

CHRIST FOR US

© Ian D. Pennicook, 1996
New Creation Teaching Ministry

CONTENTS

Christ Our Wisdom	7
Christ Our righteousness	17
Christ Our sanctification	25
Christ Our Redemption	31

INTRODUCTION

These studies were given to the regular monthly gathering for the New Creation Teaching Ministry 'Saturday Morning Studies'. A couple of points can be made about the studies. Most important is that they were given to a group of people whose concern is to have more than a 'devotional' time, although that would not be wrong. Indeed, along with the written material has gone a considerable amount of warm application and it is no doubt this which has made the gatherings so valuable. But the group was initially a meeting for pastors whose theological training had raised all sorts of questions which required some sort of answers, answers which may be of less interest to the average congregation.

Of greater significance was the aim of providing the sort of material which, when digested by the pastor/teacher, would speak to the hearts of the hearers. When these studies are used, then, it is with the expectation that those who read them will also read between the lines. The material in them is not the last word and is meant to be translated into the experience of the readers. These studies are fraught with weaknesses and no doubt they are academically inadequate. But they are sent forth with the hope that they will stimulate the faith of the reader so that, like the Scriptures, when they are read, marked, learned and inwardly digested, they may provide a stimulus to faith and so to the rich experience of all that God has given us in Christ.

I have one further request. In these studies I have set out the text of the many of the major sections of the Scriptures and not simply given the references. It is my experience that where the references only are given they are generally 'taken as read'. Please read the sections of the Scriptures that have been included. In the long run it is not my comments but the Scriptures themselves which are the final authority.

Ian D Pennicook. 1996

Christ — our Wisdom

The matter of wisdom is, generally, not one which occupies much of our thinking. Yet Paul wrote that ‘Jesus Christ ... became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption’ (1 Cor. 1:30). It is not so much that he wanted to discuss the concept of wisdom as that he could not but see that Christ and him crucified occupies the place which for others was taken by the notion of wisdom. Wisdom is a Christological consideration. That means that whatever place wisdom may previously have had in Paul’s thinking, the coming of Christ, by which I mean the whole ‘Christ event’ of incarnation, life and activities, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and Pentecost, has totally transformed it.

That is not to say that Paul viewed wisdom as some deep ‘Christ consciousness’, somehow distinct from all that wisdom had meant in the past. Indeed, the common definitions of wisdom would have continued to be of value to him. This was certainly the case of the Old Testament picture of wisdom. For example, In Romans 11:33-36, the great doxology which closes the discussion of salvation and Israel, he concludes,

O the depth of the riches and *wisdom* and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

³⁴For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor?’

³⁵‘Or who has given a gift to him, to receive a gift in return?’

³⁶For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen.

Overwhelmed by the wisdom of God, Paul quotes two passages from the Old Testament (Isa 40:13 and, probably, Job 41:11) to demonstrate his point. Likewise, when he speaks of the death and resurrection of Christ, he claims that they were ‘according to the scriptures’. To deny the validity of the Old Testament would be to call into question his whole ministry. Of course, Jesus himself had claimed the same thing: the scriptures spoke of him (cf. John 5:46).

What, then, is wisdom? The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines wisdom as ‘experience and knowledge together with the power of applying them critically or practically; common sense’. This sort of practical wisdom or skill is seen both inside and outside of Israel. For example, Exodus 31:6 records

Moreover, I have appointed with him Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and I have given skill to all the skillful, so that they may make all that I have commanded you ...

The word translated as ‘skill’ is the Hebrew חכמה (*chokmah*), the word elsewhere translated as ‘wisdom’. Here it means the practical wisdom needed to make the various items for the Tabernacle. The same occurs in Exodus 28:3.

And you shall speak to all who have ability, whom I have endowed with skill, that they make Aaron’s vestments to consecrate him for my priesthood.

There is, of course, the notable element that such wisdom is recorded as being the gift of God (see below), but nonetheless the reference is to what we would call ‘practical skills’, the result of years of experience and training.

This wisdom, while the gift of God, is also found outside Israel, that is, it is not unique to the people of God. The Egyptians had their own wisdom:

So Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in his words and deeds. (Acts 7:22)

Moses' training would have been quite rigorous and detailed.

