



**New Creation Teaching Ministry**

## 1990 Pastors Study Group Titles

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## Creation and the Liberating Glory

### Introduction: Do We Preach the Theme?

Have you ever told your people-your congregation-in one sermon, study or message-their origins, history and destination? That is, have they ever been given a full sweep of what we can call 'true human history', so that-as a result-they can see who and what they are in a reasonable perspective? Has such an overall or 'bird's eye' view become the background of their thinking, so that they can put what is significant into a working perspective? Do they have such a working knowledge of salvation history-*heilsgeschichte*-that the Scriptures present themselves intelligibly and usefully, and so become a joy to read and know?

Of course it would be difficult to contain all of this in one sermon or study, but even so, it is essential we set forth such a view and perspective as soon as possible in the ways available. We are not talking about indoctrination, but about teaching doctrine, about teaching history, about setting forth man's identity in the plan and purpose of God. It is often not realized, even by many of us who are pastors and teachers, that many of our folk may lack such a grasp of the meaning and action of history. I believe we can ascertain this by quiet questioning. Indeed we may question ourselves as to whether we ourselves have a good working knowledge of the matter, and ourselves work within this framework or reference when we preach and teach. How exciting was the time when the divine drama of history cleared before our eyes, and we saw it all steadily and clearly. Such a view is indispensable to the flock of the pastor. Israel always had a sense of history-God's history, and its own part of that history. It lived with the assurance that it had been selected, i.e. elected of God to be the special people it was. It was aware of its function, God's mandate to it, and its destiny. It was aware, too, of the destiny of the nations, and the climax of telos of history, of the new heavens and the new earth, and of the ultimate triumph of God.

This kind of thinking was what helped Israel to be a nation. It had-we may say-a philosophy of time, of past, present and future, so that 'Who was and is, and is to come' made sense, and history made no sense without Him. Likewise the apostolic people of God had this same understanding, but then it had become a comprehension greatly enhanced by the event of Christ who truly interpreted the meaning and scope of all history-of the action of the living God, the God Who acts, and whose actions are consonant with counsel of His own will.

With this in mind we will attempt to develop something useful under the heading of 'Creation and the Liberating Glory'. Many of us will know of Jonathan Edwards' *A Short History of Redemption* which I would think was the first serious attempt at a salvation history, and well worth reading. Other histories have been written, and in our day the whole idea of salvation history has been greatly developed as recourse to theological dictionaries will show.

## Creation and the Liberating Glory

### The Matter of Creation

We have previously done studies on ‘The Doctrine of Creation’ (cf. *For Pastors and the People, NCPI, 1989, pp.3-43*), and these were intended to be of practical value for pastoral teaching. I suggest we read them in connection with this study. For pastoral consideration is the fact that because of the fall of man has lost his understanding of God as Creator, and he has lost his understanding of creation. We have to work on that basis and cannot assume all in our flocks believe that ‘God is a faithful Creator’ as claimed in I Peter 4:19, and that ‘everything created by God is good and to be received with thanksgiving, and to be enjoyed’, as stated by Paul (I Tim. 4:4; 6:17). As a result of the fall we saw the following happens with sinful man,

- (i) Man seeks to deny the total creative power of God, and creation’s essential nature because it all confronts him.
- (ii) Rationalized view of creation are found in many religions and philosophies. These, because not ontological, cannot serve man.
- (iii) Man demands some kind of theodicy in the light of the presence of good and evil.

We then saw under ‘Pastoral Understanding and the Purpose,, process, and Nature of Creation’ that we need to comprehend and teach the following,

- (i) What happens in creation is the outworking of God’s plan or counsel determined before time.
- (ii) When we see that man lives between the initiation of creation and the endjudgements, then we see that he will have no hope for the present time as having final perfection.
- (iii) Man is under the curse of (a) Genesis 3:10-13, and (b) the direct wrath of God (Rom. 1:18ff. ).
- (iv) The creation is subjected to futility, i.e. it cannot fulfil its *ontological* function, but must operate *provisionally*.
- (v) Salvation history must be placed alongside creation history, or history will be misunderstood.
- (vi) God as Creator must be seen not only to initiate and sustain creation, but to continually do new works in creation (cf. Isa. 43:5-8; Rom. 4:17 with Heb. 11:3).
- (vii) The previous point must be shown most powerfully in the work of regeneration, i.e. of the New Man and each believer sharing in this newness.

Comprehension of this teaching should bring revelation of, confidence in God as Creator-Redeemer-Restorer, and so peace to the believing person.

### Coming to Comprehend Creation

When man fell his mind became as described in Romans 1:19-25; Ephesians 2:1-13; 4:17-19. That is, it was, and is, *incapable of understanding* creation and God as ‘a faithful Creator’. The mind must therefore be renewed before it can understand.

This happens by repentance (*metanoia*: ‘a change of mind, attitude, understanding’) new birth (John 3:3-6; cf. 1:12-13; II Cor. 5:17; Gal 6:15), and by surrender of the body to Christ (Rom. 12:1-2). In keeping with Ezekiel 36:24-28 the believing man receives a new heart, mind and spirit. He is incorporate in the New Man-Christ (Eph. 2:11-18; Gal 3:28; I Cor 12:13; Col. 3:9-10). Colossians 3:9-10 suggest that

- (i) a *crisis* of renewal happens (cf. Titus 3:5-7; ‘by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit’), and
- (ii) that a *process* takes place of increasing knowledge, of spiritual growth, and of comprehension.

Another way of saying this is that until we are in Christ the New Man we will not comprehend what it is to be a new person, but the new person is a renewed person, rather than one who has been made into a different person. He is renewed from his fallen condition to his true condition as a person created by God. As he lives in Christ he increasingly comprehends what it is to be a true creature, and so grows in his understanding of creation, and so of God as a faithful Creator, and creation as ‘very good’ (Gen. 1:31).

### **Problems in Comprehending Creation**

Even believing man is faced with problems in comprehending creation, which is why we should teach the points we have set out above the heading, The Matter of Creation. The factors which seem to give little hope for the future are as follows,

- (i) The world though created perfect is obviously not in this condition now. It does not function harmoniously and completely.
- (ii) The creation has been subjected to futility, and even though that subjection is in hope of a better and perfect outcome, this is not seen by man.
- (iii) Death confronts man. His mortality and the mortality of the creation are a matter of distress.
- (iv) Judgements continually happen in history. Apocalyptic is about man, and he realizes something of this, even if inadequately. He cannot rationalize this fact.
- (v) There is no convincing evidence that history will come to fulfilment on a high note, i.e. that there will be a New Age which will come-of itself-i.e. without man.

Because of these 5 factors modern man, in his humanism, is certain he must and can-bring in the New Age. He is-consciously or unconsciously-usurping God’s apocalyptic, playing God to history both as judge and regenerator. He has taken God’s scenario as though he had planned it, and is working it through. At least he gives a witness to the truth that history will have a liberating glory. His only delusion is that he-Man-can effect it!

### **The Remarkable Factor of Liberating Glory**

It is rather strange that although the doctrine of hope is taught to some degree in our churches the fact of ‘liberating glory’ is almost unknown. It is clear from Roman 8:18-25 that Paul gives it high rating. In I Corinthians 2: 6-10 he discusses the matter concluding with the statement,

What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,  
nor the heart of man conceived,

what God has prepared for those  
who love him,  
God has revealed to us through his Spirit.

In other words glorification-the glorification of all creation-is the significant factor in understanding creation, in understanding what God is about in that creation, and so in understanding God Himself, so-finally-in understanding man and his destiny. Shortly we will go into essay form under the heading Creation and the Everlasting Peace, but I suggest we first see the following points,

- (i) The glorification of creation includes all that we understand by resurrection to eternal life, eternal life, the glorification of the body-i.e, liberation from decay, the ‘eternalizing’ of all things- the entrance into the Kingdom of God, the receiving of the eternal inheritance, the receiving of rewards, the becoming a kingdom of priests, the participation in the marriage of the Bride and the Lamb, the entering into the Holy City and participating in it-including the river of life and the tree of life-and the seeing of God face to face, and reigning for ever.
- (ii) Whilst this glorification has-will have-a future climax and fulfilment, i.e. a telos-yet
  - (a) we are already glorified, even if that must be understood proleptically (Rom. 8:30),
  - (b) we are in the processes of this glorification (II Cor. 3:18; cf. Heb. 12:2) which is taking place ‘from one stage of glory to another’ by the Spirit of the Lord, and
  - (c) the process of present glorification-as well as its future climax-is dependent upon suffering (Rom. 8:18-25; II Cor. 4:7-18. Any act of suffering, or all acts of suffering do not *per se* effect glorification. We must suffer with him (Rom. 8:17-18), i.e. in the fellowship of his sufferings (Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24), and that must involve proclaiming the gospel of Christ (II Cor. 4:7-15; 6:3-10; 11:21-29). Such proclamation draws out the worst in fallen men and angels in the way of reaction

If then, this whole matter of liberating glory were truly taught it would bring a revelation of what creation is all about, and what God is about in and for creation. It is our failure to teach this which keeps hope at such a low level. It is because the things of hope have been thought ‘other-worldly’ and thus irrelevant to present living, that the quality of present living is not of a high standard. Because we have no high vertical hope we have a mediocre horizontal experience. We certainly cannot teach our people what we do not ourselves experience, and we must be persons of hope no less than we must be persons of faith and love. This means a deep and precious involvement in Christ himself, indwelling us, as we him, since it is ‘Christ in you, the hope of glory’, i.e. the hope of liberating glory. I trust then that this next section-in essay form adapted from a coming book-may stimulate us to teach ‘the liberating glory’ in the context of our teaching our people of God as Creator, and of His remarkable creation. May it stimulate hope in the God of hope, and peace from knowing the God of peace.

## Creation and the Everlasting Peace

### The Matter of Peace

One of the most universally beloved words is peace. ‘Shalom’ for the Jew is ‘salaam’ for the Moslem, and is used for greeting and parting salutations. The salutation of ‘the peace’ in the Christian liturgy of the Eucharist is as ancient as ‘the faith delivered once for all to the saints’. It is apostolic because Jesus spoke of that peace in his last hours before his betrayal by Judas to the Jews. What lovely words his were,

*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.*

His first words to the disciples on the day of his resurrection were ‘Peace be with you,’ and when his appearance startled and alarmed them he revealed the reality of his resurrection by showing them his wounded hands and side. As they came into joy he then repeated the shalom-‘Peace be unto you,’ and they must have felt it soak into them like the cooling dew after a night of fever. What is more they knew this peace was based upon both the Cross and the Resurrection.

That is how it became apostolic. The new peace so gripped the followers of Christ that they would write,

*Grace be to you and peace, from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Was peace, then, simply an emotion or was it that and more? What would peace have to do with creation, and what also with the glorification of creation-the renewal and climax of creation? As we have seen in our studies, the people of Israel anticipated a great age of peace, when ‘the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the failing together, and a little child shall lead them,’ and the nations . . . shall beat their spears into pruning hooks, and nation shall not lift up word against nation, neither shall they learn war any more, and ‘They shall not or destroy in all my holy mountain; *for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea*’, and ‘*the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea*’. Until that day Israel anticipated great troubles, and apocalyptic happenings.

Those of Israel understood this to be the ultimate expression and fulfilment of the Kingdom of God, under Messiah-‘The mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace’. Between the time of Christ’s Ascension and his final appearing, the Christians anticipated great troubles and apocalyptic happenings. The question then; is, ‘What of the peace of which Christ speaks? Was it something given to the apostles to enable them to preach the Gospel, but was a temporary endowment, and so is it intermittent in this age, and will it only come in fulness in the new age, the eschaton?’ This question we will try to answer, especially because it is essential to know whether or not we can live in peace at the present.

### The Fears That Infest Our Age

Only unthinking people would say we do not live in an age of fear. What we call ‘the modern generation’ is seeking remedies for its known fears. We consume mountains of

tranquillizers and sedatives. We use stimulants and sedatives such as entertainment, alcohol, drugs, entertainment, gambling and sport. To a great degree these things are not enjoyed simply. They become an addiction to us, and we use them in excess. States of fear are known in family relationships-the largest number of murders is within families-in racial, religious and ideological situations. There is the nameless fear both neurotic and psychotic-which helps to fill not only our mental hospitals, but our general hospitals also. Nameless fear is often called 'baseless anxiety', i.e. there is no clear cause for it, such as when threats of aggression or loss of security face a person.

We have previously touched on this fact of fear. We have seen that many human beings fear the creation. Some fear for it, but also become the victims of fear. Some though unknowingly-fear creation because of the curse. Some fear death; indeed all of us fear death in some way or another. John said 'Perfect love casts out fear, for fear relates to punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love.' The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews says that men and women through fear of death are all their lifetime subject to bondage. Fear of death affects all of life for if that is at the end of the road then walking the road is not a delightful matter. Some fear the emptiness death seems to pose; some fear the last encounter with it in the body and mind, whilst others fear the non-existence they think lies beyond it. Others honestly dread the judgement they believe is to come to them.

We have said that fear of creation, fear relating to the curse, the fear of evil, especially the evil of other human beings adds to the confusion and misery of life. Isaiah once said, 'The wicked are like the restless sea which casts up mire and dirt. There is no peace to the wicked.' Our sins then, cause us fear. The catastrophes that come through creation-fire, famine, flood, plagues-also bring fear to the human race. Then there are the judgements of God, which unfortunately few recognize as judgements. Judgements are intended to bring people back to sanity, through repentance and the clearing of their guilt, but, of course, they are judgements upon sin and evil, and are required. Fear of them is deep in mankind.

### **The Fear of the Crumbling Creation**

**Whilst** some may fear the elements innate in creation, others fear that the creation may atrophy and run down. Any one who has been in an earthquake will understand this statement. Those few moments of shock and trembling of the earth make us wonder whether anything can be stable. The most solid thing we know is the earth and world around us. When it ceases to be dependable nothing appears to be dependable, and this is a terrifying thought.

What then of the other things such as the foreboding prophecies that the world is running down, its resources are diminishing, it cannot take a population expansion for long, that it is capable of sustaining only a specified number of inhabitants, along with all the problems of ecology-balance and imbalance-and these problems, along with many more, certainly trouble many people. The thought of a creation existing-as it were-on its own, and having supplies which can be depleted and finally exhausted is a terrifying thought for anyone. No wonder conservation has become a big issue, and has assumed high political and international proportions. Indeed, as we see in our day, it has become a gospel, taking on all elements of sectarianism, and even of fundamentalism. Nothing in the world is right unless oriented to conservationism, and the preservation of creation will prove to be our salvation. The only thing it can be salvation from, is from a world which is depleted by exploitation. The main issues of

life still have to be faced, i.e. those things previously called 'the eternities'-the things which relate to God and man, the destiny of man, the relationship between this creation and the new creation in its glorified form. We will return and pick up this point shortly.

A crumbling creation is no creation in which to live.

### **The Power of Apocalyptic**

Apocalypsis is the unveiling of things hidden. Israel used the special language of apocalypsis in much of its prophecy, and in the New Testament apocalyptic teaching looms largely. Apocalyptic language is figurative of a reality, and uses symbolic images and pictures of things which would be most difficult to describe, if indeed they could be otherwise described. This form of prophecy should never be taken literally, but it can be-and must be-taken actually, e.g. there can be no such thing, literally, as a 'bottomless pit', but there is a surely a bottomless pit which is a reality, a situation where evil powers are contained, and to which they are condemned

Because of certain inadequate and even bizarre forms of *interpretation* of apocalyptic prophecy the tendency has been to reject apocalyptic forms of prophecy. Interpretation is a difficult thing to accomplish, though the meaning of apocalyptic description seems to be no problem for sincere readers. Our purpose in speaking about the apocalypsis is to read and understand the present anticipation in the world of a show-down to come, a dealing with the world situation in a dramatic and even judgemental way. Apocalyptic, because it has been a strong feature in Israel and Christianity, is a strong theme in western countries. It has never been absent, and when guilt grows universally over a number of issues, so does sense of doom, of judgement, and this anticipates apocalyptic action.

Apocalypsis has a great value: it keeps our eyes on the future breaking into the present, the present moving towards the future. 'Where there is no prophecy [vision] the people perish [cast off restraint],' is an old Jewish statement. Where there is no apocalyptic the visitation of judgement upon guilt is not in the minds of the public. Someone has called the 20th century 'the century of guilt', and it is not surprising that the idea of apocalyptic is in the minds of many. They anticipate doom and gloom, but it is a sort of humanistic apocalyptic, one which thinks of self-acting judgement contained within the actions of the creation and man. Man is the sinner in these days when morality has to do with conservation and anti-pollution actions. Immorality is the exploitation of the earth. The exploitation of moral beings, i.e. human beings, is not so much emphasized. Primary pollution is pollution of land, seas and air, and not of the minds and souls of men. Doubtless what we call 'a contained apocalyptic' helps persons to feel the enormity of our ecological evil, face a kind of judgement, and feel released when it is over, i.e. when rivers and seas are depolluted, when the ozone layer is restored, and when creation becomes whole-all this in terms of 'they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature [creation] rather than the Creator'.

### **The New Age Completed**

If a true understanding of history could arise from within man, and if history could be controlled by man, and its actions be contained within his system then man would be God. It is doubtful whether even his urbane humanistic views could dispense with

judgements and concomitant apocalypsis. It must be recognized that these are forms which totalitarian and other governments employ. We might even say these two elements are ontological. As surely as judgements and apocalyptic must run their course before 'the new age' or 'the age to come' can be perfected, so as surely the modern protectors of our creation are convinced they can-and must set up the new age. With them-and in the same procession-are the utopians, the messianists, the occultic company, the enthusiasts and a host of others, all helping to bring in the new creation.

The conservantionists and their ilk can establish nothing new. Death and decay cannot be abolished. In the thinking of the protagonists of the new age-spelt New Age-there are powers latent, innate and hidden which are theirs and which-they are sure-can be utilized. Man actually becomes God-he becomes divinized-or, according to some, has his original godhead restored in all its powers. All of this is the humanist belief which does have some kind of a hope. To hope the world will be restored to what it was, or be kept presently in the form that it has, is the ideal of the conservationist. Because he does not have a sight of, or belief in, the glorification of all things he is kept contained within this present time. His sight is foreshortened. The conservationist who sees no apocalyptic closing off of creation as it now is, is denying his eternal destiny. The occultic 'new-ageist' is setting his hope upon a false destiny. His is a baseless hope. At the best it is wish-fulfilment thinking. At the worst it is an utterly delusive and empty thing.

### **The Point of Our Study and Our Responsibility to Communicate It to the Flock of God**

What has come to me out of the recent preparing of a book on creation and liberating glory is that we can never have peace when we depart from the functional principles and norms of creation, as they are set out biblically in creation's ontology. I have admitted the difficulty of rationalizing an ontology, but I believe all human beings have an ontological sense. They could-if they would-understand what they ought to do. P.T. Forsyth once said that conscience is what makes man man, what makes him one, and what makes him eternal. It is curious that all human beings insist they know what is right and wrong-even if they differ among themselves about their conclusions. The point we are making is that in the face of the curse, of human and angelic evil, of judgements and their accompanying apocalypsis, human beings can have peace in this world, that is, if they are persons of faith. They can trust God as a faithful Creator: He controls His creation, He is sovereign over it, and will not merely work in the last hour of creation's present history, but He works in all things, in all details, and the person of faith has nothing to fear. This was the peace Jesus offered to his disciples and he offers it to all,

*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.*

This is the peace which passes all understanding, and Paul said it guards the citadels of our souls. The curse is no threat to the believer. The dynamic inner evil of a human being is defeated at the Cross. The judgements which rightfully come upon certain persons and nations, can be seen as a blessing if a person sees God in them. Jeremiah in his beautiful and sorrowful book Lamentations is able to view the rape of Jerusalem, but in such horrific moments cry out,

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,  
his mercies never come to an end;  
*they are new every morning;*  
great is thy faithfulness.  
'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul,  
'therefore I will hope in him.'

This is the spirit we can have in the face of the curse, the sinful human and angelic system, the confusion brought about by sin and blindness to 'God's glorious nature. In the face of these things-including the judgements and the apocalyptic happenings-we can praise God and see His mercies as Jeremiah did at the time of judgements. Because we are assured of the new age, i.e. the new heavens and the new earth, then we know our hope is not delusive, for we do not see an empty age beyond this age, or the peculiar and illusory age of the false-dreamers. Because of what happened at creation, of what happened as we changed to new creatures, and because of what lies ahead we look firmly, loyally and lovingly at him-Christ- who is the Initiator and Completer of our faith.

I believe that we can have this view of creation and its Creator, and because of such a view be at peace even 'midst toil and tribulation and tumults of her war'. The church is the living testimony to the presence and action of her Lord, and all within 'salvation's walls' may live at peace, enjoy peace and testify to the faithfulness of the Creator, Who is at the same time Father, King, the Holy One the Redeemer and the Restorer of all things by the end of time. He is the One Who is immutable in His character, irrefutable in His wisdom, irreversible in His intentions, indefatigable in His love and faithfulness and the same yesterday, today and forever.

To live in Him is not to have the past mercifully blotted out, but the past purified of guilt and its pollution and given back to us as a precious gift. To kill the past is to kill the soul, but to have the past renewed in Christ's great Death is to come into life. To have the present moving from such a past to the goal of glorious immortality is to live in the present time with gratitude for being created and redeemed, whilst anticipating the bliss and fulfilment of glorification. Only on these unshifting grounds can we go to those who find life tedious, mysterious, unknowable, baffling, fearful because of its threatening, hurtful because of its wounding, terrifying because of its difficulties, dreadful because of its coming judgement, horrifying because of the impending dissolution of the body and wearying because of the evil of mankind and the inner deception of their own hearts.

He who is smug in his faith, conceited in his self-righteousness, aloof in his elitence and confident that his faith has saved him may well ask whether or not he-or she-has forgotten the truth of grace, since by grace we are saved, established, sanctified, are being transformed and will be glorified. The wonder of undeserved mercy should humble us when we gaze upon the Beloved One, and the same look of pity and compassion should be in our eyes towards others as His is towards us. In this state of adoration of the Beloved-and only in this state-can we cry to our fellow beings who live in a world of tragedy and saving Love, *Have Peace! Have Peace! Have Peace!*

## **The Battle for the Throne**

What do we mean by 'the throne'? We mean first of all, 'the throne of God', i.e. His Kingship, and His reigning over all creation, time and eternity. Secondly, we mean 'the throne of the human heart', i.e. who it is who reigns in the heart of a person. By 'the battle' we mean that there is competition in the universe in regard to reigning over it. Satan would seek to equal God and have his throne 'above the stars of God', i.e. 'I will set my throne high,' (Isa. 14:13). The desire to reign is in all of us, so that each of us has his-or her-throne. The sun is said to rule over the day and the moon to rule over the night (Gen. 1:16-17), and many such rulings are part of creation, such as man's rule over the creation (Gen. 1:28; cf. Psa. 8:5-8). Much of life consists in resisting the ruling of others over us, as also in trying to impose our rule on them.

The purpose of this study is to see the conflict which exists in our universe, and to see the rule of God, i.e. the Kingdom of God, and come to know where our ruling and being ruled fits into the matter of living in this world. Since there are also intimations that we will reign and rule in the age to come, i.e. in the future life of eternity, we will also need to examine that matter.

### **The Range of the Study**

Some of subjects, themes and matters relating to 'the thrones could be the Kingship of the Father, the Kingship of the Son-both of which involve the Kingdom of God-, the attempts of Satan to rule in this world since we have the throne of Satan, the throne of the red dragon, the throne of the kingdom of darkness, and the throne of the beast. We will need to look at the rebellion of man and its effects, and the on-going drive of human flesh to achieve leadership in this world. There will be the matter of the nations, of the realms of their sovereignty, the leadership of the nations by principalities and powers, and the rebellion of nations against God-aided by such powers-as set out in Psalm 2, Daniel chapters 7, 10 and 11 and other passages. Much of the material we could use can be found in my book *The Clash of the Kingdoms* (NCPI, 1989), and so reading it would help in consolidating this study. Even so, we will be bringing up certain material and situations not dealt with directly in the book.

### **The Historic Battle For the Throne**

We will trace the conflict between Satan and God, especially in regard to whom it is who will rule in creation over creation. Satan is variously called 'the god of this world', 'the prince of this world', and 'the ruler of this world'. However, he is not over the created world for that is God's reign since He created it. Satan has a world which is not the created world, i.e. he rules over a system he has devised, in which creatures are enslaved to him. Whilst no man can serve two masters it appears he must serve at least one. By creation man should serve God as King, but by the fall he desires to rule

himself. Satan desires to rule over all creation and that includes man. So there is the battle by God to win man out of his rebellion, and the battle by Satan to overthrow God and to enslave man. This battle explains much of history. Man has been give rulership over creation (Gen. 1:26-28; Psa. 8:3-8) but he wishes to exercise this authority apart from God or Satan. As we have indicated the conflict is not only personal but becomes tribal, inter-tribal, national and international. Little happens that is not linked with the battles for the thrones. For this reason it will be good to look at the thrones we have mentioned above. As we proceed we will see there is nothing of history which is outside the orbit of the three kingdoms-God's, Satan' and man's-so that all we call anthropology, cosmology and theology in involved.

## **Thrones Good and Bad**

### **1. The Throne of God**

#### **(i) Generally in Scripture**

- (a) The throne of God is in the heavens (Psa. 11:4; 103:19), and the earth is therefore God's footstool. He is King over all the earth (Psa. 97:2; cf. Zech. 14:9). Both are linked in Isaiah 66:1.
- (b) It is a throne from eternity (Psa. 93:2).
- (c) It is a throne to all eternity (Lam 5:19).
- (d) It is founded on righteousness, justice, steadfast love and faithfulness (Psalm 9:4; 89:14; 97:2).
- (e) God's throne is the place of action (I Kings 22:19; Isa. 6:1; Ezek. 1:22-28; Dan. 7:9-10; cf. Job 1:6; 2:1).
- (f) It is a throne surrounded by the 4 living creatures, elders and angelic creatures, so that praise and worship are incessant in the presence of God (Rev. 4:2f.).
- (g) Although it is in heaven (Isa. 66:1) yet God is 'enthroned on the cherubim' (I Sam. 4:4) which is the same as being 'enthroned on the praises of Israel' (Psa. 22:3).
- (h) Ultimately it will be seen in the Holy City, the river of life issuing from it (Rev. 22:1f; Ezek. 47:1ff.). In Ezekiel 43:7 it is in the new temple. In Revelation 21:22 the new temple is God and the Lamb, yet the throne, being in the Holy City is also in the temple of God, i.e. in God Himself. Note that in Isaiah 6:1 the throne is seen in the temple.
- (i) In the Messianic age 'Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the Lord' (Jer. 3:17; cf. Ezek. 43:7). Israel's throne was really God's-1 Chronicles 28:5-'the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel'.
- (j) God's throne will always be 'the throne of grace' (Heb. 4:16), i.e. from it will flow the river of life to the needy. Ultimately it will prove to be the place of rewards (Matt. 25:31-40).
- (k) By contrast God's throne will be the place of judgement, where punishment will be meted out to the unrighteous (Dan. 7:9-21; Matt. 25:31, 41-t6; I Cor. 15:24-28; Rev. 20:11-15).
- (l) Generally known as the throne of God, it then becomes known as 'the throne of God and the Lamb' (Rev. 22:1) and as 'the throne of Christ', or, 'his glorious throne' (Matt. 19:28; 25:31; 26:64; cf. to which there are many references such as those linked with the Kingdom of God, and Psalm 110:1 (Acts 2:34; I Cor. 15:25; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3, 13, etc.)-'Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool.'

**(ii) Particularly in the Book of the Revelation**

- (i) God is seated on the throne, i.e. He reigns and rules (4:2; 4:9; 5:13; 6:16; 7:10; 7:15; 19:4; 20:11; 21:5; cf. 22:1, 3), appearing in beautiful colours (4:3). The rainbow is around the throne-sign of peace and of covenant, and also very beautiful.
- (ii) The throne has on its 4 sides the 4 living creatures, symbolizing the things they are and do, symbolizing 4 great elements of creation-the lion-like, ox-like, eagle-like and man-like elements. These living creatures initiate worship. We need to read Ezekiel 1 to see both the four living creatures and the heavenly throne.
- (iii) The twenty four elders of all creation have authority and surround the throne with it, delighted to worship incessantly (4:10; 5:11).
- (iv) Before the throne is the glass-like sea, pure and serene, speaking peace (4:5) and it is mingled with fire (15:2). Also the seven-spirits,-the Sevenfold Spirit (cf. Isa 11:2-32)-who burn as torches, and disseminate grace and peace along with the Father and the Son (1:4;), who are the 'eyes and horns of the Lamb' (5:6) and who go out from the throne to all the earth.. The golden altar of incense is before the throne (8:3-4) as an agent of worship.
- (v) The throne is ever actional: from it issue 'flashes of lightning, and voices and peals of thunder' (4:5; 8:5; 11:19), i.e. actions of judgement. In 16:17 a loud voice 'came out of the temple, from the throne' (cf. Ezek. 43:6-7), and in 16:1 a loud voice comes from the temple, so that *temple* and *throne* are closely linked. When fully considered the 3 sets of 7, i.e. the 7 seals, the 7 trumpets and the 7 bowls all issue primarily from the throne, so that the throne is source and place of judgements, and this well before the final judgement of 'the great white throne' of 20:11-15, (cf. 21:8).
- (vi) The Lamb has much to do with the throne. In 5:1 he is seated at the right hand of God the Father. In 5:5:6 he is standing 'between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders.' He holds this place in 7:9-10. In 2:26-28 the Lamb is given the place of authority, which in 3:21 is both the Father's throne, and 'my throne' i.e. the throne of the Lamb. In 5:8-14 worship is given at the throne to both God and the Lamb. In 6:16 God is the One Who sits on the throne and the Lamb (in wrath) is linked with Him, as also in 7:10 and 7:17 where, the Lamb is 'in the midst of the throne'. In 12:5 the child born of the woman is caught to the throne of God, and he is to rule the nations. In 20:4 the martyrs reign with Christ, which must mean he is seated on a throne, and they on thrones, as perhaps, in Daniel 7:9 where God is on his throne, and the saints also are on theirs. In 22:1 and 3 the throne is called 'the throne of God and the Lamb'.
- (vii) In 22:1 the river of life flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb, whereas in Ezekiel 47:1 the water 'from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar' which tends to identify the throne with the temple, and then the altar with the throne that There is a river, whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High (Psa. 46:4) refers to the Jerusalem of ancient days, but now most appropriately to the City of the Throne. All life issues from the Throne (cf. 7:15-17).

**2. The Throne of the Kingdom of Evil**

- (a) The throne is spoken of as Satan's throne (Rev. 2:13), and it is in this world, at the centre of human living, having a specified locality or localities (cf. Rev. 2:9, 10, 24; 3:9), being linked with 'the synagogue of Satan', which is possibly an anti-Christian Jewish synagogue practicing 'the deep things of Satan', as against 'the deep things of God' (I Cor. 2:10, AV.). It is suggested that Pergamum was the locale for the Satanic headquarters of the East as Rome was for the West, in that emperor worship and other pagan idol worship was intense and rife.

- (b) Just as the Kingdom of God has its throne of God and of the Lamb, so the Kingdom of darkness has its throne (Rev. 16:10; cf. Luke 11:18) which is called 'Satan's throne' (Rev. 2:13), and 'the throne of the beast' (Rev. 13:2) 16:10).
- (c) Satan claimed to have authority over the nations (Luke 4:2) and in Revelation 13:7 the beasts is allowed to make war against the saints and have authority over the nations for a specified period of time (cf. Dan. 7:21). History is really the action-and account-of 'the clash of the kingdoms' as the dragon and his cohorts endeavour to subjugate man and the nations to the throne of darkness (e.g. Dan. chs. 7, 9 and 10; Rev. chs. 13-20) and as God opposes Satan, finally destroying him and his powers.

### **3. The Throne of the Kingdom of Man**

Does man really have a throne? Does he have a kingdom which can be called 'the kingdom of man?' The following are the answers,

- (i) Man-by creation-has a legitimate kingdom as is seen by the creational mandate of Genesis 1:26ff; cf. Psalm 8:5-9. All creation is his kingdom, so it is vast.
- (ii) Man is thus by created nature a ruling creature. Even so, his authority is delegated to him by God, and he cannot rule creation apart from God. Secondly, man has a kingdom of his own, forged by the fall. It is really the same kingdom, but man refuses a simple delegated authority-he will rule in his own right, whatever that may mean.
- (iii) Man will have, or participate in, or constitute 'a kingdom of priests' or 'a priestly kingdom'. This is the eschatological kingdom, the Kingdom of God in all its fulness, into which man enters, and within which he reigns as we can see by Revelation 1:6; 2:26-28; 3: 21; 5:10; 20:4; 22:5-amongst other references.

### **One Throne: Many Thrones**

Or, we can say, 'One throne, many kingdoms.' Our pastoral concern is, 'To which throne do members of the church relate? To the kingdom of Satan, to the kingdom of man i.e. of self, or to the Kingdom of God?' This is a most pertinent question. Every human creature has been made to rule, hence it is a constitutional element we all experience: indeed it is a master-element, dominating all life. The refusal to come under God's reign and rule brings its elements of guilt, and the insistent domination of Satan's kingdom is irritating and oppressive, whilst the self-kingdom-which is really at one with Satan's kingdom-is a matter of bondage and not-as was imagined freedom. It should be seen that much of our confusion, tension and suffering comes from the conflict resulting from divided loyalties which arise with the multiplicity of thrones.

In order to become clear in our thinking we will need to take up the matter of thrones, the meaning of them, and their interrelationship with authority, ruling, and law on every level of operation, e.g. family life, local and central governments and movements national and international, since these are inseparable. We have already noted that some believe that authority structures and law were brought into being in order to cope with the fall and rebellion of man, but were not part of the original creation, i.e. are provisional and not ontological. Thus Adam rules Eve, and familial and other authority structures are devised to cope with human depravity. This theory cannot hold credence because the sun and the moon were to rule before man was created, and man was to rule the creation before the fall happened (Gen. 1:28f.). We

may, of course, say that most operations in the present world of fallen man, the curse on man and creation, also God's wrath upon fallen man-two related though distinct things-are provisional, but this does not make authority merely a provisional, matter, in itself.

Again, let us remind ourselves that authority-with-law is the fulcrum by which evil levers and manipulates guilty man into sinning (Rom. 7:7-13), into hatred of God and conflict with Him (Col. 1:19-21). How then do we act pastorally in a world innately opposed to authority? What do we teach our people?

### **The Matter of Hierarchy and Authority**

There are some personal, emotional and psychological problems here because fallen man lives under guilt, a sense of inferiority and reaction to authority and laws. Because of these problems which can be dealt with satisfactorily where human beings know they are justified-subordination is always thought of as inferiority, and superordination as superiority. This is far from being the case. The Son is not inferior to the Father, though he be subordinate and the Father superordinate. The Son can say on the one hand 'The Father is greater than I' (John 10:29) and on the other-though not in contradiction-'I and the Father are one' (John 10:30). This is partly dealt with in my *The Authority and Submission of Love*, NCPI, 19 ), and for a more detailed statement I have extracted and printed below some pages from my book *God's Glory, Man's Sexuality* (NCPI, 1988,129-133) to show that headship does not mean superiority over that which it heads up.

I am sorry to say that when it is explained that subordination does not mean inferiority then few-if any-listeners ever hear that statement or ponder it. No matter what the plea to consider the matter, it goes unheeded. They seem incapable-or unwilling-to consider the matter with any objectivity. More is the pity, but then sin and guilt naturally obscure the truth of God, and so I refer again to the need to be in a state of justification for with that state none can argue with true objectivity. Thus now, when I am about to quote Corinthians 11:3 I am aware that the substance of it will be either rejected or rationalized away by certain readers. These ones will not even consider there may be such truth in this statement as to open wide doors on ontological reality. I ask, therefore, that we thoroughly explore the matter of hierarchical authority and do not take it as presupposed that hierarchy in this form must obviously be wrong so that it not to be tolerated. Such a presupposition may not be as thoughtful as it assumes itself to be. In fact it may be missing the very dimension which is the most dynamic of all-the leadership that God brings to the affairs of creation, and which is delegated by God throughout the hierarchical structure. Antagonism to hierarchy may be rebellion against the throne of God. If the hierarchy is ontological and functional, and if it is viewed steadily for its own self, then its dynamic dimension will show through, grip the viewer and prove itself to be valuable.

Here, then is I Corinthians 11:3.

But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

As we have suggested, this statement raises the whole matter of authority and authority-structures which are strongly opposed, for what we are saying is that the throne of God is what rules the creation. We cannot then, democratize God or

‘the powers that be’ which He has set up. They are necessary to the creation, no matter how provisionally they may be forced to act because of sin. We should be eager to recognize the value of the material following.

## The Principle of Headship Under Creation (Nature) and Grace

We really need to resolve this matter if we are to see how man and woman live together. It involves not only the fact of subordination and superordination, but the nature of them both. A clue to the value of understanding lies in a powerful statement by Ray S. Anderson<sup>1</sup> when he speaks of ‘the ontological joy of sonship’, meaning that there is no less joy in subordination than there is in superordination, and that there is true joy in both. If we apply this to marriage, assuming for the moment that the woman is subordinate and the man superordinate, then we may speak of ‘the ontological joy of submission’, and ‘the joy of headship’, provided of course we understand the true meaning of ‘headship’ and ‘submission’. I do not apologize for the long rubric which must follow this statement, because the matter has been debated at length and with great intensity over the last decade. We wish that we would all stand firm in justification, being afraid of neither masculism nor feminism, traditional nor non-traditional stances, and so stand firm in the love-constraint of Christ.

The debate on the word ‘headship’ (*kephale*) in the New Testament centres on what seem to be alternatives. Either we are to think of headship as the position of authority, or as ‘the source’ or ‘origin’. The places in which the word is used in the sense of ‘headship’ are I Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Colossians 1:18; 2:10; and 2:19. Let us see them in their own contexts.

Of I Corinthians 11:3- ‘But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God’-C. K. Barrett<sup>2</sup> says:

*Man is the head of woman in the sense that he is the origin, and thus the explanation of her being. That God is the head of Christ can be understood in a similar way . . . There can be no doubt that Paul taught a form (we may call it an innocent form) of subordinationism . . . The Son would no longer be the kind of Son we know him to be if he ceased to be obedient to and dependent on the Father . . . Thus a chain of originating and subordinating relationships is set up: God, Christ, man, woman.*

Colin Brown<sup>3</sup> adds:

*Here head is probably to be understood not as ‘chief’ or ‘ruler’ but as ‘source’ or ‘origin’ . . . The creation narrative of Gen. 2:21 ff. assigns a priority to man . . . But the Christian knows that Christ has a greater priority as the archetypal man.*

F. F. Bruce says:

*As for the order of creation, there is a hierarchy of the order: God-Christ-man-woman. Each of the first three members of the hierarchy is the head of the member following. By head in this context we are probably to understand not, as has frequently been suggested, ‘chief’ or ‘ruler’ but rather ‘source’ or ‘origin’-a sense well attested for Gk. kephale (cf. S. Bedale, ‘The Meaning of kephale in the Pauline Epistles’, J.T.S. n.s. 5, 1954, pp. 211 ff.). In the light of the account of the formation of Eve from her husband (Gen. 2:21-23) man is the source of woman’s existence (‘she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man’) . . . it is better to translate . . . ‘woman’s head is man’.*

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<sup>1</sup> Ray S. Anderson, *On Being Human*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, U.S.A., 1982, p. 116.

