

THE THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE OF COVENANT

Christian Workers' Course 1992

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OVERVIEW OF SUBJECT

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INTRODUCTION TO COVENANT

The word covenant may not be immediately familiar to us but Jesus and the writers of the New Testament were all speaking and thinking and experiencing of a relation to God which is covenantal. For example: Jesus has given to us his blood of the covenant (Luke 22:20). What, then, is this covenant by which God has bound himself to us and us to himself?

The answer to this question must involve the telling of a story-Israel's story, but with ourselves as participants in the narrative. It is only in this way that we fully understand what has happened to us and what is offered to us in the coming of Christ and his present reign.

Even though the word 'covenant' occurs few times in the NT, it is clear throughout that our present relation to God is wholly covenantal and will continue to be so in the age to come.

THE WORLD WITHOUT COVENANT

God's covenants were made with Israel. Paul described what it was like for Gentiles to live without the benefit of a secured relation to God (Eph. 2:1-2, 11-12, 19). He understood that Jews like himself had been in the same position as Gentiles-by nature children of wrath, even while being, by heritage, children of hope (2:3).

Our whole life-that is, our experience of the creation and of our relationships with God and one-another, are intended to flow from the things God has revealed to us. i.e. we live by every word which proceeds from the mouth of God, from inside covenant.

But if God and his revelation have been rejected, people experience dislocation and must discover and utilise surrogate securities and experiences-to no avail however.

No God

The atheist and the agnostic must still worship. The idolator must invest his idols with absolute importance. This leads to a multiplicity of idols which, being various, provide no centre for a whole community to have a shared experience and a united goal to which to devote itself. In fact, we despise each other's idols. Sometimes, we despise **our own** idols.

In assuming that there is no Father to please and no Fatherly wisdom to guide our way, we must become self-authenticating and self-directing.

No hope

No religion or philosophy could be credible which did not struggle to find a valid hope in the context of tragedy, evil and personal guilt. Everyone experiences the sinfulness of others-and this through the eyes of personal failure and the coming of judgement (Rom. 1:20-32).

But life requires that we believe in our own usefulness and a future for the race. Not to hope is to die. 'Eat, drink and be merry!' is a counsel of despair-as recognised in its conclusion: 'for tomorrow we die'. This is as true for a nation as for a person.

Current hopes may be focussed on the cleverness of science or law, the power of protest or of education. On personal level, they may focus on prosperity or pleasure rather than on righteousness, on self-justification rather than on the vindication of God. Sometimes, the human answer to losing hope is moral and vocational oblivion becoming hopeless.

If God has doomed our present life to purposelessness and us to wrath and our castles to destruction, by nature of the case, only God can provide a hope that is valid.

The guarantees of governments, the resolutions of persons, the postulations of forecasters, cannot secure anything. When false prophets (of the modern sort) do anticipate anything, it is more often bleakness than brightness. To have a future which is certain and certain to be bright requires a God-not only to say it but to effect it and to effect it because of his own kindness rather than because of our reliability.

We may seek to write a social contract, but this, by nature of the case, must be conditional. Faithfulness, by nature of our being sinners, does not arise from us. We need an external stimulus to faithfulness.

Strangers and sojourners

The outcome of having no Father is to have no family. We become lonely creatures in a purposeless universe and doubtful if any other person really desires to give themselves to us. It then becomes necessary to secure ourselves against competitors and the suspicion may well become hostility.

Parents and educators and the media people who have self-devised securities convey and perpetuate their alienation and enshrine in our culture the distrust and unfaithfulness that result.

Our responsibilities to family, church, community and state all require the seeking of the good of the other. Guilty persons can only seek to secure themselves because they are under threat.

It is into this bleakness that the light of God's covenant has shone. In fact, it is probably not apparent to us how we have accustomed ourselves to insecurity until we see the Son of God living in covenant relation with his Father, and opening the same up to us.

THE STORY OF COVENANT-AN OVERVIEW

It may be helpful to have an overview of the story of covenant.

By the Noahic covenant, the world is...

preserved

Assurance is given concerning both human and animal life that its present life will be sustained so that none need live in fear of God not caring for the creation.

warned

Assurance is different from presumption (Matt. 24:38; II Pet. 2:2-10; 3:3-10). The present world is ours by grace and so as to have opportunity to receive the grace of God.

By the Abrahamic covenant we are assured of...

a nation, a name and a blessing (Gen. 12)

The early chapters of Genesis show that God intended us to live under his blessing but that sin drove humanity to establish its own national and personal identity. In this setting, the God of glory appeared to Abraham to establish a people who would live by his promise.

This is significant for everyone in the world. God has promised to bless Abraham and to bless all who acknowledge the grace shown to him.

an inheritance and a promised son (Gen. 15; Heb. 11)

Given that our life consists not in what we can amass for ourselves but in what God will give to us, Abraham needed to ask God what he would receive. He would have a son, and many descendants, who would receive a homeland. This promise was effectively without condition.

We then, must live in expectation of what God will establish for us—living now for the reward which the Father secures for us.

a God (Gen. 17)

The blessing consisted particularly in that God would be God to him (Gen. 17:7). Sinful creatures cannot say that there is no God interested in their well-being or that they are unable to relate to him.

By the Mosaic covenant we have demonstrated for us...

the sovereignty of the covenant Lord (Exodus)

The people of God broadened out to become a people of national significance. God is sovereign over all the nations and he demonstrated this to the Egyptians, and to numerous later enemies of his people.

In fulfilment of his covenant with Abraham (Exod. 2:24; 6:27), God saved his people from Egypt and made with them the Mosaic covenant of law which provided for their worship and for their way of life (Exod. 19:5-6; 24:7; 34:28). By keeping the covenant, they would be God's own possession.

He sovereignly established Israel in the promised land, to be a witness to the nations. They would show the wisdom of God by living under his guardianship.

This sovereign God is also to be sovereign in the affections of his people. Israel, like the nations, would feel the curse of God when they gave honour to what were no gods (Exod. 20:5-6).

the holiness of the covenant Lord

The worship of Israel showed that there was no relation to God which did not take account of the holiness of God and the sinfulness of his people. But the wonder of the worship was that it did not leave the people unclean; the worship provided for their being sanctified-through blood sacrifice.

the grace of the covenant Lord (Exod. 32-34)

The covenant relationship was immediately tested by the adultery of his people, and God showed that the covenant was in fact a covenant of grace. He forgave the sin of his people though not relenting in his purpose to make them a faithful people.

Nothing could be guaranteed to sinners which depended on something other than God's grace (Rom. 4:16). Therefore, this covenant, which emphasised the obedience of the people of God and constantly drew attention to their sinfulness, would be superseded. It could not replace the Abrahamic covenant (Gal. 3).

In the Davidic covenant, we are promised...

a king who will deliver and lead God's people

It was always the purpose of God to give his people a king (Gen. 49: 10). When David came to the throne, God covenanted with him that his throne would be eternal (II Sam. 7:10-17). His duty was to lead the people in true worship and hearty obedience—i.e. to fulfil the Mosaic covenant. It would be in this way that the promises of the Abrahamic covenant would be fulfilled (Luke 1:68-75).

Prophets keep covenant hope at full stretch

Many kings of Israel did not lead the people in righteousness, and when they did, the people did not follow. Many prophets came to the people, and particularly in times when the curse was upon the people. Eight (and a half) of the sixteen prophetic books in the Old Testament relate to the period of Israel's captivity. Through these men, God showed his people that his judgements were not his breaking of covenant but his keeping of it, and that the blessing would still be secured. It is as though God would never allow the curse to become the major factor in his people's thinking. He had promised blessing, and he would 'deliver'.

Under the New covenant, all God's covenantal purpose is accomplished

Remarkably, and in the face of what seemed incurable covenant-breaking, God promised a further covenant (Jer. 31:31-34). While this was new, it would be the securing of all that God had in mind in his earlier covenants. The context in Ezekiel shows that the new covenant is a re-establishment of the broken covenant (Ezek. 16:60-62).

It is this covenant which Jesus established by his blood (Luke 22:20) and which he now administers (Mal. 3:1-3; Heb. 7:22; 9:15; 12:24).

Jesus Christ is the chosen seed of the covenant made with Abraham (Gal. 3:16), the completer and concluder of the covenant made with Moses (Rom. 10:4), and the son of David who would reign forever (Acts 2:34-35).

All of God's sovereign grace has now been focussed in Christ who is the 'Yes' to all of God's covenantal promises (II Cor. 1:20). God has sent Christ to turn us from our sins so that his blessing will rest on us (Acts 3:25-26).

Believers in Christ are the true descendants of Abraham (Rom. 4:16). They have the same faith as he did, and they are justified. They are the true worshippers in whom the just requirement of the law is fulfilled (Rom. 8:4) and who worship God in spirit (Phil. 3:3). They are the people of truth who recognise in Jesus their king and are led by him in conquest (John 18:37; Acts 4:23-31).

THE NOAHIC COVENANT-STILL IN PLACE

A covenant of preservation (Genesis 6-9)

The context

The covenant made with Noah arose in the context of unrelieved vileness of heart and unbridled violence, and, the determination of God to make an end of all flesh. God would destroy (literally, corrupt) what man had corrupted (Gen. 6:1-13).

But it was to Noah, who himself was flesh, that this announcement was made (Gen. 6:18), and made so that he could heed the warning given and escape the judgement. In other words, the covenant was a covenant of grace.

The 'I myself am about to confirm' follows the earlier 'I am about to bring...'.

Covenant at this point may be described as an undertaking by God to be true to his purpose and word, and in which, there are prescribed ways for man by which he may avail himself of the good of the covenant. The terms of the covenant, made unilaterally, are that Noah and his family will build and enter the ark, together with the other living creatures.

Noah was righteous, known to be blameless and walked with God. But *his* righteousness was *such*, ultimately, not because he was perfect in character but because he heeded God's warning (Heb. 11:7). In fact, he found grace or favour in God's eyes.

The covenant first made with Noah was later extended to all living creatures for all time (Gen. 6:18 with 9:9-17). That is, all creatures would have the benefit of the grace shown to Noah. They would have this benefit-as those whose hearts were evil (Gen. 8:21-22).

Cf. Exod. 33:3; 34:9 where the Mosaic covenant is renewed because of the grace of God.

The content

There will not be another flood to threaten the extinction of the race (Gen. 9:11).

We can expect there to be seedtime and harvest (Gen. 8:22). The ordering of the creation had been reversed during the deluge-the waters beneath the earth and the waters above the earth converged. It was as though day two and three of creation had never occurred (Gen. 1:7-9; 7:11; cf. II Pet. 3:5-7). But now, we do not need to fear a natural disasters'.

The blessing of God is not promised as part of the covenant, but, in fact, God blessed Noah in terms recalling the blessing of creation (Gen. 9:1 with 1:28). Creation has been 'restarted' (Gen. 9:19) so that our prospering in the tasks assigned to us, given to us freely in the creation, is assured to us now as sinners, as an act of grace.

Note the departures from the creational blessing (Gen. 9:2-7) which take account of the inevitable violence which is part of our experience and the experience of the animal world.

Some suggest, because creation itself is now secured for us by covenant, and because covenants seem to ratify an existing relationship (Dumbrell), that God's relationship with the creation from the beginning was covenantal. But this is not clearly stated and is not a necessary conclusion. It is not so much creation which is secured by covenant as ourselves who must live in it, and live in it as sinners who must endure the results of our own sinfulness.

Verses which talk about God's covenant with creation are designed to build on its observable orderliness and assure the people of God that he did not create it a chaos and will not allow it to descend into chaos (Psa. 89:37; Jer. 31:35-37; 33:20, 25).

The original creation may not have been covenantal, but it is clear that the creation comes to its goal by the grace of covenant. Creation will ultimately receive the liberation of the sons of God who are secured by covenant (Rom. 8:18-25).

The anticipation it suggests

If this creation is preserved from judgement and preserved by grace, the question arises as to what God preserves it for. The Noahic covenant did not promise eternal salvation or even the renewing of all things, it clearly anticipated this. The woman's seed had been promised, and through the preservation of the race, the Seed would come by whom the serpent's head was to be crushed.

God's maintaining of the seasons is a witness to the nations of his true nature (Acts 14:17), and this should lead all people to seek him (Acts 17:26-27). Jeremiah realised that it was because of God's mercy that Israel was not consumed (Lam. 3:22 NIV), and Paul saw that the goodness and kindness of God was meant to lead Israel to repentance. So it is for the nations. The Noahic covenant should teach us all that God still has a purpose for us and a love to lead us into it. God is not willing that any should perish (1 Pet. 3:3-10).

The Noahic covenant is also a model of the salvation to come. God's covenant of peace with captive Israel (and with us) would be as permanent as his refusal to flood the earth again (Isa. 54:7-10). Jesus warns us all against settling into a judged world (Matt. 24:37-38; Luke 17:26-27). Peter saw the flood as a prefiguring of our baptism (1 Pet. 3:19-21) and as an example of God's ability to save us from a condemned world (1 Pet. 2:5-9).

The benefit and enjoyment of this covenant

Noah believed God regarding the judgement and was saved. The promise that there was a preserving God over the creation enabled the Psalmist to rejoice in a time of flood rather than be terrorised by it (Psa. 29).

More especially, Noah believed and was justified (Heb. 11:7). He took seriously the need for judgement in a fallen world and obeyed when told how to escape it. The action he took is the action all should take who live under this covenant.

THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT-FULFILLED

A covenant of promise, made with Abraham and his seed (a)

The context

Each covenant anticipates any later covenants and prepares the way for it. The Noahic covenant assured the race that God had patience with and purpose for it, but did not show how he would act to restore it.

Some think that the Noahic covenant is the basic form of covenant (Murray). Others (Kline) argue that the Mosaic covenant is basic for understanding our covenant relation to God. Rather, the covenants are cumulative, each requiring the one before it and necessitating the one to follow. The full picture of covenant relation is the ultimate covenant relation described in Rev. 21:1-8.

The blessing

The Abrahamic covenant has to do with the blessing of God. This was what God first promised to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3), it is what the sons (Gen. 16:10-13; 21:8-12, 18) and grandsons (Gen. 27) of Abraham struggled to inherit, and it was the witness that the patriarchs had to the surrounding world (Gen. 21:22; 39:2-6).

From the beginning, our life has depended on the blessing of God (Gen. 1:28). The serpent had been cursed-irrevocably. The ground had been cursed as a judgement on the couple who sinned but there was still a blessing for them—they were fruitful and multiplied (Gen. 5)—and were blessed again after the flood, though with certain provisions which took account of the violence which was now part of the human scene (Gen. 9:1-7).

Prophecies concerning Noah's sons had pointed the way to Seth's line being the means of blessing in the earth (Gen. 9:26-27).

Historically speaking, the Bible leads up to the time of Abraham, and then flows from it. Genesis 4-11 tells the story of hope being maintained in a world filled with self-establishing anger (e.g. Seth in the context of Cain and Lamech, Noah [see 5:29] in the context of an earth filled with violence, and now, Abram in the context of Babel.

It is no accident that the call to Abram in Ur follows directly on the collapse of Babel. The building of their tower is representative of human attempts at civilization and culture and security. Just as we are dependent on blessing for the establishing of our works and our persons, so Babel fell apart because of the confusion God sent to it. Everything is dependent on the immediate intervention of God—for standing or falling.

The maintenance of hope and the certainty of a blessing would not remain undefined. A promise of a seed whereby the head of the serpent would be crushed had been given. The story now shows how God raised up the Seed who would accomplish this task.

The blessing on Abraham and through Abraham has several elements. We will see what these are and, given that the covenant is eternal, how these things are being worked out in the present (Gen. 17:7).