Though we do not have from Egypt a corpus explicitly labelled 'wisdom literature,' scholars have taken note of several types of school literature that conform generally to the pragmatic, utilitarian character of wisdom. Among this literature we find texts designated as *sebayit* or 'teaching.' The most prominent examples of this 'teaching' are didactic texts that sustained popularity from 2300 to 100 BC. Intended to provide training in *ma'at* ('order, justice, truth'), these earliest texts of didactic prose and learned sayings, which in later periods contained an increasing number of aphorisms, are usually presented in the form of advice from a prominent official to his son. This pattern corresponded conveniently to the teacher-student relationship in Egyptian scribal schools. Accordingly, the school setting became a surrogate for common education in the home. Some texts, such as *The Instruction of a Man for His Son*, portray vividly the classroom setting of scribes to whom these 'teachings' belong as part of their educational resources.

Similarities between Egyptian and biblical wisdom became obvious in the modern period with the discovery of the instructional text of a minor official. Amenemope (probably belonging to the 18th Dynasty). This text, or an oral counterpart, appears to have been the source for much of Prov. 22:17-23:14 (*ANET*, pp. 421-25). Derived originally from the 13th or 12th cent. BC, if not earlier, the style corresponds to the father-son pattern of instruction found in Proverbs. The close resonance of a part of Proverbs with this Egyptian text confirms that Israel freely borrowed and adapted wise sayings from other nations in the composition of a distinctly Israelite 'wisdom' literature.

Other Egyptian literature designated as 'teaching' includes advice specifically directed to scribes. These compositions incorporate essays based on various carefully structured genres, 'onomastica' (encyclopedic-like lists of items belonging to the same general class), and polemical texts such as the so-called Satire on the Trades (*ANET*, pp. 432-34). A number of parallels can be found to Israelite wisdom. The partial lists in Prov. 30:15f., 18-20, 24-31 may show familiarity with specific Egyptian onomastica or, at least, with that genre within international wisdom circles. Other 'teachings' in the Egyptian schools were of a didactic sort, including sarcastic texts in the form of letters. These texts explored the limits and ironies of life itself. Their tough-minded, even bitter, scrutiny corresponds in many ways to the 'sceptical wisdom' of the biblical books Ecclesiastes and Job.¹

Similarly Jeremiah 50:35;

A sword against the Chaldeans, says the LORD, and against the inhabitants of Babylon, and against her officials and her sages!

'Sages' are 'wise men' and are those with special insight who may be called on for advice in the activities in the nation. In Mesopotamia, too, wisdom was a formal matter as the following indicates.

Scribal schools in Mesopotamia provided a formal setting for wisdom training ... Instructional literature, like that found in Egyptian and biblical texts, appears from the earliest period until the latest. The oldest known text contains the teaching of a father, Shuruppak, to his son, Ziusudra, the hero of the Sumerian flood epic (*ANET*, pp. 594-96). The most famous example of Mesopotamian wisdom literature is the instructional treatise attributed to a certain Ahikar, later mentioned in

¹ G. T. Sheppard, 'Wisdom' in Geoffrey Bromily (Gen. Ed) *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Volume 4 Q-Z*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1988, p. 1074f.

Tobit (1:22; 14:10). His work, allegedly dating from the 8th cent. BC, circulated widely and in various languages until well into the Christian period. The famous Ahikar served as a royal adviser under the Assyrian administrations of Sennacherib (704-681) and Esarhaddon (680-669). Proverbs and aphoristic advice in Ahikar's instruction appears to have been a resource for Prov. 21:13f. and 27:33 (ANET, pp. 427-430).