<sup>2</sup> C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Adam & Charles Black, London, 1978, p. 249.

<sup>3</sup> Colin Brown, ‘Head’, in Colin Brown (ed.), *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, The Paternoster Press, Exeter, Devon, 1976, vol. 2, p. 160.

Bruce goes on to show that Christ is the source of Man's existence because he is the archetypal Man, and because he is the agent of all things. In turn Christ as Son derives his eternal being from God the Father.

J. B. Hurley<sup>4</sup> does not agree that *kephale* in this verse can be limited to 'source' or 'origin'. In fact he disagrees altogether with this concept being used in I Corinthians 11:3. He points out that in Ephesians 4:15, and Colossians 1:18 and 2:10 where the idea of 'source' is present, Paul does not use the marital image. He says:

The best conclusion seems to be that in I Corinthians 11:3 Paul was teaching that a hierarchy of headship authority exists and that it is ordered: God, Christ as second Adam, man, woman.

The question that faces us is, 'Given in that "headship" in some contexts may mean "source" or "origin", does that mean there is no rulership, or leadership given by the head?'. Are 'source' and 'origin' in no sense linked with rulership or authority, and is there authority without some kind of rulership? Is it that sinful Man simply cannot accept the principle of rulership and/or authority? As we will see shortly, Christ's subordination to his 'Head', the Father, meant that he received actual commands and obeyed them. At this point we are not suggesting that husbands necessarily give commands to their wives, but in the relationship of subordination one such as Christ did not see anything objectionable in commands from His Father (of which he often spoke), but experienced, in subordination, 'the ontology of joy'.

The one word in different contexts may have variant meanings, but that does not mean it has meanings wholly exclusive-each of the other-in various contexts. In I Corinthians 11:3 there is at least what F. F. Bruce calls 'an hierarchy of order', what J. B. Hurley calls 'a hierarchy of headship authority', and what C. K. Barrett says involves 'a form of subordination'. The man is accorded this headship because 'he is the origin, and thus, the explanation of her [woman's] being'. In Ephesians 1:20-23 as in Colossians 2:10 Christ is the head of all principalities and powers. Obviously in these contexts origin and source are not the primary ideas. He is Lord (*kyrios*) to these powers and in authority over them, directs them, giving commands. The New Testament shows us he is Lord by virtue of creating the powers (Col. 1:16), and as the incarnate Word (Jesus) he is Lord of all powers through redemption (Heb. 2:14-15; Col. 2:14-15).

The verb *anakephalaioomai* is used in Ephesians 1:10 which the Jerusalem Bible translates, 'that he would bring everything together under Christ as head, everything in the heavens and everything on earth'. The RSV has 'unite all things'. The unity of his creative Lordship is thus a *recapitulation* (one meaning of the verb) of all things which is at once the assertion, fulfilment and goal of his Lordship. He created the powers: he now recapitulates them into their ontological unity.

Speaking of Ephesians 4:15 (passim) Colin Brown<sup>5</sup> says:

In this picture, Christ is the head, and as head he sustains the whole body. Thus, in v. 15 the head determines the relationship of love and truth in the body of Christ . . . The relationship of *kephale* to *soma* [body] expresses the authority of Christ (cf. Col. 2:10) and the corresponding subordination of the church.

Schliert<sup>6</sup> comments ' . . . the headship of Christ is manifested in the fact that He directs the growth of the body to Himself'.

The importance of Christ's headship of the church, and so the church with him, is summed up by Schlier<sup>7</sup> :

Christ is from the very first the Lord of the world. For from the very first (pro panton) the world consists in Him. When as the risen Lord He takes control of the world in His body, He is simply actualizing His real power over creation.

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<sup>4</sup> J. B. Hurley, *Man & Woman in Biblical Perspective*, IVP, England, 1981, pp. 165ff.

<sup>5</sup> Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 162

<sup>6</sup> Schlier, *κεφαλη*, in Gerhard Kittel (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Wm. B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1965, vol. III, p. 680.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p. 681.

This comment takes us from mere discussion of ‘authority’ and ‘command’ as being opposed to egalitarianism, into the purpose of ‘head’ and ‘body’ which is to effect Christ’s Lordship in time, i.e. The Man and The Woman together triumph over that which would divide, fissiparate and destroy the true creation.

If we assume that in the relationships between man and woman that man is the head – the ‘origin’, ‘source’, and ‘leader’-of the woman, without any sense of being dictatorial or dominating, but is head of the body, and utterly one with his spouse in their vocational action and goal of life, then we can now examine a little more the question of authority, leadership, subordination, super-ordination, and command.

Our point in doing this to see what is the biblical ontological nature of the words or ideas expressed immediately above. Again we face our own sinfulness, our importation of adverse ideas into these very words. On the whole the human race finds them distasteful, having had what it calls ‘bad experiences’ of them. This is the ‘flesh’ of Man, which Paul says is incorrigible, ‘it does not submit to God’s law, indeed it cannot; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God’ (Rom. 8:7-8).

The key to understanding these matters of authority, leadership, subordination, superordination and command lies in Anderson’s phrase ‘the ontological joy of sonship’, or as we might say ‘the ontological joy of obedience and responsibility’. We may go on, then, to speak of the ontological joy of submitting to God’s throne, of worshipping Him, of doing His will, and in it all of loving Him and doing His will in all things.

### **An Evaluation of the Hierarchical Material Stated Above**

If the argument set out above is valid, then it exposes the rebellion against the throne of God by those who oppose it. We must recognize that our present cultural and social mores are basically humanistic, basically anthropological and lacking the biblical emphasis on functional hierarchy. The problem of authority is with us. On the one hand authority is essential, but on the other we see the ways in which it is abused by authoritarian figures. Truly understand authority is basically a matter of love and care. In operation, however, it more often something used to fulfil the lust for power and domination of its proponents. This is not in accord with the heart of I Corinthians 11:3.

### **The Battle of, and the Battle For, the Thrones**

We now come to our primary pastoral point. Man is caught up in the conflict of 3 kingdoms, plus the conflicts of innumerable personal kingdoms-each man endeavouring to be an island and a kingdom unto himself. Satan’s kingdom is in conflict with God’s Kingdom. Man’s kingdom as a corporate whole (cf. Psa. 2:1-2) is in conflict with God’s, and man’s personal, individualistic kingdom is also personally pitted against God’s. Unredeemed man is allied with the kingdom of darkness, whether he likes it or not (Eph. 2:1-4; II Tim. 2:26; cf. Heb. 2:14-15), hence these battles, conflicts and disturbances are going on in families, communities, and nations.

Satan’s aim is to assert his throne upon mankind, and upon all celestial creatures. He desires to occupy the heart of man and make that his throne (Eph. 2:2 ‘the spirit now at work in the sons of disobedience’; cf. Phil. 2:13). From the pastoral point of view do we understand where men and women and young people stand and live in such a conflict? Do we alert them to the principles of spiritual warfare, not only in survival techniques, but principles of standing fast in the conflict and even carrying the warfare into the enemy camp? Do our people understand the historical movements of God and Satan, of communities and nations? Do they understand the conflict with the dragon, the beast, the false prophet and Babylon? Do they have adequate views of the past, of

## The Battle for the Throne

the present, and of the future hope? Or is there an ignorance which can be dangerous, i.e. are they mainly unaware of Satan's stratagems (II Cor. 2:11)? There is of course, some teaching given here and there, but it has been known to be mystical, esoteric, and in some measure conspiratorial, i.e. it frightens listeners and readers who are led to think Satan is almost as powerful of God-if not as powerful! People become uneasy with almost every area of life as though they are about to be caught by guile, cunning and cleverness and must ever be thinking about the Devil when it is much more healthy and practical to be thinking of Christ as Lord over all-as the Lamb on the throne. We can well do without this conspiratorial kind of teaching. At the same time we need to teach correctly.

Look for example at the following Scriptures:

Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made. . . **Genesis 3:1.**

And another portent appeared in heaven; behold a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns and seven diadems upon his heads. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth... the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world... **Revelation 12:3-4.**

And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent who is the Devil and Satan... Revelation 20:2 . . . . the devil who had deceived them... **Revelation 20:10.**

But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. **II Corinthians 11:3 .**

. . . the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. **Ephesians 2:2.**

In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God. **II Corinthians 4:4.**

And the devil took him [Jesus] up, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and he said to him, 'To you I will give all this authority, and their glory; for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will.' **Luke 4:6.**

. . . the ruler of this world,' **John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11.**

By this it may be seen who are the children of God and who are the devil: whoever does not do right is not of God, nor he who does not love his brother... and be not like Cain who was of the evil one and murdered his own brother. **I John 3:10, 12.**

'You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. **John 8:44.**

Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour. **I Peter 5:8.**

. . . and that they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will, **II Timothy 2:26.**

If we know that in history Satan has subverted one third of the angelic powers (Rev. 12:4), and has developed a considerable kingdom, and if we know that he has caught up a large part of mankind 'taking them captive at his will' (II Tim. 2:26), so that his powers are not inconsiderable, and if we know that mankind generally is disaffected with God, and can be manipulated into opposing Him, then we know that the battle for the throne is indeed most significant, and cannot be ignored in the human scene, in history and in the pastoral situation. So then we will need to learn more and to teach more, and to do so intelligently through the word and the Spirit.

Out of the above quotes then, we can derive something of the nature and action of Satan. From the beginning he has been clever. At some point he sought to be like God, and he tempted man into the same attitude and endeavour. By so doing he has built a kingdom.

He has subverted angels and men, and seeks to deceive the whole world. He captures creatures to do his will and not the will of the true Father-God. He promises something better than God appears to give (Gen. 3:6). Whereas God gives truth and life (the truth being the creational and moral way of freedom) Satan is a liar and a murderer. He deceives, threatens, seduces and brings death to his victims. The authority over nations which God appears to have given him at creation, he uses for himself.

### **The Building of the Kingdom of Darkness**

If Satan had not been given authority (cf. II Pet. 1:4; Jude 6; Luke 4:6) then he would have no kingdom, whatever. From Revelation 12:4 we see he has brought down under himself a third of the angelic forces. From Genesis (:1-6; cf. II Cor. 11:3) we see he has subverted man, and can take human beings 'captive at his own will'. His system is called by Jesus and Paul 'this world', i.e. an anti-God, and pro-Satan system with its own wisdom (I Cor. 1:20), its evil leaders (Eph. 6:12), and its stratagems to deceive the nations (12:9). In Revelation chapter 12-17 we see the plan to deceive the nations, capture them, and bring them under the government of the kingdom of darkness. In Psalm 2 we see the nations rebelling against God, and this must be under the deception of Satan and his kingdom (cf. Rev.13:5-10; 16:12-14; 20:7-10).

#### **Man, 'Taken Captive At Satan's Will'**

This statement in II Timothy 2:26 alerts us to the fact that Satan has power over man. How does Satan bring man into his power, and into his kingdom? The answer lies in Hebrews 2:14-15 (cf. Col. 2:14-15). Man is in fear of death by reason of his guilt, and it is this fear of death which Satan uses to enslave him. Were man free of guilt he would be free of Satan, and for that matter free of all forms of bondage. In this way Satan takes men and women captive at his own will. He not only works to build up his kingdom, but works to break down the Kingdom of God. Mostly he is jealous of God and His accomplishments, and tries to thwart that part of God's plan that he knows, namely, that God is about building up a family of sons-brethren of the Lord Christ whom he is making into the image of that Son. This means-as we have seen before that Satan attacks both persons and nations, capturing them and utilizing them for his purposes. We need to keep in mind the fact that he is a creature and cannot defeat the Creator. God is unchangeable, and will work all things according to the counsel of His own will. He actually utilizes Satan, for as Luther said, 'He is God's devil.' We will see then that Satan cannot defeat God because of His mercy and His grace. By nature of the case Satan does not have the power to defeat these. He cannot overthrow the Throne of Love.

### **The Battle For the Throne of Man's Heart**

#### **Jesus Christ is King**

In Revelation 1:3 Jesus is called 'the ruler of kings on earth'. In 17:14 and 19:15 he is 'King of kings and Lord of lords,' whilst in 2:26-27 and 3:21 he refers to being seated on His Father's throne. In the gospels that throne is called is called his 'glorious throne' (Matt. 19:28; 25:31), and he is even seated on it when 'coming in the clouds of heaven with great power and glory' ( 24:10; 26:64). In Matthew 25:34, 40 Jesus is called 'the King'. All references to Jesus as 'Lord' and 'Messiah' are virtually references to him as King.

The Kingdom is the Kingdom of 'God and Christ' (Eph. 5:5) and 'of our Lord and his Christ' (Rev. 11:15).

The fact of his Kingship is a powerful one. Ephesians 1:19-22 places him above all other powers for ever, both in the present, and in the age to come. There is nothing that is not under his rulership. I Corinthians 15:25-28 shows all things are being finally-and irreversibly-subjugated to him, but nothing now can equal or defeat him.

### **Man's End or Telos is Glorification**

Revelation 1:4 tells us that Christ has 'made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father,' and this is repeated in 5:10, 'hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign in earth.' 20:4 shows that the martyrs 'reigned with Christ a thousand years,' and 22:5 simply says that the servants of God 'shall reign for ever and ever'. The first two references speak of the redeemed as already being 'a kingdom, priests unto our God,' whilst I Peter 2:4-10 show the community of Christ as already a 'a chosen race, royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people.' Even so this state of being has not yet been filled out and completed. Romans 8:29-30 reads,

*For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

Thus God's plan is that all His children should be wholly like His Son, and so glorify Him (cf. Isa. 43:6-7; Eph. 1:4-14). The process of- doing this is not yet completed, although the outcome is not in doubt. 11 Corinthians 3:18 speaks of being changed from stage of glory to another' and that must describe the process-not the end or telos.

### **Royal Priestly Man Will Ultimately Reign**

Jesus made it' clear to his disciples that they would reign with him,

*Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. (Luke 12:32.)*

*You are those who have continued with me in my trials; and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (Luke 22:28-30.)*

*Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. (Matthew 25:34.)*

The references concerning the Kingdom must be read in the light of Daniel 7:9-27 where 'the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom for ever and ever,' it is obvious that the saints will sit on thrones and judge the nations,

*And the kingdom and the dominion  
and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven  
shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High;  
their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom,  
and all dominions shall serve and obey them.*

## The Battle for the Throne

With this key in mind we can understand certain New Testaments statements such as,

[He] made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. **(Ephesians 2:5-6.)**

If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. **(Romans 5:17.)**

These two latter references speak of present reigning, but the former of future reigning. Likewise Paul said,

If we have died with him, we shall also live with him; if we endure we shall also reign with him; **(11 Timothy 2:12.)**  
provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. **(Romans 8:17.)**

Paul also indicated our high future estate when he said,

Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels?

In the Book of Revelation Jesus promised,

He who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, I will give him power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received power from my Father. 2:26-27.

He who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. 3:21.

Probably both of these latter references refer to Psalm 2:6-9; 89:19-37 and 110:1, and so the promises given in them carry over to Christ and his people. Christ reigns here, and Christ will reign in eternity. His people reign here with him and in him, and will reign with him in eternity, because he is King.

## God Indwelling Man

There is remarkably little written about God indwelling man. There is plenty written regarding God indwelling Israel as a nation, as His covenant people, and doubtless this may refer to personal indwelling, but it is not emphasized that way. What is emphasized is man's attitude of heart towards God, of having a heart circumcised to love God, and storing up His word in the heart so as not to sin against him. If loving God with all one's heart is the equivalent to Him indwelling the person and the person indwelling Him, then that would be enough. The Authorized Version of Isaiah 57:15 is,

For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

The Jerusalem Bible says, 'I live in a high and holy place, but I am, also with the contrite and humbled spirit, to give the humbled spirit new life, and to revive contrite hearts.' In the New Testament this beautiful saying is transcended in John's Gospel when Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son will dwell in the heart of the person who keeps Christ's commandments. Of course Christ is Emmanuel,

'*God with us*'. He has become flesh and dwelled among us, and so he can-by his Spirit dwell in our hearts. As we are the temples of the Holy Spirit so we are the temples of the Father (I Cor. 3:16; 5:19). Well does Paul pray, and testify

that according to the riches of his [the Father's] glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

For Paul it is 'Christ in you [or, 'among you'], the hope of glory' (Col. 1:27). He also knows that 'God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure' (Phil. 2:13) i.e. God has begun a good work in each redeemed person and will complete it (Phil. 1:6). Thus the indwelling of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is to bring each person to be fully conformed to the image of the Son. Each one then qualifies to be like the Son in the matter of royal priesthood, in the matter of true kingship. Whilst each must suffer with him, and endure with him then each shall consequently reign with him. Together all the sons shall form the royal priesthood, the priestly nation which shall represent God to the creation, and the creation to God.

### **Living in Christ's Kingship**

Peter's wrote, 'In your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you' (I Pet. 3:15). That Christ is King of all time and eternity, over all creation, and having created all things they are 'unto him' (Col. 1:16), i.e. he is their end and goal, then it must be that all royal and priestly resources are in him. As he dwells in our hearts his personage takes hold of us-though not as a dominating entity like a spirit, but as the gracious and loving Lord and King. As he more and more affects us, teaches us and trains us, so more and more-we become like him. We grow up 'to mature manhood, to the **measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ**'.

In other words, whereas we might strive and strain and be under tension to achieve royal priesthood, or priestly kingship, the very fact of the King living with us is what assures us we will be ready in that day to reign with him. If we think off immense resources we need to be a kingdom of priests to our God, to reign upon the earth-the regenerated creation-and to do this for ever and ever, why that is not merely daunting. It can be terrifying. It need not be for our King is with us. None of us is a king or a priest separately or in his own right. We are only kings and priests in him, and unto him, as we share with him his throne, and as we reign over the nations in the glorious liberty of the children of God.

In order to reach this maturity we must 'reverence Christ in our hearts', i.e. bow to his Kingship, be subject to it, obey it in every aspect. His is actually working that Kingship out now, in time, in creation, in the affairs of nations, relating to principalities and powers-the great network of evil and good authorities. Christ is giving his commands, using his powers, determining actions by his wisdom-all according to the plan of the Father. It is here we are part of his reigning, and it is here we learn to become more royal and more priestly, more practised in the craft of statesmanship. Thus to 'reverence Christ in our hearts as Lord is to see him as King and be his slave-

his doulos! It is rare in man to be any one's slave but his own, so that it takes a revelation and an experience of Christ's love to constrain us to such slavery, yet this slavery is, in fact, a delight. Under it we are at last free! We do not have to take up the responsibility of our own decisions, but, rather, the decision in each case to do his will is our only one. For the rest we follow his plan, and walk in his way, and know his enablement, and his peace. To love our King, to give him every moment of our lives and every place of our being-this is slavery indeed that leads us to glorification and reigning with him, for ever!

### **Conclusion to 'The Battle for the Throne'**

We can now draw our threads together, summarizing our points so that we reach a practical conclusion.

- (i) There is the battle of 3 thrones-God's, Satan's and man's. In the conflict of these three men, man suffers great distress-'the haunting and howling within'.
- (ii) Members of the flock of Christ need to have this battle of and for the thrones taught to them, that they may recognize their own situations. They need to see history as the battle and battleground of the thrones. They need to learn spiritual warfare. They need to know how Satan takes men captive at his own will, and how Christ liberates those captives.
- (iii) God's plan for elect man is to bring him to glorification, so that he will be in the image of the Son. The Son who is Prophet, Priest and King will have his community to be prophetic, priestly and royal. This the elect will be a kingdom of priests to Christ and God.
- (iv) All the victory of Christ, and all the overcoming of his community is dependent upon Christ dwelling in the hearts of his people-their hearts his royal throne. This will effect 3 things,
  - (a) liberation will come to each believer,
  - (b) the dynamic presence of Christ reigning in the heart as king will make genuine slaves of his people and they will know his power in overcoming the throne of Satan, and
  - (c) Christ in each person will fill out, cause growth and mature each person into the measure of the stature of the fulness of himself, thus preparing them for eternity as a kingdom of priests. This will require personal participation in the priestly prophetic, priestly and royal plan of God as it is outworked by Christ (I Cor.15:24-28). Participation in that plan will be the means of building up and maturing the saints for the eternal Kingdom.
- (v) Our understanding of the 4 points above will help us to recognize where we are in spiritual warfare, will aid us in understanding the conflicts we experience both in the parochial and world scenes and so enable us to have a true and rich pastoral ministry to the flock of God.

# **The Relevance and Value of the Book of Revelation For Life and Pastoral Ministry**

## **The Proposition Before Us**

The proposition is really that the Book of the Revelation is of indispensable value to people and pastor alike, that it ought to be read, expounded, discussed, understood, adhered to and observed. It should prove to complete and tie off all major doctrines of Old and New Testaments, and help to give a full perspective of the Scriptures and their salvation history. For example the following are some of the themes and elements which are significant in the book-the Nature of God as Creator, Redeemer, Father and Judge; the nature of the Son as Lord over all, Lord of history and all powers; the nature of celestial and terrestrial creatures; the nature of the Spirit of God, and his work in heaven and history; the nature of worship and service; the nature of the people of God; the nature of the kingdoms of God and Satan, as also the clash of the two; the nature of history as invaded and dominated by Satan (the dragon, the beast and the false prophet, along with their political actions); the nature of Babylon functionally, morally, politically and as a power structure; the nature of God's judgements, the end things such as the marriage of the Bride and the Lamb, the battle against evil powers, the destruction of such powers, the Holy City, and the action of God, heaven and the elect in eternity.

If we ask ourselves how well we know these matters, and how well our people know them, and if such knowledge is not only helpful but essential to Christian living, then something of the value of the book can be assessed.

## **The Value of the Revelation as the Book Itself Claims It**

The book has seven beatitudes-as, indeed-it has other sevens (such as churches, seals, trumpets, bowls, visions, spirits, torches, eyes, horns and the like). The beatitudes (1:3; 14:13;16:15;19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14) are linked with the basic themes of the book-i.e. prophecy, dying in Christ and resurrection, being awake and properly clothed, being invited to the marriage supper, sharing the first resurrection, and having robes washed in order to enter the holy city and have life. Two of the beatitudes are regarding the book itself (1:3 and 22:7),

Blessed is he who reads aloud the words of the prophecy; and blessed are they who keep what is written therein; for the time is near.

Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book

There is also a curse for a wrong reading of the book (22:18-19),

I warn every one who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if any one takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

These references point to the seriousness of reading the book, and of reading it wrongly. The two beatitudes are important for they promise blessing for reading the book, and for keeping, i.e. observing it. Prophecy, then, is to be heard-even recited-until its message becomes clear, and as it is clear then keeping it, i.e. obeying it is required. Thus must mean that if one knows what God is telling by His word, then one must understand and work out one's practice of life by that word.

### **The Readers of This Book: to Whom it Is Addressed**

The prophecy is addressed 'to the seven churches which are in Asia'. These churches had a certain geographical locations. They existed in John's time. Letters of Christ, by which the Spirit was communicating, were written to these seven churches (cf. Chapters two and three), but even beyond these letters John is commanded, 'Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.' One might think the matter of the letters to the seven churches would be enough, but there is the prophecy which is not the seven letters, for chapter twenty-two verse 6 says, 'These words [i.e. of the whole prophecy] are trustworthy and true, And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angels to show his servants what must soon take place,' and in verse 9 the angel says, 'I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren, the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book . . . Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.' Then in verse 16 he shows that the book is for all the churches, 'I Jesus have sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches.'

We may conclude then that the seven churches to whom it the prophecy primarily addressed are still the churches to whom the final beatitudes and warning are also addressed. Thus it seems right to conclude that the prophecy is for all the churches throughout this present church era. All in all, the churches must read or hear the book of the prophecy, and all must observe it. This means that all are called upon to know the prophecy and to act upon it.

### **The Purposive Structure of the Book**

George Bernard Shaw once described the book as 'the ravings of a drug addict'. Well, it might seem that to the natural man-the man who has not been regenerated by the gospel and the Spirit (I Cor. 2:14; Jude 19; John 3:1-6; Titus 3:5-7). In fact the book has a clear and sensible structure, falling into the following sections,

- (i) Chapter one in which John introduces himself and the prophecy, following which he describes his vision of Christ-the natural setting to the whole prophecy.
- (ii) Chapters two and three constitute letters which the Lord writes to his churches, and which are message from the Holy Spirit. The churches being sevenfold represent the

people of God in this age, even if different churches portray certain aspects which are found reproduced in churches throughout the church age.

- (iii) Chapter four in which the throne of God is a most important feature and forms the basis of the whole prophecy. God is worshipped by the celestial family for the elements of (a) His eternity, (b) His holiness and (c) His Creatorhood.
- (iv) Chapter five introduces the matter of the seven sealed book, the discovery of the only one who can open it, i.e. the Lamb, and then the praise of the Lamb by the celestial and other redeemed creatures.
- (v) Chapter six deals with the opening of the first six seals, and the devastation they bring about.
- (vi) Chapter seven introduces the people of God (a) as the 144,000, and (b) as the countless multitude of the redeemed.
- (vii) Chapters eight and nine introduce the power of the prayers of the saints, and then by the opening of the seventh seal introduce and execute the first six trumpets, describing the even wider devastation of their actions.
- (viii) Chapter ten introduces an interlude in which an angel prophesies that the seventh trumpet will complete 'the mystery of God', i.e. God's [ plan for history (cf. Eph. 1:9-11; 3:1-11).
- (ix) Chapter eleven is to do with the measuring (protecting) of the temple-shrine, the actions of two prophetic witnesses, and the dynamic blowing of the seventh trumpet which issues in the kingdom coming in fullness.
- (x) Chapters twelve to nineteen cover the first phase of the battle of Satan against God: in chapter twelve Satan seeks to destroy the child of the woman, fails to do so, and in a battle of angels is cast out of heaven, and coming to earth, seeks to destroy the woman and then her children the church. The church overcomes Satan and is to a degree protected in the wilderness. In chapter thirteen there is the spawning by Satan of two beasts-the latter called 'the false prophet. These two set up a deadly system, conscripting mankind into a conspiracy against God. In fourteen and fifteen both chapters open with a sight of the triumphant people of God. In 14:16-13 certain woes are pronounced and two visions of harvests made by two angels are described, the latter ending in the trampling of the winepress of God's wrath. In chapter fifteen the faithful redeemed give praise to God for His holiness and judgements, and then preparation is made to commission the seven angels who have bowls of the wrath of God.
- (xi) Chapter sixteen continues the battle between God and Satan: the seven bowls of wrath are poured out on humanity, who are the worse for terrible experience. he judgements are horrific, but God does not suspend them. The dragon, the beast and the false prophets emit from their mouths three unclean spirits who seek to recruit the kings of the earth against God in order to fight Him at Armageddon.
- (xii) Chapter seventeen has to do with Babylon the city or mother of harlots, and the nature of the city is discussed, and its link with the kings of the earth who oppose God.
- (xiii) Chapter eighteen describes the destruction of Babylon, the dismay of kings and people and the doom of Babylon pronounced by a mighty angel.
- (xiv) Chapter nineteen commences with the praises of a great multitude firstly for the destruction of Babylon and secondly for the marriage of the Bride and the Lamb. Then a great Warrior who is the Lamb leads the heavenly armies into battle against the beast and the false beast and their human aides. The hosts of the beast are defeated, the beast and the false prophet being captured, and thrown into the lake of fire.
- (xv) The twentieth chapter concerns the matter of the millenium, the release of Satan from the abyss-following the closure of the millenium-and then the gathering of God and Magog-incited by the devil-but the defeat of Gog and Magog and the devil-

concludes the battle of Satan and his hosts against God. In the same chapter the final judgement of all creatures takes place, the devil and his followers being cast into the lake of fire.

- (xvi) The final two chapters (twenty-one and twenty-two) are given over to the new heavens and the new earth and the holy city, the last chapter closing with beatitudes for the elect, and a curse for the unredeemed and finally impenitent.

It can be seen, then, that a very clear pattern exists in this book and it will repay constant attention if given to it by both pastor and people. The more the book is read the more it will be seen that this could be the only pattern it could really take.

We pause then, to ask whether this sort of material is constantly taught and taught intelligently and with relevance to our present world situation. Secondly, we need to notice the way in which certain elements are introduced before they are fully met in their action. For example, in 11:17 the beast is first mentioned and is only fully met in 113:1ff. Likewise in 14:8 the doom of Babylon is pronounced although Babylon is only fully met in chapter 17. Both the beast and Babylon must be fully known by all of us because of the evil work they do in our world.

### **The Message and the Messages to the Church and Churches**

Chapters two and three are obviously important because of the amount of text given to them. We can see that only two of the seven churches receive full commendation without rebuke. As early as the end of the first century various churches face various problems ranging from traditionalism, coldness and lack of love to heresy, idolatry, and strange practices. One church was incredibly poor whilst another was incredibly rich, but the main problem seems to have been-with some of the churches-a loss of understanding of what God and Christ are about in history. That is, the historical perspective was lacking. God and the Lamb whilst the objects of worship and service were not seen for what they were about in history, i.e. that which Paul calls 'the obedience of faith among the nations,' or 'the obedience of faith of the nations'.

Test out a church today. Face it with the summary of the twenty-two chapters we have sketched above, and see whether people in the congregations have a sense of history, of God's sovereignty, of the active Lordship of Christ, of the nature of the church, of the stratagems of Satan and of knowing how evil goes about its work. What of the nature of Babylon in the world today? What of the mark of God and the mark of the beast?

The seven letters are an excellent guide to what the church ought to be about, so they are good for warnings and rebukes in order to bring about renewal of the flock of God. These letters could be expounded thoughtfully, and without hurry-not skimming over the points raised by Christ and the Spirit. If we study the ascription's at the head of each letter would then those aspects of Christ's person and work be well-known by many? We need to assess where each congregation is at-as Christ did [and does] as he walked among the candlesticks.

As we know, each letter has a regular format,

- (i) the statement 'the words of '-a most awesome fact demanding attention and hearing,
- (ii) a description of Christ in a particular aspect of his being and work,
- (iii) the statement 'I know', meaning Christ knows certain aspects of the life of the church, and this being generally linked with 'works',
- (iv) the heart of the letter which commends, advises, rebukes and commands, as is necessary,
- (v) the regular statement, 'He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches (note not to each single church, although that is so, but

to the churches so that the seven messages-being single in each case-are sevenfold and so have a unity of purpose and exhortation,

- (vi) the promises that attach to the exhortation to 'conquer' or 'overcome'. If the churches could be so dull and foolish in the first century then the pastor need not marvel at the deficient nature of any congregation in the 20th. century, even though there is no excuse for such a condition in any century.

Christ's statement in 1:11 that John is to write the whole prophecy to the seven churches, and they are to keep it links with 22:: 6, 9 and 16 where the whole prophecy of the book is to be for the whole people of God. For this reason the letters are still to be studied and obeyed, and they are in fact, an integral part of the prophecy itself. How many times, then, are these letters expounded so that they confront present congregations? How many of us study their substance and truth?

### **The Biblical Philosophy or Schema of History**

We may not always think of history as something planned, ruled and executed by God. The statement by God, 'I am the Alpha and the Omega,' with the accompanying comment of John, 'who is, and who was, and who is to come', must be understood as meaning, 'I am the Initiator, and the Completer of all things. I was always working; I am always working; and I always will be working. Nothing is outside my orbit.' This is the same as the 'I AM' of Exodus 4:14, or the 'I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, "My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish my purpose" ' of Isaiah 46:9-10. No human being can make such claims., In 17:8 the beast is described as 'was, and is not,' and later 'was, and is not and is to come,' meaning that he has had a time of action in the past, is not having a time of action now, yet will have a time, but when that is finished he will be finished.

The Book of Revelation presupposes a full doctrine of history, the history that the whole Scriptures espouse. Our summary above of the Revelation delineates some of that history. I Corinthians 15:24-28 is a precis or plan of the history we find being outworked in the Revelation, and, indeed in all the Scriptures. The Scriptures as a whole show us 'salvation history', i.e. God's working in creation, with a view to His working in redemption, with a view to His completing history in the glorification of the creation and the elect people of God. That is why worship begins with praise to and for God's holiness and His eternity-'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God almighty, who was and is and is to come' (4:8). Praise is then given for Creatorhood (4:11),

Worthy art thou, our Lord and God,  
to receive glory and power,  
for thou didst create all things,  
and by thy will they existed and were created.

Then praise is given for redemption in 5:9-10, and later in 7:10-12. Praise goes on being given for the sovereign power God exercises, especially as He raises up His Messiah and faces the nations, defeating and judging them (11:17-18; cf. 12:10). Later, praise is given for the judgements upon all forces of evil (16:4-7; 18:10ff; 19:1-4) , but the matter of history is shown in the seven seals, the seven trumpets and the seven bowls under the seven angels. They are all judgements which interact within the processes of history, both making history and drawing it to a preplanned climax.

In the face of these actions initiated by the Lamb we see the dragon, the beast and the false prophet trying to shape up history, and seeming for a time to succeed, especially as they are in combination with Babylon whose system is world-wide and involves international politicking and trafficking.

The system which Jesus and the early apostles called 'the world', understanding it to be under Satan-'the prince of the power of the air', 'the god of this world' incorporates the dragon, the beast, the false prophet and Babylon. History is to some degree the conflict between God and these evil forces. We see the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet emitting three unclean spirits from their mouths and these spirits try to seduce the kings of the earth, setting them up against God.. That they ultimately fail is a good thing, but it does not alter the fact that in man's history this conflict is his history, and proceeds perpetually.

When then we ask ourselves, 'Do we as pastors and people really understand biblical history? Do we understand salvation history? Do we know the times in which we live? Do we understand or misunderstand the judgements of God? Do we try to correct or alleviate suffering which sometimes comes from such judgements? Are we able to orientate ourselves to the processes of history. Do we understand the Lordship of Christ over history? Do we understand the often repeated matter of 'patient endurance' (cf. 1:9; 2:2; 2:19; 3:10; 13:10; 14:12 cf. Rom. 5:3, 4; II Cor. 6:4; Col. 1:11; Heb. 10:26) or do we try to make history ourselves, e.g. via a system such as liberation theology, employment of the Marxian praxis-seeking to implement the eschatological hope-or do we use certain sociological schemata to fashion history, believing it to conform with a certain dialectic and to have its own apocalypse? Probably the most significant question is, Do we have a doctrine and a praxis of hope? Marxism, and other ideologies have an eschatology, and the Christian sects generally have a strong interpretation of biblical eschatology whereby they appeal to a strongly materialistic movement of history towards a telos (goal, climax) which is acceptable to the human mind. The new 'Greenie' gospel-which is generally thoroughly humanistic has an evocative eschatology of doom, a humanistic hope of recovering the earth and so of achieving a 'kingdom of God' of sorts (cf. the more dynamic 'kingdom' of Marxism). This gospel has a doomful kind of apocalyptic which it uses to make people repent and believe its present gospel, i.e when the creation is purified then it will be peace and joy upon earth.

### **The Power Struggle of God and Satan**

Linked with our approach to history is the fact of the battle for the throne of this world and the age to come, and with it the hope of glory, i.e. the liberating glory (see our February study, 'Creation and the Liberating Glory' and our March study, 'The Battle For the Throne'). In religions there is generally the thought of a struggle between 'good' and 'evil' both of which are abstractions, though often concretised in mythical beings who fight for the supremacy. These beings are supra-historical and so is their conflict. In the Judaic-Christian approach to history Satan struggles with God to win celestial and terrestrial creatures to his side, and so to dethrone God and thus enthrone himself 'above the stars of God.'

Many people in our churches-if not most-either see Satan as a powerful figure who dominates history, or simply as an irritant in the regulated pattern of God's history. Indeed the word 'history' does not figure largely since most think of history as a thing that 'happens'-a travelling along a line from A to Z until some kind of terminus is reached. Our study of Revelation has shown us that the evil powers of Satan-as

revealed in the apocalyptic personages of the dragon, the beast, the false prophet and Babylon-figure largely in the ongoing action of the human race, especially in the movement of its constituent cultures, families, tribes and nations. Again we ask ourselves, 'What do we know-we pastors and people-of what is going on? What is our identity in the flow of history? What rationale do we have for history? How does this affect us in our personal and communal living?

The answer must lie in having the *schema* of Revelation constantly in our minds. That *schema* does not originate with John's prophecy. Revelation has 404 verses and in these some 518 references to the Old Testament. What is more, there is not one clear –cut direct reference from the Old Testament. One has to be in the ethos of the Old Testament in order to understand the Revelation, let alone to understand the whole of the New Testament. The primary apocalyptic books of the Old Testament are Ezekiel, Daniel and Zechariah, but there is a vast amount of it in Isaiah and Jeremiah, as well as in the Minor Prophets. In the New Testament we have the apocalyptic and prophetic portions of the four Gospels, as well as references in most Epistles. Whilst the Revelation is not a synthesis of the apocalyptic and prophetic (eschatological) elements of the Old and New Testaments, yet it is a remarkable document incorporating those elements. Of course the Christian idea of history whilst including the battle for the throne (as well as of the thrones) has two things in view, i.e.,

- (i) *the eschaton-the last age* which comes to a climax, and
- (ii) *the telos*, i.e. what will be achieved in history and the effects of this for the ongoing of the Kingdom of God. By the *telos* we mean the settling of retributive judgements, the destruction of evil powers, and then the things of resurrection, inheritance, liberty of sonship, glorification of creation and the elect, and the new 'kingdom of priests', and the worship and service rendered by them, and all other creatures in the action of 'the age to come', i.e. eternity-the aeon (or, aeons) of glorious liberty. It is undebatable that the Revelation seals the eschatological and telotic hope set out in the whole of Scripture.

Again, then, we ask ourselves how all this figures for us, and how we figure in it.

### **The Functional Place of the Throne In and For History**

Thrones are mentioned 47 times in this book of the prophecy of John the Divine and almost all are references to the throne of God. The throne is the centre of creation, redemption, and universal restoration of the creation, i.e. the new heavens and the new earth. It is the place of actions, judgements, commands and directions. Important as is all that work it is the Persons of the Father, the Son and the Spirit which are significant. The Revelation portrays God (the Father) as constantly initiating, empowering and sustaining the action of history. The worship of creation is towards Him for His actions, and He speaks, thunders, commands, and directs. Whereas other books and prophecies of the bible have elements of this, the Revelation reveals the actions in consecutive narrative. Christ's Lordship-so powerfully stated in the Acts and the Epistles-is given a dynamic and a substance in the Revelation which sheds its effects back over the other Scriptures. In the Epistle to the Ephesians alone Christ is God's statement of His counsel and will in that he is over all things, and is filling them up, and unifying them for ever under his headship. In Colossians Christ is reconciling and harmonizing all things, bringing them to full creational pitch and glorifying them. Such revelations of Christ enhance the Lordship as seen in the Revelation, but the actions of Christ in John's prophecy show the *modus viveruli*.