Believers in Christ are all blessed with Abraham (Gal. 3:7, 14, 29). Le. he is a blessing as promised, and, he is a blessing in that what was promised to him, we receive, as his children (Rom. 4:11-12).

Revelation

First of all, Abraham was told the divine purpose. The bestowal of blessing is usually associated with a revelation of God's purpose (Gen. 12:1-3; Eph. 1:9-10; 3:1-6, 9-10; 1 Cor. 2:10). That is, we are not left ignorant and so unable to contribute to the divine purpose (cf. John 15:15-16).

If we know that the will of God has been revealed to us, much concern with personal guidance is not needed. 'This is the will of God' said Jesus, 'that you receive he whom God has sent'. 'Give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you' said Paul.

Knowing the largeness of the purpose of God made Abraham a generous man. Knowing the sureness of the purpose of God made him a reliable man (cf. 11 Cor. 1:19-22).

A home land

In the first instance, Abram was to be taken to a new land (Gen. 12:1-3). This would be given to him and to his offspring (Gen. 17:8). In particular, it would be given to his descendants, because the time for judgement on its present inhabitants had not yet come (Gen. 15:7-21).

Abraham never owned any land other than a cave in which to bury his wife. It was occupied some 400 years later under the leadership of Joshua. Even then, not all the land promised to Abraham was taken. That remained to the reign of David some three centuries later again.

The law prescribed that the land should be purged of evil—this was always the reason given for capital punishment for sins committed with a high hand—i.e. for treason against Israel's king. Many other instructions were with a view to the proper management of the inheritance God had entrusted to Israel.

The land was lost to Babylon for seventy years—as a judgement for not giving the land its Sabbaths. They were restored to their land, but the promise had always been that Israel's possession of the land would be for the blessing of all nations, not just their personal possession of it. IN fact, the God of Israel was the God of the whole earth. Israel's possession of a part of this was a token of that ownership. In fact, it appeared that God worked out his purpose for the whole earth according to the purpose he was working out in Israel.

The language used concerning the promised land at the time of their entry into it—a land flowing with milk and honey, a land which the Lord your God waters—has overtones

of the garden of Eden. Just as Eden was a localisation of the whole creation, so Israel was a localisation of God's kingship over the whole creation.

In the NT, the promise to Abraham is understood to be that he would 'inherit the world' (Rom. 4:13). This is the way Judaism had interpreted the ancient promise (Ecclesiasticus 44:21) and Paul agreed with it, probably in the sense of I Corinthians 3:21-23, and in the sense that, through the coming Seed, the work of the serpent would be **annulled in all the earth**.

But Abraham lived richly in what was his by promise. He and his progeny were, in fact, a blessing in all the earth—particularly Joseph. His manner of living by what God would do for him rather than by what he would do for himself is in marked contrast to living by the principle of Babel. So it is the meek who will inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5). They live in it now and are more secure than those who build their kingdoms (Mark 10:28-31), and they await with patience the full disclosure of what God has in store (Heb. 11:8-16). Already, an inheritance is reserved for them (I Pet. 1:3-4).

It is by the Lordship of Christ—the new Joshua—that the world is inherited. And it is by preaching the gospel that the enemies in the earth are dispossessed (Matt. 28:16-20).

A covenant of promise, made with Abraham and his seed (b)

A nation, or people

What is the significance of God speaking to the race through the blessing of one nation, and the families of the earth being blessed through this? How is this working out now?

Abraham

God promised to make of Abraham a great nation (Gen. 12:2). In fact, nations and kings would come from him (Gen. 17:4-6). Jacob was promised the same (Gen. 35:11). A king would arise from the tribe of Judah in particular, to whom the obedience of the peoples would be given (Gen. 49: 10).

Heb. *goi* = nations—a word signifying a people with one political identity and geographic location.

After the establishment of Israel in the promised land, the word came to be used mostly for heathen nations, sometimes synonymous with evil (Psa. 9:6). While it is occasionally used for Israel, this is mostly in a derogatory sense (i.e. Israel is like the heathen).

The term that is used mostly for Israel is people ('am) which conveys close kinship, and unity. In effect, Israel is the only nation (*goi*) whom God redeemed to be his people ('ant) (I Chron. 17:21).

Christ is this King who gains the obedience of the nations by the church's proclamation of his gospel (Rom. 4:17; 15:18; 16:25-26).

This matter must be developed under the heading of the Davidic covenant. The Abrahamic covenant has in view not just the development of faith in persons but the raising up of a community, and that community with a view to all the communities

which make up humanity, and with a view to them being one people; and this people as one people belonging to God.

The character and culture of the people of God

It is God who makes them what they are, by his election of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob/Israel, and the nation of Israel. He did not choose them because of their racial characteristics, but made them a people by his election and so their relation to him (Deut. 7:6-8).

A wholly different habit and culture is developed among a people who know they are chosen by God. They understand authority, they can afford to be generous and courageous, they are substantiated in their persons and live by the word of God, and hope in the working out of God's purpose. In particular, the patriarchs (and Israel) knew the forgiveness of their sins and did not have to live in self-justification. So they grew, not without difficulty, into men of faith, and their family history is the story of that faith.

Israel's understanding of themselves as the people of God

In the days of Moses, God distinguished between Israel and the Egyptians so that God's truth and faithfulness could be seen in the saving of his people (Exod. 19:4-6). This had many ramifications for them in their relationships with one another, and then, their impact on the nations-as a people.

We will see later, under the heading of the Mosaic covenant, the nature of their law, and, under the new covenant, the dynamics that make the people of God the unity that they are.

God continued to deal with Israel as a people throughout the Kingdom era. The idea of other kings and kingdoms and peoples opposing the God of Israel and his king was ludicrous to a believing Israelite (Psa. 2:1-3).

In the days of captivity, when their land had been taken from them, the people of God were told that God would not only choose to bless them but to add to them many nations of the earth (Isa. 60; Zech. 2:10-12). The promise that they would be a blessing to the nations would be fulfilled, particularly through their Messiah (Isa. 11: 1; 42:6; 49:6, 22).

In fact, Israel was often ignorant of the great privilege they had and often lived more like surrounding nations. It was when all the outward signs of their being the people of God were removed that they began to understand more of what it meant to be a people of God (e.g. Isa. 63:15-19; 64:8-9; Jer. 13:11).

Israel moves from nation to faithful covenanted community during captivity (Campbell p. 29). More of this under the heading of the Mosaic covenant.

The New Testament people of God

What of the Abrahamic promise concerning a nation and a people under the New Covenant? Again it is God's people that are in view—at the announcement of Christ's coming (Luke 1:68, 77; 2:38), and the nations that are to be told of forgiveness (Luke 24:47; Matt. 28:19). For a nation to be discipled means that God is not only concerned with persons but with those persons in their 'people' situation. It is to his glory that whole peoples come to faith in him so that their community life is shaped by his being Father to them. They are the household of God (I Tim. 3:15; Rev. 21:1-4).

All of this is the fruit of the travail of Christ's soul (Psa. 22:22, 27-28 **with Heb. 2:9-14**).

'it is the nations who will enter the eternal city. His Father's heart will only then be satisfied when the fulness of His family is with Him and His Messiah, His Son, Deliverer and Elder Brother' (Geoffrey Bingham LFS 34 p. 23).

The community nature of a people

The obedience of people as a people must be obedience of persons who come to repentance, but the obedience of whole peoples may be clearer if we understand that disobedience is certainly exercised by whole nations. It is so represented in Psalm 2 and this was seen to be working out (in the book of Acts—e.g. 4:25-31) as the gospel was proclaimed among Jews (now acting as a Gentile nation) and Gentiles. It may also be seen in *Revelation* in the rise of Babylon or the Harlot whose whole system is designed to keep people snared and dependent (Rev. 17:5-6).

The culture of each people group has its own means of insulating itself from the rule of God's King, but the Abrahamic covenant is God's statement that the rebellion of the nations will not be able to withstand the power of the gospel. In fact, under the promise of the Abrahamic covenant, God is raising up a people whose common life betrays the immediacy of God among them. Paul gave himself to his task so as to present the Gentiles (*ethnos*= nations) to God as a sanctified offering (Rom. 15:15-19).

Who are the people of God?

It is (his 'people' factor which makes covenant ambiguous in our present understanding of who is included in it and who is excluded from it. Jesus said, many are called but few are chosen (Matt. 22:14). He said that Abraham's children were those who did as Abraham did (John 8:39). He said that a diseased woman was worthy to be healed and that a publican was worthy to host him for a meal because they were children of Abraham (Luke 13:16; 19:9).

After the crucifixion, the gospel was addressed to the covenant community: 'the promise is to you and to your children...' (Acts 2:39). Years after the Jews had formally rejected their Messiah, Paul continued to address Jews as a covenant people—until they judged themselves unworthy of it (Acts 13:16-51; 19:8-10; 22:1-3; 28:17-28). Paul reflected the patience of God with his people (Rom. 10: 1-4), and for this, he had ample justification in the history of Israel.

It may be asked if Western nations have been discipled—not in the sense that all of its people and peoples have become Christian but in the sense that they are unable to

explain their origins and social structure without reference constantly to the Judao-Christian heritage.

Children of Christian parents are included in the promise of the gospel—that is, if a father and mother regard their children as being under their authority. If children were not so included, they could not be brought up 'in the fear and nurture of the Lord' and could not be assured of the forgiveness of sins or of the hearing of their prayers—until they came to personal covenant responsibility. Such a prospect should be regarded as bleak to say the least.

But the matter of who are his people is always clear to God—and the obligation to reveal our being the people of God in our life is upon us (11 Tim. 2:19).

One people with the glory of all peoples

In one sense, all peoples retain their identity as peoples into eternity (Rev. 21:24-26; 22:2). Our present links with our own race are not insignificant, as witnessed by Paul (Rom. 9:1-3). From another point of view, Christian believers shall be, and, in fact, are now, not many peoples but one people, the people of God, acknowledging one Father and Lord.

Surrogate national identity—or the true people of God?

What then of multiculturalism? Is it a realistic notion? Can it ever make more than warring factions? What of 'One Nation', and what of a the 'New World Order'? They may be human recognitions of what is ontological but if they lack the covenant which can guarantee them and the God who makes and keeps covenant—even with sinners, they lack staying power and potency.

The Church is the wisdom of God being displayed, before the wondering eyes of the powers that seek to rule this world (Eph. 3), because the Church is the people of God, the nation which God has taken for his own and with whom he has made an eternal covenant that they will inherit the earth. He takes away the alienation between himself and those who are not his people in the cross—making one new people—virtually a new humanity (Eph. 2:11-19), God's people (Rom. 9:24-26).

The present people of God

The *Ephesians* reference shows how the people of God are effectively the family of God, under his Fatherhood.

Numerous instructions concerning the people of God in the New Testament show the interest that Christ and the apostles have in our being a people together.

What has been present throughout this study is that God is what makes his people what they are (Ezek. 37:27-28). We must now focus on this.

A covenant of promise, made with Abraham and his seed (c)

Anticipation of the seed

The constant recurring factor in Abraham's life was the coming and perpetuity of descendants. It was not just that he desired a family, or that he needed descendants to inherit the promised land, but, that through the seed of his own body, blessing would come to all the nations.

That this was in his thoughts seems clear from his comment that none but God would make Abram rich, from the desire of Abimelech to be blessed by Abraham, from Abraham's prayer for the cities of the plain, and from the way Joseph saw the blessing of God as applicable to the people of Egypt.

Isaac

But he waited over 25 years for the coming of his own promised son. When Isaac arrived, the slave woman's son had to be sent from the home. Later, the promised son was required for an offering to God. Later again, Abraham would not let Isaac leave the land of promise for a wife. Abraham realised that everything related to this son God had promised him.

But beneath the delays and the threats to the fulfilment of the promise and the trust that grew in Abraham—that God would fulfill everything necessary concerning this son—it must have been revealed to him that God had greater things in view. Abraham looked for a city whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11: 10, 13-16).

Christ

Jesus said that Abraham rejoiced to see my day and was glad (John 8:56). Paul argues that the seed in view must have been the Christ (Gal. 3:16), his point being that there could be no blessing for the human race by mere physical descent from Abraham. The promise of God to Abraham assumed the Christ. Israel should never have seen her history apart from this promise.

This may be the reason that Abraham would not recognise his own people (Isa. 63). They were now living, merely, as a race, and not as a people of promise.

Abraham must have seen the impossibility of the world being changed through his son and had his eyes firmly fixed on God. David would later have to realise that the house to be built for him would not focus in his immediate son, Solomon.

Waiting in hope

Just as Abraham was called to hope in God, his descendants had to wait for over four centuries for possession of what was promised to them. Israel had then to wait for the coming of her Messiah—not just to pass the time but to let everything in their reckoning be conditioned by the promise God had made, and the promises he continued to make.

We who have seen the coming of Christ must yet wait for the hope of righteousness, for the renewal of all things, for the return of Christ. We are at a different point in the covenant narrative, but covenant in its very essence involves living by faith-faith that through God's Christ, all that is promised will be accomplished. We are saved by believing in that promise.

Clearly, covenant involves waiting on God (involving the lapse of time) for what has been promised. So Christian hope is clearly defined by the promise of God but restful concerning the ambiguities which remain until all is fulfilled. Paul shows that, through justification by faith, we rejoice in hope (Rom. 5:1-5).

All of these aspects lead up to the central matter of covenant.

The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob-and of all his people

The intervention of God into the life of Abram and into the history of the world should never cease to amaze us. There is no reason for it other than the gracious purpose of God. In the early days of the Jerusalem church, Stephen recounted that the God of glory appeared to Abram, this being the sole reason for there being a Jewish nation (Acts 7:2).

It is also the sole reason why there is a church. 'The grace of God has appeared' (Tit. 2:11).

God told Abram to leave his own land-to become a great nation, to be blessed, to be great and a blessing in all the earth (Gen. 12: 1).

The Lord 'appeared' to Abram when he came to the land of promise (Gen. 12:7), and 'spoke' to him (Gen. 13:14), concerning the land and his offspring-though he had no children and other peoples inhabited the land. These events were significant enough to make the patriarchs return to and build altars at these places at a later time. Sometimes, the meetings with God were with 'the Angel of the Lord'.

'Appeared' literally 'let himself be seen by Abraham'. Vos *Biblical Theology* p. 82. (Also at 17:1 with 22; 26:2, 24). Vos also maintains that the informal meetings of men with God gives way to the more formal and fearful of the Mosaic period.

God met him in ways that riveted his attention and persuaded him that he had to do nothing outside of his trust in God, and, for this, he was reckoned as righteous (Gen. 15:1-6).

'He developed assurance in Jehovah' (Vos. p. 98).

'It is emphasised in the narrative that the patriarch's supreme blessedness consisted in the possession of God Himself: "Fear not Abraham, I am thy shield, thy exceeding great reward" (Gen. 15:1). For this treasure he could cheerfully renounce all other gifts' (Vos. p. 99).

The word covenant appears first at the end of the covenant ceremony (Gen. 15): the covenant was 4 cut'-perhaps referring to the divided carcasses—the covenant being that God would give the land to Abram's descendants (Gen. 15:18).

His faith was not in a God who could intervene for his benefit but a God who required that he cease to trust in himself and cast himself on the almightiness of God. In fact he came to believe that God could raise his son from death. This is of one piece with our NT faith in Jesus who is raised from the dead (Rom. 10:9).

The ceremony (given in response to his request: 'How am I know that I shall possess it?') filled Abraham with dread, more characteristic of the later appearances of God at Sinai. The significance of the severed carcasses may be as in Jer. 34:18-19—so be it to us if we break covenant! If this is the case and the smoking pot and flaming torch signify the divine promise, God bound himself alone to fulfil the covenant.

