is the new co-existence of man and man which is not merely formal but filled out with positive content. In it, then, humanity is not ashamed but honoured. The faithfulness and constancy of the covenant, to which man owes wholly and exclusively the gracious gift of the Holy Ghost, is simply the faithfulness and constancy of God the Creator acknowledging His work by saving it, and renewing it as its Savior. (Barth, C. D., 111/2, page 281]

20.3 The Thresholds of Lived Transcendence

(See, *Historical Transcendence and the Reality of God*, Ray Anderson, pp. 294ff.)

Threshold: a concrete human situation in which the transcendence of God is disclosed. The humanity of Christ is the 'threshold' of divine transcendence. In the solidarity with all humanity, the

presence of Christ as the eschatological presence of the Coming One, the transcendence of God is present.

1. The Enemy which is also the Friend (page 296)

In the reality of hostility, there is a threshold of transcendence. Where 'truth' at the ideological level is hopelessly ambiguous, only the 'tragic' can touch the 'truth' of being. Eg. The cross of Christ: Pilate asked, 'What is truth?' I Cor. 2:8 - 'none of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.' The 'truth' was in the 'tragic' event, but they saw it not as tragic, but as their own 'truth.' The truth does not always lie in the 'issues,' but 'below the issues,' in the recognition of the 'truth of being.'

. . . we are killing one another with abstractions. I'm defending Lou because I love him, yet the society transforms that love into a kind of treason, what they call an issue, and I end up suspected and hated. Why can't we speak with the voice that speaks below the 'issues'- with our real uncertainty?' [Arthur Miller, *After the Fall*, page 55-6]

Ultimately, we will discover that the one we have hated is our brother, as Cain came to realise too late that it was his own brother that he killed, and Judas too late, what it was his own Lord that he betrayed.

There are also at least two ways in which in our fallen humanity we seek to deal with tragedy:

- (i) 'How often *after* a tragedy does not a community rise up in moral indignation and demand that some law be passed, or some action taken to prevent the recurrence of this particular kind of violence or senseless loss of human life? The tragic points to the eschaton . . .' (pp. 296-7)
- (ii.) Tragedies can have the opposite effect. Where man is constantly faced with atrocities and catastrophes, he seeks immunity and refuge in recreation (instead of recreation), and false hope in technological development and environmental engineering. Anderson cites McCarthy, who suggests,

People are thrown into mental or present shock much the same as are the victims of physical shock. They are battered by some forms of external reality; mental shock results in a reduced flow of emotions that the mind normally needs in order to respond humanly. The person in shock in the 20th century is one who is constantly learning of so much tragedy, horror, chaos and absurdity that he can no longer absorb it. He becomes numb. [Colman McCarthy, "'Present Shock": We can Take Only so Much Reality' in *Los Angeles Times*, April 2, 1972]

The caring that is required to meet the crises and carry or cure the sufferings of others is seen in the present in the resurrected Jesus, who calls us to 'love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you' (Matt. 5:44). [However, while we are faced with the exhortation to see the enemy and others as needing help in tragedy, as in Matt. 25:40ff., we are not thereby arguing for pacifism. See, for example, the complicity of Dietrich Bonhoeffer in the failed 20 July 1944 conspiracy to assassinate Adolf Hitler.]

2. The Flesh that is also the Spirit (p. 298)

Transcendence is not merely 'being' (ousia) but 'presence' (*parousia*). The body is the existence form of spirit. (Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, page 46).

The threshold of transcendence is in the street, at the factory, at the supper table. 'if a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?' (James 2:15-16). Now does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?' (I John 3:17).

The resurrection 4 the ek-stasis of the body; thus, in its present form, our embodied existence is the threshold of this transcendent reality.

3. The Sickness that is also the Hope (p. 300).

Not only physical or emotional sickness, but all that is 'wrong' about human existence. Isaiah 53:4; Matt. 8:17 'He bore our weaknesses and infirmities'.

For Jesus, this 'sickness' was a threshold which pointed to hope: John 11:4 - this illness is not unto death; Mark 2:5 - your sins are forgiven -- rise, take your bed and walk; John 20:23 - if you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; Matt. 18:18 - whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth, will be loosed in heaven.

Our common mortality is a threshold of lived transcendence. We live as the 'dying ministering to the dying' (I Cor. 6:9; 11 Cor. 4:10).

4. The Place that is also the Presence (p. 302).

We are all in the same 'place' - i.e., in some Mace or other on this earth. The reality of God as 'presence' is the ek-static dimension of 'Mace.' In being absent from the flesh, Christ creates a place for us in heaven (John 14) but also comes 'to our place' here on earth (Matt. 18:20).

'Do this in remembrance of me' (I Cor. 11:25) - here presence is bound to place. Christian presence in the world means that Christ comes to the 'place' of the world. Thus, it is important that the Christian be in that 'place' (i.e. in prison, the ghettos of hunger, poverty, etc. Matt. 25).

The Church cannot have its own 'place' but must see that the transcendence of the Kingdom of God 'takes place' on earth as well as in heaven.