We are again forced to ask ourselves whether we understand the things of the throne, and see ourselves in this process of history which will culminate in the telos. Does such knowledge, then, affect the way we live in this world, this day, and this our community? Does it give new and rich substance to our worship-we being conscious of the Father, the Son and the Sevenfold Spirit ?

### **The Matter of the Battle For the Human Mind**

The Seven Letters by Christ to the churches (i.e. to the sevenfold church) warn us that the initial dynamic impact of the gospel can lessen and diminish, or can be dissipated in material wealth and security or lose its distinctive nature because of the invading heresies and false moralities which seduce the church (cf. 11 Cor. 11:1-2). It is interesting to note, for example, that Marxism has derived from the Judaic-Christ view of history, having taken on board the dynamic ideas of redemption, the eschaton and the telos but of course devising its own 'gospel'. The new conservationist gospel also has all these elements-though in somewhat differing forms-and, in fact, can become strongly sectarian. The battle for the human mind is in presenting to us an anthropology, cosmology and theology which purports to be wholly ontological-thus appealing to the suppressed truth within perverted man. The sects appeal to limited audiences because their gospels are limited, easily understandable, and they spell security within the cultic life of a small and tightly-bound community.

The Christian pastor is not in competition with these elements. He simply lives in the context of them. It is not merely that he ought to hone up his own anthropological, theological and cosmological understandings, but that he personally align himself with, and live in, the whole biblical truth. In doing this he does not have to think that the Book and Prophecy of the Revelation is the be-all and end-all of truth; that it is his answer, that it is complete in itself as his source of wisdom and action, but that it is significant, indispensable, and revelatory in his understanding of God, history and present praxis of 'the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints'. Armed with this useful equipment he can better proclaim the gospel in all its elements, and affect pastoral ministry in a world and age which he knows the better for being a humble student and competent master of this prophetic book of blessing.

### **The Glorious Hope: the Hope of Glory**

If our congregations need to know the substance of the Revelation and related apocalyptic writings, then the heart of the matter is the Christian hope. The book assures us that our hope is not misplaced. 'Christ in you the hope of glory,' was Paul's word to the Colossians. 'Give a reason to every man for the hope that is within you,' was Peter's injunction. Hope is strengthened by the Lordship of Christ in history as he unseals the book. To be liberated to experience 'the glorious liberty of the children of God' is part of the gospel, and although the Revelation does not discuss glorification as such, it certainly shows God to be active in human history, contemporary history, and so we see 'the multitude that no man can number'. In the end mans stands before God as a redeemed creature, sand as a candidate for glorification.

Many of the things of this glory are spelt out in Revelation, e.g. whilst there is no 'glory for glory's sake' we are grateful for the sight of the numberless multitude, the worship in the celestial temple, the future of the holy city, the glory of the Bride and the Lamb, the vast inheritance, i.e. 'all things' (Rev. 21:7), and the community that will be called 'a kingdom of priests'. It is not in order to escape a dull or terrible present that we seek to grow in hope. It is hope itself-Christ himself victorious in the eschaton that draws us on. We say then-at the last-do we as pastors and people know these things? Are we really living in a mediocre hope, a hope that is poorly informed. We must give ourselves to this great book-the book of present history-and receive the blessings it promises us for so doing.

## The Son-King of Psalm 2

Why do the nations conspire,  
and the peoples plot in vain?  
The kings of the earth set themselves,  
and the rulers take counsel together,  
against the Lord and his anointed, saying,  
'Let us burst their bonds asunder,  
and cast their cords from us.'

He who sits in the heavens laughs;  
the Lord has them in derision.  
He will speak to them in his wrath,  
and terrify them in his fury, saying,  
'I have set my king on Zion my holy hill.'

I will tell the decree of the Lord;  
He said to me, 'You are my son,  
today I have begotten you.  
Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,  
and the ends of the earth your possession.  
You shall break them with a rod of iron,  
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.'

Now, therefore, O kings, be wise;  
be warned, O rulers of the earth.  
Serve the Lord with fear,  
with trembling kiss his feet,  
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way;  
for his wrath is quickly kindled.

Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

### **Psalms in Their Original Settings and Applications, as well as in Prophetic Applications**

In Luke 24:25 we hear Jesus talking to his two disciples on the road to Emmaus, saying, 'O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory? And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all *the* scriptures the thing concerning himself.' Later in the same chapter (verse 44) he added in the presence of these and more apostles, 'These are my words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses, and the prophets and *the* psalms must be fulfilled.' On the basis of these-and other sayings

of Jesus-we feel justified in drawing two conclusions or principles, (i) all Old Testament Scriptures had a primary application to the context and events of their times, and (ii) their application was not necessarily limited to their situations, but was often intended to have prophetic application to events of the future. The utterances of psalms are often attributed to the Holy Spirit, indicating that they can be prophetic. If we keep Psalms 22 and 69 in mind we can understand the principle of I Peter 10-12,

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

These statements of our Lord and Peter should encourage us to see that the Scriptures of the Old Testament should be read with reverence and even trembling (Isa. 66:2 'the man that trembles at my word'), and we should realize-as Paul observed 'Now these things happened to them [i.e. to them of the Old Testament times] as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the age has come.' On this basis we can study each Psalm in its own setting and know that it may well be prophetic and even that its prophetic element is primary in importance.

### **Psalm 2 in Its Original Setting and Application**

As we can see there are four stanzas or strophes in the Psalm and they represent four actions. *The first* strophe-verses 1-3-opens the action for as we read we wonder why the nations are in such a state,

Why do the nations conspire,  
and the peoples plot in vain?  
The kings of the earth set themselves,  
and the rulers take counsel together,  
against the Lord and his anointed, saying,  
'Let us burst their bonds asunder,  
and cast their cords from us.'

The answer is that the coronation of a new king of Israel is about to take place. The old king has kept the nations of the world in subjection, and this is their time to break out. Doubtless in the reigns of David and Solomon there were the nations of Canaan which were subjugated, but the range here-in Psalm 2-seems to be universal, a situation which never took place in Israel. It may even be that the nations around have respected Israel and have felt its hand heavy upon them, but the best explanation is surely, that all the nations sense the hand of God over them, and since Israel represents God, then to oppose Israel is to oppose God. Whilst some may find this a difficult concept, since each nation insists on its own sovereignty, yet it is clear that many in Israel held to the truth that God was over all the nations. The Psalms, generally, reflect this belief (22:28; 47:8; 99:1; 97:9),

For dominion belongs to the Lord,  
and he rules over the nations.

## The Son-King of Psalm 2

God reigns over the nations,  
God sits on his holy throne.

The Lord reigns; let the peoples tremble!  
He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!

For thou, O Lord, are most high over all the earth;  
thou art exalted above all gods

Here, then, is a significant event in history of nations combining to oppose God. They seek to liberate themselves from Him, as though they have been oppressed by Him. This is why they rage against him (46:6), but their rage is powerless,

The nations rage, the kingdoms totter,  
The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nought;  
he frustrates the plans of the people.

The Psalmist speaks of ‘the Lord and his anointed, the word ‘anointed’ is literally ‘messiah’, but if left in its context may not mean ‘*the* Messiah’, a term which is used rarely in the Old Testament. ‘His anointed’ means the one about to be crowned as king of Israel.

*The second strophe* (verse 4-6) opens with the scornful laughter of God, as He surveys the nations pitifully opposing Him,

He who sits in the heavens laughs;  
the Lord has them in derision.  
He will speak to them in his wrath,  
and terrify them in his fury, saying,  
‘I have set my king on Zion my holy hill.’

Who can oppose the King of all the earth. When we come to the Messianic application of the Psalm we see how widely is the rebellion against God, and strong God’s mockery of the nations. His deep anger is against such rebellion, and His answer to it the declaration that He has crowned His king in Jerusalem. This king will defeat the nations, as *the third strophe* shows us,

I will tell the decree of the Lord;  
He said to me, ‘You are my son,  
today I have begotten you.  
Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,  
and the ends of the earth your possession.  
You shall break them with a rod of iron,  
and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.’

If we wish to see who this conqueror of the nations is, then we see him set forth, by God, as ‘my son’. If we think of the Psalm simply in terms of Israelitish patriotism and the defeat of enemy nations, and not in terms of the will of God for creation and its history, then we will miss the point of the Psalm. The nations belong to God by creation. Israel is God’s son, His chosen people. He treats Israel as His family, He being the covenant-Father (Exod. 4:22; Deut. 1:31; 32:6; Jer. 3:19), but there is also a

## The Son-King of Psalm 2

special person in Israel who can call Him, 'My father!' (Psa. 89:26; cf. II Sam. 7:14). We need to travel farther than this Psalm to see to see the greatness of that one, for example, Psalm 110:1,

The Lord says to my lord:  
'Sit at my right hand,  
till I make your enemies your footstool.'

Certainly these two Psalms are linked in the New Testament, and both carry the idea of the judgements of the nation (110:5-6) which is linked with Royal exaltation,

The Lord is at your right hand;  
he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath.  
He will execute judgement among the nations,  
filling them with corpses;  
he will scatter chiefs over the wide earth.

The king, then, will possess the nations and rule them powerfully. Notice the terms 'heritage' and 'possession' which are covenantal, for Abraham was to inherit the earth. This king will fulfil the covenant, not only for Israel, but the nations. For him to break the nations-as with an iron rod-does not mean simply their subjugation, but the divine rulership over them-for their ultimate good. In this way God's plan for the nations comes under the hand of the Son-King.

The fourth strophe now naturally follows,

Now, therefore, O kings, be wise;  
be warned, O rulers of the earth.  
Serve the Lord with fear,  
with trembling kiss his feet,  
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way;  
for his wrath is quickly kindled.

Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

The nations which have raged against God and sought to dethrone Him are urged to see the power of the king and capitulate to God. Some translations have 'Kiss the Son lest he be angry,' and the reading is a good one. In any case the nations are to kiss his feet, i.e., acknowledge his rulership over them. In terms of Psalm 110 they are to become his footstool. True wisdom lies in seeing God as Lord over the nations and worshipping and serving Him, and Him only. In the catastrophe which faces them it is wise of them to take refuge in the Lord, and not in their own-supposed-powers.

### **Psalm 2 in Its New Testament Setting and Application**

As we have said, Jesus opened the Old Testament Scriptures to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus and applied them to himself, so much so that they said, 'Did not our heart burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?' These were 'the law of Moses, and the prophets and the psalms'. These had to be fulfilled. That is why the Old Testament context cannot fill out the wonder of the writings. Not until Christ comes do they glow in all their significance and beauty.

## The Son-King of Psalm 2

Psalm 2 applies powerfully to the baptism of Jesus when the Father attests, 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased.' One Gospel has it, 'Thou art my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased,' so that it is spoken both to the Son directly- and also to those at the baptism. With Psalm 2:7-the great statement of coronation-is another verse, Isaiah 42:1,

Behold my servant, whom I uphold,  
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;  
I have put my Spirit upon him,  
and he will bring forth justice to the nations.

This servant is beloved and is anointed with the Spirit-he is 'the anointed one'. The conflation of these verses seals the coronation of the Son-King. Jesus is the Son -King. In one sense his baptism is his coronation, for from this time forward it is the King who is present in Palestine. The Kingdom of God is present in the person of the King-'If I by the Spirit of God cast out demons, then has the Kingdom of God come upon you.' In another sense the baptism is the first instalment of his coronation, for the Psalm 2 is applied to his transfiguration, his death, his resurrection and his ascension, and it is at his ascension his coronation is complete. In regard to all this we must not omit Peter's summary of the Lord's ministry,

how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with him.

This was the work of the Son-King, the Messiah. Hence the writer of Hebrews (1:5) asks, 'For to what angel did God ever say, "Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee?" Or again, "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son"?' ' Thus in the servant, the almost unnoticed one is the Son-King of all the earth. As such he moves through Palestine proclaiming the Kingdom of God with power, but is not recognized. Having brought the gospel of the Kingdom to his people, he takes Peter and James and John and ascends Tabor to be transfigured before them. As he glorified in their eyes, the voice of the Father states-again in accordance with Psalm 2:7,

This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.

This saying is of course, similar to the words given at his baptism, but the transfiguration was with a view to 'his exodus which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem', i.e. his death. In this event he is seen in glory-along with the glory of both Moses and Elijah-the law and the prophets which he is fulfilling. His death, of course, was to be part of his Servant ministry (Mark 10:45) presaged in Isaiah 42:1, and was to result in his universal conquest of the nations. If we take his sacrificial ministry as that of the priestly order of Melchizedek, then we Psalm 2:7 is quoted with Psalm 110:4 in Hebrews 5:5-6,

So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him,  
'Thou art my Son,  
today I have begotten thee';  
as he says also in another place,  
'Thou art a priest for ever,  
after the order of Melchizedek.'

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Peter could not forget this significant occasion (if he is the author of the Second Letter under his name), for he wrote,

For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received glory and honour from God the Father and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased,' we heard this voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. And we have the prophetic word made more sure.

The event of the transfiguration was certainly of great importance, for from that point onwards Jesus set his face to Jerusalem, anticipating the Cross. His Palestinian ministry was virtually completed: the work of redemption was to begin. Thus we see the Son-Kingship involves royal priestly ministry-the death which was to prove an Exodus to the covenant-people of God.

The next use of Psalm 2 relates to the death itself. In Acts 4:24-28 we have an account of the crucifixion interpreted by the early church, quoting Psalm 2:1-2,

And when they heard it, they lifted up their voices together to God and said, 'Sovereign Lord, who didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, who by the mouth of our father David, thy servant, didst say by the Holy Spirit,  
'Why did the Gentiles rage,  
and the people imagine vain things?  
The kings of the earth set themselves in array,  
and the rulers were gathered together,  
against the Lord and against his Anointed'-  
for truly in this city there were gathered together against thy holy servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, to do whatever thy hand and thy plan had predicted to take place. '

The next Psalm 2 reference is to the resurrection. Again it is verse 7 and is used by Paul in his sermon to the people at Antioch in Pisidia. It is linked with Isaiah 55:3 and Psalm 16:10,

And we bring you the good news that what God has promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm,  
Thou art my Son,  
today I have begotten thee.'  
And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he spoke in this way,  
'I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.'  
Therefore he says also in another psalm,  
'Thou wilt not let thy Holy One see corruption.'

In Romans 1:4 Paul stated the same fact in slightly different words, 'Designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.' It seems clear that here Paul clearly is quoting Psalm 2:7.

Hebrews 1:3-5 clearly indicates the ascension and enthronement of Christ at the right hand of the Father, if also it may at the same time refer to the incarnation,

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He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs. For to what angel did God ever say, 'Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee?' Or again, 'I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son'?

It would seem, here, that these words are spoken at Christ's being seated at the right hand of God. Certainly in Revelation 2:26-27 Psalm 2:8-9 are quoted in regard to Christ's receiving power to rule,

He who conquers and keeps my works until the end, I will give him power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received power from my Father...

Again, in Revelation 12:5 we have the picture of the red dragon trying to devour the Christ-child before he can begin his Messianic conquest but the Woman

brought forth a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but the child was caught up to God and to his throne,

so that the coronation of Christ is clearly stated. Further to this we see in Revelation 19:15 the Rider on the white horse, the one called 'faithful; and true' and 'the Word of God' leads the armies of heaven.

From his mouth issues a sharp sword with which to smite the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of the Almighty.

### **Our Conclusion Regarding This Wonderful Psalm**

There can be no doubt about it-this Psalm when explained by Jesus must have caused the heart of the disciples to burn within them. Because of its many mentions in the New Testament, and its linkage with Psalm 110 it is perhaps the primary scripture used in the apostolic church. This being so, it should cause our hearts to burn if we were to ponder it. It must have been in the light of this Psalm that the apostles both preached and understood the Gospel. For that reason we should try to understand it. Here-so to speak-is a rich reef, a gold-bearing lode for our mining, and all the more so because of the phrase 'to the end of the earth' found at the beginning of the Book of Acts.

. When Jesus shared for the forty days between his resurrection and ascension shared with his disciples the matter of the Kingdom, and the coming baptism in the Spirit for empowerment in proclaiming the gospel (Acts 1:1-8), he told them that they would be witnesses to him 'in Jerusalem and all Judea, in Samaria and *to the end of the earth*' 'To the end of the earth' is a phrase taken from Psalm 2:8-'the ends of the earth your possession'. Taken in context it means that Christ will possess all the nations, even to the end/s of the earth, and of course this fits Psalm 2 perfectly. It also fits the New Testament understanding of Psalm 2.

Firstly we see that the Son-King is the high figure of our Psalm. All nations are given to him: all nations are defeated by him. We could find other related Old Testament references to such a Son-King as in Psalm 89, as in Isaiah 9:6-7, and as in Daniel 7:14, but perhaps most of all in Psalm 110. When then we see that Jesus was anointed King of the Kingdom of God-'the kingdom of God and of Christ', 'the Kingdom of

our Lord and his Christ'-and realize that his references to Jerusalem, all Judea, Samaria and the end of the earth' includes all the nations then we see Psalm 2 as the revelatory key to Christ's ministry to the nations.

This understanding is enhanced when we take up the theme of 'the throne' in the New Testament, and we cannot do this without constant reference to Psalms 2 and 110. There are at least 16 direct mentions of Psalm 2 and 23 of Psalm 110, and since Psalms 1 and 110 in Hebrews 1 and 5 are linked, then the two Psalms conflate to make on grand emphasis on the throne of God. Thus the coronation of the Son-step-by-step at his inception into the world, his baptism, his transfiguration, his priestly consecration, his death, his resurrection, his ascension, his session at God's right hand, his royal victory through battle and subjection of the nations, and his ultimate reigning in the Holy City with the Father are a brilliant revelation to us which is the key to all history. This is how we must read history today and be calm and confident in its outcome so prophetically set out.

Again, if we pursue the wider issue of Christ being the Son of God-a concept and reality which surely springs from Psalm 2:7-then we are led even more widely to the lofty and awesome office and person of the living Christ. A reference we have not used, and which is surely linked with Psalm 2 is Revelation 21:7,

*He who conquers shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and he shall be my son.*

This may be taken in two ways, either it refers to any conqueror such as we see in chapters 2 and 3 of this same book, or it refers to the Son himself. It seems to refer to the first-the conquering believer-but then the principle of the verse surely refers to the Son. As Adam was given the mandate in Genesis to fill up the earth and to have dominion over it and to conquer it-subdue it-and as the first son of God (cf. Luke 3:L38; Acts 17:28) did not do so, so the second Adam-proclaimed as the true Son of God at his baptism, transfiguration and resurrection-was the true Conqueror. For this reason he 'shall have this heritage'. The heritage is the 'all things' of Revelation 21:17, i.e. 'the new heavens and the new earth'. He has been given power over all the nations, and he is set down on His Father's throne (Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21; 4:2; 6:16-17; 12:5; 19:4; 22:1).

As for the nations-what shall we think about them? It is clear from Psalm 2 that they are all subdued, and indeed smashed in pieces like a potter's vessel, and the one who smashes them rules with the same rod of iron that shatters them. When, however, we look for the sort of violence the nations use to oppose God we find it is missing. Sure, the nations are broken, and sure, their judgements are complete. But if the chaff of the nations is burned up in fire imperishable, so the nations are won by the sheer weakness of God. Christ was crucified through weakness-'For Christ was crucified through weakness but lives by the power of God'-and was 'caught up to the throne of God' when the macho dragon would have devoured him (Rev. 12:5), yet this 'weakness' was mighty strength, 'For the word of the Cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.' This sharp two-edged sword which goes out of Christ's mouth smites the nations and conquers them. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. The Lion of Judah is really the Slain Lamb: the Cross is powerful because the Lamb submitted himself unto death. This is the power which alone can open the seals of the 7-sealed book, and loosed the judgements and salvation of God upon the creation. Hence in Revelation chapters 19 and 21 we are given two pictures of the kings of the earth setting themselves against the Lord and his anointed, but going down to defeat, the first (19:11-21) by the sharp two-edged sword,

and the second (20:7-10) by 'fire from heaven'-another term for the word of God (cf. Jer. 23:23; Rev. 11:5). It is the word of the Cross which defeats them in the ultimate. He who has borne the judgements of God, may both judge and redeem.

The outcome of the great battle of the Son-King is seen in Revelation 21:22-26 for 'the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of our Lord and is Christ, and he [they] shall reign for ever', and so the nations are defeated

- (i) unto judgement, and
- (ii) unto salvation and eternal life. Hence all is caught up in the glorious Kingdom which is also known as the Holy City and shines forth as such,

And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb. And the city had no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light shall the nations walk; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it, and its gates shall never be shut by day-and there shall be no night there; they shall bring into it the glory and honour of the nations. But nothing unclean shall enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

## **The Ecclesiastical, Pastoral and Personal Implications of Psalm 2 and the Son-King**

When we ask ourselves 'How does Psalm 2 and its Messiah-King figure in the thinking of our congregations?' we probably must answer, 'Very little at all.' When we realize it is irretrievably linked with Psalm 110 and what that adds to the same Christ-figure then we know how lacking is the whole understanding of our local churches. When to all this we add 1 Corinthians 15:24-28-the programme on which Christ is now working, supported as it is by Matthew 28:19-20 and Luke 24:44-49, and when we recognize that the church as Christ's fulness is working with Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; I Cor. 3:9; Rev. 12:11; 15:2; 19:14f.) in winning the nations, and defeating Satan and his system, then we wonder what some of our churches are about. Psalm 2 is virtually unintelligible to them, as also Psalm 110.

It would good do for us to analyze where are churches in regard to Christ's Kingship and his present action of conquering. Some churches are but religious social clubs. Many of their efforts are manward and not Godward, are concerned with anthropological insights rather than theological ones, linked as they often are with psychology, psychotherapy, and sociology-useful as these things may be when within the context of God's salvific and restorative work and the true vocation of the church.

When it comes to participation with Christ in his work, then we must remember it is the Spirit who enlightens, leads, empowers and enables us to participate with Christ. Let us look a little at the matter of warfare, for where we proclaim Christ as Lord and Saviour we will have opposition and persecution, all of which are part of the on-going battle of the Son-King and his destruction of the enemies of God and Man. We need to understand the nature of the conflict and teach our people as to their vocation in Christ, and the modes of battle and accomplishment.

### **The Nature of Conquering**

In Revelation chapters two and three Christ and the Spirit speak 7 times of conquering, and each is associated with the state and place of the particular church. An inheritance is promised for the conquests made. So see 2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:26; 3:5; 3:12; 3:21.

At least two of the promises relate to ruling in authority and sharing the throne of God.

What we have to keep in mind is the two kingdoms-the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness. Each has a different mode of conquering. *The kingdom of darkness* conquers by deceit (Rev. 12:9; 20:10), display (Rev. 16:13-14; 17:4-5) seduction (II Cor. 11:1-2; Rev. 19) threatening (I Pet. 4:8), and cruelty (Rev. 18: 24). The weapons of the kingdom of darkness can be described as carnal (fleshly) worldly and unspiritual (i.e. immoral). *The Kingdom of God conquers* by weapons which are spiritual, such as the armour of light (Rom. 13:12) the helmet the hope of salvation, the the breastplate of righteousness, the breastplate of faith and love, the shoes of the equipment of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God (Eph. 6:17; 1 Thess. 5:8), truthful speech, and the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left (II Cor. 6:7). As against the works of the flesh the Christian has only the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:19-23).

The people of God on the one hand are conquered by the beast (13:7-10) and must submit to prison and not use human weapons against that kingdom. On the other hand they conquer the beast by refusing to go the way of the beast-even if they must suffer for it. Their patient and endurance and their faith are what are undefeatable. I Corinthians 1:26-29 shows that the foolish, the weak, and the 'things that are not' to shame the wise, the strong and the 'things that are'. Whilst such weapons seem foolish, and whilst the believer must be weak to be strong by the grace of God (II Cor.12:1-10) yet Christ himself was crucified in weakness to be raised in power (II Cor. 13:3-4). Thus the believer is triumphant when being killed all day long and being accounted as sheep for the slaughter, and in all things conquers (Rom. 8:35-39). He can do all things in Christ (Phil. 4:13) and greater is he that is in him than he that is in the world (I John 4:4) for the victory that overcomes the world is faith (I John 5:4). (Quoted from '*The Battle for the Throne*, Study 9).

If we can teach our congregations the meaning of Psalm 2 we will surely find that the nature of pastoral ministry will change, and the drive which comes from vocation will be present. Former unbiblical considerations will have little sway.

# **The Study of Relationships Human and Divine**

## **Introduction to the Study**

The purpose of the study is to understand the principle of human relationships. The method is to look at the relationships within the Trinity, and discover the nature, principles and constraints of these. Knowing these we will expect to see them as the source and basis for all human relationships. Recognizing that God is God and man is man we will enquire whether it is possible for such relationships to operate in the human scene. Our point of transition from relationships to those in the human scene will be Jesus of Nazareth whom we will regard as the true man, exercising true relationships, yet outworking on earth the Divine relationships. Realizing that redeemed humanity dwells in God and God in it, we will see the true constraint, ability and functional way of true human relationships.

The value of such a study-being biblical-is that we will know what Man can and ought to do when in relationship with God, and we will understand his relationship with others, with creation and with himself.

## **God as the Divine Family in Unity**

### **The Divine Family**

It is not usual to speak of the Triune Godhead as being 'Family' yet without doubt there is a Divine Community in the Godhead. Royce Gordon Gruenler in an exposition of John 17:20-26 (*Theological Journal Interpretation*, April, 1990) states, 'All of creation, but especially its highest human level appears designed of God to serve other levels and members of the larger family of creation, and it be interdependent in some way that is analogous<sup>1</sup> to the pattern which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are interdependent and are at one another's disposal in the most original Household, the 'Triune Family.' Where we have father and son on the human level there is something of family in that limited structure and relationship, though we would naturally think of a mother to complete it. For the moment we will leave aside the matter of seemingly missing Mother in this Divine Family. We must say that God is essentially Father, the Son essentially Son, and the Spirit is essentially the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of the Son.

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'analogous' may not be as appropriate as the term 'homologous'. When man is created in the image of God, it may well be that the ontology of man demands an homologous order and not one of analogy. We say this in view of the order of the archetype and the ectype. God as Family must be archetypal on any reckoning: man and human family must be ectypal, and this must follow as homologous

Thus there is unity in sociality. We will see that in the creation the Father, Son and Spirit work together so that whilst they have ontological unity-unity of being they also have economic unity-unity of doing. It is their indivisible unity which is the basis of all relationships, since man is created in the image and likeness of God-the Godhead. We can then speak of the Sociality, Household, Community or Family of God.

This social unity is shown by the relationships the three Persons have one with the other. If we commence with the Word of God who was in the beginning, and by whom all things were made, we find (John 1:1) 'the Word was with God ["face-to-face with God"; *pros ton theon*] and the Word was God'. John adds, 'And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory as the only Son from the Father.' Here, as in other places, we are pointed to the pre-incarnational being of the Son. He always was the Son, as the Father always was the Father. His incarnation did not and does not alter that relationship. When Paul speaks of God being 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' he is not only saying that God has fathered the incarnation, but that the one who came to be called 'our Lord Jesus Christ' was always His Son.

This being so-and other Scriptures attest to this fact-we go back to our saying that the Father was always the Father, and the Son was always the, Son. It may well be that God is the archetypal Father, but-archetype or no archetype- He is Father! The Son for his part is Son! Together these Two have a relationship which is essentially so and is thus ontological. Nor are the Two apart from the Holy Spirit-who as we have said, and will further see-is the very Spirit of the Father and the very Spirit of the Son. So then we have the essential Trinity, the indivisible relationships of the three Persons.

### **The Relationships, i.e., the Interrelationships of the Three**

Jesus' statement 'I am in the Father, and the Father is in me,' (John 14:10) gives us the key to all true relationships, i.e., mutual indwelling, or, if we may coin a phrase, the mutual inter-dwelling. In John 10:38 likewise he said, 'the Father is in me and I am in the Father.' This is the equivalent of John 10:30, 'I and the Father are one.' When we ask what 'mutual indwelling' is then we must answer in terms of personal union-persons in union-but to some extent we are limited in knowing what this is since true pure love is the constraint for such union and the very essence of it. We have some knowledge of it where in marriage the two become one flesh, one being. To some degree it is present in a child-parent relationship. There is more than a rumour of it in the David-Jonathan union which was not homosexual but was of love. The possibilities of such mutual indwelling are splendid in the human race. All depends on the wills of the partners, and their operations depend upon the states of the persons before God. Human mutual indwelling ought to follow from human relationships with God, since such human relationships are via God-their Source. This can be seen from the quotation immediately below.

In John 17:20-24-part of our Lord's great high-priestly prayer-we have the further and fuller statement about the Divine mutual indwelling,

I do not pray for these **only**, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they' may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so

that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me. Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory which thou hast given me in thy love for me before the foundation of the world.

In this Jesus is showing the mutually indwelling of the Father and the Son. For their people to achieve unity they must dwell in the Father and the Son as the Father and the Son must dwell in them for this is the way of true unity. We note in passing that the Father gave His Son glory before the foundation of the world, and that Jesus says he has given this glory to his disciples so that they will be one, i.e., will have true unity by it. Jesus desires his disciples to see this given glory so that (i) they realize it is the source and basis of unity, and (ii) that 'the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them'. No stronger or richer word can be spoken of relationships and oneness with those relationships.

What we have to realize in the matter of mutual indwelling is that each Person of the Godhead is 'other-person centred'<sup>2</sup>. The principle which Paul enunciated in Philippians 2:1-5,

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves [or 'in you'], which is yours in Christ Jesus . . .

is the principle innate in the Godhead. For fallen humanity to think primarily in terms of others is not natural. It is the very heart of the Divine relationships. I think the term 'other-person centred' is bettered by the phrase 'other person concentrated'. A human being who has come to God's regeneration and turns himself outwards to others discovers a thrilling freedom. It also has to do with servanthood-the heart of the Christian gospel-and it is found in the Divine interrelationships. The Father serves the Son, the Son the Father, the Spirit both Father and Son and they serve him. Because sin is a self-serving thing and we are sinners through the fall we find it difficult to understand the truly selfless serving of love. That is why we cannot comprehend the unity of the Divine Community. All things relational demand the voluntary exercise of our wills in mutuality, such as we find in the Godhead.

## **The Inter-Serving of the Persons**

### **The Mutual Glorification of the Three Persons**

One of the ways of the Three Persons being 'other-person concentrated' is their glorification of one another. The source of glory is the Father-'the father of glory' (Eph. 1:17), whilst the Son glorifies the Father (John 17:1-5), and the Holy Spirit is

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<sup>2</sup> I take the phrase 'other-person centred' from the book *The Everlasting Presence* by D. Broughton Knox (Evangelical Press, 1982). This work is an examination of the inter-personal relationships of the Trinity, and has been the stimulus for much that I am saying in this present chapter.

'*the Spirit of glory*' (I Pet.4:14). This mutual glorification one of the other is the expression of the Divine love.

### The Glorification of the Son by the Father

What do we mean by 'glorifying'? In the case of the Son **the work of glorifying the Father** would be to reveal the nature of the Father, and this by his explicating word, and by his actions which reveal the Father. When he said to Pilate, 'You say that I am a king. For this I was born and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth,' he was virtually saying he had come into the world to glorify God. In all the doxologies of Scripture certain elements are *ascribed* to God, but nothing is given to Him. Glorification of God, then, is simply the ascribing to Him what is His nature, so that the ascription is His due. When it is said that man is 'the image and glory of God' (I Cor. 11:7) it does not mean man is actually a thing a glory *per se* but reflects the glory of God (cf. Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:15). When the heavens declare the glory of God (Ps. 19:1) they are magnifying God beyond what is, nor adding something to Him, but simply declaring Who and What He is. Thus, when the Father glorifies the Son He does not add something to the nature of the Son, but reveals that nature itself: again, this by both explication of the word, and the actions which lie initiates in the Son (cf. John 14:10).

If we may speak of 'inter-serving' we can start at John 17:22 and 24 where Jesus speaks of the Father in His love giving him glory before the foundation of the world. We recognize the difficulty our minds have in grasping and expressing the 'eternal generation' of the Son<sup>3</sup> primarily because it is a relational matter. Whilst confessing that it is a difficult matter in John's Gospel-when Jesus speaks of himself as 'the Son'-to understand at times whether he is referring to as Son in his pre-incarnational or his incarnational states<sup>4</sup>, yet it would seem Jesus can refer to both within the relationship he has with God. For example in 5:22 Jesus says, 'The Father judges no one, but has given all judgement to the Son.' When was that given-before or after the incarnation? It seems both situations obtain here. Certainly he has been given both life and the authority of judgement 'because he is the Son of man' (5:26-27), but what is pertinent to our discussion is the fact that the Father gives to the Son,

For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself, and has given him authority to execute judgement, because he is the Son of man. (John 5:2(-27)).

The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand. (John 3:35)

All things have been delivered to me by my Father. (Matt. 11:27).

Jesus, knowing that the father had given all things into his hands . . . (John 13:3).

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<sup>3</sup> The Nicene Creed endeavours to grapple with the problem, in the thought and language of its day,  
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God, begotten not made,  
of one Being with the Father.'

This translation *is* from *An Australian Prayer Book* (AIO Press, 1978)--the Prayer Book of the Anglican Church in Australia. The 1662 Prayer Book has for 'of one Being with the Father' 'of one substance with the Father'.

<sup>4</sup> There appear to be two streams of thinking about the Sonship of Christ, the one in the Synoptics referring to his Messianic Kingship, as linked with Psalms 2, 89 and 110 and related to his baptism, transfiguration Peter's confession (Matt. 16:15) and the the questioning accusation of the high-priest (Mat. 26:63), whilst in John the Sonship is the reflection of a relationship with God the Father, so that Sonship *is* innately transcendental though worked out through the humanity of Christ (John 1:1-14).

. . .thou has( given him power over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom thou hast given him . . . having accomplished the works which thou gavest me to do. (John 17: 2, 4).

I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them to me, and they have kept thy word. Now they know that everything that thou hast given me is from thee; for I have given them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from thee. (John 17:6-8).

Holy Father, keep them in thy name, which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. While I was with them, I kept them in thy name, which thou hast given me; and I have guarded them, and none of them is lost . . . (John 17:11-12).

These references tells us what God has given, but with them is another set of references speaking of the Father glorifying the Son, the first of which are the straight statements in John 17:5, 22 and 24 that the Father had given him glory-i.e. glorified him-before the foundation of the world, this being when he was not yet incarnate. In 17:1 he asks the Father for glorification in the hour of the Cross. A short time previously on that same night he had stated, 'Now is the Son of man glorified, and in him God is glorified' (John 13:31). Of course it is the Father who glorifies him. The much discussed verse Hebrews 2:9 can be interpreted as saying either that Jesus was crowned with honour and glory 'because of the suffering of death', or 'for the suffering of death', but the principle is clear-he was glorified by the Father, and this surely in response to his prayer of John 17:1, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify thy Son that the Son may glorify thee.'

In the baptism of Jesus there is a glorifying of him by the Father when God announces, 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased,' the saying undoubtedly being a conflation of Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1, but the glorification proceeds through all Jesus ministry. When Jesus said (John 17:4) 'I glorified thee on earth having accomplished the work which thou gavest me to do,' he is surely saying that he himself is glorified in the doing of that work. John records that the disciples saw Christ's glory in the miracle of Cana in Galilee and believed on him. Doubtless every work he did displayed and affirmed his glory, even if mostly to sightless eyes.

Certainly Peter sees the transfiguration not merely as a miraculous visual glorification of the earthly Jesus but as moral glorification of the Son who does the will of God, for the commentary on that event of II Peter 1:16-19 defines this,

For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For when he received honour and glory from God the Father and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "The is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," we heard this voice borne heaven, for we were in the holy mountain. And we have the prophetic word made more sure.'

When Paul says that Jesus was 'raised from the dead by the glory of the Father' (Rom. 6:4) this parallels Romans 1:4, 'designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead'. Resurrection is glorification as is also his being 'taken up in glory' (I Tim. 3:16), an event which the apostles witnessed and which was evidently an ascending in the cloud of glory-the shekinah(Acts 2:9). The glory of the Session in heaven is described by Christ himself (Matt. 19:28), 'in the new world when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne,' and the Parousia likewise has links with the Ascension (Matt. 26:64), 'you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven. '<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> It is interesting to note that the occasions of Jesus' baptism, transfiguration, death, resurrection, ascension and ultimate victory over the powers of evil are all linked with Psalm 2 which is the primary reference to his coronation as the Son-Messiah-King and as such acclaimed (designated) Son of God, i.e., Son of the Father (cf.

In all these ways then, the Father glorified the Son, and will further glorify him when he comes in that Parousia.

### **The Glorification of the Father by the Son**

We have already seen that the Son's glorification of the Father is really his witness to him (John 18:37), this being by his words and his works, e.g. the miracle of the marriage in Cana of Galilee where the disciples see his glory. In other places especially in the Synoptics-people are led to glorify God for what Christ does as the Son of man, e.g. as in the case of the healing of the paralysed man, 'When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men' (Matt.9:8; cf. 15:31).

In John's Gospel Jesus speaks of his conscious glorification of the Father, stated in the principle of John 17:4, 'I glorified thee on earth, having accomplished the work which thou gavest me to do.'

This is underlined in 14:13 when Jesus tells the disciples, 'Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the father may be glorified in the Son.' The same principle obtains for the disciples as they abide in him, 'By this shall my Father be glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples.' Again the manner of Peter's death was to glorify God (21:19). In the manner of Peter's confession of Matthew 16:16 Nathanael glorifies Christ-'Rabbi!, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' and so, doubtless, glorifies God through him.

Jesus did not seek to glorify himself but waited on the Father's glorification (8:34; 12:23; 13:31-32; 16:14), knowing that the Father's glorification of him would be his glorification of the Father. This is brought out strongly in 13:31-32, 'Now is the Son of man glorified, and in him God is glorified; if God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once.' In this respect 11:4 is interesting, 'This illness is not unto death; it is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by means of it.' Later in this incident of Lazarus being raised from the dead Jesus tells Martha, 'Did I not tell you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?' Also interesting in 11:4 is the fact that it is the Son of God who is glorified, whereas in 12:23 and 13:31 it is the Son of man who is glorified.

### **The Holy Spirit Glorifies the Father and the Son**

Whilst there are not many explicit references to this glorifying work of the Spirit, yet such glorifying action is inherent in all that the Spirit does, since he is called 'the Spirit of the Lord', 'the Spirit of God', 'the Spirit of your Father', 'the Spirit of Christ', 'the Spirit of Jesus' and 'the Spirit of the Son', meaning his ministry and desire is to do the will of the Father and the Son. Hence as 'the Spirit of his Son' he cries, 'Abba! Father!' (Gal. 4:6; cf. Rom., 8:15) thus revealing God as Father. I Peter 4:14 speaks of him as 'the Spirit of glory and of God'.