This was reaffirmed, and extended, over a decade later (Gen. 17:1-8); God made and established his covenant with Abram (exalted father)—calling him Abraham (father of a multitude)—saying that he would be exceedingly fruitful, the father of a multitude of nations, and father of kings. In particular, God would be God to Abraham (so 15:1) and his descendants forever, and the land would be theirs in perpetuity.

God told Abraham: 'I will be God to you' (Gen. 17:7). Thereafter, the God of Israel was known, and would always be known, as 'the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob' (Exod. 3:6; Matt. 22:32). So began the theme song of covenant which is: 'I will be your God and you shall be my people' (Exod. 6:7; Heb. 11: 16; Rev. 21:7).

The patriarchs' characteristic name for God is 'El-Shaddai'—God Almighty (Gen. 17: 1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; [49:251; also Exod. 6:3; Ezek. 10:5). They lived by who he was and what he did, and they lived because, when this God visited them and when they believed, they were justified.

Faith, justification. and the receiving of the promise

The New Testament apostles saw that what Abraham was promised came to him, not just by faith, but through the righteousness of faith (Rom. 4:13). No material possession or family lineage would have meant anything if he did not receive **it as a reconciled and justified man—a man with a God who** received and approved him.

Essentially, when God promised to Abraham a seed and a land and a people and blessing for the world, he had preached the gospel to Abraham—and this is the blessing God ordained for him to impart to the rest of the world (Gal. 3:8-9), with Christ as his Seed (Gal. 3:14). We who receive the gospel of Christ, are the heirs of Abraham (Gal. 3:29).

Though from one point of view, Abraham died without having inherited anything (Heb. 11: 13-16, 39-40), from another point of view he had received the promise (Heb. 6:13-15). In receiving the promise, he was justified and in being justified, he had a God who was assurance enough for everything that yet remained to be done for himself and for the world. The seed would come, the land would be entered, blessing would be assured to the Gentiles. Not even the death of his son could challenge such an assurance. He lived in his day with the assurance of a man who had received everything.

The theme of God being God to his people **will be taken up again under the other covenants.**

Abraham, keeping covenant

For his part, Abraham was to walk before God and so be blameless (Gen. 17: 1). Already, he had obeyed in leaving Ur (Heb. 11:8) and had determined that he would live according to the promise God had made to him. But now, Abraham and all his male descendants were to be circumcised. Not to do this would be to break covenant (Gen. 17:9-14).

'Ethics are not, however, represented as independent of religion, much less as the sole content of religion; but they are the product of religion. Gen. 17:1, contains the classical expression of this: "I am El-Shaddai; walk before me, then thou shalt be blameless" 'Me "walking before Jehovah" pictures the constant presence of Jehovah to his mind as walking behind him, and supervising him. The thought of the divine approval furnishes the motive for obedience. What shapes his conduct is not the general thought of God as moral ruler, but specifically the thought of El-Shaddai, who fills his life with miraculous grace. Thus morality is put on a redemptive basis and inspired by the principle of faith. Further, the ethical character of OT religion is symbolized by circumcision' (Vos. pp. 102f).

As Noah (6:9—*tamim* = whole, complete-'integrity' in 20:5). If 'perfect', then in relation rather than conduct. Cf. NT 'sin no moire'. 'Complete, unqualified surrender' (von Rad on *Genesis*). So Deut. 18:13 would read-'be whole with your God'.

This circumcision was not explained to Abraham. It was commonly practised in numbers of other nations and for ceremonial purposes, representing the removing of uncleanness (Gerhardus Vos in *Biblical Theology* p. 103). But in Israel, as for the church, it came to signify a clean heart (Lev. 26:4 1; Deut. 10: 16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; 6: 10; 9:25f; Ezek. 44:7; Rom. 2:25-29; 4: 11; Eph. 2: 11; Phil. 33; Col. 2:11-13).

He was chosen ('known' by God) to train his children in the requirements of God (Gen. 18:17-19) and this was a necessary component in the fulfilling of the covenant.

However, throughout the patriarchal narratives, it was constantly God who made the action or made it viable or got it back on track. Given the passivity of Isaac and the wily assertiveness of Jacob (not to speak of the later history of Israel), a covenant which relies on human works would be unthinkable. Rather, the purpose of God for those with a profoundly faulted character brings them to the place where they willingly fulfil the divine purpose.

So Abraham lived richly in the things that were promised to him. His works figured in God's eyes because they were the works of faith, not the works of self-justification (Gal. 5:6). The covenant held good (or, was shown to be holding good) because it had already produced observable fruits in Abraham (Gen. 18:19; 22:15-18; 26:3-5; Jam. 2:18-23).

The matter of works must arise again, and strongly so, when we consider the Mosaic covenant.

Israel understood the fulfilment of covenant as living before God in holiness and righteousness (Luke 1), and this is fulfilled in the gospel (Eph. 1:12-14).

Summary

The elements in this making of covenant may now be observed. God would bring blessing to the human race, not just in granting the ability to procreate, but in Abraham's descendants having a God. He would give them their identity (a nation, with impact on other nations) and their home (a land).

Because Abraham believed this promise of God, his faith was reckoned as righteousness. In effect, he could not 'have' a God who condemned him. God was God to Abraham and his descendants particularly in communicating to them that they were his righteous people.

From the beginning, there was an action for Abraham to take—to leave his land and family, to stay in the land of promise, to believe, to be circumcised, but the constant factor was the gracious purpose of God, not Abraham's obedience. The growing obedience of Abraham, which came to the point of offering up his son (a recognition of the nature of God who would offer up his Son?) was the fruit of God's word and action to direct and prosper him, and to chasten him when he erred.

Nations other than Israel would be blessed in so far as they recognised the appearing of God to this family and nation. To bless Israel would be to come under the blessing granted to them. To curse them would be to come under the curse of God—probably meaning to be alone in a world which already had been cursed by God.

A COVENANT OF PREPARATION (A)

The making of and the living under the Mosaic covenant occupies the Biblical story from Exodus to Malachi and provides **much of the point of reference for the New Testament** as well. It is not just a passing phase-though it has been superseded-but an essential component in our having covenant relation with God.

Moses and ourselves-under the new covenant

We are those with whom God made covenant through Abraham, but we are also those to whom the Mosaic revelation has come, together with all the experience of Israel in living under that covenant, and Jesus fulfilling it (Matt. 5:17). It would be impossible to do justice to any of the aspects of the gospel without knowing this old covenant word **concerning** ourselves. We are not under law (i.e. the old covenant), but we are certainly **under him** who fulfilled it in our place,

The Mosaic covenant was introduced in order to make the nature of covenant relation clearer (Gal. 3:19). For us, it has revealed the extent of human sinfulness.

to multiply (and even stimulate) transgressions; (ii) to confine all in the prison house of sin, from which there is no exit but by the way of faith' (Bruce on Galatians p. 175).

It has revealed the holiness of God, and also his graciousness. It has also revealed the undying anticipation of God that his people would be a faithful covenant partners. We may now look at the detail.

Moses and Abraham

The Abrahamic covenant had been in place for some six centuries when God spoke to Moses and under this faith a whole people had grown up-all of whom acknowledged Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as their forefathers. The cries of these people were heard by God and he acknowledged them as his people (Exod. 2:24; 3:7, 15). So the exodus is the outworking of the Abrahamic covenant and this covenant continues throughout. The operations of the Mosaic covenant were worked out under the promise of the Abrahamic covenant.

See Exod. 32:13; 33:1; Deut. 1:8; 34:4; 11 Kings 13:23; 1 Chron. 29:18; Neh. 9:7; Isa. 41:8; 51:2; 63:16; Mic. 7:20.

The making of the covenant

A whole course would be needed to study Exodus-Deuteronomy but we will observe certain key characteristics and actions of this covenant.

God revealed himself to Moses as 'I am that I am'. This suggests that Yahweh could not be known apart from his actions—and in particular, the actions that were soon to come. Israel would need to be a people of faith.

Everything about Israel's life depended on God. The power of Pharaoh had to be destroyed and the people delivered. The nation had experienced the helplessness of slavery and was now rendered wholly dependent on their God (Cf. Isa. 30:15-16; Jer. 13:11). The national life was based on this redemption (not exploitation), and in numerous ways, their common life was to reflect the way God had saved them (e.g. Deut. 15).

Two words are used to describe this redemption: one emphasising the payment of a ransom, the other emphasising that God was their kinsman. God was Israel's Father requiring the release of his son (Exod. 4:22; Hos. 11:1). Later, he was also the husband of Israel saving her from her harlotries (Hos. 1-2).

Goel (Exod. 6:6; 15:13) and *pada* are both used for the Exodus (e.g. Isa. 35:9-10). The former emphasises the action being familial, with emphasis on restoration, the latter, on the ransom to be paid. *Goel* is often used in Psalms and Prophets for God taking *up* (the cause of his people. It is also used in Isa. 40-55 concerning Israel's 'second Exodus'.

In everyday life, a person could redeem their relative by restoring them or their property to the family, or play the part of the kinsman—redeemer by raising *up* children for a brother who had left a childless widow (levirate marriage).

While their redemption involved offering of sacrifice and sprinkling of blood, the redemption itself was deliverance from the immediate slavery of the Egyptians who stood in the way of Israel offering true worship to Yahweh.

'Interestingly enough, only once is *pada* used with reference to redemption from sin (Psa. 130:78). This remained for the completed revelation of the new covenant. Unfortunately, this emphasis has become so dominant in Christian redemptive theology, there is the tendency to overlook the fact that the NT as well as the OT sees redemption, or salvation, in terms of the total human situation. Even a cursory reading of Luke's Gospel will catch the reflection of the OT heritage in the concept of salvation' (TWOT II p. 1734).

This relationship established by the redemption was now formulated into a covenant which the people were to keep (Exod. 19:1-6; Exod. 20: 1). This gave Israel her identity but also her vocation—all Israel was rendered a holy nation and a royal priesthood (Exod. 19:6). She was to represent the Lord's kingship among the nations.

Unlike the covenant with Abraham, this covenant was made with a whole nation. A whole population heard God's voice from Sinai. In this encounter with God, the relationship established through Abraham was confirmed and broadened out.

Some recognise this covenant as being made in the already familiar pattern of Ancient Near Eastern treaties—of suzerain (conquering lord) with vassal (conquered people who must accept terms of relationship stated by suzerain).

The covenant was the 'words' or 'law' (torah does not have the legal connotation of the modern English word—as though its prime purpose was to legislate and to have a basis for prosecution; it signifies direction for life), but it also incorporated the whole pattern

of worship shown to Moses on the mountain. The ark containing the law was the ark of the covenant and God met with Israel above the covering of that ark.

A covenant of grace

The structure of *Exodus* is instructive in understanding the Mosaic covenant. The law was given, the elders summoned to eat with God, the book of the covenant was read and sprinkled with blood, as were the people, instructions were given for building a holy place (sanctuary) and the keeping of Sabbath was nominated as the sign of the covenant.

Then follows the account of Israel's rebellious making of a golden calf and Moses' intercession for the people—and God's re-giving of the law (covenant) and assuring them of his presence. Only after this does Moses deliver God's commands concerning the Sabbath; only then are the materials collected and the tabernacle raised up; and only then does God's glory fill the holy place. Between the making of the covenant and the setting up of its provisions is the rebellion of Israel—a rebellion which God covered with the assurance of his grace. The law which Israel had was a law they had by grace because they were a people of grace.

It is the worship so given and the law which was rewritten which we will focus on now—what it meant for Israel and what it signifies for ourselves.

WORSHIP UNDER THE OLD COVENANT-ITS RICHNESS

The forms of worship for Israel were given—that is they were not free to worship apart from the 'givens' of worship -the temple, priesthood, sacrifices and assemblies.

Just as it is true that the OT saints are not complete apart from us (Heb. 11:40), so it is true that we are impoverished apart from them. They were serving us (I Pet. 1: 12-13), and the word given to them is also given to us for instruction etc. (II Tim. 3:14-17).

The tabernacle/temple

The covenantal promise, often recounted, is threefold: 'I will be your God, you shall be my people, and I will dwell in your midst' (e.g. Ezek. 37:27). God told Abraham that he would be God to him (Gen. 17). Israel was told that they would be his people (Exod. 6:7). Now God explained the manner in which he would live among them.

The tent was to be erected so God could dwell among them (Exod. 15:16-17; 25:8; 29:43-46), firstly in the midst of their camp (Num. 5:3) and later, their land (Num. 35:34). The temple served the same purpose (I Kin. 6:13; 8:12). Solomon realised that the temple could not contain God but desired that it be a place at which God would hear their prayers (I Kin 8:27-30). God's dwelling among them continued to be their hope of salvation (Isa. 12:3-6).

The tabernacle and the temple were both to be made from the freely given gifts of God's grateful people (Exod. 25:1-2; 1 Chron. 21:28-22:19). The same glad and generous spirit is the manner of the Church's growth (Acts 2.; Eph. 2:21f with 3:7-13).

The ark of the covenant

Central to the tabernacle was the ark of the covenant containing the tablets of the law, and covered by a 'place of atonement'—the place where blood was sprinkled (*kapporeth*). So Heb. 9:5.

The link with an Arabic word 'cover'—hence, 'to cover sin', is not clearly enough established according to Dumbrell, but TDNT accept it as a possibility. The translation 'mercy seat' is inadequate to express atonement.

From above the place of atonement, God met with Israel (Exod. 25:17-22; Lev. 16:2; Num. 7:89; 1 Chron. 28:11—where the cover is named rather than the ark). It was his throne (I Sam. 4:4) or footstool (I Chron. 28:2). The ark was the place of propitiation and also the place from which Yahweh spoke (Num. 7:89).

The covenant which confirmed and expressed Israel's relation to God was the law, but not a naked law. It was enshrined in a form of worship which provided atonement and it was here that God met with and governed Israel. (Cf. Heb. 4:16; 1 John 2:1-2).

The ark of the covenant itself came to be associated with the bestowal of blessing and so occasioned great joy when restored to its proper place (11 Sam. 6:1-5).

Other provisions of the tabernacle/temple

The ark was behind a veil in the holy of holies (Lev. 16:2; Heb. 9:8). In front of this were the altar of incense (Psa. 141:2; cf. Luke 1:10-13; Rev. 5:8; 8:1-5), table of showbread (Exod. 25:30) and lampstand (Exod. 25:37)—in the holy place. In the courtyard in front of the tabernacle/temple were the altar of sacrifice (Lev. 1:3-9; 17:11) and a washbowl (Exod. 30:20-21).

Deuteronomy is emphatic that only one place in the promised land is to be used for the sacrificial worship—'the place where the Lord causes his name to dwell' (Deut. 12: 114). Israel could never be casual about how they worshipped. Worship was a given.

The true temple

All of this was to be made according to the copy of the true tabernacle in heaven (Heb. 8:5). Le. everything about old covenant worship is representative of how God is truly to be approached.

The ultimate location is not Jerusalem but in Spirit and in truth (John 4:22-23); the temple is the flesh of Christ (John 2:19-22), and, joined to him, the assembled believers (I Cor. 3:16), and, in turn, their own bodies (I Cor. 6:19); central to this worship is the presence of the Father among his people (11 Cor. 6:16-18). The new covenant consists in the law being written on human hearts, and, God forgiving the sins of his people (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:8-12).

The priests and Levites

On the mountain, and as an expression of the beauty and glory of God's being among his people, Aaron and his sons were chosen to act as a priesthood on behalf of all the people (Exod. 28:1-2, 40). It was necessary that this priestly nation, who would represent God to the nations, had themselves, a priesthood, to establish the principle of representation.