Alongside this specific type of literature, there exist numerous collections of proverbs analogous to the biblical Proverbs and a wide variety of religious texts, such as *I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom* (ANET, pp. 434-37), that offer advice to those who suffer. The latter text reminds us that scribal schools were attached to temples and that wisdom in Mesopotamia was overtly related to worship.⁴

The latter comment about wisdom and worship indicates that while 'wisdom' may have been common to all humanity, the source of that wisdom differed greatly. For example, the 'wise men' who came to Jesus (Matt. 2:1-12) were *magoi*, according to Herodotus a caste of people among 6th century BC Medes with special powers to interpret dreams⁵ and, Philo (1st century AD) knew of both scientific magi and those who were charlatans and magicians. The term generally 'refers to those engaged in occult arts and covers a wide range of astronomers, fortune tellers, priestly augurers, and magicians of varying plausibility'.⁶ The description given by Matthew probably indicates that these 'wise men' were astrologers who associated seeing 'the star at its rising (in the east)' (Matt. 2:3) with the prophecy of Balaam in Numbers 24:17-18. But while these people may not incur any criticism, the mere use of the word 'wisdom' should not be taken to imply some blanket approval. Indeed, as we shall see, quite the opposite is true. Human wisdom, while doubtless a benefit in many ways, is regarded as the adulteration of genuine wisdom; that is, there are always other elements which have been added.

As we observed, there is a basic similarity between biblical wisdom *forms* and those of Egypt and Mesopotamia. However, there is considerable difference in the *content*. The book of Proverbs, while regularly using the father/son framework, has a significant focus not found elsewhere, namely, 'the fear of the LORD'. Proverbs chapter one demonstrates this.

¹The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:

²For learning about wisdom and instruction, for understanding words of insight,

³for gaining instruction in wise dealing, righteousness, justice, and equity;

⁴to teach shrewdness to the simple, knowledge and prudence to the young--

⁵Let the wise also hear and gain in learning, and the discerning acquire skill,

⁶to understand a proverb and a figure, the words of the wise and their riddles.

⁷The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

⁸Hear, my child, your father's instruction, and do not reject your mother's teaching;

² 'Ahikar interceded for me, and I returned to Nineveh. Now Ahikar was chief cupbearer, keeper of the signet, and in charge of administrations of the accounts under King Sennacherib of Assyria; so Esar-haddon reappointed him. He was my nephew and so a close relative.'

³ 'A stone is heavy, and sand is weighty, but a fool's provocation is heavier than both.'

⁴ G. T. Sheppard, 'Wisdom', p. 1075.

⁵ *Histories I*, cited in R. E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, Geoffrey Chapman, London, p. 167.

⁶ Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, p. 167.

⁹for they are a fair garland for your head, and pendants for your neck.
¹⁰My child, if sinners entice you, do not consent.
¹¹If they say, ‘Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood; let us wantonly ambush the innocent;
¹²like Sheol let us swallow them alive and whole, like those who go down to the Pit.
¹³We shall find all kinds of costly things; we shall fill our houses with booty.
¹⁴Throw in your lot among us; we will all have one purse’—
¹⁵my child, do not walk in their way, keep your foot from their paths;
¹⁶for their feet run to evil, and they hurry to shed blood.
¹⁷For in vain is the net baited while the bird is looking on;
¹⁸yet they lie in wait—to kill themselves! and set an ambush—for their own lives!
¹⁹Such is the end of all who are greedy for gain; it takes away the life of its possessors.
²⁰Wisdom cries out in the street; in the squares she raises her voice.
²¹At the busiest corner she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks:
²²How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their
scoffing and fools hate knowledge?
²³Give heed to my reproof; I will pour out my thoughts to you; I will make my words known to
you.
²⁴Because I have called and you refused, have stretched out my hand and no one heeded,
²⁵and because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof,
²⁶I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when panic strikes you,
²⁷when panic strikes you like a storm, and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and
anguish come upon you.
²⁸Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently, but will not find
me.
²⁹Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD,
³⁰would have none of my counsel, and despised all my reproof,
³¹therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way and be sated with their own devices.
³²For waywardness kills the simple, and the complacency of fools destroys them;
³³but those who listen to me will be secure and will live at ease, without dread of disaster.’

The first six verses opens up the theme of the book, namely that the proverbs of Solomon are intended to teach wisdom to the young and to increase the wisdom of the wise and discerning (verses 4-5). Verse 20ff indicates that wisdom is not for the élite but for the man in the street. And, indeed, as it can be seen there; generally human beings discern a certain wisdom in the affairs of life, as can be seen in the proverbs of other ‘non-biblical’ cultures. But wisdom on the horizontal, while not necessarily wrong, is essentially deficient. Verse 7 shows that ‘the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge’ and that it is this wisdom which fools despise. Proverbs 9:10 puts it a different way, saying that ‘The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight’. Noting the Hebrew parallelism, we observe that to be wise is to know God. This not because the writer wants to gain adherents; rather it is because all wisdom derives from God, to whom all wisdom is ascribed. So Revelation 7:12,

Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.

and Daniel 2:20

Blessed be the name of God from age to age, for wisdom and power are his.