It is in John chapters 14 to 16 the Spirit is spoken of as Teacher, Remembrancer, Counsellor, Convicter and Glorifier. All of these works pertain to the Father and the Son. In 16:14-15 the glorification of the Son and the Father is explicitly stated, 'He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father

has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.’ Without him we would not know the things of the Son and of the Father, just as we would not know the Son except the Father taught us of him and drew us to him (John 6:45-46, 65), and we would not know the things of the Father unless the Son were to declare Him (Matt. 11:27; John 1:18; 14:6).

All in all, then, we see that the Three Persons of the Triune Godhead are ‘other Person-centred’ or ‘other Person-concentred’. All of this pertains to Divine love, and hence we have the key to the Sociality, Unity and Family of the Godhead.

### **The Father and the Son Glorify the Holy Spirit**

The Nicene Creed speaks of the Holy Spirit as ‘the Lord, the giver of life,’ and this is consonant with Old Testament statements (Ps. 104:29-30; Job 33:4; cf. Ezek. **37:1-14**). He is portrayed in the New Testament as ‘the Lord who is the Spirit’ (II Cor. 3:17-18), and is the giver of life (John 3:1-6; Rom. 7:6; 8:2, 6, 11; II Cor. 3:6; Thus 3:5). The Son-as man-gave great honour to the Spirit, being led by him in all things, and through him accomplishing all things. So great a gift will the Spirit be to man that Jesus spends ‘much time in John chapters 14 to 16 speaking of him as Teacher, Remembrancer, Convicter, Advocate and Glorifier of the Father and the Son. The Father will send the Spirit, the Son will pray to the Father and the Father will send him, and then he-the Son-will send him. It is from this high Source that the Spirit is sent forth. Much is said of the Spirit in the Acts Epistles and Revelation, and whilst little is said explicitly by the Father and the Son in honour of the Spirit this sense is not lacking. To grieve, vex or quench the Spirit is a dangerous matter (Isa. 63:10; Eph. 4:30; I Thess. 5:19) but it is Jesus who warns against sinning against the Holy Spirit,

*Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven’. And whoever says a word against the Son of man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven; either in this age or the age to come.*

More solemn or more honouring words can scarcely be given, but perhaps it was Jesus’ positive statements that nothing would happen until the Spirit came, following his-Jesus’-entrance into glory that glorified the Spirit (cf. Matt. 3:1 I; Luke I 1:13) Acts 1:4-5, 8; John 7:37-39; Luke 24: 47). The whole of this age becomes ‘the age of the Spirit’ so much so (hat it is the Spirit who gives to John the revelation of Jesus Christ, by taking John up in himself on several occasions and showing him remarkable things. In the seven letters to the church in chapters two and three the letters are what the Spirit is saying to the church, even though they are written by Christ. The sevenfold Spirit in the, Revelation is shown as being before the throne-along with the Father and the Lamb. He is also shown as the eyes and the horns of the Lamb-all element which revelate him as of high dignity and great in function. It is not only in this age that the Spirit leads (cf. Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:16, 18, 25-27) but the powers of the age to come are in his control (‘and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come’ (Heb. 6:5).

All in all, then, we see that the Three Persons of the Triune Godhead are ‘other Person-centred’ or ‘other Person-concentred’. All of this pertains to Divine love, and hence we have the key to the Sociality, Unity and Family of the Godhead.

## The Triune Godhead and the Household

**In John 8:35-36** Jesus said, 'The slave does not continue in the house for ever; the son continues for ever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.' Jesus can just be saying generally that in a house a slave is not free to be a member of the family, and certainly not to receive an inheritance. Whilst this is true it is the term 'house' (*oikia*) which here concerns us. In Luke 2:49 the RSV translates, 'Did you not know I must be in my Father's house?' but *oikia* is missing. The equal term for 'house' *oikos-is* used freely in the Synoptics and John for 'the house of prayer', 'the house of God', and 'my Father's house' as also Jesus' claim 'my house' (Luke 19:46).

The uses of the word 'house' in the Synoptics and John to refer to the temple is linked with Isaiah 56:6-8 where it is 'a house of prayer for all nations' (cf. Mark 11:17). The people of God since Pentecost constitute the new temple (I Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:21-22; cf. I Pet. 2:4-10) and constitute and 'the household of God', which is a term used in the Old Testament for the people of Israel (Numb. 12:6-7) and in the New Testament for the new covenant people of God (Heb. 3:1-6; cf. I Tim. 3:15). Indeed the term 'brethren' presupposes this vast household, and the name of the Father give strength and power to the concept of family which is at no time merely abstract (cf. John 20:17; Matt. 23: 9-10; I John 3:14).

We now come back to the term 'house' in John 8:35-36, and when we ask ourselves what house it is, we do not easily find an answer. The term 'house' in Jesus' use is the temple, and by tautology the Israel of God. It is the place where God dwells, hence the term 'tabernacle' or 'tent' (*skene*) a term used in Luke 16:9 for 'eternal habitations' and by Paul in 11 Corinthians 5:1-3 where *skene* ('dwelling') is equated with 'a building' (*oikodomen*), and refers primarily to the personal body of the resurrected one. It seems that the 'house' of John 5:35-36 is one which is on earth since slaves work in it, and such slaves are to be freed by the Son-and yet this house is the house of God, not even confined to be God's habitation in Israel, but has wider connotation. Certainly it contains the household of covenant-Israel, but to be changed from slaves to free sons is a work only the Son of God-the Son of the Father-can accomplish, which is why he came to earth.

The other term 'house' which Jesus uses is found in John 14:2, 'In my Father's house (*ten oikia tocr patros*) are many rooms'. This house is heavenly, and whilst it may in some way be linked with the earthly temple it is also linked with 'the holy city, the new Jerusalem' which descends out of heaven as the Bride, and as such is celestial before it locates itself terrestrially. For the moment, anyway, we avoid using the categories of archetypal and ectypal.

What then are we trying to adduce from our study on the house, but that the Godhead is domestic! In the house-whatever and wherever it maybe, on earth or in heaven, or both at once-God dwells as Father, as Son and as the Spirit Domestic

intercourse takes place among the Three, i.e. the One God. God's ineffability, inscrutability, immutability and transcendent holiness do not preclude God's being domestic. Indeed they give rich meaning to that domesticity and augur well for our proper understanding of human relationships, human familyhood, and human domesticity.

The point of transition to the next point in our argument is, 'How can we say that the relationships known within the Divine Community of the Godhead, are the kind of relationships human beings ought to exercise in life towards one another, towards God, the creation and themselves?' By the same token we have the difficulty of seeing ourselves as humans having relationships with the Godhead on lines other than our creatureliness and the capacity to serve the Creator. If God is totally of another order to man then does it follow that man should exercise the same kind of relations which the Persons exercise? We may argue that living analogously to the life of the Godhead may be good, but then is such living-where we able to accomplish it- imitative and not ontological, and is our relationship with God an analogous one or is it homologous, even without granting the gift of deity to ourselves? These are the questions we seek to answer.

### **Man's Relationships as Being as are God's and as They are From God**

One of the difficulties we encounter is not wholly having affinity with God, for whilst some affinity is surely there with Man the creature facing the Creator, Man the Servant facing God the King- who gives His subjects the creational mandate to multiply, fill up the earth, subdue it and have dominion over it-yet he does not have the same kind of affinity that the Son has 'being of one substance with the Father'. Affinity is there for the Son but not for Man since he is of another 'substance' or 'being' than God. Some theologians would say that man was created as a child or offspring of God, and has the affinity with Him that a child has with its father-yet the fact remains that God is God and Man is Man. The Son who was the eternal Word, and ever the Son, has a relationship as one of the Three with equality of Being with the Father and the Spirit, even granting there may be a Divine Hierarchy within the Godhead.

### **Does Man Have a Full Relationship With God as His Father?**

Here we try to define our terms; 'full' here means that which a man can have with God being a man, i.e. that which man had when created in the likeness and image of God (Gen. 1:26) so that Paul can say, 'Man is the image and glory of God,' and such a statement can be made of no other creature. Is there a human relationship with God which can apprehend him fully as 'Father'?

It is this difference in being between Creator and creature which has made many deny that God can be Father to Man in any other way than the figurative. Granted that God is not like a father (simile) many will further grant that He is a Father, or even Father, but then only the Father of the Son the Lord Jesus Christ, but they insist that He is Father to Man only metaphorically. We can say a certain man is *like* a lion (simile) and we can say a certain man is a lion (metaphor) and there is a difference between simile and metaphor, but it still does not make the man a lion. We must say that God is essentially Father but we could only say that with certainty in regard to the Son. It is assumed by certain theologians that essential Fatherhood stops with the Father's

relationship to the Son, and all use of the term 'Fatherhood' towards angels and men must by definition be metaphorical, and only so far as it is figurative can it be ontological. Ontologically God cannot be essentially Father to Man.

This, of course, will deeply affect relationships which human beings have-not only with God, with others, with the creation, and with Their personal selves. To a certain degree humans can respond to figurative Fatherhood, but their own sonship of God can likewise only be metaphorical. In human experience metaphorical fatherhood cannot be deeply satisfying. Man requires actual fatherhood, or a substitute who will provide surrogate fatherhood, and who will be able to do this because he is a person with the capacity for human fatherhood. Some theologians see Man as coming close to filial affinity with God through regeneration which makes him a child of God (*teknon*), and through adoption which makes him a son (*huios*) of God by God's declaration that he is a son, yet they see neither regeneration nor adoption as giving man true sonship of the Father, since God is God and Man is Man. It is rather an accredited sonship than it is a full relational sonship.

Other theologians do not agree with this view. They believe God does make men and women His true children, and in adoption gives them full sonship. Of course a human being does not have quite the same filial relationship as 'the only Son'-the one who became Jesus of Nazareth since he uniquely is 'of one Being with the Father'. Even so these latter theologians insist that through the Father's calling men and women to Himself by drawing them to the Son, and through the Son bringing them to Himself, the Father relates to His grace-transformed children and sons as their Father, such Fatherhood transcending all that earthly fatherhood can be and give.

This group of theological thinkers divides into two the first being those who do not believe Man was created as a son, and those who believe he was. The first group would claim that bringing a person to regeneration and adoption is a great act of grace. The second group argues that grace has always to do with restoration and never just a gift beyond creation. These theologians argue that unless man had the ontological structure and framework of a son there would have to be a further creational miracle to give him the form of a son. Regeneration is re-generation-an renewing of the original generated being. Likewise a person must have the lineaments of a son or he cannot have true filial being. Luke 3:38 is quoted, 'Adam was the son of God,' and Acts 17:28 is used approvingly, 'even as some of your poets have said, "For we indeed are his offspring."' 'One theologian has said, 'God is the Father of all men, but not all men are the children of God,' meaning that God created all men as His sons, but in Adam they have abdicated that relationship, and only when they believe in Christ and receive do him they have 'authority to *become* the children of God' (John 1:12-13). Perhaps our Lord had something like this in mind when he spoke of the prodigal son. His father said 'this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' That is he was no son when lost and dead, but by the father's grace he came to life and was found.

## **God is Our Father**

Whilst Jesus knew himself to be uniquely the Son, yet he also told the crowds and his disciples, 'But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one leader, and you are all brethren. And call no man your Father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven.' They were brethren under the one Father. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. chapters 5-7, but especially chapter 6) he spoke much about God being the

father of His people, that He was [is] the Father-King of the Kingdom. The Father rewards guileless piety, is present in the prayer-closet to His petitioning children and He knows their desires before they ask. They can pray 'Our Father. . .' He is the One Who forgives. He rewards guileless fasting. There is no need for fear or panic, for the Father knows the daily needs of His children and will supply them.

The statement that He is in heaven or is the heavenly Father guards the person thinking He like an earthly father, even one's own father. Indeed so different is he that only the Son knows the Father and it is he who will reveal Him where he is pleased to do. So Jesus could tell his listeners, 'I and the Father are one,' and tell his disciples, 'He that has seen me, has seen the Father,' and caution them, 'No man can come to the Father but by me-I am the way [to the Father], the truth [of the Father] and the life [the life of] the Father'.

When Jesus told his disciples, 'When you pray, say, 'Our father . . . ' we might think he was saying, 'I can address the Father as 'Father!' but you cannot, for you must approach Him corporately saying, 'Our Father.' Yet in John 20:17 Jesus told Mary Magdalene, 'Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them. I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' Notice the 'my brethren'-so far as we know the first time he had addressed them as brethren-and 'my Father and your Father', as also, 'my God and your God'. It was in the same hour that he said to the women, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.' As to addressing God directly as Father, Paul tells us, 'When we cry "Abba! Father!" it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirits that we are children (*tekna*) of God.'

We do then, voluntarily-and perhaps involuntarily-cry 'Father!' and it is this incredible utterance which makes us one with the father, and which helps us to know we are children (Rom. 5:15) and sons of God (Gal. 4:6-7).

## **We Know God is Father and We Know God as Father, by the Son and the Spirit, and then by the Father Himself**

### **(i) Knowing God as Father by the Son**

'No man has ever seen God; the only Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known' (John 1:18). That is, the Son has made God known as Father. John records, 'And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.' Whilst this may not be seen as theophany it is certainly known as ephiphany. The Gospel of John more so than the Synoptics-contains the revelation of the Father by the Son. True-as we have seen-the Father must first teach His people regarding the Son (6:45) and must draw them to the Son (6:45, 65), but then the Son must be the Son in order to show them the Father, that is, his relationship to the Father, and his doing the will and works of the Father must declare the Father. He is the way to the Father, and in fact the only way to the Father (John 14:6). Whilst in John 1:18 the Apostle says, 'No one has ever seen God,' in 6:46 Jesus says, 'Not that any one has seen *the Father* except him who is from God; he has seen *the Father*.' This comports with Matthew 11:27-sometimes called 'the Johannine thunderbolt'-'All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.' Seeing the Father is something exclusive to those whom the Son chooses to reveal Him, but then it is inclusive of them, i.e. 'all whom thou hast given him' (17:2, 6, 9, 11, 12, 24).

We have said the Son glorified the Father by the works he did (John 17:4), and that he explicated the Father-in the Gospels-by teaching in regard to Him such as the Sermon on the Mount, as also perhaps in a parable such as the story of the lost son (Luke 15), and in certain statements such as in Matthew 10:20; 11:27; 23:8-9; Luke 12:32, but in John's Gospel his life and the actions of his ministry are a continuing revelation of the Father, in that he claims and demonstrates a unique relationship with Him as the Son. For example the passage of 5:17-47 is a claim that he has ever worked with the Father-as the Son-and wholly does his will and has been given authority by the Father to be judge of the dead and the living, and must receive equal honour with the Father, that he has received testimony not only from John the Baptist but from the Father, and from Moses-i.e., from the Scriptures. In references too many to deal with in detail here he makes the same claims, but it is in 17:1-5 we see his desire to glorify the Father by his death. It is for this special hour he has come into the world, and yet he cannot fulfil it unless the Father glorify him in the same hour, i.e., unless God be Father to him in the death of the Cross he **will** not be able to accomplish it. Just what that means he does not explicitly spell out but we gather that he needs the Father to enable him to complete the work of the Atonement. If the Father does that then not only will the close relationship of the Son and the Father be evident but the love of the Father for His people-i.e. His true Fatherhood of His sons-will be manifested. Indeed 10:17-18 is a commentary upon this fact, 'For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life [for the sheep], that I may take it again.. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this charge I have received from my Father.'

The passage of Hebrews 2: 5-17 is apposite here, especially verses 9 and 10. Verse 9 speaks of the incarnation which has the Cross in view that by it God [the Father] might 'bring many sons into glory'. Jesus is crowned with glory and honour for the suffering of death<sup>6</sup>. Likewise I John 3:1 is linked with the same thought, 'See

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<sup>6</sup> As we have before mentioned, two views are taken of verse 9 the first being that as a result (dia)of the suffering of his death Jesus was crowned with glory and honour, and the second view is that he was crowned with glory and honour for the suffering of death, i.e., the 'glory and honour' equipping him for such a death. This seems to, be confirmed by the *hopos*= 'so as', or 'so that'-as though the outcome of being so crowned enables him to 'taste death for every man'. On this reading most commentators would demand an act prior to his death which would be the crowning. It could be the baptism, since it was virtually Christ's coronation in line with Psalm 2:7 (cf. Isa. 42:1), but II Peter 1:16 would seem to make it the transfiguration, 'when he received honour and glory from God the Father.' The transfiguration was with a view to the Cross, for Moses and Elijah 'spoke with him about his exodus which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem'. A Nairne, (The Epistle of the Priesthood, Edinburgh, 1913) says, 'The crowning with glory and honour must, on any natural rendering of the Greek, precede the death.' A.E. Garvie (Ex. T xxvi, 1914-15, p. 549) says, 'He had this foretaste of heaven, however, only to confirm and equip Him for the purpose to surrender the glory and honour He might have claimed as his right, to put Himself in man's place, and to share with man the doom of death, which in no way was His due.' Marcus Dods ( Ex. Gk N.T Eerdmans. Vol. Iv, 1951, p. 263) sees 3 steps, 'Jesus was (1) made a little lower than the angels, (2) was crowned with glory and honour; and (3) by dying for every man has removed that last obstacle, the fear of death.' P.E. Hughes ('He brews', Eerdmans, 1977), along with most commentators, takes the view that the crowning took place after, and as a result of the death. Whichever way the exegesis goes, it is still true that it is only 'by the grace of God' that the Son can taste death for every man, and the prayer of John 17:5, 'and now, Father glorify thou me in thy own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world began', whilst it seems to present a desire for immediate heavenly return and glorification better fits the idea that Christ wishes that preincarnational-and even pre-creational-glory to be seen on the Cross! On this point Leon Morris in his commentary of John says, Now Jesus prays God to glorify him. He looks for glory in the last place that men would seek it, namely in the cross and he sees this glory for which he prays as linked with his preincarnate glory with the Father. There is a clear assertion of Christ's pre-existence here . . . There is also the claim that he had enjoyed a unique glory with the Father in that pre-existent state. And now , as men are about to do their worst to Him, he looks for the Father to glorify Him again in the same way.. It is the Father who *will* glorify Him with true glory in the cross, and in what *follows*. ' It seems to me to link with 11:27-36 where *God will* glorify His name by the work of the Cross, and where Jesus says that when men lift him *up* in the crucifixion he *will* be this means draw all men unto him. The cross is the place of glory, and the glory of the Father and the Son, in that they give the life of the Son for the world.

what lover the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God.’ The statement can mean that God’s love here lies in His election, i.e., in calling us His children-which, of course, would be true-but the *hina* here, which is exegetical, explaining what the love consists in seems to be one of intention or means, in which the bestowal of love is the work of the Cross (see I John 4:14 where love lies in the propitiation of sins), and this work of the Cross results in us becoming the children of God. It seems legitimate to paraphrase the verse, ‘See what love the Father has given us [in the atonement], so that we should [i.e. could legitimately] be called children of God.’ Whether my interpretation is correct<sup>7</sup> or not it is still true that the calling of God is linked with the atonement, and both are the action of the Father’s love .

### **(ii) Knowing God as Father by the Holy Spirit**

Jesus’ own human consciousness of being the Son of God must have been by the Holy Spirit. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, baptised with the Spirit, was led into the temptation of the wilderness by him, executed his ministry by his power, offered himself in purity through him, was raised by him from the dead, and enabled to ascend by him to the right hand of the Father. That is why he is called ‘the Spirit of Christ’, ‘the Spirit of Jesus’, ‘the Spirit of the Lord’, and ‘the Spirit of his Son’. In John 16:12-15 it is the Spirit who glorifies both the Son and the Father, declaring them unto us. Since we come to the Father by the Son (John 14:6) and since we come to the Son by the Spirit (John 16:14) then what Paul says fits this case (Eph. 2:18), ‘For through him [Christ] we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.’ There can be no doubt that here-in the context-the access is soteriological. In Galatians 4:4-7 the first step is soteriological-‘to redeem those who were under the law’, and that step leads to sonship, and sonship is confirmed as relational by the sending of the Spirit into the heart, so that the cry of the Spirit is heard-‘Abba! Father!’-and the recipient comes to know God as Father. The third step is eschatological since it involves the inheritance,

*But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons [ten huiorhesian]. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba! Father!’. So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir.’*

Romans 4:14-17 follows much the same pattern, and is further confirmation of the Spirit’s revelation of the Father.

### **(iii) Knowing God is Father by the Father**

We saw in John 6:45-46, 65 that the Father takes the initiative in teaching His elect about His Son. This, of course, is related to the prophetic teaching of such Old Testament passages as Psalms 2, 89 and 110 -along with other ‘son’ teaching, e.g. 11 Samuel 7:14. This teaching only comes into living significance when the Son himself appears, and it is again the Father who takes the initiative in the sending. Jesus speaks

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<sup>7</sup> I have searched commentaries in vain to find the name exegesis, but heard this interpretation given by Dr. David Denton a lecturer of the Bible College of Australia at the time when I was its Principal, and it seemed most convincing to me.

some 40 times in the Gospel of John regarding the Father sending him. Many Pauline, Petrine and Johannine passages also speak of such sending, e.g. Galatians 4:4; I Peter 1:3; 1 John 4:10, 14. Of course the whole soteriological work-planned by the Father and the Son before time-is initiated by the Father (cf. Eph. 1:3-14).

It is the Father being in the Son and one with him in his mission that reveals the Father for lie who has seen the Son has seen the Father. From the commencement of that mission the Father declares the Son-as at the baptism-and speaks again at the transfiguration, and later in what is called 'the Johannine Gesthemene' (John 12:27-28). The Father also testifies to the Son-as Son-by the works he does (John 5:36-37; John 14:9-11). In all of these matters the Holy Spirit works-through the Son-to reveal the plan and purpose of the Father.

### **The Unity of Purpose With the Persons of the Godhead Necessitating Union With Them**

What we are seeking to do is to show that the purpose and work of the Godhead is to bring bring men and women to the Father so that they may be part of His family, relating to Him, to the Son and to the Spirit, and sharing in the domestic intimacy of the Godhead, thus achieving true relationships with God, with Man, with the creation and with themselves. Only then can we think about or discuss the relationships that human beings have among themselves.

What we have said above certainly shows us that men and women can come to the Father through the ministry of the Father, the Son and the Spirit, and that they can know God as Father, and-we insist-not merely figuratively as 'Father', but relationally as Father as far *as a human being can have such a relationship* aided by the Father, the Son and the Spirit. We need to discuss two things,

- (i) the purpose of this infiliation of man, and
- (ii) the way in which is is accomplished so that it becomes fully relational and so functional.

#### **(i) The Purpose of Infiliation**

We know that infiliation-the making of many sons-is God's purpose. If we hold (fiat 'we are his offspring' then the purpose must have been inherent in creation. The fall altered that in that man abdicated his innate being as creature, servant and son<sup>8</sup>, though men of faith can surely be said to have been the children of God. It is in covenant that God's people are called His children (cf. Deut.14:1; Deut. 32:6-9; Exod. 3:22-23) and that something of His Fatherhood is revealed (cf. Jer. 3:14, 19; Isa.1:2; 63:16; 74:8; Mal. 2:10). It is, however, Isaiah 43:6-7 which shows the purpose of God's making such sons,

Fear not, for I am with you;  
I will bring your offspring from the east,  
and from the west I will gather you;  
I will say to the north, give up,

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<sup>8</sup> Those who do not see man created as an offspring or child of God should see that the term 'sons of God' is used early in Genesis for the faithful people of God, e.g. Genesis 4:25-26; 6:1-4. John tells us Abel was a child of God (I John 3:10-12) and since Seth was the substitute for him it would seem Seth was the first of 'the sons of God'. It would also seem fair to class all the people of faith in Hebrews 11 as 'children of God' since Abel leads that noble list. It is difficult not to believe that all human beings who have had faith in God are 'sons of God'.

and to the south.  
Do not withhold;  
bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth,  
every one who is called by my name,  
whom I created for my glory,  
whom I formed and made.

This makes it clear that God's covenant children are created to be to his glory, and it is doubtless this Scripture on which Paul bases his passage of Ephesians 1:3-14, and in particular verses 11-14. This passages speaks first of God predestinating us from before time-to 'be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will', i.e., 'to live for the praise of his glory'. In Romans 8:29 he echoes this thought, 'For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he f the Son] might be the first-born among many brethren.' Again we are reminded of Isaiah 43:6-7. Then in I John 3:1-3 we read,

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every one who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

and this passage shows us again that as the children of God we shall be like the Son and so to the praise and glory of the Father. In this sense 'bringing man sons into glory' and 'called us into his own glory' are at one with beings sons in the likeness of His Son. If we ask ourselves, 'What greater purpose could God have in and for His creature man, and indeed for all His creation? and our hearts cry out gratefully-though humbly and wonderingly-'No greater purpose'. The means that the whole work of creation, redemption and final restoration of all things is with the primary purpose of making the sons of men into the sons God, and this in a way and manner which they never were<sup>9</sup>.

There is one thing more we need to see regarding 'purpose' and that is that the Godhead is not merely occupied with chores, with filling in time and space morally. God Who is 'other-centered' and 'concentred' upon Man the sinner is being Himself in these actions and their goal. He is going out to Man to do Him good!

## **(ii) The Way in Which Infiliation is Accomplished**

We have seen that 'the sons of God' or 'the children of God' may well have their origin in creation, and if not then certainly persons of faith have always been accounted as sons of God, so that in this sense infiliation is not needed. Likewise to be in the covenant is to be infiliated, so far as the meaning of that goes in the Old Testament. Certainly it can be no less in the New Testament where there is membership in the new covenant. Even so the statement of John 1:10-13 stands before us,

**He was** in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. lie came to his own home, and his own people received him not. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

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<sup>9</sup> This is an appropriate point at which to discuss more fully the nature of being children of God by regeneration and sons of God by adoption.

Ostensibly his own people were of the covenant, and yet they needed to receive him, i.e. believe on him in order to receive authority to become children of God. What would then take place would be a miracle called 'new birth' or 'regeneration', i.e. they would be born not of man but of God. This was the kind of thing Jesus talked about in John 3:1-14 where being born anew-or 'from above'-was a work of the Spirit related to the act of the Cross. Infiltration then, would come through reception of Christ and faith in him. How this miracle of regeneration works in the human mind, spirit, and body is a mystery. We can follow it so far psychologically-since there are many kinds of 'conversion' but they all are attended by the same psychological phenomena-and then we are baffled. Initial generation (i.e. creation) is a mystery. Re-creation must also remain a mystery. Even so regeneration is a miracle of restoration, but it is not the miracle of a new work of creation: *it* is a renewed work of creation that has happened.

Because regeneration does not lift Man higher than his pristine creation, some other work is required-along with regeneration, and perhaps part of it-to make him a full son of God *as a human being*. This work is the work of being united with Christ in his being, and not only in his work for man. Romans 6:1-6 speaks of man being baptized into Christ's death, so into his crucifixion and in his grace, and ultimately in his resurrection and ascension. Galatians 2:20 covers this range-

I have been crucified with Christ: it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

Paul is saying that whilst he has undergone the reality of crucifixion and resurrection-with and by Christ-yet he is himself as ever was, but all has changed because of his union with Christ and his daily faith in him. Other Scriptures are related to the Galatian passage such as Galatians 1:4; 5:24; 6:14; Romans 6:6; Colossians 3:13. Close to these is a passage such as Galatians 3:26-29, 'For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. As in Galatians 2:20 the redeemed person is not his own-he is a participator in Christ, not only in what Christ has done, but in Christ as he is, now. So Paul can say, 'For you have died and your life is hid with Christ in God.' This must be somewhat of what is written in II Peter 1:3-4,

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature.

We see the means by which we escape lust and passion, but also we see them as enabling us to 'become part of the divine nature'<sup>10</sup> and it does seem that the thrust of

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<sup>10</sup> 11 Peter 1:3-5 should be read as of being the one thought, i.e. God calls us to his own glory and excellence' by his own divine power (grace) and not by human effort or occultic rituals. It is 'his own glory and excellence' which are His Divine nature. In some measure that glory and excellence is ours now (Eph. 1:3; Col. 2:9; Eph. 3:19) but coming to them is also a present process (II Cor. 3:18) and eschatologically they will be ours in fulness (II Cor. 4:1(-18)) but in every case we must 'escape from the corruption that is in the world through lust', and this escaping is at the present time, and also through death. In one sense we now are partakers of the divine nature, but in all fulness we will be at the end time. The meaning of 'partakers of the divine nature' cannot mean our divinization. We never become God or part of God, but as humans we have fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ' (I John 1:3) but it is that we put them on-as in baptism we put on Christ-or they come and dwell in us (John 14:14-23) and the effects of their Godhead are on us, to the degree that we are fully humanized, but never divinized. R.J. Bauckham ('Commentary on Jude, II Peter', Word Books, 1983, p. 181) says, 'In view of the background sketched above, it is not very likely that participation God's woman essence is intended.' Michael Green ('Tyndale Commentary on 11 Peter and Jude' (Tyndale, 1976, p. 65), 'Peter does not mean that man is absorbed into the deity; that would at the same time dissolve personal identity and render impossible any personal encounter between the individual and God. But as in I Peter, he speaks of a real union with Christ. If we are partakers of Christ's sufferings (I Pet. 5:1), it is because we are partakers of Christ.

the New Testament is union with Christ, coming to the Father by the Son and the Spirit, and having 'our life hidden with Christ in God', as well as being filled full in Christ, and being 'filled unto all the fulness of God'. In this since we are partakers in the Divine Nature. When we think that within that Nature the Father is in the Son, and the Son is in the father, and both are in the Spirit as the Spirit in them, then when we are in them our closeness is such which on the one hand does not merge us with Them (loss of true humanity) or give us any element of deity (further loss of humanity). It does, however, place us on that level where to be a human being and to be a true son of God are not incompatible.

Further to this we must think of the 'the Spirit of his Son' being sent into our hearts. Just as our union with Christ makes us one with him-but does not make us him-so the Spirit brings all the Sonship of Christ to us, not as an abstraction, but in its functional operative being. Far from being separate human beings comprehending his Sonship, we are persons joined to him, in union with him, apprehending and expressing his very Sonship. If ontologically and metaphysically we are not 'one substance' with the Father and the Son, we are certainly 'one being' with Him whilst still remaining human. This is the glory of the Gospel, the glory of the loving Father, the glory of the Redeeming Son.

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# The Theology of Relationships

## Introduction: Relationships

**What** is today called Relational Theology is really that theology which sees all truth in the light of relationships, and since this makes relationships primary it is certainly valuable, but not wide enough in its reference, and tends to be reductionist if it brings us into this one view of all things. At the same time relationships are what living is all about, and even what eternal life is about (John 17:3:1 John 5:20-21).

The practical matters of living in fellowship with God, with the Community of Christ, and with the wider society of the human race is certainly what greatly occupies us. We would wish to improve our relationships, and cope with those that are difficult, and for this reason a brief theology of relationships could prove of value. This theology-not filled out of even documented-is a basis for fleshing out its bare bones and making it a living entity.

## A Theology of Relationships

- (1) All relationships commence with the Godhead. The Godhead is not composed of Three Monads brought together by love and common purpose, for the Three are not monads but Persons, and yet not separate Persons because they are One God. No document has ever set this out better than the Athanasian Creed, for all its stilted and somewhat archaic language.
- (2) Within the plurality of the Godhead--the Three Persons--there is Divine sociality. The Three are One by Their nature-Love. Love does not make them One for they are One, and that unity is expressed in Love, and that love ensures Their indivisibility. The Father *is in* the Son, the Son *in* the Father. Both are in the Spirit and the Spirit in them. Each is 'other-person centred' or 'other-person centred'. They cannot exist apart from One another. Thus the Father is Son-concentred-hence the richness of His Fatherhood. Likewise the Son is Father-concentred-the essence of his Sonship. The Holy Spirit is known variously as the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the Father, the Spirit of the Son and in this way is seen to be centred in the Others.
- (3) All Three Members of the Godhead honour One another and glorify one another. All Three Members serve One another. [*Honouring and glorifying are the root and source of true worship, the basis on which created Man is able to worship and serve God and his fellow-creatures.*] The Father serves the Son, and the Son the Father, and the Spirit both, and both the Spirit. All Three Members work in unity-and serve-in the ministry of creation, of redemption and the ultimate reconciliation and renewal of all things. This proclivity to serve is seen in

‘Carmen Christi’-the taking on of human flesh by the Son-Word, ‘taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form’ (Phil. 2:6-8; Rom. 8:2; John 1:14; Mark 10:45; cf. Isa. 53)’ and so is spelled out in human terms in the incarnation.

- (4) Man-made in the total image of the Triune God-must image, i.e. reflect and express the relationships which are in the Godhead. This he would have done in creation, but through the fall had denied-and defied-the essential nature in which he was created. The incarnate Son-living as ‘true Man-demonstrated the true human relationships, and this not in a perfect creational state, but in the state were the depravity of man is extant, as also the curse, the dynamics of guilt and wrath, and the irrationality of man as he is defective, dislocated, inhuman and awry from what is called ‘ontological’. The Son reveals the nature of God whilst in this situation, and effects that redemption which regenerates man and brings him into experience of the Divine revelation of God and true relationships.
- (5) Redeemed man comes to know the Indwelling of God he had lost by the fall. He comes to indwell the Three Persons, and They to indwell him. He abides in love and love abides in him. He abides in God and God abides in him. The normal flow of relationships which are not only analogous with the Divine relationships but homologous with them has commenced. These relationships are extant in the situation of living ‘in the ends of the ages’, and so are resisted by the ‘old age’ but renewed by ‘the age to come’, i.e. this living in love and holiness is contested by evil powers. Even so, in this age, the dynamics of faith, hope and love work to establish true relationships, and this is the fruit of the high-priestly prayer of Christ (John 17:20-26), the action of his Cross (John 11:50--52; Col. 1:18-21) and the fulfilment of the ‘mystery of his will’ (Eph. 1:9-11; 4:10, Col. 1:19-21; 3:14). As the eschatological outworking of the ‘mystery of God’ is coming to fruition in the telos, so the new age is being inhabited by the new serving people-‘the kingdom of priests unto their God-who as the Temple of God, the Bride of the Bridegroom, the Body of their Head the Lord, the Holy City-live in the new relationships and anticipate the perfection, love and glory of the new heavens and the new earth. The Temple is then God and the Lamb, the Bride the People of God-arc ‘one flesh’ with the Bridegroom and as the Holy City are under the reign of ‘God and the Lamb’, living in the beatific revelation of God they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads’- and they shall reign as priests and kings unto their God, forever!

# **Superordination and Subordination-I**

## **The Question of the Two Elements**

The question of superordination and subordination is not a new one. In fact it is paramount in all theology. The reasons for this are many, and they commence with the Triune Godhead. Is there a Person of that Godhead who is before another? Is there an inbuilt hierarchy in the Godhead, such as seems to be suggested by the prior situation of the Father with His principium, and the seeming posterior positions of the Son and the Holy Spirit? Since the Son is eternally generated by or from the Father and proceeds from Him, and since the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father (Eastern Orthodox position) and the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son (Western church position) then something like a hierarchy appears to be the case, albeit that hierarchy ought not to be understood as other than benign and other than in love.

Any form of superordination and of subordination is fiercely contested by those who correctly discern that if there is any structure of hierarchy in the Triune Godhead, then that must be the ontological order for humanity. This then affects the whole matter of authority and law, all forms of leadership, and of course the matter of male and female gender order. It immediately makes its impact upon masculinists and feminists. The masculinist appears to be given ascendancy by it, and a weapon to battle with the feminist, whilst the feminist appears to be put down, and has no virtually argument regarding an ontological equality of the genders. The matters of authority and law all have to be seen in an hierarchical schema if there is superordination and subordination in a true ontology.

On the other hand if there is no superordination-subordination structure within the Triune Godhead, but all three Persons are equal, then the feminist appears to have a weapon to use against the masculinist, and he has no moral support for his view that the male is superordinate. Of course, logically speaking, the male and the female would have equality within the human race, so that both masculinist and feminist have no grounds for claiming prior quality or status-one over the other. Also the matters of authority and law would have to be appraised and their functional nature assessed.

## **The Matter of Superordination and Subordination Itself**

Where do we most profitably commence our investigation? I am sure it does begin with the Godhead for theirs is the paradigm of all true relationships-the source and ground of all true human relationships. Even so, we have a problem and it is \_ one of terms.

Some of us personally, have never been able to subscribe to the view that superordination must mean superiority and subordination imply inferiority. I am not alone in thinking that one can be in a superordinate position and not consider himself or

herself to be superior to one subordinate in office or rank. I believe we have to separate the subjective impressions persons have in these situations from the reality of their positions. I have noticed that the idea persist strongly with the idea that to be superordinate is to be superior to the one who is subordinate.

Again some of us have problems with the words 'equality' and 'inequality'.<sup>1</sup> We do not know from what they arise. Are any two human beings equals in the sense that they are equivocals. No two leaves which have the same venation pattern nor are there any two fingers which have the same prints. Doubtless some of may have an impediment to proper thinking, but whilst people like us exist we will have to do something about the words 'equality' and 'inequality'. What do we make of the diversity of all things, whilst recognizing that the unity of all things exists in this rich diversity. Of course we recognize what is meant by 'equality in value, in esteem; in honour and in opportunity' and in general we seek to work in accordance with these evaluations, but, even so, some of are baffled as to how to arrive at such 'equality'. Should we not think in terms of 'totality', i.e., we do not love my children *equally* but-ideally-we love each totally. God certainly does not love by degrees. We see a woman as having total value-as a woman-and a man total value-as a man. Qualitatively we seek to see a person as he or she is, and indeed that goes for all creatures and things and no less for the Persons of the Godhead. One is Father, another is Son another is the Spirit of these Two. We suppose that is why 'equality' and 'inequality' have no essential meaning for some of us. Of course we are human-and sinful-enough to glow when we are accepted as a 'equals', and to feel resentful when we are considered as being subordinate and unequal but in our more sane moods we see the. inanity of such reactions.

### **Relationships Within the Godhead**

We should all recognize it to be an historical fact that the matters of the superordination of the Father subordination and the subordination of the Son were at the heart of the Christological controversies of the third and fourth centuries, and indeed, are still with us today. The Arians-arguing from the Scriptures- based their unitarianism on the fact that the Son was subordinate to the Father, and indeed in being unequal with the Father, could not be considered to have Deity. The Trinitarians-such as Athanasius-basing their arguments on the Scriptures-argued that the Son as touching the Godhead was equal with the Father and the Spirit, but as touching his manhood was inferior to the Father. It is was-and still is-argued that the Son lowered himself to become a man, but that in no way did he lower his deity-an impossible exercise by nature of the case. There were-and are-that who see the *kenosis* of the Son as an emptying of himself of qualities or prerogatives of [his] deity, but that these discarded elements were restored to him at his ascension and glorification. Docetists argue for the deity of the Son but refuse him genuine humanity, saying he did not actually become a man and that humanity is not part, now, of his personal being.