The High Priest, a type of greater things to come, indicated that God wanted his people represented before him and had made a way for the sins of the people to be forgiven and the covenant promises to be fulfilled. The High Priest bore the names of Israel on his chest and also the responsibility to bring to Israel the judgements of God on matters presented to him (Exod. 28:28-30).

So, the mediatorial role of Moses and Aaron was extended to a whole priesthood (the sons of Aaron) and a Levitical order (the tribe of Levi) to act as assistants of the priests and the service of the tabernacle/temple. It would appear that they later ordained themselves for this office by their zeal for God (Exod. 32:25-29).

Is this given another aspect because of Israel's aversion to direct contact with God (Exod. 20:18f; Deut. 5:4, 22-24)? While Moses had a mediatorial role from the

beginning, it may be more pronounced after their making of the golden calf. God would go with them, but it is Moses who would meet with God and the glory of this would be screened from Israel (Exod. 34:29-35). This remains the case throughout the remainder of time allotted to the Mosaic covenant, until the time of Christ (11 Cor. 3:12-18).

Hebrews makes much of the High Priest being one with his people, able to sympathise with them and chosen by God—for none could appoint himself to approach God on behalf of sinners (Heb. 4:14-16; 5:1-10). He was also without sin and held his priesthood forever (7:23-28).

While the OT priesthood anticipated the coming of the Great High Priest, it did not anticipate his tribe; he would be of the royal line of Judah and his priesthood of the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 7:7-22).

The priesthood of Aaron would survive **the great judgement of the captivity (Jer. 33:17-22)**. It would not be cancelled until that which it represented had arrived. In fact, it would be purged of all its unfaithfulness (Mal. 2:1-9; 3:1-4), and this is the Church, as a priestly people, offering right sacrifices to God continually (Rom. 12: 1; Eph. 5:2; Phil. 4:18; Heb. 13:15f; I Pet. 2:5).

The sacrifices

Atonement was secured by sacrifice, not because the blood of animals could cover the sin of men and women (Heb. 10:4) but because it was the way appointed by God for this to occur (Lev. 17:11). The offering was to be of a perfect animal. The blood represented the death of the victim (cf. Moses offering to give himself up to make atonement—Exod. 32:30-32, and Phineas making atonement by slaying certain transgressors—Num. 25:6-8, 13). 'Death was the penalty for sin (Exod. 18:20), but... God graciously permitted the death of a sacrificial victim to substitute the death of the sinner' (Leon Morris in NBD P. 104). So Heb, 9:22.

It may also be helpful to consider the blood as the offering up of a life (PT Forsyth).

A burnt offering (Lev. 1:4) or sin or guilt offering (Lev. 4:20; 7:7) and especially the sacrifices on the day of atonement (Lev. 16) were accepted to make atonement for a person's or nations' sins.

Kapar comes to mean 'to atone by offering a substitute' (e.g. 49 times in Leviticus). This is confirmed by the practise of the worshipper confessing his sins and placing his hands on the head of the sacrifice (Lev. 16:21).

Where atonement involved other than sacrifice, as in payment of money, it meant to avert punishment, especially wrath of God, by payment of ransom or of life (L Morris in EDT p. 97).

The LXX used ∞ ilasthrion = place or object of propitiation, as in Rom. 3:25 and Heb. 9:5.

God could be free in his offering forgiveness of sins, not because the sacrifices did anything but because of what they pointed to. We can be grateful for knowing the OT

sacrificial system because it was made according to the pattern in heaven, the heaven into which Christ has gone on our behalf with his own blood (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 6:19-20; 9:11). Jesus did not take the sacrificial system lightly but made himself the offering, the Passover lamb (I Cor. 5:7). The veil of the temple could only be torn on earth because it had been torn in the heavens. The temple ritual gives us a window into the majesty and the holiness of what Jesus effected in his own flesh to bring us to God.

Sabbaths and festivals

The weekly sabbath was the sign of the covenant (as the bow for the Noahic and circumcision for the Abrahamic). In their weekly ceasing from labour, they acknowledged their Creator (Exod. 31:12-17) and Redeemer (Deut. 5:12-15).

The Passover feast celebrated their redemption from Egypt (Exod. 12:3-20). Pentecost celebrated the first fruits of their crop (Exod. 23:16) and the feast of Booths, at the end of harvest, recalled their being kept by God through the wilderness (Num. 29:12-38).

Just prior to this last festival was the day of Atonement when the High Priest offered the annual sacrifice and entered the Holy of Holies (Lev. 23:26-31).

WHAT IS THE LAW?

Law from the beginning

In the very beginning of man's history, instructions were given regulating marriage, work, and the Sabbath (Gen. 1:26-28, 2:3, 15). This creational law was never revoked; Jesus and Paul both referred to it as authoritative (Matt. 19:8, 1 Cor. 11:7-8).

Abraham obeyed God's voice, and also kept God's commandments, statutes and laws (Gen. 26:15). The law of God has always been and has always applied to all peoples. Paul showed that this was true when he wrote to the Romans: people died because of sin from the beginning, and sin is not measurable unless there is a law to break—so God's law must have been from the beginning (Rom. 5:12-14). The ten commandments were not the origins of God's law.

What did happen when Moses received the stone tablets from God was that the commandments were given to Israel as a people (Rom. 3:1-3), proclaiming to the world that their relationship to God was a responsible one (Exod. 24:3-8). Their duty was to sanctify God's name among the nations by worshipping the true God exclusively and spiritually, and to reflect the character of God ethically. So the law was formally proclaimed as part of the covenant governing the relation between God and the people, giving that relationship a new dignity.

The law expressed God's nature and proclaimed his wisdom

The commands express God's own nature (Exod. 20:2-3, 5, 7; Prov. 14:31). As the Holy God, he called Israel to share his likeness (Lev. 11:44-45). One could not offend the law without offending the God whose nature was thereby expressed.

Accordingly, for Israel to keep the law would convey to the nations the great wisdom of their God (Deut. 4:5-8).

Content of law

By 'the law' we refer especially to the ten commandments, yet not exclusive of the detailed statutes, commands, ordinances, etc; nor apart from the summary of the commandments in the *Shema*: '...you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart etc' (Deut. 6:4-5).

The ten commandments are general in their formulation and applicable to all situations. The judgements which follow appear to arise out of case histories (Exod. 21-24) and are an application of the commandments to the particular situation in which Israel found herself (Dumbrell pp. 92f). But given that they were the application of those commandments they were as binding as the commandments were. *Deuteronomy* treats each with equal seriousness (e.g. 7:5-6; 14:1-2).

The ten commandments are generally negative in their formulation, suggesting that they do not initiate a relationship but guard it. It is the fence erected to keep the covenant people in tune with what has been granted to them—God among them.

The first commandment prohibits anything but an exclusive relationship with God.

The second prohibits anything but a direct relationship with God (not mediated through an idol).

The third prohibits anything but a serious and **whole-hearted relationship with God**.

The fourth prescribes a day given over to God—a token of all the other days (cf. firstborn and firstfruits). This is the outward sign of the Mosaic covenant (Exod. 31:12-17; 35:1-3), a recognition of God being their Creator (Exod.) and Redeemer (Deut. 5:12-15), and an expression of their trust that it would be God and not themselves who would bring them to the promised land.

It is the only commandment not mentioned affirmatively in the NT. Together with circumcision, the sign of the Abrahamic covenant, it had become a hollow practice. Just as there had to be a true circumcision—of the heart, so there had to be a true sabbath rest—a ceasing from the labours of self-justification and a trust in the 'finished work of Christ' and God who will fulfil all his purpose concerning us (Heb. 4:10-11; 11:16).

The fifth prescribes respect for family life.

The sixth to ninth prohibits the taking of the life, or spouse, or property, or reputation of another.

The tenth commandment internalizes all of the others (Exod. 20:17; Deut. 10: 16; 30:6). Jesus confirmed this (Matt. 5:17-48).

Permanence of law

God's law must be what God wants done, or righteousness. God has never abandoned his plan for man to live righteously. Neither has his standard of righteousness altered. In I John 2:29-3:10, the writer shows that God's children are those who do what is right. He says that sin is lawlessness, so righteousness must be keeping the law or the commandments of God.

Gentiles also under law

Because the law was formally promulgated with Israel, their case is clearer. But there is a moral law which asserts in each person's conscience that if he does well he will be rewarded and if he does not then he will be punished (Rom. 2:6-11). The form of that law may not always be clearly formulated as in Israel's case, but it is present and playing a dynamic role in every person and society.

The effects of lawbreaking (viz., **death**) **have fallen on all men (Rom. 5:12-14)** so in fact the whole world is irretrievably wedded to law until the gospel comes (cf. Rom.

7:1-4, Gal. 3:22-25). And of course, if people reject the good news of God's kindness, they remain under the control of law, and, in fact, under the bondage of law, because any approach to law not grounded in God's kindness is an imprisonment (Rom. 9:32).

THE IMPORTANCE OF 'KEEPING COVENANT'

Abraham had been commanded to keep covenant, or to walk before God and be blameless (Gen. 17). This now became the cry of Israel's prophets-starting with Moses. The book of Deuteronomy is a stirring call to faithfulness. The book of Joshua concludes in a similar manner.

The books of Judges, Samuel and Kings record the history of Israel-according to this criteria-did they keep the covenant? Where they did, they prospered; where they did not, the Lord gave them up to their enemies.

The meaning of keeping covenant

Keeping the covenant was the same as **keeping the commands of God, or the Sabbath or the Passover** (Moses kept P. 'by faith-Heb. 11:28) or the way of the Lord, or justice. Israel was to be diligent in keeping the covenant (Deut. 29:9) and those who had been were commended (Deut. 33:9). Not to keep covenant would be turn to other gods (Josh. 23:16).

Not to keep covenant was to have forgotten the miracles of Egypt and the wilderness (Psa. 78:5-20). It would be to forget in particular that they were especially the people of God.

The 'law' for Israel would have included the ten commandments, but also, the instruction which applied it to particular situations. The way of life for him was to love the Lord with, all his heart... and his neighbour as himself-keeping himself from all envy of what was another's. As time proceeded, it would also have included all the word of God through the prophets who encouraged them to keep this law and to anticipate the redemption of its Giver-prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah. It would also have included the wise application of this law to daily life as in the book of Proverbs.

Keeping covenant did not signify perfection. The Lord would instruct sinners in the way and pardon the sin of those who, in the general direction of their life, kept his covenant and decrees (Psa. 25: 1-11).

God's steadfast love would be on those who feared him (Psa. 103:17-18) and the throne of David would be secure for those who kept covenant (Psa. 132:12; cf. I Kings 11:11).

God would keep covenant

God would be faithful to the covenant (Deut. 7:9; 1 Kings 8:23; 11 Chron. 6:14; Neh. 1:5; 9:32). He would do this in two ways. Firstly, he would show that his covenant was still in place by bringing the promised curses on those who broke his law-and on those who refused to acknowledge Israel as his people.

Secondly, he would show that his covenant of grace was more potent than their sinning. His grace would overreach their unfaithfulness. In wrath he would remember mercy. For a covenant broken beyond repair—from a human point of view—he would make a new covenant, which fulfilled the terms of the first covenant—the law would be fulfilled and inscribed on the hearts of his people.

God was confident in giving Israel the law, and, making his covenant dependent on its fulfilment—in view of his purpose to raise up the Seed in whom all would be fulfilled (Matt. 5:17).

The delight of law

The Psalms are the hymn book of Israel and include many songs of delight in being the people who lived under the law of God. This delight related to a prior trust in Yahweh (Psa. 40:4, 8; Jer. 17:7-8).

The joy arose as part of a delight in the whole creation—as a revelation of the wisdom of God—and the law as a specific revelation to revive, instruct, delight, enlighten and warn the godly man. It could be that he saw the works of God in creation—including himself as a part of it—as too wonderful to be polluted by his own great transgression (Psa. 19).

This keeping of the law, the psalmist saw as the fruit of God's nearness to him (Psa. 119:7-8) and dealing bountifully with him (v. 17) and enlarging his heart (v. 32) and longed to know what they were because the whole earth was full of God's covenant love (v. 64). **It was to him a word of life and hope** (v. 49-50, 74, 81, 154).

For his part, the psalmist would make these testimonies his delight (v. 16) and chose the way of faithfulness (v. 30).

He was indignant that others would choose to live otherwise (v. 53, 139); it caused him to weep (v. 136). He accepted the chastenings of life so that he would be more attentive to God's way (v. 71). Because he delighted in the rightness of God's way—in the presence of those who did evil, he had not been destroyed (92-96). His confidence in the law of God is that God will act according to them and establish justice (v. 126).

In particular, the commands of God taught him to seek the mercy of God (v. 76-77, 156). Though he was a 'lost sheep', God would seek him because he trusted in the commandment of God (v. 176).

The covenant Israel broke

The story of Israel has its high points (during the reigns of David, the early Solomon, Uzziah, Hezekiah and Josiah among others), but is characterized by a constant drift to the practices of surrounding nations, compliance with their demands, reliance on their forces, and so, capitulation to their gods. This did not display the superior power and wisdom and grace of Yahweh. The blessing of God in the creation was obscured and the jealousy of God for his people and his name aroused.

Their faithfulness of the people was not measured legalistically—in fact, where Israel offered mere performance of ritual, their worship was rejected. God always desired

justice, mercy and a humble walk before him (Mic. 6:8). These were the things truly required of the people who lived under the law.

The prophets continued to call the people to faithfulness to the Mosaic covenant. They could offer no hope to Israel that did not take account of the word of the Lord through Moses. However, they struggled to know the meaning of the larger, and unqualified, promise to Abraham (and to David) when Israel could not be recognised as the people of God. To them was revealed that the covenant would yet be fulfilled-by God, and by his people.

With the anointing of David to be king—a man whose heart was set to do God's will a further covenant was made. It was a covenant of promise—that God would maintain the Davidic dynasty, and that by a son of David, the people of God would be led in righteousness. This must be considered separately, and, with it, the fortunes of the people who remained under the Mosaic covenant.

The Mosaic covenant was still in place when David's true Son came as Messiah, and his work had to be accomplished under the terms of the Mosaic covenant.

THE USES AND ABUSES OF THE LAW-1

The law was given for two fundamental reasons.

Luther suggested three uses of the law: to maintain external order; to induce sinners to recognise their guilt; to direct the life of believers. In fact, reform theologians have made more use of the latter and Luther made little use of it. (See Berkower's *Faith and Sanctification*, chapter eight.)

I have preferred to start with the creational situation, and the historical situation in Israel's case and what is now the case because of the gospel, and, against that background, to show how the law acts powerfully to arouse our sinfulness, to condemn us, and to make our situation untenable—apart from one Saviour.

The Heidelberg Confession puts these two purposes in the reverse order:

‘Q. Why, then, doth God so strictly enjoin upon us the ten commandments, since in this life no one can keep them?’

A. First, that all our life long we may learn more and more to know our sinful nature, and so the more earnestly seek forgiveness of sins and righteousness in Christ; secondly, that we may continually strive and beg from God the grace of the Holy Ghost, so as to become more and more changed into the image of God, till we attain finally to full perfection after this life.’

The first use of the law

To tell us what to do

Most obviously, because it expressed the nature of God—his nature as expressed in creation and in his redemption—it was the way they should live in gratefulness. It was there for their guidance.

This is certainly one of the themes of *Deuteronomy* (4:37-40; 6:20-25) and it is also clear in the New Testament letter of *James* (see 1: 19-25; 2:8-13).

Jesus explained to Israel that he would fulfill the law, and that those who taught and practised it would be great in the kingdom and that the righteousness of believers in him would have to exceed that of the Pharisees—and he gave some illustrations of what he meant (Matt. 5:17-20).