Both Daniel and Proverbs continue that wisdom is God’s gift.

²¹He changes times and seasons, deposes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding.

²²He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with him.

²³To you, O God of my ancestors, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and power, and have now revealed to me what we asked of you, for you have revealed to us what the king ordered (Daniel 2:21-23).

For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding⁷ (Proverbs 2:6).

Of course, God gives wisdom only to those who will seek it (Prov. 2:1-5), which means, to those who seek him (cf. Prov. 3:5-8). It is this which is stressed in the letter of James.

If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you. (James 1:5; cf. 3:15, 17, 'wisdom from above').

Likewise, Peter wrote that Paul was *given* wisdom (2 Pet. 3:15).

It is the 'givenness' of wisdom that stands in contrast to the foolishness of men and women. 'The fool says in his heart, "There is no God"' (Ps. 14:1). This is not a reference to the person who denies the existence of God but to the person who will not have God figuring in his or her decision making processes. 'They do not see fit to have God in [their] knowledge' (Rom. 1:28) and, as such, this is the outworking of the sin of Adam. Rather than be dependent on God for the evaluation of good and evil, they insist on their own rights. In doing so, however, they must 'suppress the truth'.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth. ¹⁹For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse; ²¹for though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened. ²²Claiming to be wise, they became fools; ²³and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles. (Romans 1:18-23).

From this perspective, being a fool is far more than being an inept person who regularly makes mistakes; a fool is a person who asserts his own ability and deliberately refuses the truth of God which is constantly set before him. The fool actually *hates* knowledge (Prov. 1:22).

The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens; (Proverbs 3:19).

²²The LORD created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago.

²³Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth.

⁷ We should note that there are a number of terms used synonymously in Proverbs; they are wisdom, knowledge, discretion (prudence), understanding etc. cf. Prov. 2:10-11. See Derek Kidner, *Proverbs*, TOTC. Tyndale Press, London, 1964, p. 36f.

²⁴When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water.
²⁵Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth —
²⁶when he had not yet made earth and fields, or the world's first bits of soil.
²⁷When he established the heavens, I was there, when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,
²⁸when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep,
²⁹when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth,
³⁰then I was beside him, like a master worker; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always,
³¹rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race. (Proverbs 8:22-31).

It is he who made the earth by his power, who established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens. (Jeremiah 10:12).

These statements indicate that the wisdom of God is the framework of all creation, but they mean more than simply that all creation is very cleverly put together. Of course it is, as Psalm 139:14 makes plain.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.

But the role of wisdom in creation lies in the structuring of creation for its ultimate goal. The wisdom of God means that both the act and the preservation of creation are with a view to the final purpose, the *telos*. All the language of hope and promise within the Old Testament left believers in Israel with an awareness that God had a purpose for creation, that its present spoiling was not the final state of things. Passages such as Isaiah 65:17-25 and 66:22-23 make this plain.

But it is the coming Christ, Jesus the incarnate Son, which adds a greater dimension to all of this. Some commentators have even seen the wisdom of God, especially as personified in Proverbs 8:22ff and other passages in the intertestamental literature as providing the background for John's description of Jesus as the incarnate creative Word.⁸ While I do not believe that is necessary, nonetheless the New Testament is full of the notion of the *telos* being understood in the light of Christ. A significant statement in this matter is Ephesians 1:3-22, especially verses 3-10.

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. ⁵He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight ⁹he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

All of history can only be understood in the light of Christ. Prior to creation we were chosen 'in him' and therefore our destiny is 'adoption' through him, since God is 'the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ'. Now the wisdom of God has made known to us what was hitherto hidden, namely that all things are to be 'headed-up' in Christ (verses 8-10) and,

⁸ See the introductions in the various commentaries for details.

although this includes all things, it finds particular focus in the church, the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23). So the church itself is intended to be the vehicle by which ‘the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places’ (Eph. 3:10).