Whilst many of us are grateful that the outcome of the Christological controversies has been the credal acceptance of Christ's deity-to which is attached his

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<sup>1</sup> Most people would have a problem of even greater dimensions if they could not equate 'superordinate' with 'superior' and 'subordinate' with 'inferior'. We know the quip of honest egalitarians, 'All human beings are equal, but some are more equal than others.' Doubtless purist egalitarian theologians put this down to the sinfulness of human beings-a fruit of the fall.

humanity-yet others have felt the metaphysical argument of 'substance' (*homousius*) is an abstract argument, and whilst it may accord properly with the historical revelation of God as Father, as the Son of the Father, and the Spirit as personally the Spirit of the Father and the Son as these were set out in the early Christian writings of the New Testament yet the theology is metaphysical rather than biblical. Some who would have liked to have seen the Christological controversy resolved more on the matter of the meaning of **person and** relationships, nevertheless appreciate the abstract argument of 'the substance', feeling it was useful line to argue, and whilst they do not consider the constant use of the word 'equal' in the Athanasian Creed to be the best way of expressing the deity of the Three Persons, yet accept that was how it had to be stated at that time-that it could dogmatically preserve the doctrine of the Trinity and saved the church from Arianism.

The question today is, 'Now that the primary threat of Arianism is not present or immediate in the same measure, can we discuss the relationships within the Trinity without being accused of Arianism? If we should venture to speak of a form of subordination within the Triune Godhead, can we do so without those who are equalitarian raising the accusation that we are necessarily reverting to Arianism? We are aware-at this point-that many Arians were accused of being authoritarian in their leaning and practice<sup>2</sup>, but the matter is not an *either-or* situation. Doubtless some of us who have a philosophy of equality in the Godhead and in humankind, may be authoritarian in practice.

We now look at the arguments for the presence of a form of Superordination subordination relationships within the Triune Godhead. As is the case with terms which are to many emotive, one would prefer not to use those of 'superordination' and 'subordination' particularly where discussants associate them with Arianism. It is a fact of historical theology that the term 'subordinate' was not confined in use to the Arians. One can hold a view of the subordination of the Son to the Father, without espousing subordinationism, especially not Arian subordinationism. The use of the term 'subordinationism' is often intended to conjure up an image of crass authoritarianism.

### **(i) The Inter-dwelling of the Three Persons**

It seems to me that the authoritarian element in any hierarchy must be that each member of that system insists on autonomy in his or her situation, works bureaucratically within his/her domain, and does not have a personal loving interrelationship with other members in the functional outworking of that system. The nature of God being love, and love being essentially interpersonal the rigid nature of a hierarchy as it is generally perceived is lost. No one member works without intimate relationship with all members, nor without the uninterrupted *perichoresis* of all members. The *perichoresis* is what dissolves the [imagined] superior-inferior interpretation of anything that is functionally superordinate or subordinate. Within the Triune Godhead the Father gives His Fatherhood to the Son, the Son his Sonship

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Sherlock (*Interchange* 45, AFES, 1989, pp. 62-63) states, 'The doctrine of the Trinity is the very antithesis of "controlling", power-dominated ideas. It is monism or deism-'plain oneness' views of God-which are linked with the so-called "masculine" power. One God-one emperor is a covenant ideology for autocrats'. That is possibly why the Arians held sway often in the imperial courts. Quite simply, only a Trinitarian God can be Love.' One wonders whether Arians in particular were given over to this kind of domination, and whether those who held to the *Quinque Vult* were not! Sherlock also speaks of Arian patriarchy. Most feminists would wonder whether patriarchy began and finished with the Arians.

to the Father, the Spirit his servant-attendance on both, and all Three are mutually inter-dependent and perichoretic. We have previously seen that the Three honour and glorify one another, give to one another, receive from one another, and share together in the great works of creation, redemption and the ultimate regeneration of the creation. This kind of hierarchy-if it may be called so-dissolves the rigidity of an authoritarian view of the hierarchy as set out in I Corinthians 11:3, and implied hierarchical elements in some of the Pauline and Petrine passages relating to marriage and to ecclesiastical leadership.

### (ii) The Eternal Interdwelling

In John 17:7 Jesus tells the Father, ‘Now they know that everything that thou hast given me is from thee; for I have given them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from thee; and they have believed that thou didst send me.’ Just prior to this high-priestly prayer for them he had told the disciples, ‘I came from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and going to the Father.’ In response to this the disciples had said, ‘Ah, now you are speaking plainly, not in any figure! Now we know that you know all things, and need none to question you; by this we believe that you came from God.’ Jesus was saying that he had come from the Father and was going to the Father. He had also told them, earlier that he was going to prepare a place for them in the Father’s household.

Later, John in writing of the Son whom he had come to know said, ‘The only Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him [God; God\_ the Father] known.’ Previously (1:14) he had spoken of Jesus in the term, ‘as of the only Son from the Father.’ The normal place for the Son is the Father’s bosom. He had left this bosom to come to man. The interdwelling of the Father and the Son has not been interrupted by the incarnation, for he prays. ‘that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us.’ The Son then speaks of the glory given to him, ‘The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me.’

### (iii) The Matter of Personal Functional Operations

Without rigidly defining the roles of the Father, the Son and the Spirit we see that the Persons made-and make-their contributions from their situations of being Father, Son and Spirit in the operations of creation, redemption and the ultimate renewal of the’ heavens and the earth-along with all their creatures celestial and terrestria<sup>3</sup>. We find the Father giving the Son commands<sup>4</sup>, the Son gladly accepting these, and fulfilling

<sup>3</sup> Here we need to see the functional areas of the Persons and their cooperation within their unity. Thus in creation, redemption and the ultimate renewal of all thing we find the three Persons working as One.

<sup>4</sup> The immediate question is raised, ‘Whilst it is true that the Son obeys the Father (e.g. John 10:17; 14:31), is this an obedience only within the realm of his humanity, but not within his deity. Does not the Father give the Son orders in the realm of their deity?’ I think the question reveals the mind of the questioner, and shows that he thinks commands can only be given in the interests of man’s redemption, and at the level of the Son’s humanity i.e. that whilst the Son in the immanent Trinity is not subordinate since he not given commands, but in the economic (revelational) Trinity he receives commands related to his humanity. This would negate most of the uses of the verbs *apostello* and *exapostello* along with other ‘sending’ verbs. The-Son is sent into the world by a directive which includes the directive of the incarnation. It is interesting that in Galatians 4:4-6 the Son is sent ‘out of the Father, and the Spirit is also sent ‘out of the Father. It needs to be seen continuously that if God commands (sends) the Spirit then the sending of the Son must be on .the same level of deity since the Spirit does not ‘take flesh’. The deity of the Holy Spirit is present in any commanding or sending. In the present era of the church he is ‘the Lord the Spirit’ (II Cor. 3:17-18) and the community is led by the Spirit. As **he had led the Son (Luke 4:1, 14) so he** led the children of God (Rom. 8:14). This against R.G. Gruenler (op. cit. p. xvii),

Our study describes one of the characteristic modes by which the persons of the Triune Family disclose their interaction in the redemptive process. The incarnate Son subordinates himself to the will of the Father for the work of

them, whilst the Spirit also received commands and carries them out<sup>5</sup>. Even the Son gives commands to the Father, e.g. the high-priestly prayer of John 17 when the Son charges the Father with accomplishing a number of things.<sup>6</sup> It may well be argued that these are not commands so much as petitions, but John 17:24 has Christ saying, ‘Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given<sup>7</sup> me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory which thou hast given me in thy love before the foundation of the earth.’ Here ‘I desire’ (*thelo*) can be translated ‘I wish’ or ‘I will’, and carries something of a command in it. Is it that between the Divine Persons it can be said, ‘Your every wish is my command: your every command is my wish.’?

Is it an incipient legalism which makes us haggle about the Persons and try to protect the One against the principium (first in time or order) of Another? Did not Jesus say to his disciples, ‘If you love me you will keep my commandments,’ and did not the apostle John add, ‘And his commandments are not burdensome.’? Have we missed the ‘ontological joy of obedience’. or-better still-‘the ontological joy of Sonship’? Legalism and love do not go together.

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salvation, and the Holy Spirit subordinates himself to the will of the Father and the Son in carrying out the work. . . . But it is also clear from Jesus’ complementary claims to equality with the Father<sup>2</sup> (10:30; 17:11) and his intimation that the Holy Spirit shares equally in carrying out the work of salvation (14:16-17, 26; 16:13-15) that such subordination is voluntarily assumed and flows out of the divine Family as a unity.

Gruenler is according subordination to the Spirit and appears to be saying that it is because the Spirit is on the work of salvation that he is subordinate. Carried to a logical conclusion any work done in the creation-whether it be creation, redemption or the restoration of all things-is a work which subordinates the member of the Trinity occupied in it, This would have to include the Father Himself!

<sup>5</sup> In John chapters 14 to 16 Jesus speaks of the Father sending the Spirit (14:26), of himself sending the Spirit (15:26; 16:8) so that the Spirit is seen to be subject to the Father and the Son. It is this ‘subjection’ which interests us who know virtually nothing of a human perichoresis and so can know little of a Divine one.

<sup>6</sup> These commands are not limited to the high-priestly prayers-see. See also the tone of prayer in Gethemene, ‘Father if it be thy will,’ for the Son does not request help outside the will of His Father, or even seek to circumvent his own manhood in knowing that will. In John 14:13; 15:7; 16:24 the Son is the one in whose name the disciples now approach God and petition him, so that ‘Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Aon; if you ask anything in my name I will do it.’ In this sense the name of the Father and the name of the Son are as one (cf. Matt. 28:20 where there is one name for the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit).

<sup>7</sup> The word ‘given’ may be some indicator to understanding the relationship between the Father and the Son. What the Son have has been given to him by the Father. The verb is used 15 times in John 17. The Son has been given authority over all flesh, has been given ‘the elect children’ (cf.. Heb. 2:13; Isa. 8:17-18), the work to do on earth, the word and the words the Father has, the name of the Father, ‘everything’ (v. 7) and the glory. Whilst some things are given to the Son in his humanity, some things are also given to him in his deity-before creation. It must be admitted there is some sense functionally where the giver is prior-though not prior in time-to the receiver.

How could we have missed the perfect harmony between the Father and the Son where haggling is absent? As on earth, so in heaven: as in heaven so on earth incarnation not withstanding. 'The Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever he does, that the Son does likewise.' The key to the mystery is, 'For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing; and greater works than these will he show him, that you may marvel.' Jesus had previously told them, 'The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand.' We find the same 'Johannine thunderbolt' in Matthew 11:27 and Luke 10:22, 'All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.' Paul speaks to the Colossian church of 'the Son of his love' which whilst it may have overtones of election still reveals the heart of the Father in His love for His only Son.

The Son reveals the mind of the Father, 'For this reason my Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again . . . this charge I have received from my Father.' The Son's response **to the Father is, 'I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know, that I love the Father.'** On our human level we hear Paul say, 'The love of Christ controls me,' and we know obedience is the fruit of love. The Father and the Son have ever been working together. Far from being an impediment the *principium* of the Father is a powerful force in the functional operations of the Father and the Son, and-for that matter-of the cooperative Spirit.

### **Love is the Key To Divine and Human Relationships**

It is the key to the Son knowing the Father and the Father knowing the Son, and to each knowing the Spirit as he, them. Their knowledge of one another is of love, so that where love is absent in us we cannot understand the One-ness of the Father, the Son and the Spirit. John in speaking to the children of God says, 'Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God.' The Members of the triune Godhead know one another. They *are* love, for 'God is love' (I John 4:8, 16). Love, then is 'of God'. The Father loves the Son and the Son the Father-as we have seen-whilst the Spirit is himself the Spirit of love (Rom. 15:30; 5:5; Gal. 5:22; Col. 1:8). The love of the Three for one another is too deep, too incomprehensible for us, although we do have knowledge of the love of God insofar as we know His love for us.

It was the desire of the Son that his elect people should know this love of God, so that he prayed, 'I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me.' In this sense, then, we *can* know the love of God, and doubtless it is to this that Paul refers in Romans 5:5, 'God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.' He prays in Ephesians 3:18 that his readers may come 'to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge (*gnonai to ten huperballousan tes gnoseos agapen tou Christou*) so that humans by the divine power of the Holy Spirit can know at least *something* of the love the Members of the Trinity have for one another.

We say then that in this love the Persons utterly know one another, and human beings would have to approach this kind of knowledge before they could understand the way in which the Son and Spirit would understand the *principium* of the Father. Having grasped this fact we can now look at the Johannine texts which seem to speak of the subordination of the Son and the Spirit to the Father and on the other of the Son

being one with the Father. We are saying that our human, horizontal feelings about subordination may blind us to the glory of divine subordination and superordination<sup>8</sup>. I think it is a pity that we assume subordination is linked only with the realm of humanity, and so our Lord's incarnation, and that we put it down-as we do authority and law-to the face and scene of human rebellion. The meaning of worship may thereby be drained of its richest element-serving-and we may be forced to reject the heart of our Lord's teaching on humility, i.e. on being the least and thereby being the greatest in the sense of true greatness.

### **The Johannine Texts Relating to Subordination and Superordination**

1. The primary text regarding discussion on subordination and superordination is John 14:29 'If you loved me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father; for the Father is greater than I'.

Most of the following commentaries seem to favour the fact that any subordination the Son has to the Father *is only because of his incarnation*, but some of them go beyond that thesis,

Raymond E. Brown (p. 655)

'If we seek to explain the passage without the intervention of of the formal dogmatics of a later period, the key probably lies in a similar statement made in xiii:16: "No messenger is more important than the one who sent him." We have already explained that statements like "The Father and I are one" (x 30) and "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (xiv 9) have their background in the Jewish concept of the relationships between a messenger or agent and the one who sent him... During his mission on earth he is less than the One who sent him, but his departure signifies that the work the Father has given him to do is completed. Now he will be glorified with that glory he had with the Father before the world existed.

J.N. Sander and B. Mastin (p.334)

'The statement that **the Father is greater** than the Son, torn from its context, became the subject of fierce controversy in the later phases of the Arian controversy. But the dogmatic issues then raised are beyond the horizons of the Fourth Gospel, for which the inferiority of the Son is due to the fact that he is his Father's agent, fulfilling his will, and subordinating his own to it.'

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<sup>8</sup> Throughout Scripture it is evident that joy comes in submission and surrender to the Lordship of God. The exaltation of God is a great theme of the doxological Psalms. Thomas's surrender to Jesus-'My Lord and my God!', and even Peter's cry, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' has the note of worshipful wonderment. The doxological passages in the Revelation show the joy that men and angels display in their submission to God. In demeaning the idea of subordination we may miss one of the most profound truths of Scripture. I believe there may be a parallel in the matter of subordination to an observation by Father Danielou on the the matter of the wrath of God quoted by J.G. Mackenzie in his book *Guilt: Its Meaning and Significance* (Allen and Unwin, 1962), 'We have to reckon, whether we like it or not, with wrath as one of the divine attributes : and what is more, for all its anthropomorphic appearance, this particular word may carry a stronger charge than any other, and afford the deepest insight into the meaning of the divine transcendence.' I am not referring here to wrath, but the the principle that a word or an idea-e.g. the idea of subordination , 'may carry a stronger charge than any other, and afford the deepest insight into the meaning of the divine transcendence'. In presupposing subordination to be a bad thing, or in seeing it as a temporary factor by reason of the incarnation, that we 'may miss the manysplendoured thing'-perhaps the deepest expression of love and loving service.

L. Morris (p. 658),

“The Father is greater than I” presents difficulties for those who hold a trinitarian faith. The reference, however, is not to Christ’s essential being, but rather to his incarnate state. The incarnation involved the acceptance of a certain subordination as is insisted throughout the New testament. The saying must be understood in the light of “I and the Father are one” John is not asserting, as the Arians maintained, that Jesus was a created being. He is talking about the departure of the human being Jesus from this earth to be with the Father. In the light of this Jesus sees it as a matter for rejoicing when he returns to the Father.’

Barnabas Lindars (pp. 484-485)

‘Jesus is aware that his mission is entirely derivative from the Father and done in obedience to him. In spite of the horror of the Passion, he has nothing to fear, because he has surrendered himself to the Father (12:28), and the Father is in control of events. The sentence is thus intended to confirm the assurance which Jesus has already given to the disciples. It is a metaphysical statement only in so far as the concept of sonship necessarily implies subordination to some extent. It does not mean that Jesus is a lesser kind of being, not truly divine. But inevitably this verse played an immense part in the Christological controversies of the third and fourth centuries.’

Lindars says,

‘It is a metaphysical statement only in so far as the concept of sonship necessarily implies subordination to some extent,’ and by so saying leaves the way open for an ontological subordination which is not inferiority.

G.R. Beasley-Murray (p. 262)

‘The encouraging explanation of the reason for Jesus’ impending death and promise of his return, given in vv 2-3 should have brought joy to the disciples, since it is a departure to be with the Father; real love to Jesus would mean rejoicing with him in that prospect, A further ground of such joy is a reminder that the Father, who sent Jesus, and gave him his words to say and works to do, is greater than Jesus, and so everything is under control; God will work out his beneficent purpose through the terrifying events of the coming hours, and the disciples may be sure that he will do the like for them in their hours of testing . . .

The intent of “The Father is greater than I” is clear in the context, but the statement has caused immense discussion through the history of the Church, and it played a prominent part in the Arian controversy. The problem has been to reconcile the declaration with intimations in the Gospel of Jesus’ oneness with the Father in the Godhead (e.g. 1:118; 10:30; **20:28**) **and with** the Church’s credal affirmations of the co-equality of the Father and the Son. Without doubt the statement in v 28 is one of the many representations in the Fourth Gospel as to the obedience of the Son to the Father (e.g. 4:35; 8:29), as well as of the origin and end of the Son’s mediation in revelation and redemption as being in the Father (e.g., 1:14, 18; 5:21-27). It is doubtful therefore if the reference of v 28 can be limited solely to the conditions of the Incarnation (as maintained, e.g., by Cyril of Alexandria, Augustine etc.) . Barrett endeavours to take into account both aspects: ‘The Father is *fons divinitatis* in which the being of the Son has its source; the Father is God sending and commanding, the Son is God sent and obedient’.

Beasley-Murray’s rubric states,

‘It is doubtful therefore if the reference of v 28 can be limited solely to the conditions of the Incarnation (as maintained, e.g., by Cyril of Alexandria, Augustine etc.)’. He, too, leaves the way open for a deeper investigation of the meaning of subordination of the ontological kind. It seems to me that those opposing subordination fail to see that the ‘sending’ took place before the incarnation. The incarnation was result of the sending. Barrett’s statement, ‘The Father is *fons divinitatis* in which the being of the Son has its source; the Father is God\_ sending and commanding, the Son is God sent and obedient,’ recognizes the element of ontological subordination. One is reminded of Hebrews 10:5-6,

Consequently when Christ came into the world, he said,  
 ‘Sacrifice and offerings thou hast not desired,  
 But a body thou hast prepared for me;  
 In burnt offerings and sin offerings  
 thou hast taken no pleasure.  
 Then I said, “Lo, I have come to do thy will, O God,  
 ‘ as it is written of me in the roll of the book.”‘

as also of Psalm 40:8-from which is quoted, ‘I delight to do thy will, O my God.’ His delight in coming does not, somehow, comport with a further word of C.K. Barrett (p.391, cf. 770. ‘John is not thinking of the essential relations of the Father and the Son, but of the humiliation of the Son in his earthly life, a humiliation which now, in his death, reached both climax and its end.’ I think we need to take up the matter of humiliation in the light of ‘Carmen Christi’-Philippians 2:5-11, for this is the passage often called ‘the divine condescension’ and ‘the humiliation of Christ’. I would enter the caveat that there was no ‘condescension’ regarding the modern usage of that word<sup>9</sup>, and that Christ was in no way humiliated-not even by the death of the Cross. We can say that God’s name is profaned by covenant-breaking (cf. Ezek. 36:20ff.) and that His holiness has been despoiled but *essentially* this cannot be the case. Likewise the Son in his humanity could display the glory of God. John could say-of his incarnation and work-‘We have beheld his glory as of the only Son from the Father.’ In John’s Gospel we find two things

- (i) The Son of God-being the Son of Man-was one with the Father, and
- (ii) that he gladly confessed the Father to be greater than he. This by no means represented an antinomy.

## 2. In John 1:1 we have a text which speaks of the Son’s intimacy with the Father

‘In the beginning was the Word<sup>10</sup>, and the word was with God, and the Word was God.’ God, of course, was not the Word since the Word was to express<sup>11</sup> God, and yet he

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<sup>9</sup> The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary says ‘condescend is ‘to descend’, and figuratively ‘to stoop so far as a particular action is concerned, from one’s position of dignity or pride: to deign.’ It is doubtful whether Jesus saw it that way. I refer the reader back to what I have said under the heading, ‘Christ’s Humanity was True Humanity’ (pp.25-28), Only a proud person can be humiliated. Doubtless we would be humiliated by having to become incarnate in a lower order of a species, but the passage does not relate his ‘humbling’ to the act of incarnation but to the act of the Cross. Whilst what men and evil powers did to him would have humiliated us, *he was* not humiliated. As the doulos of God and Man he humbled himself to do the terrible work of the Cross. If we read the whole passage aright then I think we have to say that (i) he looked not only on his interests, but on the interests of others, and (ii) he counted others better than himself. The logical conclusion is that ‘to be God is to insist on becoming man’, especially if one is in the position of Sonship. He did not draw back from some humiliation to come but became incarnate to show the nature of God as Servant. For such there is no humiliation in becoming Man-the Second and True Adam and as for talk of subordination meaning inferiority that is scorned, and the teaching of the Servant being greatest opens the door to a new understanding of servanthship and the rehabilitation of Man as principally Servant by creation.

<sup>10</sup> Plummer (Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges, Commentary on St. John Cambridge, 1913, p.641 sums up, ‘The Logos of S, John, therefore, is not "the thing uttered" (*rhema*); nor "the one spoken of" or promised (ho legomenos) ; nor "he who speaks the word"(ho legon) ; nor a mere attribute of God- (as sophia or nous). But the Logos is the Son of God, existing from all eternity, and manifested in space and time in the Person of Jesus Christ, in whom had been hidden from eternity all that God had to say to man and who was the living expression of the Nature and Will of God.

<sup>11</sup> J.B.Philips in his translation equates ‘the Word’ with ‘the expression’.

could only do this if he were God and if God were not the Word. In particular we wish to look at the phrase 'was with God' *pros ton theon*.<sup>12</sup>

We conclude that the above text John 1:1--speaks of the Son's oneness with the Father. Being face to face with Him, being towards him and looking upon Him all indicate that oneness. He is the one who contemplates God-or how else could he communicate Him-yet himself must have deity or he would not be competent to communicate the Godhead. The fact that he is called 'the Word' differentiates him from God-Who in the Prologue of John's Gospel is 'the Father' whilst yet being himself one with Him. He was the Logos *before* time becoming the enfleshed Logos *in* time

### 3. The text of 5:18 speaks further of his oneness with the Father.

This was why the Jews sought all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the Sabbath but also called God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

We have observed before that the text does not say that as Son he made himself equal with the Father, but 'equal with God'<sup>13</sup>, i.e. that he was God. To call God his *own* (*idion*) Father was a unique claim. If he had said, 'Father of all men' and included himself that would not have been blasphemy. In the previous verse he had said, 'My Father is working still, and I am working.' this making himself parallel in working with

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<sup>12</sup> A. Plummer (p.64).

'*pros to theon*. *pros*= 'spud' or the French 'chez'; it expresses the distinct Personality of the Logos, which *en* would have obscured. We might render 'face to face with God,' or 'at home with God.' So., 'His sisters, are they not all with us (*pros hemas*)? Matt. xiii. 56. Cf. I Cor. xvi. 7; Gal. i:18; I Thess. iii. 4; Phlm. 13. *Ton theon* having the article means the Father.

C.K. Barrett. (pA30)

The Word does not come to be with God; the word is with God in the beginning. Cf. 17:5; at the ascension Jesus returns to the position of glory he occupied before creation.

Beasley- Murray.(p.10)

' "with God," in the sense of "in the presence of God" (Mark 6:3), or "in the fellowship of God" (I John 1:2-3), or even (as the next clause suggests "in union with God".

Lindars. (p. 84)

'Gr. *pros* ("in company with"; hence NEB: 'dwelt with'). Then usage is not classical, but it is found elsewhere in the NT, e.g. Mk 6:3. There may be an allusion here to Prov. 8:30 ("beside him").

Morris. (pp. 75-76)

' "The Word was with God' is probably as good a translation as we can manage for a difficult Greek expression., If the proposition is to be taken literally it means "the word was towards God'. John thinks of no opposition between the Word and the Father. The whole existence of the Word was oriented towards the Father. Probably we should understand from the preposition the two ideas of accompaniment and relationship.'

Raymond Brown.

'*in God's presence* We attempt here and in vs. 2 a rendering that will capture the ambiguity of the Gr. *pros ton theon*.

<sup>13</sup> Raymond Brown (p.213) suggests "'The Jews' are charging Jesus with rebellion and pride similar to Adam's sinful attempt to be like God (Gen. iii 5-6):' C.K. Barrett says (p.214), 'The kago of v. 17 places Jesus on a level with God.' Leon Morris adds (p.310), Jesus was not teaching ,men that God was the Father of all. The Jews would have accepted this. He was claiming that God was His Father in a special sense. H was claiming that he partook of the same nature as His Father.'

God whom he called 'my Father'. In any case our point is that he claimed God was his Father, and in this sense he was equal with God. The Jews would have understood that a claim to equality with the Father was *not* made, but the claim that he-Jesus had deity was made, i.e. that he was equal with God.

#### 4. The text of John 10:29-33 relates to Jesus' implicit claims to deity.

'My Father, who has given them [the sheep] to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the **Father are one.**' **The Jews took up stones again** to stone him. Jesus answered them, 'I have shown many good works from the Father, for which of these do you stone me?' The Jews answered him, 'It is not for a good work that we stone you but for blasphemy; because you, being a man, make yourself God.'<sup>14</sup>

The matter is clear enough. Jesus is certainly claiming he is God by using the term 'my Father' and then saying, 'I and the Father are one.' His explanation of verses 37-38 is on the basis of his works and his relationship, 'If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works that you may know and understand *that the Father is in me, and I am in the Father.*' Of these two verses C.K. Barrett says (pp.320-321), 'The crux of the argument is in the character of Jesus' works. His sonship and his apostleship could be disproved by deeds not congruent with them. Cf. 8:39f.-the *erga* of Abraham and his descendants . . . to recognize that the works of Jesus were the works of God would imply that God had sent Jesus.'

For our purposes the passage is valid not merely in a metaphysical-way-that Jesus was of the essence of the Father-but that the works which the Father did and that Jesus did, showed his true Sonship. Later we will see that these works are the works of a worker, i.e. a servant. This is the substance of his discussion in John 14:8-14 where his works will be superseded by those who will serve after his going to the Father. We will need to discuss the matter of his glory which in its turn glorifies the Father (v. 13), 'Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.' The Son never ceases to work for the people God has given to him.

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<sup>14</sup> Saunders and Mastin (p. 258) in speaking of verse 30-'I and the Father are one,' comment, 'That the Son and the Father are one (en, neuter, literally one thing), is not offered as a proposition in metaphysics, but simply as the explanation why an attack on the Son is also an attack on the Father, and so bound to fail..But the complete unity of Son and Father, which has already been expressed in others terms in i.1; v. 17 ff., forms the basis and justification for the later orthodox affirmation of the unity of substance between the divine Persons'. Of the same verse Raymond Brown says (p. 403) 'This was a key verse in the early Trinitarian controversies. On one extreme the Monarchians (Sabellians) interpreted it to mean "one person," although the "one" is neuter, not masculine. On the other extreme, the Arians interpreted this text, which was often used against them, in terms of moral unity of will. The Protestant commentator Bengel, following Augustine, sums up the orthodox position: "Through the word 'are' Sabellius is refuted; through the word "one" so is Arius.'

## **The Matter of Hierarchy Functional and Relational**

### **The Trinity the Source, the Paradigm, and the Power For all Human Relationships**

We have seen that the relationships between the Three Persons and their Unity as One God would be unknowable for us were it not for the revelation God has given us, and especially in and by His Son and through His Spirit. It is an extraordinary thing that human beings are permitted, let alone moved personally by God, to view these relationships. Then it is even more extraordinary that through the gift of adoption following the liberating action of the atonement-that human beings are reconciled fully by God, to Himself made one with Him since their lives are hidden with Christ in Him. Thus the powerful truth of the Triune God dwelling in the persons of His people, and they dwelling in the Triune Godhead. Via the *imago dei* resultant relationships must emerge and they are the only true relationships human beings can know since they derive from and comport with the law of Christ-the true law of God. Of course the reality of Divine love (*agape*) is the great power by which true relationships obtain (I John 4:11,12,19).

What we must keep in mind is that these relationships do not come as prescriptions. They are not legal requirements or even specified roles although they often appear to be. They issue from the archetype of the Godhead. They are also linked with the principle of hierarchy. Speaking of the *imago Dei* Thielicke (op. cit. p.155) says, 'It is characteristic that the various references to the divine likeness in Genesis (1:26; 5:1; 9:6; cf. also Wis. 2:23; Sir. 17:3) do not give statements of ontological content but restrict themselves to these hierarchical relations, to the position of man in the total cosmos. This is true even of a verse like Genesis 5:1, where the concept of the divine likeness is, as it were, a preamble to the first genealogy in the Bible, the one that ends with Noah.'

### **The Matter of all Human Relationships**

There can be no question that human relationships commence with creation, with Man made in the image of God, and with the man and the woman. Whilst there is some disclosure of the Godhead all is not closed. Likewise whilst we can understand the *imago Dei* there must be much of it which is not disclosed. Only what is disclosed of the Trinity can help us understand Man. We have argued that as the likeness and reflection of God Man-i.e. the human race-have not only the paradigm for relationships in the Godhead, but the relationships of the Persons are the only way in

which true human relationships can obtain. It is essential, then, to know whether relationships within the Godhead are hierarchical. We cannot deny the hierarchies in which we presently live but we ask whether they are of the Divine order, and not an order which comes from human fallenness.

## The Matter of Hierarchy

Biblically Man is hierarchical in relation to the creation, i.e. he is above it, and rules over it-i.e. he has hierarchical placement and responsibility to rule over all other creatures-yet he is under God who not only calls him to lordship over it, but also exercises Lordship over him. He prohibits him from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The mandate of Genesis 1:28 is presumably not beyond Man's capacity, nor is it in anyway inhibitive for Man qua Man, any more than the prohibition to eat of the tree is *essentially* inhibitive. The question arises whether in the Triune Godhead and the relation of the Persons there is an hierarchy. For example is the Father as *fons divinitatis* in hierarchical relationship to the Son since the Son proceeds from Him? Likewise is the Spirit in an hierarchical order?

These questions are asked because they have great bearing on our whole thesis. If there is an hierarchical order within the Godhead then there can be no questioning of it in the human order i.e. in the functioning of the *imago Dei*. It is without question that as a result of the fall part of God's judgement on the fallen couple was to declare the hierarchical rule of the man over the woman, 'I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth your children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.' Whilst accepting this self-evident *fact* that following the fall there is an hierarchical order in marriage some scholars speak of it being the result of the fall, but deny it is a true ontological-i.e. creational-order. The same argument is sometimes used of the whole principle of law and authority, i.e., that had there been no fall there would not have been law and authorities, since it is only man's sinfulness which calls for them.

There are two ways to go about researching whether hierarchy is part of the order of creation the first being to examine the biblical accounts of creation, and the second to find some situation in which there is an unquestionable hierarchical order and examine it.

### (i) The Creation of Man

The materials of Genesis 1:26-31 show that Man's creation is purely in the context of *vocation*. The *imago Dei* must not be viewed in any way which separates man from the responsibility and task of ruling 'over fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and, over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' God as Creator rules over all things, but Man is delegated this position. 'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created *them*.' Genesis 5:2 adds, 'When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created *them*, and he blessed *them*, and named *them* Man. There can be no question that the man and the woman together are Man, i.e. in union they constitute Man. Man is a unitive male-female entity, dynamical in relationship with God, serving Him in the mandate and one with Him in His purposes. It is *as one* that they undertake the fulfilling of the Divine mandate. If-following Thielicke-we see the *imago Dei* as relational and teleological in the fulfilling of the mandate, then we can see that the relationship between the man and the woman is one which subsists within

the action, rather than in some prescribed relational category, as such. Questions of the male looking at the woman, and the woman at the man, i.e. living vis-a-vis instead one entity facing the creation as God's dynamic image should not be raised. The account of the man-as Man-naming the creatures confirms his place in the hierarchy, but the woman is missing. She comes a helpmeet, and she is a special creation of God, but not as the Man was created is she created from him. Thus she is 'bone of my bone and flesh of me flesh'. She is integrally part of him. Now they are together Man and cannot be thought of as apart in being Human, i.e., Man, but we must see them as functionally, teleologically, vocationally active. Does this then constitute any form of hierarchy? If by hierarchy we mean a course of members graduated in descending order of subordination from one who is superordinate, and if we understand elements of superiority and inferiority according the places of the members, then the answer must be, 'No!' If however, we mean 'A course of members functionally moving together for the fulfilment of a task, in which the hierarchical order is required,' then the answer is, 'Yes!'

We constantly face the psychological and emotional difficulties that come from being under another person, taking directions from that one. The deeper issue of how we relate to God in His authority and 'superordination', and so consequently relate to others who have authority over us, is really the basic matter. Any enquiry into the matters of law, authority and hierarchy should take this into consideration.

### **(ii) Ontological Hierarchy**

When we talk about ontological hierarchy we must keep in mind that the division of the Trinity into two categories-ontological and economic-is not satisfactory. God is not subsistent without being actus. We must keep in mind the corresponding actional nature of the *imago Dei*. We now take one or two hierarchies that came into being at creation. In Genesis 1:14-18, i.e., the hierarchy of sun and moon, and Man's rule over creation. As man was to rule over all living creatures, so each of these was to rule-the sun by day and the moon by night. What was the place and effect of these hierarchs? The answer is: they had a task to perform-a vocational task of goodness to give light, and to mark out days and nights. There is also the sense that they were to keep creation within the prescribed boundaries of their rule. If the creation of man and woman in hierarchical order were such, then the order would have been purely with a view to ruling creation for its own good, and presumably, for God's glory (cf. Psa. 8:3ff.; Psa. 19:1ff.). It is difficult to escape this principle as we read the text. Linked with this is the whole matter of the creation being subjected to futility through the fall of man and-in particular-the curse upon the earth. The rehabilitation of the sons of God into 'the liberty of the glory' will also rehabilitate the creation: hence man's hierarchical authority must have been meant only for good (Gen. 1:31).

If there is a Divine hierarchy, and there is a human hierarchy then each can be considered, but we do have a hierarchy that involves both God and man in I Corinthians 11:3, and this should be helpful in establishing the principle of hierarchy, 'But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of the woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.' The order is interesting. It starts with Christ and ends with God. It is not stated as a descending order even though it can be seen that way. Why is it set out in this way? Because Paul is talking of the order of a man and his wife. The man does not stand alone as superordinate to the wife. He stands under Christ, and this alters matters considerably. If he were standing alone in his headship then the wife would be immediately and only subject to him and his approach

would conditioned by his autonomous headship. As Christ is his head his effective headship is of his Lord. Likewise Christ is not standing outside the Father in exercising his Lordship of the man. The wife is not outside her husband since Man is man and woman-a unitive entity-face-to-face. Both are standing together in the *imago Dei* and as the *imago Dei*-as active in vocation fulfilling the will of God, being-as one-purposive.

There is more to it than even that. There is the *perichoresis-circumincissio* that obtains throughout the hierarchy. Christ is in God, the husband in Christ, the woman in the husband-the relational hierarchy. God is in Christ, Christ is in the man, the man is in the woman-still the relational hierarchy. All are mutually interdwelling one another and all others. This is the relational unity which is Trinitarian and which is extended to man-given in the gift of the *imago Dei*. All questions of domination, superiority-inferiority dissolve. All are one: all share the liberty of the Godhead-subsistent in the Three Persons, extended in creation, damaged in the fall and rehabilitated in redemption.

We must face the fact that we cannot get back to the primal union with its innocence and bliss of the first couple. Even with redemption and the presence of the Godhead we cannot fully know what utter unity is-i.e., the unity of the man and the woman in full relationship-but we certainly have a *sense* of it. Its perfect experience does not take place in this penultimate age. Such unity is fiercely contested by the world, the flesh, and the devil. Fallen man has opted for humanistic egalitarianism trusting that this is the way to and of true unity.

So important is the matter of hierarchy especially in the face of the present feminist-masculist debate, that we need to pursue it fully. If indeed there is a hierarchy within the Triune Godhead-and I maintain there is-then it will figure significantly fore the whole matter of human relationships. For this reason I have written an Appendix, 'Superordination and Subordination' which is quite long and contains material that is pertinent to the line we are pursuing namely whether law, authority, and hierarchy are ontological or not, and if so then what changes have come about in relationships because of the fall and the consequent curse, and how do we go about them? The short precis of Appendix-I which I set out below is asserted but not defended here. I have attempted its justification in the text of the Appendix. Following the material of the Appendix we will resume our discussion of human relationships, commencing with the primal couple.

## **Summary of Appendix One: Superordination and Subordination**

Commencing with the observation that no one comes to discussion without some bias, and that bias can only be checked by living in the dynamics of justification, it was also suggested that because of the fall man cannot be impartial to the idea of authority and law. We must see then whether within the Godhead-i.e. amongst the Persons-there is a superordination-subordination. If this were so the matter of human superordination-subordination hierarchies would be reasonably established.

Because the interdwelling of the three Persons, the usual view of hierarchy-were it to exist in the Godhead-would have to change. The truth is that here has ever been the interdwelling and the *perichoresis-circumincissio* of the Godhead. Thus mutuality spells authentic sociality (ontological), and since all is in the context of economic-revelation activity that which is ontological is not static but dynamic, i.e. in interpersonal relationships.

The texts in John's Gospel of 14:29; 1:1 (espec. *pros ton theon*); 5:18 and 10:29 were dealt with, especially in present commentary. This led on to discussion of the ascended Christ's position in the cosmos, and in this aeon. This was actuated by the idea of some theologians

(cf. the *Qtdctaique* vult) that the Son was equal to God as touching his deity but inferior as touching his humanity. In order to preserve the equality of the Son the work of incarnation and redemption (*opere ad extra*) was put on an inferior level to the ontological subsistence of Triune Godhead (*opere in extra*). It was then argued that there is an order of superordination and subordination within the Triune Godhead, but it must be understood in the light of relationship, the counsel of God as seen in salvation history and the cooperating of all Persons in this work-the economic-revelation work relating to the *telos* of God.