It is also the assumption in I *John* that the speaking of God to his people will make them eager to hear the command of Christ and to do it (2:3-11). There is no distinction between hearing the command to be saved and the command to love our brother. To heed one is to heed the other (3:22-24). Redemption has made a gratefully obedient people and the commands are for them to express that gratitude—to say ‘Yes’ to the command of God.

This must be what Jesus meant by fulfilling the law—it is fulfilled 'in us' (Rom. 8:3) by the work of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:12-15; Gal. 5:22-23). The law is written upon **the heart of his** people (Deut. 6:6; 30:14; Isa. 51:7; Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 10:12-17).

Some prefer to say that this is not a use of the law but rather a statement of what has happened by another means. However, the obedience of the Christian has no focus if there is no command and many instructions are specifically called commands.

The law being envisaged here is not a static law, removed from God, but an immediate presence of God to a person at a point of time, a word of love to one who has reason to want the command.

By extension, the Gentiles have a law—or what the law requires, written on their hearts (Rom. 2:12-16). Out of gratefulness for creation they should express the nature of God in their living (Rom. 1: 18-25).

To warn and restrain

However, the law received at Sinai was expressed negatively, which acknowledges that Israel would be tempted to live otherwise. It says to them that this is the arena in which they must live. Out of this context, it is a real question as to what relationship they may have with God.

They have already found that there is a context outside of law called grace, but, none the less, a context where judgement has its place. This matter is strongly emphasised in the latter part of *Deuteronomy*—both the judgements and the mercy for which they may still plead (chapters 28-30).

So, the law is a restraint—to warn us not to behave in a manner contrary to the expressed nature of God, to make the judgements which flow from God explicable. So the prophets could say of God's judgements: 'This has happened because...'

This is so for all peoples: 'righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people' (Prov. 14:34).

This remains its use under the new covenant (Rom. 1:32; 2:2; Gal. 5:21; 1 Thes. 4:1-8; I Tim. 1: 1-11; Tit. 3:11).

To lead us to mercy

As a corollary of this, the law would lead Israel to see the need to apply to the Lord for his mercy. This must be behind the statement of Micah that what the Lord required of Israel was that they do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before their God (Mic. 6:8). None of the ten commands refer to mercy, but the attempt to keep them and their application to the covenant Lord for mercy ought to have taught them that it was what God wanted. (Cf. Psa. 1 and Jer. 17:7-8.)

Judgement will be without mercy to those who show no mercy (Jam. 2:13); it is one of the greater matters of the law (Matt. 18:23-35; 23:23-24).

THE USE AND ABUSE OF THE LAW-2

The second use of the law

Luther called this 'to induce sinners to recognise their guilt'. The Heidelberg confession says the ten commandments are strictly enjoined upon us 'that all our life long we may learn more and more to know our sinful nature, and so the more earnestly seek forgiveness of sins and righteousness in Christ.'

... to reveal sin

When Christ says that the law is to be done and taught, it must have this object in view, that we should not only have a true understanding of God's nature and our duty, but also a good understanding of our own evil nature and refusal of duty.

The law not only discovers those who do evil, it unseats those who do 'good'-that is, with a view to self-justification. From the beginning of our sinfulness, we have attempted to be 'right' and will go to extraordinary lengths to be so or to appear so.

Christ used the law for this purpose himself: with Judaism generally-in the sermon on the mount (Matt. 5-7); with the Pharisees (Mark 7:11); and concerning love of neighbour (Luke 10:25-37), and payment of taxes (Luke 20:22-26). The parable of the rich man and Lazarus should have shamed the worldly Pharisees (Luke 16:14-31) and the illustrated law have awakened the rich young ruler (Luke 18: 18-27). He taught the futility of justification by works of the law. The publican went to his house justified rather than the Pharisee (Luke 16:15; 18:9-14).

In fact, the law had so revealed the sinfulness of Israel by the time of Christ's coming that it should have been beyond question (Rom. 2:17-24; 3:9-20).

However, because of their, and now, our own eagerness to unilaterally prove ourselves (our habit since Eden), we fondly hold to what we think is right and even revell in it, and perceive ourselves to be keepers of this law-deceiving ourselves, making God a liar (I John 1: 10).

... to incite rebellion

But the law does its work even while we misunderstand our relation to it. We wish to evade the content of the law-angry (whether perceived or acknowledged or not) that another should have authority over us and be able to pronounce verdict concerning us. So it stirs up the evil in us. We attempt to redefine the law, or minimise the seriousness of breaking it. In particular, we do not see the need for grace or of anyone dying for our sins. (This may explain the difficulty in many receiving the truth of the cross; they still have a too inflated view of their own goodness.)

... to bind us to our evil conscience

In fact, in our attempts to do well, we do very badly-as did Paul-breathing out threats and murder. Paul went about his persecutions of the church thinking he was serving God, but he was actually enslaved to his own guilty conscience.

As he said later, our sinful passions are aroused by the law (Rom. 7:5). We not only encounter the truth of God in the law but also encounter the intensity of our own sin as we seek to counter and oppose this external restraint. This must be true for non-Christian and Christian alike.

Such persons think themselves pleasing to God in their own right and set out to prove the point. But this does no more than prove the obdurate disobedience of the sinner-because the righteousness being paraded turns out to be an arrogant facade or something with no heart to it.

Law then rises up to contradict all such self-justification by leading to awful bondage (Gal. 3:23-26; 4:2-11).

... to condemn us

All the while, our conscience is not free, our judgements are unbalanced and critical and without mercy. We treat others with the harshness that law is working in us. This is part of the working out of Paul's comment: 'All who rely on the works of the law are under a curse (Gal. 3:10). There is nothing we can do to avoid the actions of God's law.

In all works which are simply self-justifying, the law is condemning us leaving us unable to enjoy relationship with God and yet at the same time, tying us to the necessity of our good works-for which we have no heart. These things are so for all people-for all have a sense of law-but especially for those who set themselves up as knowers of what is good.

Paul thought he was alive under the law until the law revived and he died (Rom. 7:9). This awakening to law may have been historical-with the coming of the ten commandments, or, his coming of age-from which time he was expected to keep the law, or, with the coming of the gospel which showed him the true content of the law. Whichever of these is true, law came.

... to shut us up to Christ

Law comes to us also, to arouse our thinly veiled sinfulness into its full proportions, to direct us to the true source of our hostility-the call to be dependent on God-especially his grace, and to condemn us for the sinners that we are.

The cross and resurrection are the expose of all this. We have been found out for what we are and forgiveness is proclaimed to us.

The church must continue to teach its people the good things of God's law because in so doing, they will know whether they have a good heart for God-when they love his law-or merely a good heart for themselves-when they boast of their law.

The law has the express intention to shut us up to no other possibility than to acknowledge that our life did not lie in ourselves but in Christ. Therefore, in the interests of the gospel and the relief of burdened consciences, we must not forbear to teach the law as the good way to live. It is not only life to us to do it-through grace, it is pride's grave-from which we are raised by the gospel.

Discovering the uses of the law through grace

Through an experience of the kindness and grace of God the apostle Paul came to see the true nature of law and its purpose in Israel's history. He said: 'We were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law' (Gal. 3:23-25).

Resisting entanglements with the law

Because law remains, as the will of God, and our sins continue to trouble us, any relation to law that is unfulfilled by Christ-in our place-is tortuous. We are, through the law, dead to that law so that we may belong to Christ (Rom. 7:4-6). In this, we must stand firm (Gal. 5: 1).

Standing against a wrong use of law

Because some, through an unholy mix of guilt and pride, seek to be teachers of the law (I Tim. 1:7; Jam. 3:1, 13), and because they may work on the imperfect faith and weak consciences of those who retain some vestiges of self-proving, false teachers must be recognised and rejected (Rom. 2:17-21; Gal. 1:6-9; Phil. 3:2; Col. 2:8, 16; 1 Tim. 1:6-7; Jam. 4:11-12).

Trusting in the God of the gospel for all godliness

It is precisely in Christ's removing us from the condemnation of law that our will to keep it is born (Jer. 31:31-34; John 14:15; Rom. 7:12, 14, 22). We serve in the new life of the Spirit (Rom. 7:6). It is by walking according to the Spirit-who raised Jesus from the dead (Rom. 8:11)—that we put to death the deeds of the body (Rom. 8:13-14).

We are the true circumcision-who really keep the law-who glory in Christ and put no confidence in the flesh (Phil. 3:3). It is by God's precious promises, and faith in the same, that we become partakers of the divine nature (II Pet. 1:3-4). We learned Christ, from Christ, in Christ, to put on the new man-created after the likeness of God (Eph. 4:20-24).

It is for this reason that some would say there is no 'third use of the law', but see earlier comments.

THE DAVIDIC COVENANT—I

The Abrahamic and Davidic covenants are of one piece and Christ has fulfilled both in one action (Luke 1:67-79).

This can be seen in 11 Samuel also but we will follow the sequence of the story.

The gift of a king

From the beginning, Yahweh was king of Israel (Exod. 15:18; Deut. 33:5). When Israel requested a king to replace the evil sons of Samuel, they were expressing a long held distrust of the way God was leading them (I Sam. 8:4-8, 19-20; 10: 19).

Cf. John 6. Israel again sought a king-for false reasons.

However, it had always been in God's mind that they would, and could, have a king-of God's choosing-and he had prescribed of what kind he should be (Deut. 17:14-20; 28:36).

Samuel installed Israel's first two kings-Saul and David-and saw to it that both king and people understood their duties. The king would deliver the people of God from their enemies (I Sam. 10:1).

Saul did not keep his heart humbly trusting in God and was rejected as king. This is tragic from the point of view of Saul, but seems to serve the purpose of emphasising that kingship belonged to the Lord. Saul never managed to restore the ark of the covenant to Israel (God was 'enthroned' between the cherubim). Rather, he sought to establish his own kingship (I Sam. 22:12-23).

Note David's concern later that the Spirit of the Lord not depart from his as it had from Saul (Psa. 51: 11).

From these first two kings (in Saul, by way of contrast with David), we see the marks of kingship. First, they must be elected by God and anointed. (It seems more important for God and the king to know of this anointing than for the people to witness it.) Second, they must be anointed by the prophet-giving prominence to the way in which God rules his people. Third, they must be men of the Spirit (I Sam. 10:6; 16:13-14). Fourth, they must demonstrate their prowess in battle and see the defeat of God's enemies; i.e. bring Israel into their inheritance. They must be a shepherd to Israel (II Sam. 5:2).

David shows his suitability for kingship because he could not rest until the ark of the covenant was restored to Israel. This restoration of the ark was, however, clearly a work of God (II Sam. 6:1-19).

He then sought to build a house for God's dwelling.

Just as parallels can be seen between the Mosaic covenant and Hittite suzerain treaties, so parallels can be seen between the Davidic covenant and pagan kingship rites—in which the king was seen as governing on behalf of the city-state deity.

Connections with Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants

It had been the purpose of the Abrahamic covenant to give his seed the land and that they should be a blessing in the earth. It had been the purpose of the Mosaic covenant period that they should enter into their inheritance and live in the blessing through trustful obedience of his word.

The narratives of Joshua and Judges make it clear that there was still more to be done. More land needed to be taken; a resting place had not been found for the Lord's 'name to dwell'. The people were not united and certainly not faithful to Yahweh.

It was now the promise of God to David, not that he will complete the conquest (though, militarily, he does), but that his dynasty will be forever—i.e. Israel will always have a king who will secure their inheritance. To do this, he would not only need the blessing of God upon him but would need to lead the people in righteousness so that they could live in what God gave to them.

THE DAVIDIC COVENANT —2

The Davidic kingship-pivot point between promise and fulfillment

'The appointment of David as king of Israel may be seen as the pivot point for the whole Old Testament. God had promised to bring Israel to the land promised to Abraham. This would be their 'rest' (Deut. 12:9). Their land would be reminiscent of Eden—a land flowing with milk and honey. The hostility of resentment and anger would be subdued.

David was acknowledged by his people as their shepherd (11 Sam. 5:1-5; cf. 7:7). He had been triumphant—or gained 'rest from his enemies' (11 Sam. 7: 1, 11). There were further battles and triumphs, but his kingship and the peace of the nation were beyond dispute.

The battle had clearly been God's, and now that David expressed his wish to build a temple for the returned ark, God made it clear that he would retain the initiative (11 Sam. 7:8-15). He would build a house (or dynasty) for David.

David may have been reminded of the promise to Abraham because he used terminology (Adonai Yahweh) directly from Genesis (Gen. 15:2, 8)—that is, he may be saying that the promise to him is the way of fulfilling the promise to Abraham.

Territory promised (Gen. 15:18ff.- Deut. 11:24ff) is Israel's 'place'. So (II Sam. 7: 10) David will appoint a 'place' for my people Israel and will plant them they may dwell in their own 'place' and be disturbed no more.

Israel's sonship (Exod. 4:22) was now applied to David in particular (11 Sam. 7:14).

In particular, v. 19 reads (literally) 'this is the law for man' and may signify that the kingship here promised to David will be the norm, not only for the future of Israel but for the future of all peoples. This is, in fact, the case.

"This is the law of man' WC Kaiser says this means 'this is the charter by which humanity will be directed' (*The Blessing of David in p. 152 of Dumbrell*).

It was promised to David that his kingship would be eternal (II Sam. 7:13; 23:5; Psa. 89:33-37).

In some ways, the Davidic covenant was conditional (Psa. 89:29-32; 132: 12; 1 Kings 11:4; 8:25; 9:4-5); however, the general tenor is that the covenant will be fulfilled even if the benefits may be withdrawn from individuals.

In literal terms the Davidic line failed at 587 BC but in terms of what God intended, the promise of 11 Sam. 7:13 is fulfilled in Christ (Rom. 1:3-4). In Ex. 19 Israel was called a royal priesthood. This priestly ministry of the whole nation is now focussed in the king-after order of Melchizedek (Psa. 110:4). 'This Psalm makes it clear that the king is not just a priest but exercises his priestly ministry as king.

Christ, who is the true Son of David, offered up his priestly service to God as King. Thereafter, the Davidic kingship, is 'the charter for humanity'-all nations must heed God's king in Jerusalem (Psa. 2).

THE DAVIDIC COVENANT—3

The Davidic covenant gathers together all the purposes of God as expressed already in the Abrahamic covenant and the Mosaic covenant. At the same time, under its provisions, all the unfaithfulness of Israel came to a head.

The maintaining of the covenant-for David's sake

Although David was the anticipation of God's Messiah, his life was far from perfect. His sinfulness in regard to Bathsheba is notorious, and his inability to bring peace to his own house a burden he carried all his life.

Yet it pleased God to have this great king famous for his humble and expectant trust.

The remaining history of Israel is largely the story of its kings (whether they led the people in true worship and obedience, or into idolatry) and the messages of its prophets.

What began as a word of promise to David concerning his son became the hope of the nation. In the days of David's chosen heir-Solomon, the nation rose to heights it rarely reached there-after. The great temple was built, Solomon's wisdom was greatly sought after, the nation prospered and had undisturbed peace.

But all was not well. The heart of the king was lead astray to idols. This, then, could not be the son in whose days God would fulfill all his promise. His prowess did not survive his own reign. In the days of his son, the nation expressed its disdain at the mismanagement of Solomon. (This probably gave them their excuse to cast off the reign of God as had Samuel's evil sons 120 years earlier.) When promised 'more of the same-only more so', the Northern tribes (who came to be known as Israel or Ephraim) chose another king for themselves.

Northern tribes

By doing so, they showed their disdain for the promise God had made concerning the son of David. They regarded their own contrivances as more significant than the covenant. Their contrivance in particular was to set up an image to worship at their Northern and Southern boundaries. No one need travel to Jerusalem where God's throne was. This became the test point for every Northern king-that they did nothing about the images which Jeroboam set up and by which he caused Israel to sin.