For Paul, the church is more than an organisation within humanity; it is a new humanity in Christ (Eph. 2:15). This high view of the church rests on the fact that God has *created* us in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:10). This great work of grace (Eph. 2:8-9) has come to us through the work of atonement (Eph. 2:16) and, in particular, by ‘redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses’ (Eph. 1:7). So the vehicle by which the wisdom of God is made known is the church which has been freed of its guilt through the work of the death and resurrection of Christ. The redeemed and forgiven church stands as a declaration of the wisdom of God!

Now it is at this point that the vast gulf between mere human, horizontal wisdom and the wisdom of God is delineated most clearly and it is as Paul deals with the matter of the divisions at Corinth that his understanding of the gulf is most plainly expressed.

... For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power.

¹⁸For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹For it is written, ‘

I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart’.

²⁰Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe.

²²For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, ²³but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

²⁶Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, ²⁹so that no one might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰He is the source of your life in *Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God*, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹in order that, as it is written, ‘Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord’.

¹When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. ²For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. ³And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. ⁴My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God. (1 Corinthians 1:17 — 2:5).

What is plain is that, here, the wisdom of God lies in the way by which the church, this great declaration of the wisdom of God, has come into being, namely through the word of the cross. At every point the wisdom of God stands in contrast with ‘conventional wisdom’, and certainly with the wisdom which relied on rhetorical techniques for its success. Mere human wisdom saw the church as comprised of the very people that those who were humanly

wise found offensive. More than that, the testimony of those people was equally offensive, either religiously or intellectually. They proclaimed a *crucified* Christ and in the Roman world that was to say that Christ died the revolting death of a slave. Any sense of nobility or attractiveness was totally absent.

We might compare the language of Revelation 5, where John sees that the only one who can break the seals and open the scroll of the plan of God, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, is one who appears as a dead sheep! This would certainly emphasise the fact that the Christians could hardly appeal to the logic or to the aesthetic sensitivities of their enemies to gain acceptance. Their proclamation was (and still is?) quite illogical. Yet this is the wisdom of God and, what is more, this proclamation is effective. Through this proclamation men and women have actually been brought to faith and are secure because no human wisdom can be brought to bear to undo what God has powerfully done.

That is not to say that Paul did not have a wisdom; indeed among the mature he does speak wisdom

though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish. ⁷But we speak God's wisdom *in a mystery*, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ⁸None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹But, as it is written, 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him' — ¹⁰these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. (1 Corinthians 2:6-10)

The mystery is that which required a revelation in order to be known and that is Paul's point: a revelation has taken place. The great things of the plan of God, the *telos*, *have been revealed to us through the Spirit*. And what is more⁹, the revelation came at one particular point in time, namely, the point of the cross and, in consequence, where that came to us. Just as the Galatians had Jesus Christ publicly exhibited as crucified and, by believing, received the Spirit, so Paul determined to proclaim only 'Jesus Christ and him crucified' to the Corinthians and it was then that the Spirit revealed the wisdom of God in and to them. The Spirit, who searches the deep things of God, by virtue of his own being, has brought those deep things, till then unknowable, to us.

What then of Paul's question in I Corinthians 1:20, 'Where is the one who is wise?' I suggest that, in fact, he answers that in a positive way when dealing with the matter of the gifts of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12. Do we need wisdom? Indeed we do and the first 'manifestation of the Spirit' to be mentioned is 'the utterance (*logos*) of wisdom' (verse 8).

Without wishing to go into the subject in any detail, I simply observe that, when this gift is discussed, in many circles it is assumed that what is *now* called 'the word of wisdom' is what Paul meant by the phrase.¹⁰ But surely we may conclude that Paul meant by wisdom

⁹ If the use of the Aorist tense is consistent.