The whole matter of Christ's incarnation as humiliation was discussed and the idea negated in favour of its being a Servant work, and therefore not humiliating, but indeed the highest work of all, if we can rightly speak of 'levels' in the Trinitarian action.. Exegetically Christ's 'humbling' of himself-not to be mistaken for humiliation-was not in relation to incarnation but to crucifixion, so that work amongst mankind cannot be denoted as inferior to what might be called 'celestial' work.

The whole matter of superordination-ordination was then discussed and the ontological joy both of authority and submission, command and obedience was examined. It was claimed that understanding subordination-serving must be as much a revelation as any other truth of God. Contemporary views of the matter were discussed, especially because the claim was made that subordination-serving is the highest form of personal being, including Moltmann's view-linked with contemporary process theology of God's patri-compassionism, i.e. not the heretical patripassionism, but total identification with Man and his suffering, serving Man in some way through this shared suffering.

### (iii) The Outworking of Hierarchy in Submission and Obedience

A current thinking that headship is related only to source or origin, e.g. the source of the Son is the Father, the source of woman is man (see Gen. 2:18-24) so that headship is benign and in no way involves ruling or the giving of commands. This claim that headship (whether of the Father, the Son or the husband) does not involve ruling or commands cannot be substantiated. This can be seen from the following:

#### (i) The Father's Superordination in Regard to the Son

(a) The Father commanded the Son to come into the world. Over 40 times in John's Gospel Jesus uses the verb for being sent-by the Father.

(b) Jesus spoke of the Father giving him commands (John 10:18; 12:49; 14:31) and said, '... I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love'. In John 12:50 he said, 'I know that his commandment is eternal life'.

(c) The Father took the initiative in the incarnation and the atonement (Rom. 3:24-25; II Cor. 5:21; I John 4:9-10, 13). The Son was commanded to do these things.

#### (ii) Christ's Willing Subordination in Regard to the Father

(a) Christ was under the Father's authority (see above, and also John 5:19-20; 8:28; 14:10).

(b) The Father gave the Son authority (Matt. 11:27; John 3:35; 5:22ff.; 10:27-30; Matt. 28:18; see also Matt. 3:17; Ps. 2:6-7; Isa. 42:1; Rev. 2:27; 3:21f.).

(c) The Son learned obedience (Heb. 5:9-10; cf. 2:10) and was obedient (John 9:4; 10:17; 14:30-31; Phil. 2:8).

(d) He rejoiced in the Father's will (Matt. 11:25-26; Heb. 10:7/ Ps. 40:8; John 4:34).

(e) He said many times that he had kept the Father's will. See John 15:10: 'I have kept my Father's commandments'.

Note: Jesus could say, 'The Father is greater than I' (John 14:28), and, 'I and the Father are one' (John 10:30).

(iii) Christ Gave Commands to His Followers

- (a) Matthew 7:24: 'Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them'.
- (b) Luke 6:46: 'Why do you call me "Lord, Lord," and not do what I tell you?'
- (c) John 13:34 (cf. 15:12): 'A new commandment I give to you'.
- (d) John 14:15: 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments'. John 14:21: 'He who has my commandments and keeps them'.
- (e) John 15:10: 'If you keep my commandments', cf. John 8:51: 'If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death'.
- (f) Matthew 28:20: 'all that I have commanded you'.
- (g) Acts 1:2: 'after he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit to the apostles', cf. Acts 10:42: 'he commanded us to preach to the people'.
- (h) See Christ's commands to Paul (Acts 9, 22, 26).
- (i) Notice that the Gospel is a command. To believe it is to obey this command and come to 'the obedience of faith'. (See Acts 6:7; 17:30; Rom. 10:16ff.; I Thess. 1:9; II Thess. 1:7-8; cf. Rom. 1:5; 15:18; 16:26.)

We can sum up these statements by concluding that the headship of the Father is one in which, and by which, He gives commands to His Son, and His Son likewise in his headship gives commands to his followers. What, then, is unacceptable in the giving of commands? Was not the essence of the Law (*Torah*) instruction, and not legislation? Is the Law not 'the Way' rather than 'the Legislation'? Would not we be without direction if there were no law? Is not the Law 'the outshining of God's nature'? Is it not holy, and spiritual, and good (Rom. 7:12)?

The question arises: 'Do his followers in any way give commands to others within the church? Do elders, for example, give commands, and in any sense at all do husbands-heads of their wives-ever give commands? If such are given, are they only "domineering over those in your charge", or are they protective directions by those appointed "overseers of the flock"?' The answer must be, 'Yes!', but we need to check out this reply.

### **Submission, Subjection, and Submissiveness**

One way of doing this is to examine the verb *hupotasso* which in its various forms active, middle, passive, aorist, etc.-means 'to place, put, or arrange under', 'to subordinate', 'to bring under influence', 'to be subordinated', 'to submit oneself', 'to render obedience', 'to be submissive', with the nouns 'subordination' and 'submissiveness' (*hupotage*). This will help us to see (a) ontological categories of authority which should be obeyed, and (b) categories given by God in a sinful world, and which, though temporary, are nevertheless binding and conducive to good order, harmony, and conduct.

The *verb* is used of: Jesus submitting himself to his parents (Luke 2:51). The demons being subjected to the apostles (Luke 10:17-20). Principalities, powers and 'all things' to Christ (Eph. 1:21-22; 1 Pet. 3:22; I Cor. 15:24-27 [cf. Ps. 8:5; 110:1]; Heb. 2:5-8 [cf. Heb. 1:3; 10:13]). Christians to authorities (Rom. 13:1-7; I Pet. 2:13f.; Titus 3:1). Wives to husbands (Col. 3:18; Eph. 5:22-24; I Pet. 3:1; Titus 2:5). Children of God to 'the Father of spirits' (Heb. 12:9). Members of the body to each other (Eph. 5:21). The younger men to the elders (I Pet. 5:5) Members to 'good men', fellow workers and labourers (I Cor. 16:16). The church to Christ (Eph. 5:24). Spirits of the

prophets to prophets (I Cor. 14:32). Servants to masters (I Pet. 2:18). Slaves to masters (Titus 2:9). The creation to vanity (Rom. 8:20). Sin (negatively) to the law (Rom. 8:7).

The *noun* is used of: Women as subordinate (I Tim. 2:11), children as submissive (I Tim. 3:4) 'Obedience in acknowledging the Gospel of Christ' (II Cor. 9:13), non-yielding where the Gospel is in peril (Gal. 2:5).

Also related to subjection and submission is obedience. In Titus 2:9 slaves are to be subject to their masters. In Colossians 3:22 they are to obey (vb. *hupakouo*) their masters. In this case, if we bring these two references together, subjection calls for obedience. In Hebrews 13:17 (cf. 13:7) obedience (vb. *peitharcho*) and submission (vb. *hupeiko*, 'to yield, give way, be submissive') are linked. In this case the church is to obey its rulers (elders?), and be submitted to them. Children are to obey (*hupakouo*) their parents, Ephesians 6:1 and Colossians 3:20 (cf. Luke 2:51), and in the first case submission is enjoined (Eph. 5:21), whilst in the second case, the children cannot be unsubmitted if the wife is called to be (Col. 3:18). In I Peter 3:5-6 the apostle describes 'holy women who hoped in God' as being submissive (vb. *hupotasso*) to their husbands, and says 'Sarah obeyed [vb. *hupakouo*] Abraham, calling him lord'. Submission and obedience are here joined.

These references referring to subjection, submission and obedience are set forth as objectively as possible to show that there is a divinely appointed order, and a demanded obedience. We will discuss the principles of subjection and obedience below, for they may well be different from what they seem as most of us view them. Certainly they must never be interpreted in a legalistic sense.

#### **(iv) The Total Environment of Hierarchy, Commands, Submission and Obedience**

Often in seeking what is ontological so that we may press ourselves to conformity with it we forget two sets of factors. *The first set* is to do with *communion*, i.e. the communion within the Triune Godhead which is the relational situation of true being, as well as the true *source* for true human being and living. If we forget this then our research into the ontological can be-and generally is-harsh, cold, unrelational and even legalistic. It is often metaphysical to the loss of personal, existential and relational categories of experience. We are trying to discover and apply a 'norm' of relationships without necessarily understanding and living in the *communion* which is trinitarian, and which is shared by the Godhead with elect man. When this understanding and experience of the Divine communion with Man comes him it issues from the overwhelming love of God for him, love which is poured into the heart and love which becomes the living environment for his life and fellowship. Partaking in the Divine nature not only dissolves the ancient enmity against God, authority and law, but it builds a rich new love for it. When we keep in mind the fact that such love does not only come to him personally and singly-the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me'-but that it comes corporately, i.e., in the body of Christ, in the full fellowship of the brethren then we know that the corporate personal environment is that of love-a theme which Paul, John and Peter pursue with vigour<sup>1</sup>.

*The second set of factors* is the varied environment in which we love. All men whether they wish it or not 'live and move and have their being' in God, but they dislike this Presence and the knowledge of God (Rom. 1:28) so they suppress it (Rom. 1:18). They are antagonists of God (Rom. 1:30) and side with evil powers that likewise

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. (i) Paul, Romans 5:5;

are at enmity with God (cf. Eph. 2:1-3). It is in the context of this world with its 'flesh' and 'devil' that all have to live (cf. I Cor. 7:31; I John 2:14-15). Thus Paul says we are those 'upon whom the ends of the ages (*aeons*) has come' (I Cor. 10:12). If we add to this the presence of the curse on the earth, and existential flux of human existence, then we can see the difficulty of discovering, applying and maintaining what we might call 'ontological norms'. That is why we have to recognize there is a 'battle for relationships'. The first set of factors assists in overcoming the second set of factors, but there are always 'provisional' as against 'ontological' solutions in this penultimate age. These must not be seen as lessening the nature of God's will but they have to do with law. In regard to God's will there can never be a change but with regard to the principle of given law there can be. Thieliicke sees what he calls the refraction of God's law, that is that in the light of man's sinfulness elements of amelioration. He says (op. cit. p. 147),

The doctrine of the Law must always be viewed against the background of the fall. The dark foil of this fallen aeon, which flees from God and blatantly defies him but is nonetheless called back by him must be considered at every point when we speak of the Law of God. Whatever we say theologically concerning the nature of the Law must take its bearing from the Pauline statement that the Law was "added because of transgressions" (Gal. 3:19). From this it follows that one cannot understand the Law simply as "the *will* of God'. The Law is rather God's will as it pertains to us [*quoad nos*]. It is his will as it now appears in the refracted light of any situation. Perhaps one might even say that it is the will of God as altered by a fallen world.

Thieliicke goes on to describe the amelioration of the law for certain conditions, but our purpose in taking his point is to show that any legalism in regard to what is ontological needs the tempering of grace-not in order to change the law, but to have a right approach to it so that we do not see it is a piece of inflexible and timeless legislation but the law as it comes from the nature of God, within Whom there has ever been both Law and Gospel at the one time. Linked with this, and something to be kept in mind, is the proneness we have to self justification so that we always have to fight the tendency to go back on grace. The pride of the religious ego directs us to self-effort, and all forms of evil have a hand in encouraging this. In this climate relationships are prejudiced since self-justification puts us at odds with all persons.

Another strong element in the environment of hierarchy for submission or otherwise is that of the word which we hear. We can say that we are always hearing one word or another, of God or man, of self or others, and the word we hear determines the strength or fragility of our relationships. The primal woman heard God's voice in regard to eating of the tree, but she unheeded the word He had spoken when she listened to the word of the serpent. The man listened to the voice of his wife-unhearing God. The proverb in Israel, 'Where there is no prophecy the people cast off restraint,' is also translaterable as 'Where there is no vision the people perish,' i.e. prophecy (vision) is the word of God through the prophet and when it comes to hearers they act upon it. If they have no word they do not know how to act. We can rightly talk about the canonical word but the measure of the canonical is not that it is received by the canonists, but that it is already the word of God which *is recognized* as innately canonical.

Every day we must hear the word, whether it be the inscripturated word (the Bible) or whether it comes to us through other means. We may study the Bible without it speaking to us, and the fault lies not in it but in us. We do not know where to go and what to, what to say and how to act apart from the word. This is not to say that God denies us the word, but that it is in His presence that we hear it. Thus the communion

of which we speak above is the environment of the word, and the two are inseparable. Where the word is heard relationships have their true environment. In the company of the Persons we know the love of God and we hear the will of God in order to do it.

So then, in the context of the communion with God, with our fellow creatures, in the living of life vis-a-vis the fallen world, the curse, and the dynamical outcome of human guilt, we can know true relationships, and more so when we keep hearing the word of God to us. There is a responsibility on our part to remain in, and use this environment.

### **The Alternatives to Non-Hierarchical Relationality, Sociality and Differentiation**

It is the heart of this thesis that what is ontological and economic for the Godhead is the same for Man, though for Man on his own level of humanhood. i.e., that in the imago *Dei* he reflects the being and acts of the Godhead. If our reasoning is that the fall demanded law and authority-vis-a-vis the sinfulness of man-then we have to come to terms that is the way things will have to be. That is we must still live in the curse on the earth, the woman must have pain in childbirth and have her husband rule over her, and the soil must bring problems to man as he tills it. In the wider issue we must live with law and authority. The most sensible thing to do--on this score--would be to approach the whole matter with joy and acceptance, and utilize it properly. The cherubim and the flaming turning sword seems to say, 'Make the most of what you have out there. You cannot get into what is here.' History abounds in invented alternatives to God's schema for fallen man and creation. When it comes to relationships those who think law and authority a necessary and unavoidable expedient will have to be realistic and adapt at every point.

If, however, law and authority are not expedients devised to meet the contingency of the fall, and of fallen celestial powers pitting themselves against God, i.e., if law and authority come down from the Godhead are a gift to man-both creationally (ontologically) and soteriologically, then we must face the whole matter of law, authority and relationships on an entirely different basis. Thielicke rightly warns against seeing the law as a static timeless entity. He says (op. cit. pp. 149-150),

It would be quite erroneous to try to understand this law in terms of the 'abstract truth' it contains or to ascribe to it the kind of 'timeless validity' expressed, for example, in the categorical imperative. The moment we do this the Decalogue becomes 'natural' law, and the axis of a corresponding system of 'natural' law. It becomes a moral idea which moves in the void and is no longer rooted in history. The existence of a system of natural law always indicates a crisis in the concept of history. Behind the historical phenomenon, behind the positive law which changes, there is sought a constant factor, a timeless Platonic idea of law, an abstract norm, of the moral. To be sure, the negative judgement is not the only criticism which theology has to make of natural law; if that were the case it would imply a thoroughgoing committal of theology to positivism. Nevertheless, behind every attempt to interpret the law of God simply as natural law there is an attack on history. History becomes mere illustration or mythical adornment of that which is timelessly valid.

Thielicke says (p.147) that the law must always be viewed against the background of the fall, 'The dark foil of this fallen aeon, which flees from God and blatantly defies him but is nonetheless called back by him, must be considered at every point when we speak of the Law of God.' We must take into consideration, he says,

the fact that ‘the law was added because of transgressions’ (Gal. 3:19), and it would seem from this that Thielicke is saying the law only came because of sins, so that his view is the first one nominated above. That is not true of Thielicke. He sees the law as the will of God, but then not as simply that will. ‘The law is rather God’s will; as it pertains to us [*quoad nos*].’

Law on any treatment must be seen as beneficial. It is a strange thing that the punishment/curse as meted out to the woman and the man in Genesis 3 has been looked upon as a burden and a problem. Rarely does it seem to be viewed as an immense blessing. Law and authority are inseparably linked. Few would deny the authority of God and the delegated authority to the sun and the moon and man. The view of authority and law which fallen make takes make them unacceptable is ontological, but rightly they the means of blessing for the human being of faith. Because we as sinful beings have sinful view of law and authority does not mean that both these things are deficient. The view in Israel of God’s authority and His law come as a revelation. The resources of the Old Testament bear rich witness to the beauty and wonder both of authority and God’s law. This is surely part of the case for both authority and law.

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## Trinitarian Love and Pastoral Ministry

### Pastoral Trinitarian Love

What do we mean by Trinitarian love? We mean the love the three Persons have mutually within the Godhead, and their love as God for the creation He has made. That love has redeemed elect Man from the fall and its consequences. Because Man has been redeemed by that love the elect then love one another. That love is worked out

- (i) in the pastoral situation and
- (ii) in the larger societal situation.

As pastors and leaders we have to know the nature of that love, the significance of the command to love, and how that love works out in the community. We have to consider the fact that since love is first of all within a hierarchy, it may be that love operates hierarchically. If so, then this is an important theological fact for love praxis.

### God is Love

'God is love' is a statement made explicitly only twice in the Scriptures (I John 4:8; 4:16) and in its context not as a metaphysical or theological statement so much as a statement linked with the practical expression of that love

- (i) by God (John 4:9-10, 16:18; cf. 3:16) and
- (ii) by believers (4:11, 19-5:2). 1 John 4:7 is important—all love *comes from God*.

When we seek to understand

- (i) God is love, and so
- (ii) all love comes from God, we first see that God is not merely loving but God is Himself love, and secondly that any true loving on and within the human plane of living must come from God since (a) man is a creature dependent upon God for all things and (b) fallen man is devoid of love because of his rebellion and because he is not dependent upon his Creator. I John 4:7-19 shows us
- (i.) all love comes from God,
- (ii.) God displays His love in effective propitiation for sins,
- (iii.) we love because (a) we have been born of God, and (b) God first loved us, and such love is natural, and to refuse to love is unnatural. To receive it is then to go on to love God and others.

### The Nature of Trinitarian Love

The statement 'God is love' may well refer to the whole Godhead, but in the order of **the Trinity** the Father is prior to the Son and the Spirit since both proceed from Him. In that sense the Father is love, the Son is loved and the Spirit the Spirit of love. Of course the Son responds by loving the Father, and the Spirit is concerned with love. The Son is called 'the Son of his love' (Col. 1:13). In this sense the Father can be said to be love, the Son to be loved, and the Spirit to be 'the Spirit of love' (Rom. 15:30).

The references to 'the love of God' (cf. are many and almost certainly refer to the Father. There are specific references to the love of the Father for the Son (John 3:35; Col. 1:13; John 10:17) and one of them of great importance, namely John 17: 24 which speaks of the love of the Father before the foundation of the world. There is then love for those who are called His children (cf. I John 3:1; 4:12, etc.), and finally love for all the world (John 3:16; Matt. 5:43-48). In II Corinthians 13:14 love is said to be of the Father, grace of the Son and fellowship of the Spirit. The conclusion that the Father is primarily love is important, as this means love is of the hierarchical order and that is how it would be on the human level.

In regard to the Trinity the Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father, and-it would seem-such love is always spoken of in relation to the *action* of the Persons i.e. the outworking of the will and purpose of God (cf. Matt. 3:17; 17:5; John 3:35; 10: 14:30-31). On the human level this also the case e.g. John 14:15; cf. 14: 23). The Spirit is always connected with love-Rom. 5:5; 15:30; Gal. 5:22-23; Col. 1:8).

Divine love is not abstract, nor is it merely an element of the Godhead<sup>1</sup>. Love is the nature of God and is the oneness of the attributes of goodness, holiness, righteousness and truth. The expression of love within the Triune relationships is relational, and is shown in the actions of giving, honouring and serving. Love is 'other-persons centred', i.e. 'other persons-concentred'. Seeing love on the Divine level in terms of 'the mind of Christ' in Philippians 2:1-8, each Person-to speak in human terms--- looks on the interests of the others, thinks others better than himself, i.e. put the other first, and empties himself for the other. This means that all the gifts and abilities that constitute one Person are utilized **for the other**, without question of oneself. So far as God is concerned these relationships within Himself are the same relationships exercised towards the world He has made. In love He predestined men and women to be His sons according to the purpose of His will (Eph. 1:5, and so in love predestined them to be conformed to the image of His Son Rom. 8:29) that these children of His might know the 'liberty of the glory of the sons of God' (Rom.8:21). The highest, noblest category the Divine love can accomplish in the created humanity it loves is to give it fellowship with Himself (I John 1:3) via sonship of the Father and brotherhood of the Son, making it to partake of the divine nature (II Peter 1:4). This is the Trinitarian love which has come down to man via the atonement and the descent of the Spirit .

Our conclusion is, then, that there is mutual love in the Triune Godhead-i.e. God is love-but in the mode of hierarchical relationships commencing with the Father, and that that love is not simply a quality or even an attribute but that it is the Being of God always expressed-i.e. it is always being worked out-an *action*. The inner love **relationships** of the Godhead are operative towards the creation, and especially towards Man, in *creation* (I John 2:7ff.; I Pet. 4:19; cf. Ps. 104), in *redemption* (John 3:16; **I John 3:16**; I John 4:9-10), and in *filiation* (I John 4:9-10,16-18).

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<sup>1</sup> It has been customary to speak of God's attributes as love, goodness, holiness, righteousness and truth, and this is surely acceptable. At the same time, God is not really constituted of numerous attributes. He is love, holiness, goodness, righteousness and truth, e.g. God is not so much loving as love, holy as holiness itself-and so on. Indeed these five so-called attributes are the One being of God. It is impossible to speak of God's holiness as distinct from His love-and so. The I AM is who and what He is. On the human level we can speak of ourselves in terms of derived 'attributes' or 'qualities', since we reflect God. We may have conflicts with love and righteousness, but essentially they are the one-even as reflected communicable attributes derived from God and expressed as the *imago Dei*.

## **The Trinitarian Love that Comes to Man**

The revelation of God's love as found in Romans 5:5-11 and I John 4:9,10, 16-18 (cf. I Cor. 2:6-10), and which is brought by the Spirit (Rom. 5:5; John 16:32-15; cf. I Cor. 2:10) brings the response of love in the recipient of the revelation, e.g. (John 4:19), 'We love because he first loved us.' Man loves because he was loved by God prior to his loving God. This may well be said to be the order in Trinitarian love, i.e. the Father loved the Son who loved Him in response, and the Spirit would also be loved by the Father and the Son. The *perechoresis-circumincessio* of love proceeds continually, but its hierarchical order shows us that love is not arbitrary free-lance or is even involuntary, and this is important for man who is commanded to love, and who must love along the lines of the law, especially as that law has come to be known as 'the law of Christ', but we will revert to this point later.

Man, then loves God when he is loved by God (I John 4:19, cf. 4:11-12). Primarily he sees God's love-and God as love-through the Cross (I John 4:9-10; Rom. 5:5-11). Then he is born of God and so knows God is love (I John 4:7-8), and is free to recognize God's love in *providence* (Matt. 5:43:48; cf. Psa. 104), in *the forgiveness of sins* (Matt. 26:28; Jer. 31:31-34; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:13-14; I John 4:10; cf. Rom. 3:24), and in filiation (I John 3:1; cf. Gal. 4:4-7). The gift of love has now come to man (Rom. 5:5) and the gift has come via the Spirit (Rom. 5:5; cf. Gal. 5:22-23). Love, then has come to the community of Christ. It has come by the Spirit as of Pentecost-a point we must now discuss.

What we need to note at this point is the ordered nature of the community, even though there was a great freedom of the Spirit. The hierarchy of the gifts as seen in Ephesians 4:7-11 and I Corinthians 12:4-28 was in operation. Primarily the apostles led the community, although soon the elders were evident as the leaders of the Jerusalem church. The 'order' of deacons was possibly inherent in those who served at tables. The regular hours of prayer, and the social life of the community were firmly established. Ecclesial life was ordered and not a confusion. When-as in Acts 4-the apostles were persecuted the church was a consolidated fellowship which prayed together effectively.

## **The Action of Trinitarian Love in the New, Community**

**When Christ** commanded his disciples to love even as he had loved them, the constraint and ability to do that awaited the revelation of God as love through the Cross, e.g. I John 4:19-'We love because he first loved us.' It also awaited the coming of the Spirit by whom love would come to the community (Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22-23), so that as the Spirit came upon the community so did love, and this was seen in the fellowship, unity and caring action of the new people, e.g. Acts 2:42-47; 4:29-33. Love was actively manifested. It was manifested in parental, filial, familial, brotherly, and community relationships within the people of God (Gal. 6:10) and towards all mankind (Gal. 6:10; I Thess. 3:12; 1 Tim. 2:15; I Pet. 2:12-17).

Because the Father continually loves us (Rom. 8:37), the Son continually loves us (Rev. 1:5), and the Spirit continually brings that love to us (Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22-23; cf. Rom. 15:30) we love continually 'not reluctantly, or of compulsion (necessity)' cf. II Corinthians 9:7-but because our wills are one with God's (cf. John 7:17-18), i.e. we express the nature of God within us, as we are also within Him (I John 4:16), as He is within us (John 14:23). Having been awakened to the truth of God being love,

and having received from God that love, we now love that love, i.e. *it is the action of God within us*. This love is expressed and fulfilled in the three actions of giving, honouring and serving others (cf. Phil 2:1-8), i.e. in thinking others better than ourselves, in looking on their things, and in emptying ourselves for them.

The means whereby we do these things are

- (i) the relational-hierarchical situations in which we are, and
- (ii) the gifts we are given ‘to profit withal’ (I Cor. 12:6: i.e. ‘for the common good’).

First taking ‘(i)’ we think back to our previous study and its definition of hierarchy—‘A course of members functionally moving together for the fulfilment of a task, in which—and for which—the hierarchical order is required.’ We stipulated that this hierarchy must be a relationship of love and its constraint or ‘drive’ must be that of love (cf. I Corinthians 16:13: ‘Let all you do be done in love.’) since all we do ‘without love is nothing worth’ (Anglican collect).

It is not possible, within this paper, to cover all relationships domestic and societal<sup>2</sup> in regard to the hierarchies of love, but we do need to grasp the principle. There is no hierarchy which is self-appointed, which is free standing, and which does not have its head, origin and inception in the Godhead. The hierarchy of I Corinthians 11:3 is clearly this, remembering that each member is in another, and so all are in the others. The husband-wife-to narrow down the hierarchy—have their origin, blessing and aid from God the Creator. The parents-children hierarchy has its archetypal source in the Father-family reality. The elders-people is an hierarchy and the people are to honour *those who are over you in the Lord*’ (Thess. 5:12-13; cf. Heb. 13:7, 17), ‘because of their love’. They, for their part ‘will have to give account’ because ‘they are keeping watch over your souls’. The shepherds (I Pet. 5:1-4) are to tend and feed the flock of God because they are shepherds under the ‘chief Shepherd’. The younger are to be subjects to the older ones (I Pet. 5:5), and one must not rebuke an older man but **treat him** as a father, who in turn must treat the younger as brothers. All must treat older **women as** mothers, and younger women as sisters (I Tim. 5:1-3). Women are not to usurp the authority given to men (I Tim. 11-15). Older women are to teach younger women the things which are particularly womanly (Titus 2:3-5). Congregationally are all to be subject to one another (Eph. 5:21 }, are to have humility to one another (I Pet. 5:5), the pastors must not ‘lord it over the flock’ (I Pet. 5:3), and no one may lord it over anyone else’s faith (II Cor. 1:24). All of this relational exhortation has its roots in familial hierarchical patterns.

### **Love, Obedience and Law: ‘the Law of Christ’**

This brings us to the matter of obedience and law. In John 14:16 Jesus told the disciples they would keep his commands if they loved him. This links with I John 2:3 6; 5:3. In a hierarchy there is no arbitrary action. Believers are not single freelancers.

Being freed from the law’s condemnation, and law as a way of self justification, we are nevertheless to fulfil the just requirements of the law (cf. Rom. 8:4). Love must be **shown in the** hierarchical situations and events. Jesus commanded love—love is a **command** of God. All true law is shown to be love (Rom. 13:8-10; cf. Gal. 5:13-14; James 1:22-3; 2:8-13). In the NT this is all called ‘the law of Christ’ (cf. John 13:34; I Cor. **9:21**; Gal. 6:2). It is recognition of, and obedience to, law that encourages one to **live under** ‘the law of Christ’. Christ did nothing—apart from the will and plan God **had set out before** him. True loving is just doing the will of God, but it is doing it in **the context of the** hierarchy, the dynamic social unit which is seeking to forward and—

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<sup>2</sup> But see the August Pastors’ Study for the whole matter of hierarchy.

hence-fulfil the plan of God. It is doing it as ‘the law of Christ’. It is virtually obeying God in all His commands, which is, in fact at the one time fulfilling the will of God and His functional law for creation-called ‘the law of God’-and that this obedience is counted as Christ’s own righteousness (cf. Rom. 5:15-19) on the one hand and yet is accounted to all who are ‘in Christ’-as against being ‘in Adam’.

The essence of what we are saying is that all obedience-i.e. all acts of love-are done within the hierarchical course, within the membership of the body of Christ, so that love deeds are not arbitrary but are the fulfilment of the prescribed law. The true freedom of the person in the community-‘you are all brethren’-is not compromised by the fact of ‘ontological necessity’, for where the heart is filled with love (Rom. 5:5: cf. Jude 20) the response to the prescription is a free one, for this is the proleptic experience of the ultimate utter ‘liberty of the glory of the children of God’.

### **Rejection of Hierarchy**

The rooted objection to hierarchies, as we have seen, is the thought that someone prior in the course to another is thus superior-but this is inadmissible. Secondly the fact that one is prior to another suggests unbearable authority but this is also inadmissible since all authority is delegated and does not reside in the person. Because within the course of persons every persons is in some way-directly or indirectly within the other, then the whole system, is one only of love. Because there are faulty persons and dominating ‘lords’ within a system does not invalidate the principle. Hierarchy is the functional situation for servanthip and the loving of other persons.

### ***The Trinitarian Opere in Extra and Opere ad Extra***

There are intrinsic relationships within the Trinity and from these result the works in extra, as also there out outward operations of the Trinity towards creation and all creatures which are not Divine and from these result the works ad extra. Likewise in the Christian community there are the internal relationships and works and then the extrinsic relationships and works. The latter are primarily in the proclamation of the saving gospel. Thus the circulatory flow of the gifts is the operation of love. Gifts are for unity, (I Cor.12:4), for fellowship (I Cor. 12-13) and for loving (I Cor. 13: cf. I John 3:16ff.). In this paper we are not seeking to nominate the ways and modes of love so much as the course in which believers are free to love.

### **Conclusion**

The value of Trinitarian love is that in the pastoral situation it obviates contemporary sentimentalism, mindless empathy and sympathy, and proceeds in an orderly fashion **within the numerous** hierarchies. The pastor can shepherd-and even monitor-the various orders-familial, societal-and so on but cannot enforce them or dominate those within those courses. Teaching and feeding and shepherding the flock he can let love run its true orderly course. Within the corporate leadership of the eldership all are free to love in humility and simplicity, for this is how it is in the Godhead.

All of this demands responsibility on the part of the pastoral hierarchy. Since we ‘are all brethren’, then legalistic discipline is not permitted. Weakness within the hierarchy will weaken the congregation. Just as the Persons of the Godhead must have

one to another and must not move out of their Trinitarian 'orbit' so must the members of the body of Christ be related to one another. Today congregations are built up by pastors and others on the models they have learned from others or have induced by their own thinking. All churches must spring from the Trinitarian source and express the Godhead in their society. This is something which we must work through, as pastors and leaders, and indeed as congregations.

# **The Adoption of Sons and Pastoral Ministry**

## **Introduction: Plan of the Study**

There is remarkably little material on the subject of the adoption of sons, and granted the subject can be clarified, few pastors work on the thought that it is of practical pastoral significance. We propose to examine the doctrines of regeneration and adoption together, note their relationship and view them in the light of the Fatherhood of God, Brotherhood of Christ, the familihood of the household of God-the people of God, and view the whole doctrine of sonship in the light of heritage. Finally we will seek to see the pastoral implications of sonship; especially in regard to the doctrine and dynamics of hope.

## **Regeneration and Adoption Issue: From the Cross**

Whilst the inner working in a the believer of regeneration is said to be of the Holy Spirit, the basis of that work is shown to be Christ's atoning work, i.e. the work of the Cross and the Resurrection. Likewise the adoption of sons issues from the work of the Cross (cf. Gal. 4:4-5)

## **The Atonement and Regeneration**

If we may talk about 'the inner working of the atonement' it is that .it removes the guilt and pollution of sin, deals with the judgement of the law, and so sets the person of faith free from the penalty and power of sin. Titus 3:5-7 links 'the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit' with 'Jesus Christ our Saviour'. The 'new creation' teaching of II Corinthians 5:16-21 is clearly in view of the Cross, and this could be said for Galatians 6:14-15.

Jesus linked regeneration with the Cross in John. 3:1-14, for it is the Cross which prevents death and gives new life, especially with Numbers 21 in view. John, in his First Epistle, does not directly link new birth with the Cross, but nothing could be clearer than I John 4:7-10, where God is known, as love at the Cross (vv. 9-10), and throughout the Epistle new birth is linked with believing the redemptive work of Christ. Peter, in his First Letter; in 1:3-4 speaks of new birth coming through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but in 1:18-22-his next mention of purification and new birth, the Cross is in view (cf. v. 19). Whilst the Epistle to the Hebrews does not overtly speak of regeneration, the long discourse on the Cross and its link with the heart-regenerating covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34 means that those of the New Covenant are renewed by the atonement.

## **The Atonement and Adoption**

Galatians 4:4-7 can be seen as the *locus classicus* of the theme of adoption. Here the redeeming work of Christ-‘born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those that were under the law’-leads straight to sonship. Likewise in Ephesians 1:5-7 the coming to sonship through Christ is linked with his blood-the death of the Cross. There is of course the Johannine passage of John 11:49-53, where ‘all the children of God [who are] scattered abroad’ are to be brought together by the death the Jews are planning for Jesus.

### **Atonement and Christ’s Identification with Sinful Man**

The bearing of our sins by Christ (I Pet. 2:24) requires identification with those whose sins he bears. This is the principle of atonement in the sacrificial cultus of Israel.<sup>1</sup> One weakness in viewing substitution is that there can be no substitution without identification. II Corinthians 5:14-‘we are convinced that that one has died for all; therefore all have died’-shows us that it is not possible. In making Christ ‘to be sin for us’ God had to unite the victim with the sinners. Hence the ‘co-crucifixion’ references, such as Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:20; Galatians 6:14; Colossians 3:3 and 11 Timothy 2:11. However the identification with sinners-and so sin-was effected in the atonement may be difficult to understand, but the fact of identification must be understood. There can be no identification with Christ in his risen, glorified state if identification has not taken place on the Cross. The reason for this is that the offerer of sacrifice must be one with the victim. Paul’s argument in Romans 6:1-10 and Galatians 2:16-21 is that the penal death to sin took place in Christ’s death. This means that the blood of Christ has purified our consciences from dead works, and so we are renewed by this emancipation to serve the living God (Heb. 9:14), and this is regeneration.

Our point in referring regeneration and adoption to the Cross is that the Cross is the place of personal identification with us by the Son of God and so is the place of our identification with him. This is not merely a union which is to be regarded as forensic, and a happening taking place on some plane divorced from our personal presence. It is the most personal union of all. It is the starting point of our union with Christ which is then overtly sealed in baptism for faith to understand, and for faith to live by (cf. Gal. 2:20).

### **John and Regeneration**

In John’s Gospel Jesus said that all persons must be begotten from above before they could enter the Kingdom, and this new birth necessarily related to baptism linked with the mysterious operations of the Spirit. (John 3:1-6). For some the essential element of new birth-water-represents the male seminal fluid, to others the water-bag breaking for the birth of a child, and to yet others it represents the word, since the word is sometimes linked with mention of that element. It would seem more obvious for it to be the water of baptism. In the Synoptics the baptism of John and Jesus was linked with repentance<sup>2</sup>. In more definite terms, one must believe in the Son and receive him in

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<sup>1</sup> See Leviticus chs.1-6.

<sup>2</sup> See Matthew 3:2; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3

order to be born 'not of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God' (John 1:12-13) This is the Johannine doctrine of regeneration. The references to new birth or being born of God in John's First Letter are 2:29; 2:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18. These references do not speak of the way in which new birth happens, but they would seem to accord with the principle of John 1:12-13-the action of birthing being of God and not man. In the Johannine material one becomes a person or child of God by believing. I John 3:9-10 shows that the result of being born anew is that the objects of the action are children of God, as indeed they are also called in I John 3:1-3.

### Paul and 'the Adoption of Sons'

**The Pauline** teaching was of adoption, rather than of regeneration, although regeneration is also dealt with extensively, though not with specific reference to the elect being children of God, as in John<sup>3</sup>. It seems that in Paul the terms 'children' and 'sons' is interchangeable, and in both cases refers to adoption. This interchangeability of the terms can be seen in Romans 8:14-25. What then is the Pauline doctrine of adoption?

Undoubtedly the doctrine has its roots in the Old Testament. In Romans 9:4 Paul refers to the adoption or sonship (*he huiosthia*). This sonship was one of the gifts of God to His covenant people. In Exodus 4:22 God informs Pharaoh, 'Israel is my first born son, and I say to you, "Let my son go that he may serve me; if, you refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay your first-born son."' He puts Israel's sonship on the same level as the sonship of Pharaoh, so that in one sense it is not necessarily metaphorical. Later reference is made to this in Hosea 11:1-'Out of Egypt have I called my son', and this was later referred to Jesus (Matt. 2:14-15). Deuteronomy 14:1 addresses Israelites as 'the sons of the Lord your God'. In Deuteronomy 32:4-9 it is asked, regarding Yahweh, 'Is he not your father who created you, who made you and established you?' This would seem to refer to Israel alone, as also Isaiah 64:8, 'thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou art our potter.' In Malachi 2:10 is the same thought: 'Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us?', i.e. created Israel as a people, a family people. The creating of a people is in Isaiah 43:6-7, where God speaks about His sons and daughters, 'whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made'. Israel seems to be mainly in mind. In Isaiah 63:16 the prophet-for Israel-says, 'O Lord, thou art our Father, our Redeemer from of old is thy name.'

In Jeremiah 3:19 the sonship of Israel is linked with heritage-a natural enough link and one prominent in the New Testament (cf. Gal. 4:4-7; Rom. 8:14-17; Rev. 21:7), 'I thought how I would set you among the sons, and give you a pleasant land, a heritage most beautiful of all nations. And I thought you would call me, My Father, and would not turn from following me.' This loyalty to Fatherhood is also found in Isaiah 1:2f. The enacted parable of Hosea chapter 1 with Hosea and Diblaim and their children tells us, surely, that there would be a time in Israel when the people would be called by God, 'Not my children,' and then again a time when they would be called 'Sons of the living God'-a passage Paul uses in Romans 9:22-27 and which he refers to the Gentiles. The phrase for Israel in Hosea, 'Sons of the living God', accords with Deuteronomy 14:1.

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<sup>3</sup> In Paul regeneration refers to that change which is the renewal of the person, and is not necessarily the process by which becomes a child of God (Titus 3:5-7; II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; cf. Eph., 2:25; 4:24; Col. 3:10).