It is remarkable that God still sent prophets to these Northern tribes: Elijah; Elisha; Amos; and Hosea. Isaiah and others also spoke prophecies directed to the Northern tribes.

God intervened and retained control in regard to their kings. Elijah anointed Jehu to be king to bring the dynasty of Ahab to an end (I Kin. 19: 15-18); but a prophet was sent to encourage Ahab none the less (I Kin. 20:13-29). Elijah challenged Ahaziah concerning there being a God in Israel (11 Kin, 1:1-8).

A Southern King, Jehoshaphat, sought to have friendly dealings with the North, but with unsatisfactory results (I Kin. 22). When the North finally fell to Assyria (721 BC-11 Kings 18:9-12) after 210 years and numerous dynasties, the Southern king made overtures to the straggling remnants of population to gather the people of God back into one (11 Chron. 30:1). This reunion had been prophesied (Isa. 11:13). It had to be clear to all concerned that God's purposes for his people had to do with the chosen Davidic king.

Southern tribes

After Solomon, Rehoboam retained only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Over the ensuing 344 years, Judah (as the kingdom came to be called) had 19 kings and one queen. Those who stood out as men of God were Asa and Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, and especially Hezekiah and Josiah who sought to reform the nation.

But the evil of the nation could not be held in by external reforms. Jeremiah was a contemporary of Josiah. He saw that the sins of Manasseh (and the people under him) had been so decisive and unchangeable that the reforms under Josiah would not prevent a Babylonian exile (Jer. 15:4).

What is remarkable about Israel's history in all this is not the nation but their God. he kept speaking to them, and as their situation looked less and less like a covenant one, the promise of God grew clearer and brighter.

The prophetic hope

Though David had many unfaithful successors, and the nation was regularly unfaithful, for the sake of David-whose heart was like God's heart, God promised to maintain his promise (I Kings 15:3-5, II Kings 8:19).

Concerning David's Son, see:

Psalm 2; 18:49-50; 20; 21; 45; 72; 101 89; 110; 132 (also 28; 61; 63).

-and all of this representing God's kingship over the nation-Psa. 74:12; Isa. 33:22; 43:15; 44:6, Zeph. 3:15-18).

The word 'covenant' not used in 11 Sam. but later spoken of as such (Psa. 89:3-4, , 26ff; 132; 11ff. As before, the whole thing is secure, immutable and determinated as with the Abrahamic and Mosaic but this time, more clearly. Isa. 54:9f cf. 59:21 (which shows that Noahic is pattern for Davidic).

Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-10; 32:1.

Jer. 23:5-6; 30:2133:14-16.

Ezek. 34:23 with vv. 11-22, 31; 37:24-28.

Dan. 2:44; 7:11-14.

Mic. 5:2-4.

Zech. 3:8; 6:12-13; 9:9-10; 13:1.

With this must also be linked the Suffering Servant (linked in Acts) and the Messenger of the covenant (Mal. 3:1-4). These promises are one with new covenant in Jeremiah, or eternal covenant.

THE DAVIDIC COVENANT—4

During the years between Solomon and Uzziah, there had been little new revelation of the purpose of God or his nature. Many of Judah's kings had done 'what was right in the eyes of the Lord' (I Kin. 15:11; 22:42-43; II Kin. 12:2; 14:3; 15:3) and some had not (I Kin. 14:22; 15:3), but **Judah was far from stable**.

Israel's Psalms (some the work of, or perhaps collected by, or in the name of, David) celebrated the greatness of the Davidic kingship—which was the visible representation of God's immediate greatness among his people (e.g. 18; 20; 21; 45; 72; 101), acknowledged by king (Psa. 28; 61; 63) **and people** alike.

In days of national calamity, a cry rose from the psalmist which called God to remember his steadfast love to David (Psa. 89).

Also, Psalms 2 and 110 (referred to earlier), became the grid through which the apostles understood the person and work of Christ. In these Psalms, the work of Israel's king was seen to be universal, victorious, priestly, sonly, uniting and final.

Isaiah and the King

After some two thirds of the duration of the political Davidic dynasty, the prophet Isaiah saw 'the King, the LORD of hosts' in the temple (Isa. 6:5). Yahweh's kingship of his people was not limited to its earthly representation. He realised how polluted he, together with Judah, had become while ignorant of God's holy kingship.

The king represented the people, with specific responsibility to give them rest from their enemies and especially, to lead the people in righteousness and humble trust. Clearly, this was not the case as Isaiah began his work. King Uzziah had had a long reign and was commended by the prophetic record, but the people showed little sign of righteousness (Isa. 1:2, 10-11, 2:1; 2:6-8; 3:14-16; 5:8-23). The trend begun by Solomon—to subvert the kingship to personal ends (his aristocracy had cut across the boundaries appointed by the Lord)—seemed to triumph.

Their monarchy led law-keeping/righteousness was to have been their witness to the nations. Instead they became subservient to those nations. This was Isaiah's first tangle with the monarchy in the person of Ahaz (who began to reign some ten years after he had his vision). Ahaz would not trust in God and yet the land belonged to Emmanuel (Isa. 7-8; cf. Matt. 1:23).

The king may not listen, but a group who heard the word of the prophet would know the kingship of Yahweh over his people (Isa. 8:11-17). It was to these people that the promise came of a true **kingship—not** a merely political kingship but a kingship which represented the immediate rule of God over his people.

The coming deliverer would be a child but with divine characteristics (note the development of the 'Immanuel' personage—Isa. 9:6-7) and would be marked by all anointing with the Spirit and lead the people in righteousness and fulfill their mission

among the nations (Isa. 11: 1-10; 16:1-5; 32: 1). This king would lead his people to holiness (Isa. 4:2-4). This king would be God himself (Isa. 33:17-22; 41:21; 43:15; 44:6).

-and all of this representing God's kingship over the nation—Psa. 74:12; Isa. 33:22; 43:15; 44:6; Zeph. 3:15-18).

These mercies to Israel will 'my steadfast, sure love for David' (Isa. 55:1-3), which is linked with & **my covenant of peace' (Isa. 54:9-10).**

THE DAVIDIC COVENANT—5

Kingship and temple

David had recognised the location for the temple (11 Sam. 24:15-25) and Solomon had seen to its building (1 Kin. 8). In other words, it was the worship and thanksgiving of the king which raised up the temple (though, of course, the kingship, worship and temple were all gifts of God).

The location was Mt Moriah in the vicinity of his own fortress-Zion (a word meaning 'fortress', different from Mt Moriah; but Zion comes to encompass the temple area—see Westminster Dictionary article p. 657.)

So the nation recalled, as it worshipped at its festivals, that the Davidic covenant was the immediate cause of the worship being there to enjoy (Psa. 132), even though it had come through Moses. The temple had not been able to be built until the enemies were destroyed.

We will briefly review the promises God continued to give to the nation through its various prophets.

Micah and the King

In a period overlapping that of Isaiah, Micah saw that the Assyrians who were currently invading the plains of Philistia below Jerusalem would soon pose a threat to their beloved city—if she did not repent. He began his lament in the same way as did David when the armies of Saul and Jonathan were defeated (Mic. 1: 10 with 1 Sam. 1:20). But for all this present distress, God would still effect his purpose for the kingship (4:1-8).

Bethlehem would be the birthplace of this king. His origins being 'from of old' may be a reference to the origins of the Davidic monarchy, or to the eternity from which Messiah would derive (5:2-4).

In the day of this Messiah, Jerusalem's temple would be the centre of learning for all the nations (4:1-5).

Jeremiah and the King

Jeremiah could see no future for the nation as he saw it—Josiah's reforms notwithstanding. But he was not left without hope. God would raise up a true Davidic king (23:5-6; 30:8-9, 21; 33:14-26) whose name would not be Zedekiah—which means '[Yahweh] is my righteousness' (Yahweh sidqiyahu) but 'Yahweh is our righteousness' (Yahweh sidqenu).

This 'Branch' of God will himself be righteous, but also be 'The Lord is our righteousness'. So God would have mercy on his people by being faithful to his promise to David—as to the Levitical priests. Paul saw that Christ was the king of Israel,

who, in his death and resurrection, was both King, and, the righteousness of his people (I Cor. 1:30; 11 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9).

Ezekiel and the King

False shepherds, which would have included wise men, priests, prophets as well as kings, had misled the people. God himself would act to shepherd them (Ezek. 34:11-22, 31). But this shepherding would be done by 'my servant David' (vv. 23-24, 31). The tending of the true shepherd would be the tending of God himself. Jesus claimed to be this good shepherd (John 10:1-30)—in effect, the king. This point is emphasised when it is seen that Israel's **leaders had just excommunicated** the formerly blind man—but Jesus, as true leader, had included him in the nation.

This fulfilment of the Davidic covenant will, in fact, be a covenant of peace (Ezek. 37:24-28) and this is linked with the sanctuary of God being among his people.

Daniel and the King

Nebuchadnezzar's reign would be replaced by others, and all of these be swallowed up by the coming kingdom (Dan. **2:44; 7:11-14**).

Zechariah and the King

Zerubbabel led a remnant of Israel back to their land after the captivity. He was of the royal line—a prince—but never became king. Some despised 'the day of small things' (4:10) but God promised Joshua, the High Priest, that his work would prosper. God would bring 'the Branch' and he would bring peace, and this would be linked with removing the guilt of the land (3:6-10).

Zerubbabel was told he would complete the work of erecting the temple (the task of the Davidic king—cf. John 2:18-22), but that this would be a work of the Spirit, not of human might or power (4:6-10). The work of the king as temple builder, and the work of the priest would be of one piece (6:12-13).

The Davidic prince, Zerubbabel (I Kin. 3:19; Hag. 2:23; Matt. 1:12) failed to restore the dynasty and this must have furthered Messianic hopes. Jehoiachin was released in captivity in 562 BC (end 11 Kin.) but this shows the helplessness of the remaining monarch under the protection of a foreign king—cf. Mephibosheth.

This King would surely come, though humbly (9:9-11; cf. Zech. 3:14-15), with peace for the nations, and with freedom through the blood of the covenant (the Mosaic?). For the house of David there will be cleansing from sin (13: 1).

Summary

Christ, as Davidic King, is one with his people. He is responsible for our living under the gracious rule of God, including the law of God—so attracting all the blessing of God, the destruction of our enemies and the establishment of one people under one Head as a worshiping community with God amongst them. His kingship has gathered up the priestly function of purification so that righteousness is truly established.

When we come to study the New Covenant, it will be difficult to distinguish between the outworking of the Davidic covenant in its non-national form and the new covenant promised first to Jeremiah (31:31-34).

With these references to kingship must also be linked the Suffering Servant (Isa. 42:1-7; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12) and the Messenger of the covenant (Mal. 3:1-4).

THE NEW COVENANT KING

We began this course with a consideration of what it would mean to be outside of covenant relation with God—having no God and no hope. The accoutrements of covenant were taken from Israel in their captivity, but God assured them that they were still his people—he sent them his prophets, he explained the necessity of judgements and outlined the future he had for them.

The new covenant announced

In particular, he told Jeremiah he would make a new covenant with the houses of Judah and Israel—reunited (Jer. 31:31-34). The same promise was also given—under different names—to Isaiah (54:10; cf. 55.-3) and Ezekiel (16:60; 34:25; 36:22-30; 37:26). In all of these contexts, the initiative of Yahweh in making the covenant—and also, in making it effective—is asserted.

The old or Mosaic covenant had proven defective—not in what God intended it for, or for those who waited humbly on God, but in the way it had been construed to suit the political and self-justifying intentions of Israel. The new covenant would be unlike the Mosaic. In certain respects and we must now focus on these differences as they are introduced to us in the ministry of Jesus and the apostles.

This is the covenant concluded by Jesus Christ with all his people and under which we now live (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25-26; 11 Cor. 3:5-6; Eph. 2:12-13; Heb. 8:8; 10:16, 29; 13:20).

The newness of this covenant may be observed under the headings of the new covenant Kingship, forgiveness, Spirit, obedience/righteousness, Father, people, signs and fulfilment.

The presence of the King

Given that the Abrahamic promises and the Mosaic requirements were to be worked out by the Davidic king, it is not surprising that the new covenant should be focussed mostly in terms of the king and the kingdom. So the prevailing motif of the ministry of Jesus was the kingdom of God—this, rather than that the new covenant was being made.

It is difficult to distinguish promises concerning the coming Davidic king and the promise to Jeremiah of a new covenant (e.g. Jer. 32:38-41; Ezek. 37:25-26). When John the Baptist was born, Zechariah did not refer to 'the new covenant' but the mercy promised to the fathers—the gracious fulfillment of the promises to Abraham and to David (Luke 1:68-69 with 74-5). But clearly, they are all of one piece.

The restoration under Zerubbabel in 536 BC and following years had not constituted the making of the new covenant. This awaited the coming of the king.

Jesus said that a greater than Solomon was in Israel; he said the kingdom of God was 'at hand', 'among you', 'upon you'.

To enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 21:31-32) is linked with being members of the covenant community (Matt. 8:11; Luke 13:16, 18; 16:22-30; 19:9, 11).

Every other covenant anticipated something which would make it viable, but here, the Executor/King was actually present to make good every covenant promise (II Cor.1:19-20). He was declared to be both Lord and Christ by his resurrection from the dead (Acts 2:36—that is, Israel's God and King (together with his being the Prophet and the Great High Priest). So the preaching of Jesus as the Christ is preaching the kingdom of God and this is preaching the covenant into which converts are welcomed.

His true subjects

Just as David had to do the work of the king while opposed by Saul, so Jesus had to begin the work of the kingdom with no other credentials than the anointing of his Father. But the blessings of the kingdom began forthwith for those who 'came over to him' (as Judah did to David). Clearly, Jesus' kingship is modelled on that of David—the man of blood, before that of Solomon—the man of peace.

Many were called but few chosen said Jesus (Matt. 22:1-14), and he, personally, was the Shepherd who determined who was part of Israel and who was not (John 10:7-10). Jesus said all who were of the truth heard him and knew the truth (John 18:36-37).

The kingdom of God and righteousness

Jesus taught us to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Clearly, there could be no kingdom without righteousness. He would be the king whose name was 'The Lord our Righteousness'.

The surprise crucified king

It appears that no-one had anticipated that the Messiah would suffer. Jesus expected that such a conclusion should have been drawn (Luke 24:44-47). The Davidic prophecies interlaced with those of the Suffering Servant—each of these two figures was to establish righteousness in the earth.

Christ, quite specifically, died as King of Israel—not just because Pilate came to that conclusion, but because he was to die for the nation, and, would gather the Gentiles also—the task of Israel's King (John 11:51-53; also Eph. 2:12-16).

The blood of the covenant-in anticipation of the coming kingdom

Four cups were drunk during a Jewish Passover meal—corresponding to the promises in Exod.6:6-7. It is probable that Jesus chose the third of these to drink with his disciples—the cup representing redemption, and his suffering. The fourth celebrated God being their God—so he says he will drink this cup no more until he drinks it new in his Father's kingdom (Matt. 26:28-29). His covenant making and kingdom establishing

are of one piece. All covenants with sinners were made with the offering of blood and this covenant is secured forever with the blood of its King.

Cf. also, Jesus as Messenger of the covenant (Mal. 3:1)

In Christ being the covenant Head, or King, or Lord over all things for the church, the world is confronted with its Saviour who alone can restore (by reconciliation) the relation between Creator and creation and so bring the world to its goal, and in the interim, righteousness, joy and peace to those who acknowledge its Lord (Rom. 14:17-18).

THE NEW COVENANT FORGIVENESS

The covenant secured through the forgiveness of sins

The forgiveness of sins is fundamental to the newness of the new covenant—Jeremiah was told that the new conditions would apply because (**ki** in a causative sense) he would forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more (Jer. 31:31-34). Through this forgiveness they would all know the LORD, they would be his people and have the LORD as their God, they would have the law written on their hearts.