¹⁰ One illustration of this is in Arnold Bittlinger, *Gifts and Graces*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1967, where the author, after insisting that he is 'only concerned with the *biblical* evidence' goes on to define the gift as 'In a difficult or dangerous situation a word of wisdom may be given which resolves the difficulty or silences the opponent. It is not innate wisdom as a personal possession which is described here, but rather a word of wisdom given to someone in a specific situation' (p. 28). Yet in the *biblical* evidence which follows, there is no mention of Old Testament definitions and none even to the language of 1 Corinthians.

in chapter twelve what he meant in chapters one and two. If that is the case, then perhaps ‘the utterance of wisdom’ may be understood to be ‘the given capacity to understand and expound a situation or issue in the light of the work of the cross’. Mere ‘insight’ into a situation is not intended here (it may be elsewhere). Rather, the church has as its (first?) gift from Christ through the Spirit the capacity to know the wisdom of God and to respond to given circumstances in the light of that.¹¹ In a world where human wisdom was (and is) so insistent such a gift must be of inestimable value.

Given that all this is his understanding, Paul urged the Ephesians to

Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise,¹⁶ making the most of the time, because the days are evil.¹⁷ So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. (Ephesians 5:15-17).

To be foolish is culpable. To fail to know what the will of the Lord is to refuse to live in the revelation which has been given. Wise people make the most of the time, knowing that the days are evil, because they have ‘learned Christ’ as ‘the truth is in Jesus’ (Eph. 4:20-21). Or, in the language of 1 Corinthians,

Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God.¹³ And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual. (1 Corinthians 2:12-13).

Who are the ‘spiritual’ people who can receive the wisdom of God, the ‘spiritual things’ interpreted by the apostle(s)?¹² They are those who have received the Spirit (verse 12) and who function in the fulness of that gift.

Those who are unspiritual¹³ do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.¹⁵ Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny.¹⁶ ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?’ But we have the mind of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:14-16).

To be ‘spiritual’ is to be one who can ‘receive the gifts [or *things*¹⁴] of God's Spirit’ because we have received the Spirit and live in him. Thus Paul followed/continued his exhortation to the Ephesians by telling them to ‘Go on being filled with the Spirit’ (Eph. 5:18) with all that that involved (Eph. 5:19ff.). To be wise is to be continually filled with the Spirit.

We may conclude, then, that the matter of wisdom is of central importance to us. It relates us, not only to sensible living (and much of the book of Proverbs insists that such

¹¹ Cf. Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1987, ‘... in the present case the “utterance of wisdom” comes “through the Spirit,” and in Corinth it is almost certainly to be found among those who give spiritual utterances that proclaim Christ crucified in this highly “wisdom”-conscious community (p.592).

¹² I say ‘apostles’ because the truths of the Spirit are always rooted within the apostolic testimony and it is that which must condition our thinking and responses.

¹³ Paul's word is ψυχικοῦ (psuchikos), ‘natural’, ‘soulish’. Whatever the word's precise meaning, it certainly stands as the contrast to ‘spiritual’.

¹⁴ The Greek is not specific: τὰ; τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ θεοῦ.

is the case) but also to the whole purpose of God and, so, to Christ himself. In the ultimate, Christ is our wisdom. All our knowledge and skill, especially as that relates to our 'vocation' (in the creational sense), is recognised as being 'in Christ' by those who themselves are fully living in him by being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Christ — our Righteousness

Surprising as it may seem, the subject of ‘righteousness’ is one which generates some confusion nowadays. In the past, it was a simple matter to identify righteousness with legal status. However, whatever truth there may be in that, it is evident that the subject of legal status should be put in a far broader context. If righteousness refers to legal standing, the question of how we understand the law must be addressed. In this paper, then, I am attempting to see what Paul meant when he said that God has made Christ our righteousness, but I am conscious that when scholarly works on the theology of Paul are examined, we find that there is no complete consensus of opinion.¹⁵ And yet the matter must not be thought of as too complex for ordinary believers; if the topic opens up wider horizons within the scriptures then that must, surely, be for our benefit.

Perhaps it would be appropriate to start at Romans 1:16-17.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, ‘The one who is righteous will live by faith.’

If, in 1 Corinthians 1:30, Paul describes Christ as being made our righteousness, he does so because he is expounding the fact that his priority is the proclamation of the word of the Cross (1:17-2:5, 7). This statement from Romans is parallel to it. The gospel is the power of God, because ‘the righteousness of God’ is revealed by it.. What follows in Romans is an exposition of the reality of the wrath of God as the present experience of humanity. The righteousness of God is revealed in the face of another revelation, that of the wrath of God. And the reason the wrath of God is revealed is plain; men and women suppress the truth of God by active wickedness. At the heart of this is the fact that this suppression depends on the fact of the truth of God being fully known; from creation God has shown his ‘attributes’ so that all is quite plain. The rejection of God is the rejection of the God who is known; ‘having known God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him ...’ (Rom. 1:21).