All in all, Israel has few occasions when reference was made to God as Father, but they are all significant ones. They are not, however, the only reference to God's Fatherhood of Israel. The king was always the Father-figure in the nations, and this would not escape their thinking. More, it is borne out by the sonship of God which is linked with kingship, such as in II Samuel 7:14. Psalms 2:6-7, 89:19ff. and possibly 110:3 speak of a royal Son who is set up as king by God. Certainly in the New Testament this Old Testament view of the Son-King becomes established<sup>4</sup>. Whilst our purpose here is not to draw strong conclusions regarding the Fatherhood of God in the Old Testament, it seems that Paul seals the meaning for himself regarding Israel as having the sonship. For him it is the equivalent of his view of adoption for those in Christ. It is outside our province to deny this kind of sonship for those of the former covenant. Given the fact that few references are made to God in Israel as Father, that does not mean His Fatherhood was not highly significant to them.

### **The Origin of Paul's Use of Adoption**

Paul's use of sonship in Romans 9:4, along with the other elements or gifts, i.e. 'the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, the promises, the patriarchs and the Christ', may mean he saw these elements as one, and even subsumed them under sonship. Paul would certainly know of the Greek and Roman customs of adoption and may have had them generally in mind. However, in Galatians 3:26-4:7 he explicates sonship as liberation from being under the tutelage of the pedagogue-the law-into the freedom of mature beings coming into full and free sonship with their Father, thus qualifying for the inheritance. It is this mature state and status of being to which adoption refers. This is evident from Galatians 3:26-4:7.

One methodology of arriving at an understanding of sonship has often been to find the meaning of Israel's sonship in the Old Testament and to build upon that for Paul's doctrine of adoption. Others have looked at the common elements in Jewish, Greek and Roman adoption. With these things in mind, we ought to be able to detect Paul's doctrine. We know that there are not always parallels between Old - and New Testament, and that Paul does not necessarily draw his main ideas from contemporary cultural elements. It seems to me that there is one common element to sonship in Israel, in Greece and in Rome, and that is the principle of inheritance. Inheritance or heritage is a predominant feature in Israel. In the Pauline contexts of sonship there is the prominent idea of heritage. In Galatians 3:26--4:7 Paul is speaking about the infant-stage of Israel under the tutelage (pedagogus) of the law, and being virtually no better than slaves to 'the elemental spirits of the universe'. The coming of Christ has released from that bondage into the status and relationship of sons of God, so that 'you are no longer a slave but a son, and *if a son then an heir.*' Likewise in Romans 8:14-17, emancipation from bondage to the liberty of the children of God concludes, 'and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ'. Whilst Ephesians chapter 1 does not speak specifically of sonship as adoption, it does relate predestined sonship (v. 5ff.) with inheritance

- (i) vs. 13-14; where the Holy Spirit is 'the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it', and
- (ii) v. 18, 'his glorious inheritance in the saints'.

In Romans 5: 1ff. Paul is not speaking directly about adoption, but even with justification he brings in the principle of inheritance, 'we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God'-an obviously eschatological reference (cf. Rom., 8:17, where inheritance and glorification are inseparable). In Romans 4:13 Paul speaks of Abraham

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<sup>4</sup> See John 1:49; Matthew 2:2; 16:16; John 12:13.

and his descendants inheriting the world, and he links this powerfully with justification. No less in Romans 9 is 'the sonship' related to Israel's being as God's people-hence the reference to Hosea (9:26) as 'sons of the living God'. Israel, in danger of losing its heritage among the nations, is reinstated. The Pauline reference in Ephesians 3:1-11 of 'the mystery of Christ', i.e. 'how the Gentiles are *fellow heirs*, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel.' In Romans 8:17 those of the believing community are 'fellow heirs', and in Romans 9 the community is ultimately composed of believing Israel and the believing Gentiles. Romans chapters 9-11 are certainly concerned with Israel as God's people and the Abrahamic promise of inheriting the earth.

It would seem, then, that understanding of adoption is primarily linked with the principle of heritage. It may well be that Paul's understanding of Psalm 2<sup>5</sup>-especially of verses 6 and 7-may be in mind regarding the heritage that is accorded the Son-King of that passage. Certainly Paul has in mind that Christ will inherit the nations (cf. Gen. 49:10; Rom. 1:5; 15:18; 16:26). When to this thinking is added the statement of Revelation 21:7-that conquerors in Christ will inherit the new heaven and the new earth-then the promise to Abraham has been fulfilled, if not superseded. We need to notice that men of faith are the true sons of Abraham, whether Jews or Gentiles (Gal. 3:7, 9) and that to be a son of Abraham is to be a son of God, and so 'heirs according to promise' (Gal. 3:29; cf. Rom. 4:13)

### **Inheritance and Sonship**

Heritage in its turn is linked with glorification of the sons of God (cf. Acts 20:32; Gal. 3:29; Eph. 3:6; Titus 3:7). Even so, that glorification primarily originates with the Son. God's predestining purpose is to conform all believers to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29). In Galatians 3:26 sonship comes through faith and baptism, and, baptism is putting on Christ, i.e. everything happens and pertains 'in Christ'. It is in Christ that the sons become heirs. We have seen that both inheritance and glorification are 'in Christ' (Rom. 5:2; 8:17; Eph. 1:13-14; 3:6). The emancipation of creation into 'the liberty of the glory of the sons of God' is dependent upon 'the revealing of the sons of God', i.e. upon their glorification. The restoration of Man to effectual functional lordship over creation in the Second Adam must certainly be in mind here.<sup>6</sup> The promise in Revelation 21:7, that the overcomer will be granted to inherit all things, is linked with 'I will be his God and he shall be my son', and has overtones of Psalm 2:6-7, where the heritage of the Son is all the nations of the earth.

### **The Sonship, the Spirit and Glorification**

Adoption is not merely the giving of the status of a son to the believer-highly significant though that status is, especially in light of the heritage-but adoption makes

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<sup>5</sup> Paul's quote of Psalm 2:7 in Acts 13:33 is clearly of the apostolic kerugma common to him and others (cf. Acts 4:25ff.), and since Psalm 2 is a strong theme with the writers of 'Hebrews' and the 'Revelation' and is often linked with Psalm 110 it is reasonable to assume that Christ's ultimate possession of the nations is also present in apostolic thinking.

<sup>6</sup> Since Christ is the Second Adam, and all in him are part of the Second Adam (Gal. 3:26-28; cf. I Cor. 15:45-56; II Cor. 5:17), then to be conformed to the Son and have the liberty of sons must mean all in Christ are part of this new humanity.

a dynamic relational change in Man when he comes to it. Reconciliation as well as justification are involved in sonship. The ungodly are justified and become sons of the Judge who acquits them! 'The Spirit of His Son' is sent into the heart of one who has faith in Christ and has put on the Son in baptism (Gal. 3:26), and the Spirit keeps crying 'Abba! Father!' and *it is this vocative which overrides explanations analogical and metaphorical*. As in Galatians 4:6, so even more in Romans 8:15, for the heart of the son cries 'Abba! Father!' and the Spirit witnesses to that heart by crying *with* it 'Abba! Father!' The new and unchanging relationship is established. *All* talk of relating to God *as* a father or even *as* Father-in the metaphorical sense-is banished. *All* believers address God in the vocative and will not be cheated of this address, behind which lies the undeniably transformed relationship.

If we ask how this can be, we are told it is because we have wholly put on Christ's Sonship, because the Son dwells in us, and because he dwells in us by the Spirit who is 'the Spirit of his Son'. That is, the community of the Son participates in the Son. It has its identity in the Son and its relationship to the Father via the Son. It has its relationship to the Son via the Spirit, yet this only 'because you [they] are sons' (Gal. 4:6). Having relationship with the Father-via the Son and the Spirit-is *the* relationship since the Sonship of the Son derives from the Fatherhood. Fatherhood as it is before us and we before it-i.e. before Him as Father-is of such a relational nature as to defy full description. We need further to understand the vocative for it expresses a subjective address to God from an objective knowledge of authentic sonship of the heavenly Father (cf. Matt. 23:9; Luke 11:2a). If it is asked, 'How can this be, God being God and Man being Man, and Man not the in the substance of the Father?' then the answer must be in terms of Romans 4:17 which speaks of God Who 'who calls into existence the things which do not exist'. Since man's subjective conviction that God is his Father is expressed in the vocative then to deny it in the indicative is to go against what has become 'natural' to the believer. If the Elder Brother-Christ-being man can also be Son so the sons can relate to him as brothers (Heb. 2:10-17) since they are 'all of one origin'.

The Old Testament parallel to this is that all Israel was God's son, but all Israelites were sons of God (Exod. 4:22; Deut. 14:1). We have seen that Hosea 11:1 is quoted in Matthew 2:14-15, so that Jesus becomes 'the Son' so that all in him may then constitute-with him-'the Son'. If we look at the functional side of the Sonship-i.e. the economic-revelational rather than the immanent-ontological then in Hosea the reference is to the establishment of the house of God in Canaan and not in Egypt. It is a domestic matter which, being that, entails the heritage, i.e. Israel as God's heritage, and Israel receiving its heritage from God.

### **The Work of the Spirit in Adoption, Inheritance, Suffering and Glorification**

The Spirit not only brings us to the Father and keeps alive the relational elements of sonship, but he is the eschatological Spirit<sup>7</sup>. Whilst Peter calls him 'the Spirit of glory', and John refers to him as the glorifying Spirit (John 16:12-15), Paul associates hope and its fulfilment with him<sup>8</sup> and this primarily in relation to glorification. Part of this thesis is the insistence that 'the liberty of the glory of the children of God' is that the children will be brought into the inner fellowship of the Triune Godhead, i.e. it will be a relational thing.

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<sup>7</sup> The Spirit as eschatological-this can be seen from Romans 8:18-25; Isaiah 11:4; II Thessalonians 2:8; cf. Revelation 1:4; 4:6; 5:6.

<sup>8</sup> So Romans 8:18-27; Galatians 5:6.

In II Corinthians 3:7-18 there is first liberation and then -or with it-transformation from one stage of glory to another of the believer. This work of the Spirit in glorifying God's elect is linked with suffering, as II Corinthians 4:7ff. indicates. In Romans 8:15-25 the trial of suffering<sup>9</sup>, the Spirit and glorification are again present. Since the goal of the telos is that all shall be sons, sons in the likeness of the Son, and all be glorified, then it has to be seen that ultimate sonship is glorified sonship, and the glory itself the fruit of the Son and the Spirit.

### **Adoption, the Vocative and the Invocation**

We now come to the heart of the matter of humans being the sons of God, of the church being the family of God. If we have a problem in this matter it is the problem of whether redeemed humanity-being human and not being God-can have a total relationship with God such as that which Man<sup>10</sup> had when created in the likeness and image of God (Gen. 1:26), thus enabling Paul later to say, 'Man is the image and glory of God,' so that such a statement could only be made of Man and not of any other creature. Is there a human relationship with God which can apprehend Him fully as 'Father'?<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> For the necessary and functional presence of suffering see II Corinthians 4:16-18; Romans 8:17; Colossians 1:23; Philippians 1:29.

<sup>10</sup> By using the word 'Man', i.e. humanity in its generic form, I am not trying to discriminate between a man and a woman, nor seeking to use unacceptable gender language. The whole question of gender-language is a complex one, but the use of the RSV text (1956) makes it difficult to go by any other way than the one I have taken. 'Man' then incorporates both man and woman-the male and the female-generically, but I will later take up the fact that 'Man' is 'man-woman' in unity, a dual-entity, and that male and female are not to be thought apart from each other.

<sup>11</sup> There is a great deal of disagreement among scholars as to whether a person's sonship of God is metaphorical or actual, i.e. essential. In the late 19th century Liberal theologians were teaching the universal Fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood (sonship) of man, but not all theologians held this view. The following is a valuable list of books for those who would wish to take up the matter of man's sonship as creational and as soteriological:

Two notable theologians were R. S. Candlish, *The Fatherhood of God*; and T. J. Crawford, *The Fatherhood of God*. These two held opposing views, Crawford maintaining that man was created as a son of God, and Candlish disagreeing. In Harnack's *What is Christianity?* a chapter is devoted to God's Fatherhood. *The Fatherhood of God in Christian Truth and Life* by Scott Lidgett is a large volume opening up the subject of man's created sonship of God, as also regeneration and adoption. Lidgett has also two other volumes in which he pursues the matter of Fatherhood and Divine and human sonship, *The Spiritual Principle of the Atonement and Sonship and Salvation*, a commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews. H. E. Guillebaud's *Why the Cross?* devotes a good chapter to the subject. Emil Brunner in his *Dogmatics* speaks of God's Fatherhood under the 'The Christian Doctrine of God'. Paul Tillich in *Systematic Theology* speaks in numerous places of the Fatherhood of God (cf. esp. pp. 264-269). On page 287 he makes the statement, 'The Lord who is not the Father is demonic; the Father who is not the Lord is sentimental.' In *Essays dedicated to the memory of R. H. Lightfoot (Studies in the Gospels)* H. F. D. Sparks has an Essay 'The Doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood in the Gospels'. Karl Barth has material in his *Church Dogmatics* in Vol. I, 2 (pp. 441-456), Vol. 11 under 'The Doctrine of God', but it is in his *The Christian Life* (pp. 49-110) that he speaks of 'The Children **and Their Father**', one of Barth's most beautiful Essays. Vincent Taylor has an appendix 'The Categories of Lordship and Sonship' in his *The Person of Christ in the New Testament*. Ernst Loymeyer, *Our Father*, sees the term 'Father' as primarily eschatological. G. D. Kaufman's *Systematic Theology, A Historical Perspective* has an excellent chapter; 'The Transcendence of God II, Lord, Father, Creator'. A useful Essay in *Christian Spirituality is "Our Father" in the Fathers*. The article 'Pater, Patria' in Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (vol. V, pp. 945-1021) is valuable. Thomas Smail's *The Forgotten Father* is an excellent contemporary study in which he points out the sad lack of Fatherhood teaching in the present charismatic movement. There are useful articles in the Bible and Theological Dictionaries nominated in the Bibliography of this present book. Previous centuries were fairly devoid of works about God's Fatherhood-excepting of course the early church fathers. The first few centuries were taken up in Christological debate and formulation of the Creeds, and the Fatherhood of God was comparatively-thought not wholly neglected. Likewise pneumatology was largely neglected. This century has

It is this difference in being between Creator and creature which has made many deny that God can be Father to Man-to any person, male or female-in any other way than that which is figurative. In agreeing that God is not merely *like* a father (simile), many will happily grant that He is *a* Father, or even *Father*, but will mean by this that He is *only* the Father of the Son-the Lord Jesus Christ-but they still insist that He is Father to Man only ritetaphorically<sup>12</sup>. It is assumed by some theologians that essential Fatherhood begins and ends with the Father's relationship to the Son, and that all other uses of the term 'Fatherhood' towards angels and human beings must by definition be metaphorical, and only so far as it is figurative can such usages be called ontological, i.e. God ever purposed only a metaphorical Fatherhood for His creation-as a creation-and He did not purpose an actual, relational Fatherhood. Sonship for human beings and angels is only ontological insofar as it is metaphorical. This means that whilst ontologically God can be *ritetaphorically* Father to Man, He cannot be *essentially* Father to humanity.

This, of course, will deeply affect relationships which human beings have-not only with God, with others, with the creation and with their personal selves. To a certain degree humans can respond to figurative Fatherhood, but their own sonship of God can likewise only be metaphorical. In human experience metaphorical fatherhood cannot be finally satisfying. Human beings require actual fatherhood and motherhood or substitutes who will provide surrogate fatherhood and motherhood. The giving of surrogate father or motherhood is then on the basis that men and women have the capacity for fatherhood and motherhood, i.e. that it is innate in them and not primarily a learned skill. Theologians use this as an analogue of the adoption of us as, son, by God. The practice of adoption surely tells us this.

Some theologians see human persons as coming close to filial affinity with God through regeneration which-they agree-makes them children of God (*tekna*) and through adoption which makes them sons (*huioi*) of God by His declaration of grace<sup>13</sup> that they are sons yet they see neither regeneration nor adoption as giving man true sonship of the Father in the sense of a full relational sonship. It is rather an accredited sonship, even though regeneration and adoption have taken place. Other theologians do not take this view. They believe God does make men and women His true children, and in adoption gives them full sonship. Of course a human being does not directly have the unique filial relationship as that of 'the only Son'-the one who became Jesus of Nazareth, since he uniquely was and is always 'of one Being with the Father'. Even so, these latter theologians insist that through the Father's calling men and women to Himself by drawing them to the Son, and through the Son bringing them to Himself, the Father relates to His grace-transformed children and sons as their Father,

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seen a remarkable returning to all three categories-Pneumatology, Christology and Pateriology-and in turn these should help us to shape further formulations of Trinitarian theology.

<sup>12</sup> An article in *Interpretation* by Roland Mushat Frye discusses the work of Elezabeth Achtemieir (an Essay 'Female Language for God: Should the Church adopt it?' in *The Hermeneutical Quest*) and that of Elizabeth Ruether, *Womanguides: Readings towards a Feminist Theology*. In speaking of figurative language he says, 'Thoughtful Christians and Jews recognize that biblical language about God is pervasively figurative, but that fact should not delude any of us into assuming that we can therefore change the biblical figures for others that we may prefer. The assumption that we can alter the figure is not only historically and theologically false, but equally false linguistically and literarily. The fundamental literary principle is that figures cannot be abandoned, symbols cannot be substituted, images cannot be altered without changing the meaning they convey.' In speaking of the power of metaphor he says, 'Functionally, a metaphor is a rhetorical figure that carries a word or phrase far beyond its lexical meaning so as to provide a fuller and more direct understanding of the subject . . . When metaphor operates with poetic power, it is "language at full stretch". In this sense we cannot speak of a thing being 'merely figurative'.

<sup>13</sup> In Romans 1:4 Jesus was 'designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness, by his resurrection from the dead. He was 'designated' means 'declared' and it is not in this sense that God declares believers in Christ to be sons of God. The one who became incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth had always been the Son of God, but the declaration of his Sonship-as a man-was made through and because of his resurrection from the dead. The sonship (adoption) of believers is not because of any process they have gone through or any accomplishment of power-such as was the case with Jesus. Galatians 3:26 states it is 'by faith' they become children of God. Galatians 4:4-7 shows it is by the incarnation and atonement of Jesus that they could be made sons of God. In becoming sons of God there is a manward and a Godward work. Adoption is not merely by a fiat.

such Fatherhood transcending all that earthly fatherhood can be and give, yet so transcending it that earthly fatherhood can scarcely be an analogue.

Most-if not all-theologians would agree that whatever human sonship of the Heavenly Father may mean, its coming into being is a rich gift of His grace. From that point onwards there are variations in thinking. The old Liberal theology was that God is the Father of all human beings, and all human beings are brothers and sisters because children of God. Orthodox thinking divides into at least two groups, one group asserting that Man was never created as a son of God and the other that he was. The first group would insist that bringing a person to regeneration and adoption is a great act of grace. The second group would argue that the work of grace has always to do with restoration and is never a gift beyond creation.<sup>14</sup> These theologians argue that unless Man-by creation-had the ontological structure and framework of a son there would have to be a further creational miracle-in redemption-to give him the form of a son. Regeneration is re-generation-a renewing of the originally generated being-that is, a person must have the lineaments of a son or he cannot have true filial being. Luke 3:38 is quoted, ‘ . . . Adam, the son of God’,<sup>15</sup> and Acts 17:28 is used approvingly, ‘even as some of your poets have said, “For we indeed are his offspring.”’ One theologian has said, ‘**God is the Father of all men, but not all men are the children of God,**’ meaning that God created all men as His sons, but in Adam they have refused and abdicated that relationship, and only when they believe in Christ and receive do him they have ‘authority to *become* the children of God’ (John 1:12-13), the ‘becoming’ meaning they have lost sonship and can only regain it by grace. Perhaps-reasons this theology of filial restoration-our Lord had something like this in mind when he spoke of the prodigal son. His father said ‘this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ That is, he was no son when lost and dead, but by the father’s grace he came to life and was found.<sup>16</sup>

Can there be some conclusion to the argument that Man was created as a son of God, i.e. that all human creatures by creation were sons of God, and not that humankind awaited the atonement and the coming of the Spirit to become sons of God, i.e. to be gaterated and adopted as children of God, rather than to be *regenerated as* fallen children of God and to be adopted by grace<sup>17</sup> so that they might be declared sons of God? Did not the antediluvian term ‘sons of God’ apply to those who called upon the name of the Lord (Gen. 4:26; 6:1), i.e. who were of the lineage of Seth and so as Abel’s true brethren were among those who are called ‘the children of God’ in John 3:10-11? As we have already reasoned, if Abel was a child of God, and if all men and women of faith-as described in chapter eleven of the Epistle the Hebrews, Abel being the first of them-then this surely indicates that there were sons of God prior to the covenant with Israel? The fact that Israelites were called ‘the sons of God’ (Deut. 14:1) further indicates that being children of God is part of being ‘the people of faith’ (Heb.11:1-3) and so being children of God is possible within the realm of faith. I will state this point again and at greater length when I deal with it fully in relation to Christ and the Trinity, but I am presenting it here because I want to introduce the matter of Christ becoming man, and as man being the second or last Adam. Being truly Man as the Second Adam-especially in the light of Romans 5:12-21 (cf. I Cor. 15:42-50)

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<sup>14</sup> It is clear that Karl Barth considers creation as an act of grace. Because he sees everything as contained in predestination, creation must obviously be with a view to grace. *Is* this, however, the same as saying that the act of creation *is* a gift of grace? It *is* difficult to find any instance of the use of the word grace in the New Testament apart from restoration of that which has failed, *is* fallen, *is* sinful and under judgement. Both *chen* and *chesed* seem to have similar connotation in the Old Testament. Surely creation *is* a direct action of God which *is* a gift to all that *is* created. If it *is* not a gift then the dignity of Man and the creational glory of Man (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:7; Ps 8:3-8; I Cor. 11:7) is surely indicted.

<sup>15</sup> 1, Howard Marshall in *The Gospel of Luke* (pp. 160-161) surveys various commentators’ views regarding Jesus being nominated the son of God and observes, The fact that the genealogy *is* carried back to Adam, as the son of God, may perhaps point to a contrast between this disobedient son of God and the obedient Son of God, Jesus.’ He links the verse with Genesis 5:1, ‘When God created man he made him in the likeness of God’.

<sup>16</sup> Some would debate that the change in the son was evoked by the father. Whilst that is strictly correct since the son ‘came to himself’, the question is, ‘What prompted him to think of returning to the father? We cannot use a parable as infallibly setting forth or proving a theological point, but repentance (metanoia) in the New Testament is generally *evoked* by something. We may fairly assume that at the point of repentance the fatherhood figured largely-and wonderfully-to the son who was ‘lost’ and ‘dead’ so that he ‘changed his mind’ about his father and himself, and returned home. ‘Lost’ and ‘dead’ is an apt description of any sinner until he turns to the Father via Christ and the Cross. It is the love shown in the Cross that evokes repentance, e.g. in the crucified thief.

<sup>17</sup> We are again driven back on the thought that either redemption effected a new creational act sonship, or it liberated the person from a fallen filial state to one of wholesome filial restoration.

-must have anthropological as well as soteriological implications. Given in that his Sonship of the Father does not dissolve via the Kenosis, we are still confronted with the fact that Jesus' sonship of God-as a genuine human being-must have been absent from his humanity if created Man prior to the fall <sup>18</sup>- was not anthropologically a child of God. If filiation is part of creation then regeneration makes sense as a word, and as an act of grace. Regeneration is then a work of filial restoration. Whilst adoption is a second category of filiation and an act of grace-if not a parallel to regeneration-it must nevertheless be in some way linked with regeneration (as we have seen above). We are saying on this basis that Christ's incarnation is the guarantee that man was created as a son of God, whatever may have been his refusal to be so in the event of the Fall.

Having said all that we have in the rubric above as a necessary enquiry into the nature and relationship of regeneration and adoption; we are still left with an unresolved debate. That is why we turn back to the matter of the vocative -'Abba! Father!' No believer thinks he has trespassed beyond the boundaries of his legitimate humanity, nor the grace that comes to him in the Son in salvation, when he addresses God as Father (Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:15; cf. Jer. 3:19), and when he dares to call on God as Father (I Pet. 1:17; Matt. 6:9). Whilst it is true that God has first predestined him to be a son (Eph. 1:5), redeemed him into sonship (Gal. 4:5-6) and then affirmed him as a child and a son-'See what love the Father has given us that we should be called children of God; and so we are,' so that the Apostle must say, 'Beloved, we are God's children now,' and Paul can exhort us, 'Therefore be imitators of God as dear children,' and whilst the whole creation waits in eschatological expectation 'for the sons of God to be revealed''-yet the same child or son is baffled if he tries to penetrate, explain and rationalize his sonship or child standing before God the Father. If we refer back to the fact that this child-son is in Christ-i.e. in the sonship of Christ as a participator-and if we remember that 'the Spirit of his Son' is in him, then we can understand the inner, conviction and assurance of, the person that he/she is a child of God. Theology, on the one hand strives in vain to deny or authenticate this sonship, and on the other it fails to establish the metaphysics of both Divine Fatherhood and human sonship: It is in the vocative that the subject of prayer knows he is the child of the Father. It is in the invocation that he knows that the Fatherhood is his refuge and his strength, his ground of being and his hope of the heritage of glory. He has to leave the more metaphysical question-the one we raised above without achieving a solution-to those who think an answer is necessary.<sup>19</sup>

### **Conclusion to Regeneration and Adoption as Means of Personal Sonship and Personal Knowledge of God**

We can see that through the Cross the Father and the Son-via the Spirit-entered into the affairs of Man, and into the stream of human living. This destroyed the enmity and hostility of man and opened the way for authentic reconciliation and so for union with

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<sup>18</sup> The question arises as to whether Man was innocent prior to the Fall, and in such innocence had a rich filial relationship with God as Father. It is better to say Man was as yet untested, but to say that raises further questions which are out of the orbit of this study.

<sup>19</sup> This raises the whole issue of the revelation of the Fatherhood, and the psychological and emotional impediments to approaching even the subject of Fatherhood. We speak of course of the child's relation to its parents, the obstacles to fellowship with a human father, the seeing of parenthood as an unacceptable authority structure, and the universal dislike of authority, of parental control and upbringing, and the battle for human autonomy by personal control of relationality. I have attempted to speak to this in various of my books intended to be used in pastoral care and counselling, i.e. *True God or New Guru?*, *Angry Heart or Tranquil Mind?*, *The Wounding and the Healing, Where I Love I Live:*

the Persons of the Trinity-the theme of filial hope. It is these relationships which concern us, for we need to know whether they flow from God and correspond to the relationships which obtain between the Persons in the Triune God or whether they are prescribed relationships of another ilk.

If, as we have claimed above, Man has a true filial relationship with God by both creation and redemption-through the Son and the Spirit-and thus inherits the new heavens and the new earth, then this is immense value and significance for our pastoral ministry. We must teach the doctrine of the believer's sonship of God. We must emphasize the matter of hope-a vast subject on its own, and a most dynamic one. With this must be an explication of heritage, for this is rarely taught, and does not have the same association with present Christian thinking as it had in Judaism and the early church. Many Christians are very hazy about the future. The vision of 'a city to come' as found in Hebrews 11 is little present. Likewise 'the home' of John 14:1-10 is often seen in romantic terms since the reality of being sons with the Father in 'the Trinitarian homeland' is mostly absent.

The 'liberty of the glory of the sons of God', i.e. entering into full relationship with the family of the Triune Godhead is a concept not yet grasped, much less a virile part of the substantial hope, a glorious anticipation of a new and rich living. We must teach our people their present indwelling in God and His in us-the interdwelling of the Persons in us, and us in Them, so that the teleological fulfilment will not be strange and fearful but the unfolding of the present bud of love into the glorious full blooming of the ultimate flower of total relationships.

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# The Presence and the Absence In Pastoral Ministry

## Introduction to the Subject

By the 'presence' and the 'absence' we mean

- (i) the presence and absence of God to Man, and so
- (ii) the presence and the absence of Man to God, and
- (iii) the presence and the absence of Man to
  - (a) his fellow human beings and
  - (b) to the creation around him.

The state and place of these 'presences' and 'absences' in regard to God, Man and creation are most significant, and go far to determine much of Man's state and behaviour. Man can be in states of rich fellowship with all things, or can be devastatingly lonely in the midst of much action and personalities Divine and human. Pastorally there is everything going for true sociality in our congregations, our families, and the personal lives of members.

## Man in the Presence of God

Because Man-i.e. Man the man-woman entity of one-flesh unity- was created closest to God he should have the most affinity of all creatures with Him. God Himself being Triune, being One in a plural sense of the three Persons, yet having the one centre of consciousness and Being, and Man being made in His image, Man must be in himself more than a bare unity. Man as created had knowledge of the creational presence of God. He-like God-has a plural sensing of himself in that he can commune with himself. At the same time 'the way of a man is not in himself'-he cannot truly exist apart from God. No one human creature can exist apart from all human creatures<sup>1</sup>, even though one person may not compass all others in his/her lifetime. The inter-relationship of the entire human race is a social reality (Acts 16:26). The statement of Paul, 'None of lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself,' (Rom. 14:7) which whilst it is not a direct anthropological statement nevertheless indicates that the true ontological position is that a person-any person-should live to God, and 11 Corinthians 5:15 indicates this is the norm of true godly relationship. Romans 14:7 may then be claimed to be an anthropological statement as well as a theological statement.

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<sup>1</sup> So Paul's view of the solidary nature of man in Romans 5:12-21. So too, John Donne's famous poem *Devotions* in which he says, 'No man is an *Island*, enture of itself. Any man's *death* diminishes *me*, because I am involved in *Mankind*; and therefore never send to know for whom the *bell* tolls; it tolls for *thee*.' Paul said God 'made of *one* every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth,' i.e. since we all derive from common stock we must all constitute one race.

The relationship Man had with God<sup>2</sup> was via His word<sup>3</sup>. Presence by the word is the everlasting pattern. Wordless presence is modified presence. God's statements communicated His mind, and set out the pattern of behaviour for Man, i.e. the mandate of work and living (Gen. 1:28), work in the garden Gen 2:15, life-resources (2:16-17, and man-woman relationships and living were indicated by the actions of God (Gen. 2:21-22). God's 'walking in the garden in the cool of the day' may have been regular or not-we were not told. They certainly understood 'the presence of the Lord God', for later Cain objected that he was being driven away from 'thy face'<sup>4</sup> and 'Cain went away from the presence of the Lord' (Gen. 4:14, 16). It would seem the norm was to live in God's presence. It is axiomatic that to live in His presence was also to live fully in one another's presence (Gen. 2:23-24), indeed, in the presence of all others. Nothing could be more intimate than 'bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh'.

### The Loss of Presence

When Man-through the temptation-decided he did not desire dependent presence, but autonomy, that was tantamount to rejection of God (cf. Romans 1:18ff.). The fact that Cain was not driven from the presence of the Lord indicates that man had a modified or provisional presence, but not an ontological one. Hebrews 11 makes it clear that a stream of humanity-called 'persons of faith'-issued from grace in the face of the fall, so that even fallen man still retains something significant of the presence of God. I John 3:10-11 indicates that the family of God retained the presence of God, but that it was a 'presence by faith'<sup>5</sup> and not by sight (f. II Cor. 5:9). Loss of God's presence was loss of the ontological. The loss of the knowledge of God, of the clear lines of God's subsistent Being-in Whose image man was made-meant loss of true humanity.

### The Covenantal Presence of the Lord

It is clear from the accounts of Cain, Nimrod, and Babel that city builders saw their opportunity to refuse the creational mandate. It was their defiant action of opposition to God. They preferred their own presence, or the provisional (devised) presence of their god/s or idol's. God's revelation of Himself to Abraham (cf. Acts 7:2; cf. Josh. 24:23; Gen. 12:2f.)<sup>6</sup>, and the other patriarchs was always linked with His presence. Jacob called Bethel the house of God, and pillars or altars were built that were linked with the appearances of God (cf. Gen. 29:17). In the case of Israel enslaved in Egypt God

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<sup>2</sup> Man *is* not Man apart from God. Man should not even be considered apart from his union with God, for he exists as a non-existent without his Source-God Himself. Even though Man separates himself from God he still 'lives and moves and has his being' in God whether he likes it or not.

<sup>3</sup> The word of God *is* more than a communication of God's thoughts or commands. It *is* God Himself-God communicating. In this sense God *is* as His *word*, and the word *is* as His presence.

<sup>4</sup> The words translated 'face' and 'presence' are both *panim* in Hebrew, so 'face' in Genesis 4:14 *is* the same as 'presence' in Genesis 4:16.

<sup>5</sup> Here we need to see the principle of sacrifice., especially sacrifice offered in faith (Heb. 11:3), which *is* the worshippers fellowship with God. Here *par excellence* there *is* communion, and communion presupposes the presence in coinherence *of* two or more. This *is* seen from I Corinthians 10:14-22 where sacrifice involves fellowship-oneness *of* the offerer with the one worshipped.

<sup>6</sup> Abraham became 'the friend of God' (Isa.41:8) indicating closeness to Him (cf. Gen. 15:1f.). Jacob wrestled with the man at Peniel-'For *I* have seen God face to face'-which was an evident theophany, and *so* a contact with God.

‘remembered’ His covenantal promises and made His presence known to Moses in the burning bush (Exod. 3:1-6). Moses was untutored in theophanies at the beginning but came to live in the presence of God, typified by ‘the tent of meeting’. The tabernacle was the sacramental presence of God-as also the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire-the *shekinah* glory, ‘the glory of His presence’<sup>7</sup>. Moses wished to see all the glory of God but this was linked with the Presence<sup>8</sup> going with Israel to Canaan<sup>9</sup>. The ark of the covenant symbolized God’s presence, but this was misunderstood in Samuel’s time when it was taken out to war against the Philistines, God suffering the indignity of being taken into battle like some fetish. The temple was certainly certified by God as the place of His presence with His people. Not only did His glory appear at the dedication (II Chron. 7:1-3) but He spoke of it being His house (cf. II Chron. 7: 11-22)-‘My eyes and my mind will be there perpetually’. We remember that Israel had a mediated worship, a coming into the presence via the priesthood and the sacrifices. Again, it was also by the word of the law, the covenant and the promises that God manifested His presence. The prophetic word was mediated of course, but then it was a direct utterance of God to His people, e.g. ‘Hear the word of the Lord . . .’

The real indignity offered by Israel was their idolatry-a presence to replace or ignore *the* Presence. So Stephen’s comment of Acts 7:39-53-especially verse 49 that Israel had thought to contain God in the temple in the face of their innate idolatry.

The glory of God’s presence in Israel is seen in the adoration of Him by the faithful. The Psalms are rich with this matter. Beautiful and significant sayings are in Psalms 16:11; 17:2; 31:20; 51:11; 68:2; 68:8; 95:2; 97:5, 114:7; 139:3; 140: A fine theology can be worked out from these and related passages, such as the Psalms that refer to the worship, to the temple, and to the altar (e.g. 42:1-5; 63:1-6; 84:1-7). Powerful also are the references to God’s presence. We remember Jonah’s attempt to flee from the presence of the Lord, a principle to which Psalm 139:7 refers.

Whilst many in Israel undoubtedly had great revelations of God yet little is said of the personal indwelling of God in the sense that Paul speaks in Galatians 2:20 ‘Christ lives in me!’ The closest to this is in Isaiah 57:15, ‘I dwell . . . with him who is of a humble and contrite spirit.’ It appears to await the new covenant for such an indwelling of persons by God beyond even the indwelling of the congregation.<sup>10</sup>

## **The New Covenant and the Presence**

Isaiah 7:14 is the Immanuel prophecy-‘God with us.’ This is linked with Matthew 1:22. Speaking of the virgin Mary having a child the angel said, ‘She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.’ This was seen by the angel as a parallel to Isaiah 7:14 (Matt. 1:23). That is that Jesus is

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<sup>7</sup> The term *shekinah* as such is not used in the OT

<sup>8</sup> Later Isaiah spoke of God taking Israel through the wilderness by ‘the angel of his presence’ (63:9). JB translates it, ‘I was neither messenger nor angel but his Presence that saved them’.

<sup>9</sup> God first promised His presence would go with them to which Moses replied that if His presence did not go with them then he did not wish to go. Doubtless to know the presence was to know the glory and was to know-so to speak-the *equipment* by which they could succeed.

<sup>10</sup> Some scholars debate this. To love God from the heart (cf. Deut. 30:6) means that God is in the heart. Hiding God’s word in the heart, is surely speaking of the personal presence of God, and not just an objective word-as such. The explicit expression of personal indwelling is not found in the OT, but that does not mean it is not implicit.

'*God with us*'. It is borne out by John 1:14, 'The word became flesh and dwelt<sup>11</sup> among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as the only Son from the Father<sup>12</sup>.' Passages such as Romans 8:3; Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 2:14ff. make it clear that the Son was virtually the presence of the Father. In John 5:17 he works with the Father, and he constantly says it is the Father working in him which accomplishes the works of God (John 14:10). In John 8:29 he says, 'And he who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him,' and in 16:32 he repeats the thought-'I am not alone for the Father is with me.' Indeed he could say, 'He that has seen me has seen the Father.'

Christ's death was not to be the end of his presence. This matter he discussed with his disciples on the last night, and as seen in John 14:18-20 and 16:16-22 appear to say that they will see him again after his resurrection, and be joyful, and that he will go to the Father but they will always have his presence with them. This is brought out in John 14:18-22 the essence of which seems to be, 'I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you. You will see me when I rise from the dead. In that day it will be clear to you that you indwell me and the Father and we indwell you: that will be our relational 'presence'. This comes in another way in Matthew 28:20 when he said, 'Lo! I am with you always,' meaning he would be with them in the ministry they would have. Whilst a cloud received Christ out of their sight He certainly appeared to Paul more than once -Acts 22:17; 26:16. Paul's statement that we are seated with Christ in the heavenly places (Eph. 2:5-6) means we have relationship with him in his present authority and action. II Timothy 4:17-18 is a sad and yet beautiful statement-'But the Lord stood by me and gave me the strength to proclaim the message fully, that all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth.' Christ's presence was undoubted.

### **God's Presence Indwelling His People Personally -The Dwelling and Interdwelling**

There is a plethora of material regarding redeemed man dwelling in God and God dwelling him, i.e. as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Paul's quote of the Greek poet in Acts 17:28, 'In him we live and move and have our being,' which originally applied to Zeus, is virtually a statement that all men live and move and have their being in God whether they like it or not.

#### **(i) Believing Man and the Father**

In the Synoptic Gospels Jesus has no reference to the indwelling of the Father except in Matthew 10:28 where he speaks of the Spirit of your Father speaking within them on the day of trial. John's Gospel says more of the Father indwelling His people. In John 17:20-23 the Father is in the Son and the Son is in his people, which also makes the Father to be in them and they in Him-via the Son. His prayer to the Father 'keep them in thy name' is equal to them being kept in the Father Himself. On the same night of his betrayal Jesus had said to his disciples that he was going to the Father's house to prepare a place for them. Later in his address he said, 'If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make

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<sup>11</sup> Some translations have 'he tabernacled among us,' and, 'he pitched his tent among us'. His reference to his body as a temple, and of it being raised in three days, and the use in the epistles of Christ's people-his body-being the temple are fascinating.