This would not be a 're-run' of the covenant which they had broken but a covenant (wholly a provision of God) which would work a dynamic change in the heart of God's people-arising altogether from his remembering their sin no more.

Consider how hopeless Israel's situation under the old covenant had become (Jer. 14:19-15:2; cf. 17:9-14).

The promise is also stated as God cleansing them from the guilt of their sin and their rebellion (Jer. 33:8), or God having mercy on them (33:26), or finding no iniquity in Israel or Judah-because (**ki**) God would pardon the remnant left after the judgement (50:20).

The same thought is present in the promise to Isaiah that God would never again be angry with his people (Isa. 54:9-10; 40:1-2; 44:21-22; 45:17; 60: 10). The suffering servant would bear the iniquity of his people so that they may be accounted righteous (Isa. 53:10-12). God would abundantly pardon as an extension of the Davidic covenant-and in a manner beyond Israel's capacity to understand (55:1-9).

Ezekiel was also shown that the time of forgiveness would be basic to the establishing of the everlasting covenant (Ezek. 16:63). The cleansing would be related to receiving a new heart, and also, to lamenting their past misdeeds (Ezek. 36:25, 33).

Cf. also: the years required to put an end to sin (Dan. 9:24); God's removing the guilt of the land in a single day through God's servant the Branch (Zech. 3:8-9); the fountain opened for the cleansing of sin (Zech. 13:1); the end of the curse (Zech. 14:11).

No more remembrance of sin

This forgiveness would have continuity with the grace of God as shown to Israel in the wilderness (Jer. 31:1-3) but would be new in an important respect.

The writer of *Hebrews* says that while animal offerings remained there was always a reminder of sins (Heb. 10:2-4); an awareness that nothing had been perfected (i.e. for worship-Heb. 7:11, 19). Under the new covenant, Jesus, by the power of his own indestructible life (7:16, 24-25) and holiness (7:26; 9:14), and by a single offering (10:12-14), has sanctified us once for all (9:26; 10:10, 14). He has also purged us from dead works (works arising from a guilty conscience) to serve God truly (Heb. 9:14).

Therefore, It behoves us to take this covenant with all seriousness (Heb. 10:22-31; 12:15).

Through the blood of Christ

The servant songs came closest in the Old Testament to showing the means of this great action (Isa. 53). But John the Baptist saw that the Christ would be the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29, 36; cf. I Cor. 5:7). Jesus, in establishing the new covenant, said his blood was for the remission of sins (Matt. 26:28; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25).

Paul shows us Gentiles that we have been included in the covenant provision of God through the blood of Christ—the hostility which divided us from his people and himself being removed forever (Eph. 2:11-16).

God has granted to us what the sinner craves—purity of heart and a clear conscience; and this has been assured to us not in figures and promises, but in the full and sufficient life offering of our King and Covenant Head. We may stand with him as full covenant partners of our Holy Covenant Father.

THE NEW COVENANT SPIRIT

The Spirit outpoured—A new formality is unthinkable

Prophecies in Ezekiel (11: 19-20; [18:31]; 36:26; 37:11-14; 39:29), and Joel (2:28-29), had shown that the new covenant would be characterised by a wide effusion of the Spirit of God. The Lord would convey his truth immediately to the heart and mind of his people. They would be purified and raised from a seemingly impossible situation.

John the Baptist announced the coming of this era. When he saw the Spirit descend on Jesus, he knew it would be him who would baptise with the Spirit and so purify the people of God (Luke 3:16-17; John 1:33).

Jesus showed that Jerusalem would not be necessary to the new covenant. True worshippers must worship him in spirit and in truth—i.e. with their whole humanity—(John 4:24). So Israel's propensity to focus on the outward—which they could then manipulate to their own advantage—would be gone forever. Israel was to turn to him and he would give the Spirit (John 7:37-39).

Pentecost saw this outpouring and the creation of a new obedient people as its result (Acts 2:38; 4:8; etc.).

The proclamation of the gospel was constantly accompanied by new attempts to codify, contain, or legalise the message of Christ. Paul referred to it as a ministry of the letter (11 Cor. 3:4-18) and showed that the result of this was condemnation and death.

Rather, the servants of the new covenant are to stand open-faced before the Lord and reflect his glory—and not practise the veiling of deference done by Moses, or the veiling of obstinancy done by Israel.

Martin Luther made much of the distinction between spirit and letter and showed that one generation's 'spirit' could become the next generation's 'letter'. That is, by merely repeating the forms that arose from the reality of experience of one generation, they would not have life but condemnation and death.

The full sonship of his people

Israel had been the nation/son of God. It had been intended that this would be reflected in the personal life of each of the people of Israel. But, for the most part, Israel lived at the level of the political and formal.

Now, sonship would be understood only in its reality. Jesus is the Son of God in truth, and the very Spirit of this Son would be poured into the hearts of those who confessed him, so that, as Christ cried 'Abba' (Mark 14:36), so now would his people do. As he belonged to the Father, so would they. As he obeyed the Father, so would they. (See John 14-17 for illustration of this.)

This blessing did not come by the works of the law—it never had done so and would not be possible now (Gal. 3:2-3). Rather, it flowed from Christ bearing the curse of the

covenant law (3:14) and resulted in familial freedom in the presence of the Father (4:4-11).

The whole of life now must be a trustful hope—by the Spirit—that God will fulfill all righteousness for and in us (Gal. 5:5; 6:8), a waking in the Spirit so that the fruit of the Spirit is produced in us (5:16-26).

This is more fully developed in Romans (8:1-27).

THE NEW COVENANT OBEDIENCE/RIGHTEOUSNESS

The promise

The new covenant brings about the obedience nominated in the Mosaic covenant (Jer. 31:31-34). From the beginning, it was God's intention that their obedience be from the heart (Deut. 6:4-6; 10:16; 11:18), and it is even suggested that this circumcision of heart would be not just an expectation but a work of the Lord (Deut. 30:6).

However, in the light of Israel's presumption and rebellion, God made the fact of righteousness being his work in the hearts of his people even clearer. He would write his law on the hearts of his people (Jer. 31:31; 32:39); he would give them a new heart (Ezek. 44; 36). It is impossible to separate cleansing and the giving of a new heart (Ezek. 36:25, 33).

Isaiah had heard the word: 'Only in the LORD ... are righteousness and strength' (Isa. 45:21, 24). The LORD would clothe himself in righteousness to judge his enemies and redeem those who turned from transgression (Isa. 59:16-20). His righteousness would be their vindication (Isa. 54:14-17).

It would be an act of the Lord's righteousness, but it would yield righteousness springing up in response (Isa. 61:3, 10-11). It would be both the work of God's righteousness and observable in the lives of those who believed.

This righteousness would be the work of the King (Jer. 23,5-6; 33:16).

Therefore it would be imperative for Israel to not trust her own righteousness (Ezek. 33:13).

Christ our righteousness

These promises have their 'Yes' in Jesus Christ (11 Cor 1:20). He himself is our righteousness (I Cor. 1:30).

In the gospel, God's righteousness is being revealed-not just as an action of God but as a gift to all who believe (Rom. 1: 16-17; 3:21-26). Those who cease to trust in themselves and entrust themselves to God's saving righteousness are thereby borne along in the stream of God's righteousness and are declared to be so with authenticity.

It seems best to understand righteousness in this dual sense-as an action of God, and, as a declaration of God concerning us as his subjects.

This righteousness of God-which is Christ-is the declaration of God concerning himself, and, at the same time, his declaration concerning us.

Living in righteousness

God anticipates and is confident that his gospel has achieved all that is necessary for our life and godliness (11 Pet. 1:3).

We are now God's confidants—those in whom God is pleased to confide. He makes his will known to us, and does so because he trusts us—or trusts his own workmanship in us (e.g. Peter—'when you are converted').

The old English word confide had the sense of anticipate. Lord Nelson, on the morning of his death said: 'England expects every man will do his duty'. He had originally said: '...confides...' in the old sense of 'is confident that. One fellow officer suggested that 'expects' was a more idiomatic word.

The present word expect has a harsher ring to it—perhaps as strong as demand. Is this the result of existentialism—which has deeply influenced our perceptions in the West?

The love of God in covenant is incentive enough for us to turn from everything base (11 Cor. 6:16-21).

Lengthy tomes have been written on the subject of human action in the pursuit of holiness. Certainly, there is no place for complacency. We have been saved from our disobedience as well as from its penalty; to return to it is to be like a dog returning to its own vomit (11 Pet. 2:22 with preceding verses).

To have no heart for obedience is to have forgotten that we are forgiven (11 Pet. 1:5-11); it is to have no confidence for praying (1 John 3:18-22). To give way—together—to corruption is to reap nothing but corruption (Gal. 6:7-10).

It is those who hunger and thirst for righteousness who will be satisfied (Matt. 5:6)—i.e. with righteousness. In declaring us—for the sake of Christ—to be his justified people, God has given us a heart for his will and the power of love to be about those things.

Israel pursued righteousness—but without faith (Rom. 9:30-32). Clearly, we are to pursue righteousness—meaning that we must seek above all to trust in the Son of God (Gal. 2:20-21) and put no confidence in the flesh (Phil. 3:3). It means we must not be dismayed by our many failures because these are never our trust. But it means also that we will be confident, as is God, that his gospel will perform in us all of his good will. This **was Paul's confidence** (Rom. 8:3-4; Gal. 5:5; 1 Thes. 3:12-13; 11 Thes. 1:11-12; 2:16-17).

We are to reckon what God reckons to be so—that we are the people he is pleased to receive as righteous (Rom. 6:11). As those brought from death to life (13), obedient from the heart because obedient to the gospel (16-18), God has committed us to (entrusted us to) his teaching (17) and we are to yield ourselves to righteousness (13, 19). The power of continuing sanctification is in justification.

A whole new humanity has been created in Jesus Christ and we are to be subject to the him as our **teacher, and**, to the renewing action to which we are subject in him (Eph. 4:17-24).

All our works are prepared beforehand for us (Eph. 2:11).

Our works are not mere compliance with law but a heart for that law—it is written on our heart. Therefore, it is an obedience with zeal (Tit. 2:11-14).

Zeal is the same word as for jealousy In Hebrew and In Greek—a word which has to do with offended love.

Obedience should be understood in the light of eschatology—we must trust God for what he is about in us; in the end time, we will wholly reflect the character of God (I John 3:1-3).

THE NEW COVENANT FATHER

Given the sinfulness of the race and our wilful ignorance of God which this involved, covenant had always had in view the revelation of the Father. With the establishment of the New Covenant, this is no longer reserved for the few—rather: 'they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest'.

More especially, what the patriarchs saw through visions and angelic visitations, and Israel saw through their prophets, the church now sees in the face of Christ (11 Cor. 4:4-6)—God, fully disclosed as the God of his people. In this respect also, Jesus is the 'Yes' to all of the promises of God to be God to his people (11 Cor. 1:20).

The patriarchs

God made himself known to Abraham and his family as 'God Almighty' signifying that God was over all things but over them all as one who was with the patriarchs in all that was happening to them, the one on whom they must rely.

Israel

God made himself known to Israel as their national Father—they were his first born son, and this had personal overtones for them (Deut. 14:1). It had special significance for their king (Psa. 89:26) who could only exercise his high office if he was assured of direct access to the Father. It had significance for the nation when their identity was all but lost (Hos. 11:1, 8-9; Isa. 63:16; 64:8).

But Israel had discovered that they had no proprietorial hold on God—he was their holy Father who prescribed the manner of their approach to him, who taught them how he expected them to live and who judged their unfaithfulness. So Israel was obliged to learn how this God was even yet their God. If his judgement of those who hated him could endure to three or four generations, what did it mean that his steadfast love endured for thousands (Exod. 34:5-7 with I Chron. 16:15)?

Christ

This question is answered by Christ—grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (John 1:17). This grace and truth answers to the 'steadfast love and faithfulness' to which Israel constantly appealed (Psa. 85:10; 89:14; 100:5). Israel was not ignorant of God's grace and truth but it lacked a human face and the conscience of her worshippers were left questioning as to how such a thing should be—that God could be known by sinners.

This new covenant Head is supremely 'the Son', revealing the Father. It becomes apparent that God's covenant relation with his people always had this in view—that we, through grace, should know the Father, as the Son, by right, knows him (John 17:20-23).

The whole of covenant history had arisen from the nature of God-Father present to Son and Son to Father in love, and this by the Spirit. This relationship does not need to be called a covenant relationship but is, none the less, expressed in time covenantally.

So, looking backwards, the Abrahamic seed, whom, in a figure, Abraham did not withhold from offering up is finally the Son of the Father's love-whom he would not withhold. As Abraham received his son from death, so the Father received his Son from death, and with him, all those who would share this relation.

The Mosaic covenant in which God says of Israel—this is my first born son-anticipates the day when God's people finally live as the son in all righteousness-but this is first and always the righteousness of the Son of God.

The Davidic son who could call God Father is finally the eternal Son who uniquely calls God Father in his own right but does so within a human time frame and in a manner in which the many sons can participate.

The church

By the new covenant, we have access in one Spirit to the Father (Eph. 2:18). By the Spirit, the depths of God are opened up to us (I Cor. 2:10-13) and the depths of us are opened up to God (Gal. 4:4-9).

So the way in which God has always desired to be known has been as Father-by his sons. His covenantal purpose can only be fulfilled by those who are assured that, their sins notwithstanding, they may address him as Father (cf. Psa. 89:30-34).

1 will be their God and they my people is fulfilled in them being made partakers of the divine nature (11 Pet. 1:3-4). His people are called, chosen *and* faithful (Rev. 17:14).

All this is with a view to the fulfilment of covenant purpose-that God will be our God and we will be his *son* (Rev. 21:7).

THE NEW COVENANT PEOPLE

The new covenant people inherit all the promises given to Israel

The nation through which all nations will be blessed is the church (Rom. 9:22-26; 1 Pet. 2:4-10 with Gen. 19:6; Gal. 6:16). We are those who are blessed (Rom. 15:27; Gal. 3:9,14; Eph. 1:3-13; 11 Pet. 1:3) and are a blessing in the earth (Rom. 4:6-9; 15:29; 1 Pet. 3:9) through our living by the promise of God and by our proclamation of it to others. This body now includes Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 1: 12-13) and are one new humanity (Eph. 2:11-19).

As the above references show, we not only have the promises to Israel fulfilled in us but have the function of Israel apportioned to us. What they were as a nation among other nations, we are—as a new race, re-created in Christ—spread throughout the nations and as a light to them.

Living in the Son

The people of the new covenant are the people of the Son, who take all their point of departure from him—who is the remnant in himself, the people of God in himself, and as the Son brings the people of God to their full stature. To this end, we are exhorted to live in him, to grow up into him, to be patient as we are conformed to his image.

The NT people of God enter into the sonship of Israel (Hos. 11: 1), but, without the limitations inherent in the days before the coming of the Son. We now have full sonship—revealed by the Son (Gal. 3-4). We have come to know God or to be known by God. The richness of the NT knowledge of God can be illustrated by the confession of Israel—the Shema (Deut. 6:4-5) as against the confession of the church: 'For us there is one Lord, the Father...' (Eph. 4:4-6). The latter is far richer.

A people characterised by mercy

God made his covenant with Israel as those on whom he would have mercy and he taught them to be a people who looked to him for their righteousness (Rom. 9:14-10:4). It is this quality especially therefore that should be apparent among the people of God. Hence, when the church is instructed as to its manner of life, the qualities of tenderness, forgiveness, doing good to enemies are particularly apparent (e.g. Eph. 5; Phil. 2), as distinct from the vaunting of self in self justification.