What is known is not merely the existence of God. Rather, the unseen things of God, which have been known from the creation, are seen by means of the things he has made. These ‘unseen things’ are his eternal power and deity. Plainly this means far more than simply that God is a powerful God, since the result of this knowledge is its suppression in *wickedness*. On the contrary, God’s eternal power and deity contain the whole truth of the character of God. Paul is not saying, then, that to look at the creation is to see that there must be a creator who is powerful. He is saying that God is ever present to his creation so that it is impossible to see the creation and not be continually confronted with the whole being of God. This is comparable with such statements as

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork;

²Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.

³There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard;

⁴yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world (Psalm 19 1-4)

¹⁵ For a recent summary of the academic discussions, see S.J. Hafemann, ‘Paul and His Interpreters’ in G.F. Hawthorne and R.P. Martin (Eds), *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, 1993, pp 666-679.

What is the glory that is being told? I suggest that it is nothing less than the law of the LORD (vss. 7ff.)¹⁶. This picture is confirmed by Psalm 97:6, 'The heavens proclaim his righteousness; and all the peoples behold his glory.' In that psalm, the implication is

⁷All worshipers of images are put to shame, those who make their boast in worthless idols; all gods bow down before him.

⁸Zion hears and is glad, and the towns of Judah rejoice, because of your judgments, O God

⁹For you, O LORD, are most high over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods (Psalm 97:7-9).

The revelation of the righteousness of God exposes the futility of idolatry and, on the other hand, gives great joy to the people of faith.

The great evil of fallen humanity is that, being continually confronted with the law of God, that is with the revelation of the whole character of God, men and women reject his whole moral being. It is this which explains the great turmoil of the conscience and the desperate attempts to quiet its demands. There is no rest for the wicked because the wicked are continually confronted by righteousness of God and so by his law, which means they are continually confronted by God himself. This is the action of his wrath.

Later in Romans, in 2:14-16, Paul deals with the matter of universal culpability:

When Gentiles, who do not possess the law, do instinctively what the law requires, these, though not having the law, are a law to themselves ¹⁵They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, to which their own conscience also bears witness; and their conflicting thoughts will accuse or perhaps excuse them ¹⁶On the day when, according to my gospel, God, through Jesus Christ, will judge the secret thoughts of all. ¹⁷

Gentiles do not possess the Jewish law (of which I shall say more later), but when they do instinctively (that is, without written directive) what that Jewish law requires, they show that the law is written on their hearts, with their conflicting thoughts now accusing, now excusing. There are those who regard this idea of the law written on the heart as being a fulfilment of Jeremiah 31:31-34, the promise of the new covenant. However, I suggest that it is the *reason* for the promise of the new covenant and not its result. In the light of Romans 1:18ff, the law written on the heart here is a creational principle not a redemptional one.¹⁸ In Romans 3:10-18 (where Paul makes statements which have their primary reference within a

¹⁶ Although, obviously, we could understand this glory also in terms of his holiness of which the law is, equally, an expression.

¹⁷ One difficulty of this section may be alleviated by a change in the punctuation, so that the possibility of some person being *excused* by their behaviour on the day of judgment is removed. Thus the ASV has brackets around verses 14 and 15

¹²For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without the law and as many as have sinned under the law shall be judged by the law; ¹³for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified ¹⁴(for when Gentiles that have not the law do by nature the things of the law, these, not having the law, are the law unto themselves; ¹⁵in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them); ¹⁶in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my gospel, by Jesus Christ (Romans 2:12-16).

¹⁸ Contra Cranfield (ICC *The Epistle to The Romans, Volume 1*, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1975, p. 158f) who contends that Romans 2:15 refers to Gentile Christians. C K Barrett (*The Epistle to the Romans*, A & C Black, London, 1971, p. 52f) argues that the phrase 'the work of the law' (NRSV 'what the law requires') means 'the effect of the law'. He still regards the idea of the law written on the heart as the result of redemption, but at least the relationship of the Gentile with creation and the law is acknowledged.