<sup>12</sup> Some modern exegetes have linked this verse with Exodus 34:6-7.

our home with him.’ The Epistles add to this: I John 2:24 says that if believers let what they heard from the beginning abide in them, then He will abide in them, and they in Him. 3:24 John says that all who keep His commandments abide in Him-i.e. in the Father and He in them. In 4: 13 he adds, ‘By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit.’ 4:15-16 continues, ‘Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in Him-i.e. the Father-and he in God . . . God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God and God abides in him.’ In 2:22 and II John 9 the writer speaks about believers ‘having’ or ‘possessing’ the Father and the Son, and this is certainly a sign of mutual relationship. The Revelation, whilst far from being Matthean, virtually points to the baptism or seal, i.e. the name of the Father and the Son on the foreheads of the elect 144,000 (14:1; cf.7:18; 22:4), and the sealing indicates the relationship these saints have with the Father. Because the book is a prophecy (1:1-3) it describes action which indicates relationship, rather than it dwells on the relationships themselves, though their nature is strongly inferred, especially in the last two chapters in the figures of the marriage and the holy city.

In I Thessalonians 1:1 and II Thessalonians 1:1 Paul speaks of the church at Thessalonica ‘in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.’ Ephesians 4:6 speaks of ‘one God and Father of us all, who is above all, and *through* all, and in all.’ In Romans 5:2 Paul speaks of having ‘access to this grace in which we stand’, and then in Ephesians 2:18 he speaks of us having access to the Father by Christ and the Spirit-an echo of the Johannine ‘coming to the Father’ (John 14:6). In Ephesians 3:11-12 he speaks of having access to the Father by Christ. Again-on a slightly different note the Father is said to be dwelling in the holy temple which the believers constitute (cf. I Cor. 3:16). One of Paul’s most magnificent contributions to the matter of relationships is his Colossians 3:3, ‘You died and your life is hid in Christ with God,’ for this sums up both the order and reality of indwelling. He who has his life in the Son has his life in the Father.

The writer of Hebrews has a high doctrine of entering into the presence of God. In 10:19-21 he speaks of drawing near to God in the Holy of holies via the great high priest who is the Son. Jude addresses his readers as ‘beloved in God the Father’ and exhorts them to ‘keep yourselves in the love of God’, and concludes with his rich ascription, ‘Now to him who is able to keep you from falling and present you without blemish *before the presence of his glory* with rejoicing.’

## **(ii) Believing Man and Christ the Son**

By the incarnation the Word-the Son-came to Man (Matt. 1:21; John 1:14; cf. Rom. 8:2; Heb. 2:14). Likewise the Father drew believers to him (John 6:46, 64). Christ of course drew near to sinners, but in the Cross he identified with them, and identified them with himself. We have seen that in looking at the reconciliation of the atonement. The Synoptic Gospels certainly spell out relationships in a remarkable but not novel way.

The Johannine writings are most relational. In the Gospel it is through believing on and receiving the Son that people become children of God. The disciples draw on ‘grace upon grace’, are loved to the end, and move from being disciples to being friends and then to being brethren. On the night of the Son’s betrayal they are ‘loved to the end’, and the great address on abiding in the Son is given (John 15:1-11), where Christ speaks of abiding in his Father’s love and urges them to abide in his love as they abide in him. He had already told them he would come with the Father and dwell in them (14:23). In the First Epistle the Apostle speaks of the intimacy the apostolic band had

had with their Leader-having heard, seen, touched and handled him. The writer then speaks of having fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. In 2:23, 5:12 and II John 9 the believer 'possesses' the Son. The First Epistle closes with the words, 'and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ.' The Book of the Revelation, as we have seen, shows the inseparable relationship of the Father and the Lamb so that the seal upon the 144,000 is that of both of them. They share the throne together, and the movements of history. At the same time the 144,000 follow the Lamb wherever he goes, and the numberless multitude are also led by him to rivers of living water. Ultimately they constitute his bride, and become one with him and the Father in-and-as-the holy city.

Rich as the Johannine material is, the Pauline writings are more prolific in the matter of relationships. Paul's experience on the road to Damascus he later described as God revealing 'his Son in me.' For him this was unforgettable and was the basis of his gospel. The basic statement of Colossians 3:3-'your life is hid with Christ in God' shows the intimacy and relational nature of all Christian living. That this is present and eschatological is shown by 'when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we appear with him in glory'. For Paul everything is 'in Christ', 'with Christ', 'through Christ'. Romans 6:1-10 shows the unitive nature of baptism, for by that the believer personally and the believing community as a whole participate in the death, burial and resurrection of the Son. We have seen in the atonement that Christ has first identified sinners with himself in his suffering that they might be identified with him in his risen life and ultimately in his glorified state. In the remarkable passages relating to the New Man and the Second Adam all believers necessarily are organically one with Christ. His obedience is theirs, his life is theirs. The doctrines of reconciliation, regeneration and adoption are all factors leading to the 'in Christ' relationship. At the same time they are linked with the 'Christ in' relationship. In Romans 8:10 Christ and the Spirit dwell in the believer. In II Corinthians 13:5 Christ being within the person and community is the test of true faith. In Galatians 2:20 Christ lives in the believer. In Ephesians 3:16 he dwells in the heart by faith through the prevenient work of the Spirit. In Colossians 1:27 it is 'Christ in you, the hope of glory'.

Just as being 'in the Father' and the Father being 'in all' is unitive, so being in the Son and the Son in all is unitive. In Ephesians 2:11-22 we see the uniting of Jew and Gentile by both the Father and the Son, especially through the work of the Cross. This leads to the unitive building of the *naos*-the holy temple-shrine-of the believers in which the Father dwells, through the Spirit. We might be tempted to speak of 'the figure' of the Body of Christ, the church, but it is more than a figure. It is the organic reality of Christ the Head and his people and they members one of another. Likewise Bride and Bridegroom are not merely figurative. The passage of Ephesians 5:21-32 makes it clear that this relational presentation is of some archetypal matter. Christ's people-as the Bride-are bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. Having said all these things, we have only sketched the relational nature of life in Christ.

### **(iii) Believing Man and the Holy Spirit**

The universal coming to Man of the Holy Spirit was one of the basic promises of John the Baptist. The other two-the coming of the Kingdom and universal forgiveness-were intimately related to the first. John pointed to Jesus as the baptizer with the Spirit. The Gospels are accounts of the work of the Spirit in Christ which in effecting the atonement were to lead to the day of the Spirit, i.e. the era inaugurated at and by Pentecost-the fulfilment of the prolific prophecies concerning the coming of the Spirit. Jesus shows his personal dependence upon the Spirit and speaks of the Spirit

of the Father being in believers and speaking from them (Matt. 10:20). The manner of the Spirit's coming—that prophesied by John in both the Synoptic and Johannine Gospels—was to 'baptize', 'come upon', 'fall upon' and 'fill'. The effects of the Spirit's coming were certainly unitive. It is a note of the Book of Acts that the Spirit jealousy guards the unity. The remarkable way in which the Spirit caused the new community to live in love and fellowship and 'other-person concentratedness' inevitably drives us back to the prayer of Jesus in John 17:20-23.

In the Johannine literature the Spirit is spoken of as effecting regeneration (John 3:3-6), and of coming to live in the believer and the believing community (John 14:15-16; cf. 20:23). His interior possession of persons will cause rivers of living water to flow from them (7:37-39). The teaching of chapters 14-16 is comprehensive in regard to the Spirit, especially as teacher, remembrancer, glorifier and comforter. In the First Epistle he is 'the truth' (5:7). In fact he personally is 'the anointing' and since the anointing dwells in believers it is the Spirit indwelling them (2:20-27). It is by the Spirit that we know the indwelling of the Father (3:24; 4:13). In the Book of the Revelation the work of the Spirit is objective to the believer as he brings the revelation of Christ to John in varying stages, as he is himself the sevenfold Spirit going out into all the earth. Finally he is one with the Bride, since together both say 'Come,' to those who desire the water of life, which in turn may be a picture of the Spirit himself.

The Pauline literature is rich with references to the dwelling of the Spirit in believers and their indwelling him. Doubtless Paul's teaching springs as much from his Jewish understanding of the Spirit as from his own experience (cf. Acts 9:17; cf. 13:9; I Cor. 2:4-5; I Thess. 1:5). Certainly Paul's teaching of the indwelling Spirit must have related the events of the Spirit which happened in his life. So in Romans 5:5 the Spirit floods the heart with love and is himself given to believers. In 8:9-11 (cf. I Tim. 1:14) the Spirit dwells in the believer and if he is not present then the person 'does not belong to him'. In 8:18-26 the Spirit is the Spirit of hope, encouraging the believing community, and he intercedes to God within their hearts in the most intimate way. In I Corinthians 2:12 (cf. Gal. 3:2) he tells us we have received the Spirit, and in 3:16 that the Spirit of God dwells in the believer (cf. II Cor. 1:22; 5:5; I Thess. 4:8; I Tim. 1:14) as in 6:19 the body of each believer is the temple of the indwelling Spirit. It is by this Spirit that all were baptized into the body of Christ (12:13) and have become members one of another. In Galatians 4:6 the Spirit has been sent out from the Father and into our hearts as the Spirit of the Son (cf. Rom. 5:14-15). In Ephesians 2:18-22 the Spirit gives access to the Father and through him the believing community comes to constitute the dwelling place of God. In Ephesians 4:4 the whole body is one in the Spirit (cf. I Cor. 12:4ff.; Phil. 2:2; Col. 1:8), as indeed it is one in the Lord, and one in the Father. Titus 3:5-7 (cf. I Cor. 6:11) is a passage which speaks of the regenerating work of the Spirit in the believing person, as Galatians 4:4-7 (cf. Rom. 8:15) is a passage which speaks of the Spirit working in adoption.

The Petrine material certainly speaks of the Holy Spirit within the prophets as the Spirit of Christ (I Pet. 1:11; II Pet. 1:21) but says little other regarding indwelling. Jude speaks of people who do not possess the Spirit, and urges his readers to pray 'in the Holy Spirit'.

## **A Conclusion to the Matter of Indwelling and Inter-dwelling**

What we have tabulated above seems to be simply a record of the referential data relating to indwelling and inter-dwelling. When we look at the material from the vital

relational point of view then it becomes most dynamic. Baptism into the Name seals us into relationship with the Godhead. Our life being hid with Christ in God is the seat and source of new being and consonant action. God being in us 'both to will and to work for his good pleasure' (Phil. 2:13; 1:6; I Thess. 5:23) means that the indwelling and the interdwelling is not static.

*To know that we are in the Father and the Father in us* is not only a matter of relational fulfilment but one of assurance in living life and filling out vocation. Filial relationship does satisfy emotionally, but it also obligates vocationally. To know that the Father loves as He does the Son (John 17:23) and has called us into the fellowship of His Son (I Cor. 1:9) and that we have fellowship with Him and the Son and so share in the vocation of the Father and the Son (e.g. I Cor. 15:24-28) in bringing the nations into the obedience of faith gives nerve and fibre to the new community. To know that the community itself is in the Father and the Father in and through it, and that its members are sealed in His name fills out the identity just mentioned. The vocative is a matter of intimacy, and the invocation we can make one of great assistance in our human weakness.

So then, *to be in the Son* is to be able to address God as 'Abba!' Through this adoption via the Son we are one with the Father and being in the Son are sustained in this vital and necessary relationship. Again, to be in the New Man, to participate in the Second Adam, is to have his obedience accounted to us and his power to enable us to do the 'all things'. Through his death to have put away the things of the past is to live appropriately in the present in view of his (shared) resurrection, as it is to have the hope of 'the liberty of the glory of the children of God'. To be his body, his people, his community is to share in his life as it is outworked in witness to the Father. To have him live in us is to take us on to know 'the length and breadth and height and depth,' and to know his love which passes all understanding and so 'to be filled unto all the fulness of God'. Since he has been made to us, 'wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption' then these are our riches-'the inexhaustible riches of Christ', since in him are hidden 'all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge', so that we are 'filled full in him'.

To live in the Spirit is to have the Spirit live in us, and so to walk in the Spirit and be led by him. The Spirit has brought life through regeneration (John 3:6; Titus 3:5; cf. II Cor. 3:6), and full relationship with the Father through adoption (Gal. 4:4-7). To live in the Spirit is to have the liberty of the Spirit as one can have it in this life, and to be taken-with suffering-from one stage of glory to another (II Cor. 3:17-18). It is to bear the harvest of the Spirit in ethical and relational living. Since from the Spirit come all holiness, worship, prayer, love, unity and fellowship then inter-dwelling makes for true living. It also makes for doing the will of God (Eph. 5:17-18) in witness and proclamation (I Cor. 2:4-5; I Thess. 15; I Pet. 1:12). All Christian living is in faith, hope and love. He brings faith by the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17; I Cor. 2:4-5; I Thess. 1:5), brings love to the heart (Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22) and is the Spirit of hope (Rom. 8:18-25). Especially he brings hope of the coming 'liberty of the glory', for he is also the Spirit of glory (I Pet. 4:14; cf. II Cor. 3:17-18).

When we have said all these things, we have not said all things. What is evident to us is that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have come to us to dwell in us and to interrelate. They have taken us into themselves. The relationships we will have in the *telos* will not be strange to us, even if their sensed quality and their abundance may exceed what we know at this present. Then, as now, we will say 'Abba!' to the Father, 'Lord!' and 'Brother!' to the Son, and doubtless we will then-as now-articulate

these vocatives by the Spirit. To know the Father and the Son is eternal life-it is the life of true relationships.

### **The Pastoral Outworking of the Presence and the Absence of God**

We need to be very sensitive to Man's problem caused by the Absence of the Presence, and the Presence of the Absence. Psalm 139:1-18 is the classic description of Man who seeks to escape from God's presence, but who seems ambivalent about the matter. He cannot understand why God should be so caught up in him! Man is always obsessed by the presence of God. We saw in Genesis 3:8 that, having sinned, 'the man and the woman hid themselves from the presence of the Lord'. This is how it is with all fallen humans. Even so, Cain did not want to be driven from 'the face of God', but was forced to do so, and 'went away from the presence of the Lord'. So the prodigal son went into 'a far country'. Man needs the presence of the Lord, and is plagued by the same presence, but is even more plagued by the absence of the presence and the presence of the absence.

We need to see the existential necessity of God's presence to Man, of its creational form as in Acts 17:28, and yet of Man's constant fleeing from God. We need to understand that there are means by which we bring the presence of God to ourselves and our people,

- (i) The word is to our people as 'the sound of God in the garden' was to the primal couple. That 'sound' or 'voice' had originally revealed the nature of the presence by the injunctions it had given regarding vocation and the trees of the garden. Do we understand the dynamic impact of the word to our people? Are we afraid of the scandal of communication-'the word of the Lord'? Do we understand the reaction of hearers who will have to go through this pain before they come to peace?
- (ii) The preaching of the gospel is the revelation of God in holiness, grace and judgements. Are we as proclaimers ourselves 'gospel-hardened, and have we lost the glory of revelation?
- (iii) The sacraments are the living presentations of God's presence to His people. They are the *esse* of His presence within His people and His people within him. Here the Persons indwell and are indwelled. Do we highly esteem these, and is our sacramental ministry a reality, a glorious entrance into the church's fellowship with God?
- (iv) Men and women inducted into the Church, the Body of Christ, the Temple-shrine, the Family, the Flock, the Vine are brought into the mystery of the Divine-human indwelling and inter-dwelling. This is a scandal to the rebellious person, as it also introduces the emotional ambivalence found in Psalm 139. For the repentant believing person it is the deepest emotional release and the strongest emotional charge (recharge) he can know in his lifetime. The question is, 'Do we realize this? Have we grown tired, unbelieving and even despondent about this matter? Do we need a personal recharge of the presence of God, and an understanding of the devastating effects of the presence of the absence, the absence of the presence?'

- (v) Worship is the most powerful of all human experience. It is fellowship with God, God fellowshiping with Man. The terrible dynamics of idolatry are a witness to the glorious dynamics of true worship. Here there should be no calculation, no manipulation, no human dynamics, but the recognition that Christ is the minister in the divine sanctuary and so in this earthly-heavenly one in which we presently worship (Heb.8:1; cf. 12:22-24). Do we understand that all worship is in the Father, in the true 'Abba!' of faith and love? Do we understand that all worship is by the Spirit (John 4:20f.; Phil. 3:3)? Do we remember that Pentecost broke out in new and wonderful worship-in the offering of spiritual sacrifices (I Pet. 2:5; Heb. 13:15-16)? Are we 'worship-worn', flagged out, having lost the anticipation of faith? Do we have great faith that God's grace will break out amongst us in floodings of joy and love and adoration and worship, or have we become cynics through tiredness, anger and disappointment?
- (vi) Pastoral care and ministry is the key to the presence and the absence. What is our personal relationship with God-Father, Son and Holy Spirit-as theirs with us? What does it mean to us to 'have fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ', to have our lives 'hid with Christ in God', and to be 'participators in the divine nature-now? What of our relationship with others-in our family, in the community of Christ, in the community of Man? What of our personal relationship with ourselves in purity of being, in faith, hope and love?

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# Human Identity in Divine Relationships

## The Matter of Identity

The word 'identity' derives from *idem* 'the same' and *entitas* from which we have our word 'entity', i.e. a thing as it essentially is, hence 'the quality of condition of being the same; absolute or essential sameness' (*The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*). Toffler's book *Future Shock* shows the difficulty human beings have in working out their identity in this age in which so many changes are taking place, and at such an accelerated momentum. In particular the rapid changes one person may have to experience in vocation and in location from time to time are bewildering. 'Identity crisis' is a well-known term today. Doubtless none of this is entirely new: Cain had to face a more difficult vocation and a terrifying location. Abraham was uprooted from his former culture and opted for a nomadic life (cf. Heb. 11:8-10). Nomadic tribes have an exacting culture and a disciplined way of life under the constant threat of losing their basic identity, e.g. the Gypsies and the Bedouins. The industrial revolution of the 19th and 20th centuries has forced human beings and even their cultures to learn to adapt to changing conditions. The rapid advance of technology and the shrinking of the world to a global village via modern media means that the human race is presented with everchanging conditions and situations, the question being whether it adapts quickly enough to retain sanity, good mental health, and a communal and personal sense of identity. The crises of famines, earthquakes, plagues, wars, and even genocides are a few of the tragedies which face mankind continually. Even so, the human race seems to be incredibly resilient and adaptive to the changes it has known in its history.

## Personal Human Identity From a Biblical Perspective

What concerns us in this study are the biblical principles of personal identity in the face of Divine and human relationships.<sup>1</sup> Whatever more secular disciplines may tell us regarding human personality identity-and they tell us much-there is something about the creation of Man, the fall and restoration of Man, and the final Destiny of redeemed Man which is of great importance to our subject. The identity of Man<sup>2</sup> not

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this paper we assume that the relationships of the Triune God both internal and external are ontologically the relationships humans ought to have with God, with others, and with themselves.

<sup>2</sup> The present *psychological* search for identity which some undertake cannot be entirely satisfactory, since man is more than a psychological entity. Identity is determined by many things, namely the various elements with which one is identified by God, and with which the person seeks to identify his/her self. It seems obvious that the less self-consciousness there is concerning identity the more simple and real will be a person's true identity. The very fact that we seek to know our identity tells us a story, namely that we are unsure of ourselves as persons.

only as an abstract entity, but as an intimate personal entity is something that we can learn best from Scripture, i.e. Man being created in the image of God, and the implications and ramifications of that act, as also his continuance in the presence of God. Briefly we here set out these relationships as we assess their nature by the biblical descriptions of creation, the Fall, and through present salvation and ultimate adoption of sons, i.e. the ultimate redemption of the body (Rom. 8:23; cf. Phil. 3:21).

- (i) By creation, Man being made in God's image has total affinity with Him. In him is that which on the human level corresponds with God on the Divine level. Man-man-woman, one-flesh-is a pluralistic entity corresponding to God's innate plurality. Just as Father, Son and Holy Spirit have differentiation, so do man and woman-as Man. Each person is in some sense pluralistic-i.e. self-conscious, able to ruminate with and within his/her self, and each person has remarkable differentiation.
- (ii) By the Fall this total relationship was broken between Man and God, Man within the race (as male-female) and each person within him/her self. Even so, all human beings 'live and move and have [their] being' in God (Acts 17:28). This fact is important, as no one can 'have being' outside of God, i.e. have true being.
- (iii) By salvation Man is reconciled, the male-female entity resumes true relationships and the 'divided self'<sup>3</sup> of a person is brought to unity. Even so, the renewed identity in God is in the context of a curse yet unremoved or not rescinded, and the powers of evil are present and seek continually to bring disharmony. This is aided by their attempts to rouse the flesh into producing the old patterns of the old humanity, e.g. anger, division etc.-such as in 'the works of the flesh'.<sup>4</sup>
- (iv) Relating to '(iii)' Man now has his identity in God, in the community of the church, as the renewed 'male-female, one-flesh entity', and a changed relationship with society and the whole creation. We will seek shortly to develop all aspects of this renewed identity.
- (v) In the new world-the new heaven and the new earth-i.e. in the new age, every person's identity will be total, each having come to full maturity in glorification,<sup>5</sup> in having received the heritage of all things (Rev. 21:7), being in the family of God and the holy city, and in being a member of the 'kingdom of priests unto God'. This new identity which we may call a *revealed* identity is promised in Scripture, e.g. I Corinthians 13:12; Revelation 2:17; 3:12; Hebrews 11:39-40; Philippians 3:21; I John 3:2; II Corinthians 4:16; cf. 3:18.

We will need to develop some of these ideas we have just set out.

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. R. D. Laing's *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1965.

<sup>4</sup> Technically, theologically, the 'old humanity' and its equivalent 'the flesh' have been put out of action (destroyed) by the work of the Cross in 'regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit' (Thus 3:5). In practical experience they can be seen to be stimulated by evil powers (cf. Gal. 5:16-21) but defeated by the present action of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16-18, 20-26).

<sup>5</sup> Man does not achieve-or receive-his full identity until glorified (cf. Rev. 2:17; 3:12). It is then that it be revealed to the person.

## Man's Identity in God

Man is not truly Man without God. When he broke off relationship with God (i.e. 'died to God and came alive to himself) he ceased to be fully human, in that he had 'died'. In one sense he is never fully without God (Acts 17:28; but cf. Eph. 2:12; Ps. 14:1-2) but in another sense he is. Cain, though cast out from the presence<sup>6</sup> of God could still exist. Abel who was equally a fallen creature is numbered with those who lived 'by faith' (cf. Heb. 11:4-40) and so related to God, though not by sight. Man in this state cannot be aware of his true identity. Every person has, of course, self-consciousness, but self-consciousness does not necessarily mean true awareness of one's identity. Self-consciousness in some cases can retard knowledge of identity, as each person needs the aid of others in understanding him/her self.

## Identity Lies in Relational Hierarchy<sup>7</sup>

This is not immediately apparent. Most hold the idea that to be autonomous is to assure self-identity, but biblically identity obtains only in relationship with God, others and oneself. The statement of Romans 14:7- 'None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself' -is not necessarily an anthropological one, but ultimately it amounts to one of that order. Jeremiah 10:23 says the way of man is not in himself, i.e. it is in him only in relationship with God. Not fully knowing God prevents us from fully being human (Prov. 30:1-4). However as we examine the nature of God and see that He has His unity in three Persons, and that these three are in hierarchical order of Father, Son and Holy Spirit,<sup>8</sup> as is evident from the New Testament. Man, being in the image of God, must reflect the Divine hierarchy. Certainly it is clear that since God created him he is in hierarchical order with God. The position of the man before woman was created from him means that the woman is in hierarchical relationship with him. Just as in the Godhead hierarchy does not mean that the descending order of ordination infers a descending order of superiority, so in the man-and-woman hierarchy there is none. It is a matter of function and not of nature or essence.

In I Corinthians 11:3 Paul speaks of the hierarchy of the Father, of Christ, of the man and of the woman. *Each hierarchy is a dynamic social entity of love which is purposive and functional in the will of God so that all relationships are in unity and are essential to the true working of the entity and the fulfilment of the will of the God.* It is in this relationship and this vocation that true human identity has both its origin and being. Hierarchy also relates to sociality both human and Divine, and in turn to the law of God. There is no room inside a hierarchy for the autonomous independence of any member from the others, for all are bound together. The beauty of true hierarchy is that every member is not only interrelated with all, but is centred on every other member, and indeed the identity of each is wholly dependent upon this hierarchical relationship.

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<sup>6</sup> We need to know what *presence* means in Gen. 4:14, 16. Ps. 139 insists that there *is* nowhere where God *is* not, but even there the idea *is* not primarily geographic or locational but 'present to' in the relational sense and in the sense of providential care. In Matt. 5:43-48 Jesus *is* saying that God *is* always present in the providential sense to all sinners as well as to *His* children. On the whole matter of *presence* see my book *The Everlasting Presence* (NCPI, 1990).

<sup>7</sup> For an extended presentation of the matter of hierarchy see my paper 'The Matter of Hierarchy-Functional and Relational' (NCTM Pastors' Study Group, 6th August, 1990).

<sup>8</sup> We *will* not endeavour to work this out now, but see see the Pastors' Group study for the month of August entitled 'The Matter of Hierarchy-Functional and Relational'. This contains a *full* description of hierarchy, including the Divine hierarchy. See also my Thesis yet to be published entitled *The Glory of God and Human Relationships*.

This mutuality preserves the hierarchy from individualistic domination by one of the other. Of course this cannot happen if the mutuality is not that of Divine love. Only in mutuality is true sociality: only in true sociality is mutuality. The love that a person has for God or a fellow person must be Divine *agape*, and that *agape* has its circulatory movement throughout the hierarchy in what has been called *perichoresis* and *circumincessio*.<sup>9</sup>

### **Authority, Law and Human Identity**

If we understand hierarchy we will see it is wholly against anarchy or forms of government which are independent of the Divine order.<sup>10</sup> Since all true hierarchy is rooted in God-i.e. comes down from above-so we must see it is linked 'With authority and law. We must not understand authority as being authoritarian-i.e. authority for its own sake-but as being for the sake of those others who are under its hierarchical direction.<sup>11</sup> The law of God must ultimately be seen to be the law of love, and nothing else. Love is commanded as both Jesus and John insist (John 13:34; 15:12; I John 2:7ff.; 3:1 lff.; 5:2-3). As we have seen, the whole hierarchy is a dynamic entity of love, and since love is the fulfilling of the law there can be no talk of domination within the hierarchy, i.e. no one has dominion over the sovereignty of other persons (cf. 11 Cor. 1:24; I Pet. 5:3). It is clear from I Thessalonians 5:12 and Hebrews 13:7, 17 (cf. I Tim. 3:1-7; 5:17; Titus 1:7-9; I Pet. 5:1-5) that leadership is a matter of love. It clear that the one who would be first must be servant, as Jesus so clearly intimated.

We conclude, then, that authority, law, order and hierarchy are the environment and context in which the identity of persons has its full liberty and development.

### **The Community of Christ and the Identity of Its Members**

We come now to the heart of the matter. Each person has his or her full identity in God. Reconciliation with God through the gospel (Rom. 5:1, 2, 10, 11; II Cor. 5:19; Eph. 2:14-18; Col. 1:19-22) is sacramentally effected through baptism as believers are 'called into the fellowship of his Son' (I Cor. 1:9), i.e. are baptized into the Tri-unity of the Name (Matt. 28:19)<sup>12</sup> and into the one body by the Spirit (I Cor. 12:13) and so partake of the seven elements of unity as set forth in Ephesians 4:1-6 (cf. Phil. 2:1-7). The New Testament teaches that the three Persons of the Godhead dwell in the

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<sup>9</sup> These two terms cover the assertion of John of Damascus (7th century A.D.) that the three Persons of the Trinity interpenetrate each other, and that relationally there is a circulatory movement of giving and receiving of the differentiations within the mutuality of the three persons.

<sup>10</sup> By the statement 'wholly against anarchy, etc.' we simply mean that the only ontological order is that which God brought into being. In history there have been many forms of government, of law and of order and probably none of these even approximates to the ontological order. Even so, these operate within the sovereignty of God, so that they are 'allowed' (cf. Rev. 13:7; Dan. 7:23-27) but they cannot prevail because of their innate fallibility.

<sup>11</sup> Here we have the revelation of Jesus that all the law and prophets depended upon the two-fold command to love God with all one's being and-consequently-one's neighbour as oneself. Paul and James see the law of God and the law of Christ as being wholly the law of love (Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:13-14; James 1:22-25; 2:8-13).

<sup>12</sup> Note that in this reference (Matt. 28:19) it is into 'the name' and not 'the names' that the nations are to be baptized. Man being created in the image of God and brought into being through the three Persons must have meant that the Fall brought a break in relationship to the three Persons. Baptism brings the baptized person back into relationship with the Father, the Son and the Spirit. This must mean a wholesome reunification of 'the divided self' as the person becomes one with the Triune God.

church-the community of the Father, the Son and the Spirit and that each person of that community dwells in the Father, in the Son and in the Holy Spirit. This is variously described as 'abiding',<sup>13</sup> 'fellowship with God'<sup>14</sup> and 'partaking of the divine nature'.<sup>15</sup>

Human identity-as we have said-derives from being one (identified) with God. The order of *nature* is that God creates us and makes us one with Him for He has determined to be with one with us. The order of grace is that God identifies with us in Jesus Christ who is 'Immanuel' (cf. Matt. 1:21-23; Isa. 7:14; cf. Rom. 8:3; Gal. 4:4; Heb. 2:14) since he 'tabernacled amongst us' (John 1:14). This identification *with us* (cf. II Cor. 5:14, 21) was also for us (Rom. 8:1-3; Gal. 1:4; 2:20; etc.) so that we might be one *with Him* (II Cor. 5:14). Thus-we repeat the union of His elect people with Him means we have come to our true identity *in Him*. The identification of '*in Christ*' releases from the identification of '*in Adam*'.<sup>16</sup> To be *in Christ* has both personal and corporate connotation. To be *in Christ* and to have Christ in us (Gal. 2:20)<sup>17</sup> makes us one with one another since we are 'members one of another',<sup>18</sup> i.e. we are organically members joined in a more-than-human mutuality, and this effected by the seven unifying elements of Ephesians 4:1-6. The Spirit is the spirit of unity of love and of fellowship so lie enables us to have our identity in identification with all others.

We conclude then that our identity derives from being one with God, one with others, one with creation and one with one's self. Notice we say 'derives from' because just the relationships are not our identity. As we will see, each of us is unique, and is a person and a vital one at that. We now look at the things with which we are identified and which enable us to realize who we are.

## **The Person Subsisting and Functioning**

If we look at God in whose image we are made, we see theologically that God subsists-His ontological Being-and acts-His economic or revelational Being. This theological description must include the fact that God is One, and One as both subsisting and acting. God cannot be without doing. The statement 'who was and is and is to come' is not a statement of His continuity in time, but of His never-ceasing action, the action itself being purposive and telos-oriented.

Man being 'the image and glory of God' both subsists and acts. He subsists in God and he acts in God. His identity is then a being and doing entity. As created, Man is always developing as he moves towards his destined maturation, i.e. the glorification God will give to him. This drive for the goal of maturity is an often-mentioned one in the N.T. Again, subsisting and acting are two sides of the one coin-so to speak. All

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<sup>13</sup> Abiding', 'indwelling', 'living in', 'making home in' are synonymous. The ideas and verbs can be found in such scriptures as John 14:17, 23; 15:1-11; 17:21; Rom. 8:9-11; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 1:3ff.; 2:22; 4:6; Col. 1:27; 3:3; 1 John 2:27; 3:24; 4:13, 15, 16.

<sup>14</sup> 1 John 1:3.

<sup>15</sup> 11 Pet 1:4 (cf. I Cor. 1:9).

<sup>16</sup> Rom. 5:12-21 with I Cor. 15:22, 45-49 is important as our true identification, not only eschatologically but also in the present.

<sup>17</sup> Gal. 2:20, 'I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me', is the end of the individualism which stemmed from the Fall. Total identification with Christ and union with him are the one, and the basis and source of an entirely new life.

<sup>18</sup> See I Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 2:16-22; 4:15, 16, 25; 1 Pet. 2:4-10 which show the unity and the oneness of the brethren and the inter-relatedness of everyone.

true action is in God and stems from the indwelling of the Persons in the person and the person indwelling them. In particular the person works with the whole community of Christ. This community is at once *royal* (i.e. of the Kingdom of God; cf. Exod. 19:6; I Pet. 2:9-10), *priestly* (I Pet. 2:4-10)<sup>19</sup> and *prophetic* (Acts 2:17-18; Joel 2:28-32; cf. Num. 11:29).<sup>20</sup> It is this because Christ is Prophet, Priest and King so that the ‘not I, but Christ who lives in me’ has its outworking in the Person of Christ. Since these three offices are *acting* ones, the person in Christ-along with all the community of Christ-will be doing what Christ is doing. In *the being and the doing in Christ the identity of the person is being realized*. That is the innate identity of any person-the particular combination of all things which pertain to that one, which constitutes his/her uniqueness in the given sovereignty of that person’s being-is only realized in the progressive fulfilment of that person as he or she lives within the will and purpose of God. In this sense identity is teleological.

### **The Ultimate Identity of the Person**

For Paul his ‘I’ was not an egotistical<sup>21</sup> entity. To say ‘the Son of God who loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*’ set his ‘I’ out as distinctive. His personality is not lost or homogenized in the community of Christ, but rather is etched more strongly. Whilst Paul is a person for all persons, and is by no means an individualist, yet he is clearly one conscious of having his own identity, and faces both the responsibility and the joy that it brings. Christ’s use of the ‘I’ is numerous and significant, and none of it is egocentric. No one was more self-conscious-in the good sense of that term-and yet none was so self-giving for others than he. It is difficult to describe his identity apart from his relationship with the Father and the Spirit and this relationship does not so much identify him by use of the terms ‘Son’, ‘servant’, ‘Lord’ (etc.) as he gives meaning, content and colour to those terms. It is thus difficult in relationship to him and for that matter, anyone-to describe his identity. Even so that identity is remarkably evident and is not liable to be confused with the identity of any other.

When we go to the passage of Psalm 139:13-18 we have the reality of personal identity expounded. Science tells us that the DNA of a given person is different from all others, as also that person’s fingerprints, and-in fact the personal combination of weight, height, physical dimensions, and this being so, each person is unique. No two persons are ever identical in these regards. The Psalmist says it was God who gave the proportions of the person to the person, and it was God who formed the days of that person ‘when as yet there was none of them’. Is this then why each person delights in what he or she is, and can never surrender that reality-not even under the most terrible pressure? What is clear from this Psalm is that *identity and destiny are inseparably bound together*. Indeed they are the one.

This remarkable fact is borne out in Revelation 2:17 and 3:12.<sup>22</sup> Revelation 2:17

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<sup>19</sup> Note that the doctrine of ‘the priesthood of *all* believers’ is not the doctrine of ‘the priesthood of every believer’. In the N.T. church no one person is a priest in the ministry of the church, but all are involved together as participators in ‘a kingdom of priests’ (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6; cf. Isa. 61:6).

<sup>20</sup> We do not have time here to develop the prophetic, priestly and kingly character and role of the people of God. See *Christ’s People in Today’s World* (NCPI, 1985, Sec. 3, pp. 71-141).

<sup>21</sup> Literally the ‘I’ which constitutes a person is egotistical, but here we mean that when one-e.g. St Paul-is not ego-centred then that one is not egotistical. The ego (‘I’) of a person is not realized in and by ego-centricity but its essential being is total and healthy when it is ‘other-person centred’, i.e. ‘other person centred’.

<sup>22</sup> In Revelation chapters 2 and 3 there are seven promises given to the conqueror or overcomer, and to these is added Revelation 21:7. These 8 promises relate to the person’s destiny and thus to that one’s identity. They are all keys to the person, and keys to any one’s destiny. Both identity and destiny are gifts of God.

says, 'To him who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone which no one knows except him who receives it.' Commentators are divided as to whether this 'new name' is that of Christ or the recipient of the white stone. Revelation 3:12 speaks of the person having 'the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God . . . and my own new name', i.e. the name means the *identity* of 'my God', of 'the city of my God' and of 'me'-meaning Christ. It seems reasonable to say that it is the name of the recipient of the white stone, which some think to be an invitation to the wedding feast of the Bride and the Lamb. It is a sort of 'identity card'. H. Hoeksema (*An Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, Reformed Free Publishing Association, Grand Rapids, 1969, p. 94) says, 'He shall be given a new name expressive of his new and eternal being, a name which he alone shall be able to know, a name that determines his personal place in that blessed throng that shall once gather around the throne of God and the Lamb and reveal in all its fulness the splendour and image of God.' Some other commentators say similar things. Commentators on Revelation 3:12 see 'the new name' in the same light-i.e. the identity of God, of the holy city and of Christ.

What is significant is that no one knows the name written on the white stone except the one who receives it, so that if it is that person's name then now has something been revealed to him or her which was not previously known. It would appear that one at last will know him/her self, i.e. the personal identity and all that it implies. If it is the name of Christ that is meant in 2:17 then it would amount to the same thing since in the light of I Corinthians 13:12 and I John 3:2 where to see Christ in the ultimate is to be truly like him, and to know him as one also is known by him.

The rich and wonderful conclusion that we draw is that *each person has his or her unique identity, that it is significant for one's being and doing, and that eventually one will know truly who one is, and what one is about both in time and eternity.* The pastoral and counselling value of this cannot be computed.

### **The Matter of Human Identity in Pastoral and Counselling Ministry**

So much lies at the root of human inferiority,<sup>23</sup> anger about that state, and reactions to hierarchy, authority and law which is failure to see the extraordinary worth of a human being. The evaluation humanism places on a human being is not realistic. The exaggerated and false value that ego-centricity places on one's self is dangerous and leads to mental ill-health and often also to anti-sociality. Personal worth in identity makes no place for the person being lost or merged into society any more than it gives credence to individualism. True social being stems from the sociality of the Triune Godhead, and gives value to the differentiations that persons have in the economy of God. The reality of God's love for human beings, without conditions, does not mean Man is loved because it is valuable, or even valuable because it is loved. The reason lies in creation.

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<sup>23</sup> We need to see that not all human beings are equal-a fact which would require homogeneity to make us so-but that all human beings are equally human. Inferiority springs from existential guilt, and existential guilt springs from the Fall-'all have sinned and come short of the glory of God', which means we have come short of the glory of Man. Nothing can alter the matter of this guilt or the self-depreciation which springs from it, and self-atonement which the human person is compelled to attempt in order to achieve self-justification.

Man has been created with thought, in wisdom, and each person has been given an identity which is unique, is functional, and is essential to the plan and purpose of God, so that vocation and destiny<sup>24</sup> are one with identity.

The communication of this truth by persons of faith to persons in need means the release of them from bondage, and entrance into fellowship with God and the liberty of the glory of the sons of God.

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<sup>24</sup> Destiny, rightly understood, is a most powerful force for motivation and accomplishment. It gives g reason for being, and hope for the endeavour.