A spiritual people

In the OT God intended Israel to be a people who leaned on their God and drew their identity and strength from him. In fact, they wanted to be a nation like other nations—like Babel—whose togetherness was not to express the unity of their God but to be in union against God. God weaned them from this in the captivity—and it ought never to be restored in any taking up of the sword. We worship God in Spirit.

Covenant families

The new covenant was announced as the promises being made to Israel and their children (Acts 2:39). This proclamation is, quite specifically, the new covenant with all of its new elements but it is announced as a people thing—you and your children. The same new covenant is announced to Jews and Gentiles suggesting that the promise of the gospel is again to the children of those who receive it.

Therefore, children should obey 'in the Lord' and be brought up 'in the discipline and instruction of **the Lord**' (Eph. 6:1, 4), **not won over to the Lord as though** they commenced as pagans.

Covenant nations?

To say that the NT is spiritual does not need to undo altogether the whole idea of covenant which is essentially a 'people thing'. It is certainly not a (political) nation thing, but certainly a people thing taking into account the cultures and customs and heritages and inputs of people as they interact with one another and by which the gospel is handed on to the next generation. This links with Christ's command that we make disciples of all nations; i.e. to teach them as a people of the true God and his ways.

Among Western peoples, we have the advantage of calling people back to the things they have been tutored in as a child, or, at least, have had represented to them in the culture that is still extant and that in many respects, reflects faith in Christ. We should seize the advantage that is ours and proclaim to them the Christ who makes good the hope they have been taught.

Some say: in the OT, the promises are made with all Israel but are received by the elect; in the NT, the promises are announced to the whole world (making the whole world a covenant people) but are received by those who turn to Christ. Certainly, the gospel is for all nations. Against this view, it may be said: the covenant made with Israel was always with a view to the world. Covenant was never intended to exclude the world so much as authentically witness to it. Elchrodt says: 'This association draws no clear line to exclude the stranger, but is continually absorbing outsiders into itself (OT Thol. 1/39—quoted in Dymess p. 126).

The main argument in favour of saying that nations may have a covenantal understanding of themselves is that they have been disciplined (Matt. 28:19). This is what God did with Israel (Deut. 11:2). It must be clear that there is no indication of God making a covenant with a nation per se subsequent to Israel—God taking a nation for his own possession exclusively (cf. the British Israel theory). But, given God's covenant with Israel and the fact that a nation finds itself disciplined by Christian faith, what other way does it have to understand what has happened to it other than Israel's experience? Such a nation—as a nation—cannot claim exclusively to be a light to the nations, but it may humbly cry to God that it may be so and remain so.

Cf. those who think we have better hope of winning to faith in Christ those who have no cultural heritage in Christian teaching. There may be evidence to show that those who have rejected the faith are harder to win than those who have not considered it, but to say that we do not have an advantage because of previous teaching is to be culturally obscuratist. We do not start in Australia where we would have to start among pagans.

Identifying the covenant people

These wider possibilities of covenant may leave us with ambiguities as to who are the people of God, but there is no ambiguity (a) to God—the Lord knows those who are his (11 Tim. 2:19); (b) there is no ambiguity in the conscience of persons who have been tutored in the faith. They know the things that are normative for them.

Finally, the people of covenant, the Lord's people, are the elect-as many as the Lord our God calls to him (Acts 2:39; 13:48). We can be sure of the election of those who are clearly converted (1 Thes. 1:4), but can we be sure of those he has excluded? Israel is still a favoured people; may they not yet be grafted back in-as a people; the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable (Rom. 11:29).

The Pharisees chose to include and exclude people from the covenant on the basis of whether people observed the cultural norms they dictated. But Jesus was the true Shepherd of the sheep, knowing who to include and exclude in the fold (John 9:34-10:6). He gave healing to a sick woman because she also was a child of Abraham (Luke 13:16; also 16:22) and saved Zacchaeus for the same reason (Luke 19:9).

Also Matt. 3:9; 8:11

Jesus died to gather all the children of God who were scattered abroad (John 11:52), the other sheep who were not of this fold (John 10: 16). We need to be careful that we do not exclude those whom Christ includes.

As the people who currently enjoy the blessings of covenant, we need to know the mercy promised to the fathers-the mercy of the gospel preached in the name of Jesus Christ, but also the mercy of God's mysterious elective purpose in which it pleases him to have mercy on whom he has mercy. As such, he still has a purpose for Israel. If Paul can see this hope for Israel, may we not also have hope for our families and for our nation?

THE NEW COVENANT SIGNS

Covenant signs In the Old Testament

God declared the rainbow to be a sign of his covenant faithfulness—that he would never again destroy the earth (Gen. 8).

Abraham received circumcision as a 'sign or seal' of righteousness by faith (Rom. 4:11). That is, he had been justified; his circumcision was a sign in his flesh of what had occurred. It was a sign of the whole covenant made with Abraham (Gen. 17:11).

Israel was to keep the sabbath as a sign of her keeping covenant (Exod. 31:13-17). It represented to Israel in her daily life that God was still the Creator and that they were not slaves (Deut. 5:15).

These and other signs were appointed by God—his word of consecration making something a sign, pointing to his activity and purpose. As such, they were of great importance to the people of God, but never a 'proof' of God's presence in themselves—particularly in view of Israel's penchant to make them the basis of a false and presumptive trust.

Our Western education (and our evangelical Christian education) may have taught us to be conceptual and principial, and to have actually avoided all things external. But our culture must not prohibit us from seeing that the NT congregation (as the OT congregation) were assisted in faith by external signs performed in obedience to Christ.

Christ appointed a New Covenant remembrance

Old covenant worship (Passover) was transformed into new covenant worship when Jesus offered bread and wine as his body and blood. The cup he called the 'the new covenant in my blood' (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11: 25). We are to partake of both 'in remembrance' of him.

The meaning of 'remember' is debated. It certainly means more than recollection of a past event; it must include, here, our being mindful of Christ's death in its great significance for the present and future; it certainly has the meaning of verbal reminder (11 Pet. 1:12Q and this is clearly in Paul's mind (1 Cor. 11:26); the word is sometimes used of prayers or offerings pleasing to God (Acts 10:4); it may also relate to an Old Testament offering of frankincense (Lev. 24:7-9) offered each sabbath as a reminder, to God and to the people, of the covenant.

For us, Christ himself is the covenant, and to remember him is to confess to one another and to God that Jesus Christ and his cross is our whole trust. In that Jesus commanded us to so remember him, our obedience is an integral part of our participation in the covenant.

It may also be called a sign of the covenant in that it is an outward event given significance by the word of God. Christ is present to us as we eat and drink—to faith, they are his body and blood. To so believe (as did the Corinthians) and yet to despise what we do is to eat and drink judgement to ourselves (I Cor. 11:26-32).

Because the Lord's supper includes the cup which 'is the new covenant in my blood' (I Cor. 11:25), and succeeds the Passover which was the covenantal meal, it may be considered as a sign of the covenant.

Christ commanded a new covenant initiation

John the Baptist had required baptism of Jews—which effectively said that they needed to come into the faith of Israel as would Gentiles. This baptism was inadequate once Jesus had risen from the dead (Acts 18:25-26). The church must make disciples of and baptise all nations (Matt. 28:19) beginning with Jerusalem and Judea (Acts 1:8).

'The rabbis used baptism to induct proselytes but never Jews' (EBC 8/103).

The sign of inclusion in Christ and so inclusion in the new covenant was baptism into Christ's death and rising (Rom. 6:1-4; Col 2:11-12).

Because baptism is listed in parallel fashion with circumcision it is regarded as the new (or succeeding) sign of inclusion in the people of God or covenant of God.

Because far less emphasis is placed on baptism in the new economy than circumcision was in the old (it is assumed rather than insisted upon), and because warning is given in the NT about those who insist on external rites, there must be a readiness to accept the variety of formulations and practices which we now have. But to discontinue the use of the sacraments would be to reject what the NT assumes—that we would baptize and receive the Lord's supper.

Additional notes re baptism

It is because of Christ's saving actions, his baptism (joining himself to the repentant people of God), and, metaphorically, the baptism of his death (Luke 12), that there is something into which to be baptized.

Peter argues that baptism saves us—i.e. our coming to baptism out of (subjective genitive) a conscience made clean by Christ's blood and the work of the Spirit (I Pet. 1:2; 2:24; 3:18). Baptism is an appeal to God to be saved; and we make that appeal from a clear conscience because it is an appeal wholly dependent on the saving acts of God in Christ. What a sign and seal! It is given to us by Christ, it is done in his name, and the appeal is heard in the heavens.

'Although it does not wash away sins, it "saves" those with a "good conscience" by appealing on their behalf to God the only Savior.' 'The resurrection of Jesus Christ is what makes an appeal or pledge to God "out of a good conscience" efficacious, and guarantees eternal life to the one baptized' (Ramsey Michaels p. 218).

So, we are baptized in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38; 19:5) and into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19); and this is accomplished by the baptism of us with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Luke 3; Acts 1-2).

It is therefore a washing away of our sins (Acts 22:16; Tit. 3:5). It is a being born of water (John 3:5; 1 John 5:6-8).

The Lord wants us to have a sign in our flesh to recall our participation in his death and resurrection. Not for us the cutting of circumcision. That for us happened in Christ. His flesh was torn. It is in him that the putting off of the body of flesh occurs.

Feelings, experience, understanding and even faith may waver, but the sign is there like a sentinel, an event in our history as surely as there was an event in the history of Jesus. And it is the will of the Father, the Son and the Spirit that we receive his sign as an encouragement, and that we hear the word of his Church concerning our forgiveness and sonship with all meekness and joy.

THE NEW COVENANT FULFILMENT

The new covenant promise-sufficient until the 'Father's kingdom'

Christ told his disciples when establishing the 'covenant in his blood' that he would not drink wine again until he drank it in the coming kingdom and that by their drinking the cup they proclaimed the Lord's death until he came-again (Matt. 26:28-29; Mark 14:24-25; Luke 22:14-20 with 28-30; 1 Cor. 11:25-26). The covenant in his blood would keep us in relation with his Father and this would be celebrated together in the day of his coming kingdom.

See Matt. 8:11; Luke 14:15; Rev. 19:9 for other reference to the heavenly feast.

As the Old Testament covenants gave hope to those who waited for the full revealing of God's faithful purpose, so the New Covenant assures us of forgiveness as we wait for the final revealing of the sons of God (Heb 9:15, 26-28). Until that time, believers may rely on the God of peace and the shepherd/king—by whose blood the covenant is secured, to equip them for all things necessary to the accomplishment of his will (Heb. 13:20-21).

Making all things new

The fulfilment and consummation of the new covenant and of all God's covenantal dealing with his people is the marriage of the Bride to the Lamb, God being with his people, the removal of all pain, the Bride as the holy City of God—a City without temple or light because God and the Lamb are sufficient for these (Rev. 21).

The creation was first revealed to us as a place of order, an order established first by the coming of light. It was then revealed to us as a garden tended by God and the creatures established in his image—a garden whose tranquility was ravaged by sin (Gen. 2-3).

God gave his people another land 'flowing with milk and honey', a land tended by God and in which the blessing of God would be revealed to the world—a land with a temple, the place where God would make his name to dwell. But this they also abused.

It was impossible for the purpose of God to be thwarted. Each human aberration has been the opportunity of God's nature and purpose to be more fully **exposed and the hope for humanity to** be more firmly established.

Here, at the end, the new heaven and the new earth is described in terms of the welfare of Jerusalem (Isa. 65:17-19; 66:18-23; Rev. 21:1-2) and the fruitfulness of a garden whose foliage heals the nations (Rev. 22:1-5). In this new creation, the unmediated light of God himself, together with the Lamb, will have brought order out of chaos (Rev. 21:22-24; 22:5).

But this goal of creation was never a friendly environment. It was the revelation of the faithful Lamb, who tended this creation and is one with God in all his functions (Rev. 21:22-23; 22:1, 3). It is the revelation also of the Lamb's Bride—prepared by God for

this day (Rev. 21:2). This Bride is, herself, the City built by God, whose magnificence is not a facade and whose power is nothing but the willing submission of the nations (Rev. 21:10-11, 24-27).

The heritage of those who turn to God for the water of life is that they are his people and he is their God-among them. They share the high calling of the Messiah—they are his son (Rev. 21:7).

So the creation which was the free act of God and his gift to us in love, is now assured to us by covenant. And the creation is nothing other than this—he will be our **God and we—whose** names are in the book of the Lamb (Rev. 21:27)—will be his people.

The presence of the future

All the things that God has promised to reveal in the days to come are present to those who walk by faith. 'in this hope we were saved' (Rom. 8:24). We are now his people (I Pet. 2:9), we have already the love of the Lamb who has given himself for us (Eph. 5:25-27), we are already a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (Eph. 2:22). The true light is already shining and having its impact on the nations (I John 2:8; 11 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 5:8-13). What will be new in the coming age is the abolishing of death and all enemies, and, the revelation of these things—'now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face' (I Cor. 13:12).

Living In hope

There has always been an element of the stupendous about the promise of the new covenant. Not only is Israel promised everlasting peace and prosperity, but their fidelity to God is to be complete. There shall be no more curse (Zech. 14:11); the sin of Israel will be removed in a single day (Zech. 3:9); 'they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest' (Jer. 31:34).

These things may strain our credulity so that we feel obliged to explain them as the hyperbolic language of hope, or the immature expression of what we now understand as spiritual, or the coming blessings of a restored nation of Israel. Granted that it is impossible to know the nature of the coming age, we may yet have **assurance of the truth of it, based, not** on our ability to conceive it but on our faith in the One who has promised it.

Our hope was first ignited at the dawn of our history as a sinful race: the serpent's head would be crushed. This requires finally no less than the abolishing of death. Every covenant pointed to the future and made the task and the means progressively clearer.

Each generation has been called to live, not for the perfection they could achieve in their immediate history but for the outworking of God's ultimate purpose. Our duty as covenant people is to do the will of our Father. This duty is love and we have reason to believe that this, coming as it does from the throne of God, will effect all of God's **purpose—though to the world** it look like weakness itself.

But the coming of what God has promised is not the fruit of our projection and determination of interim steps. It is always the blessing of God coming as a gift of

grace-and coming in far greater measure than we could ask or think. It is for us to believe and never to doubt the goodness of the Creator (Jam. 1:16-17).

All of the heroes of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11 died 'not having received what was promised' they waited for it with patience. They did not want the fruit of human ingenuity but a city with foundations-whose builder and maker was God. They received divine approval and were the heirs of righteousness which comes by faith (Heb. 11:2, 7). Herein lies the dynamic of living by faith justification. We do not need to restlessly pursue the goals of self-justification—ambition, observable piety, perfectionism, immediate gratification. Rather, 'through the Spirit, by faith, we wait for the hope of righteousness' (Gal. 5:5).

A goal oriented view of history and society may have arisen from God's revelation of his covenant, but if the idea of progress is lifted from its context of grace and made to be an inevitable law, or a manipulatable phenomenon, God will judge it as he does all human arrogance.

It may be seen therefore how great a tragedy it is when we chose to live for the present alone. Jesus gave grave warnings concerning those who lived for their present crops and barns and not for the return of the master for his fruits.

The idea of progress in history cannot be sustained empirically according to Herbert Butterfield. Civilization is the result of restraint and of a phenomenon that things end up better through failures—though no reason can be adduced for it. Our idea of goal cannot come from within history; is a revelation from outside of it.

Those who have good hope in God have good hope for themselves and so they give themselves to the present with a ready zeal-good works prepared by God for them to walk in-and this has its social effects. But these social effects are a witness to the goodness of God and the potency of his grace, not an end in themselves.