Jewish context, see Isaiah 59:7-8, into universal principles) and 3:23 Paul later explicitly denies that there is any possibility of a person being acquitted before God by what they do. There is none righteous, no not one. That is, in the face of the law all are condemned. Hence his conclusion in Romans 3:19-20.

Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.²⁰ For 'no human being will be justified in his sight' by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.

So when Paul begins by insisting that the gospel is powerful because in it 'the righteousness of God' is revealed he is saying far more than that the law is declared. He is saying that the righteousness of God comes in such a way that men and women are relieved from their fearful situation (cf. Rom. 5:9, 'much more will we be saved through *him from the wrath*').

But what is 'the righteousness of God'. Some argue that it is God's gift which has the character of his power to save¹⁹ and this is certainly true (see Rom. 5:17). But at the same time they argue that righteousness is not an attribute of the divine nature.²⁰ But in view of Psalm 97:6 that seems quite inadequate. God's righteousness must first be his own complete consistency with his own nature as that nature is expressed in his law. The law of God is the law by which God himself subsists.²¹ That is why, in the Old Testament, 'righteousness' is sometimes associated with God's covenant faithfulness. Furthermore, since God is righteous, righteousness must be found in creation and especially in the dealings which men and women have with God and with each other. Hence we may say that *God's righteousness is his total consistency with his own nature, which he both expresses and expects*.

It is for this reason that the language of righteousness is used in contexts involving all areas of life.²² Within Proverbs, for example, the wicked are contrasted with the righteous, usually with the implication that wickedness and righteousness are exemplified in behaviour.

For learning about wisdom and instruction, for understanding words of insight,
³for gaining instruction in wise dealing, righteousness, justice, and equity;
⁴to teach shrewdness to the simple, knowledge and prudence to the young—(Proverbs 1:2-4).

The wicked are overthrown by their evil-doing, but the righteous find a refuge in their integrity. (Proverbs 14:32).

The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but he loves the one who pursues righteousness. (Proverbs 15:9).

Likewise, the righteous are contrasted with fools in Proverbs 10:21

¹⁹ E. Käsemann, see, K.L Onesti and M.T. Brauch, 'Righteousness, Righteousness of God' in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, p 835.

²⁰ See C. Brown, 'Righteousness' in C. Brown (Ed), *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Volume 3*, Paternoster, Exeter, 1978, p 372.

²¹ Quite possibly the often quoted statement that the law is 'the written, preceptual image of God' is also inadequate, if by 'written' is meant written down in the Mosaic context, that is, on tablets of stone. If written on the heart is intended then there is no problem.

²² Onesti and Brauch, 'Righteousness etc', p 829.

The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of sense.

The wise person is the righteous person, the one who fears the LORD and who demonstrates that fear in his or her behaviour.

What is the context in which to understand these various statements? Taken by themselves they could be seen to imply that by behaviour a person becomes righteous. But this is not the case. These are not the actions of those who wish to gain righteousness but of those who have it, and they have it because they are within the covenant relationships established by God. The law, the righteous ordinances of God, is a cause of delight to those who are righteous (see Ps. 1).

I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn your righteous ordinances. (Ps 119:7)

At midnight I rise to praise you, because of your righteous ordinances. (Ps 119:62)

I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to observe your righteous ordinances. (Ps 119:106)

The sum of your word is truth; and every one of your righteous ordinances endures forever. (Ps 119:160)

Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous ordinances. (Ps 119:164)

The commandments come to the righteous in this way because such people are not condemned by them. The boast of these righteous does not lie in their obedience but in the forgiveness of God. Thus,

Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

²Happy are those to whom the LORD imputes no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. ...

¹⁰Many are the torments of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the LORD.

¹¹Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart. (Psalm 32:1-2, 10-11).

It is the covenant which God has made, and in particular those parts of the covenant which ensure the ongoing freedom from guilt, which is the basis for the righteousness and so the basis for the righteous behaviour.

But how do we, then, understand the whole matter of the law and those outside the covenant, the Gentiles, who were mentioned above? The answer to that lies in the fact that they, too, are in a covenant relationship with God. The law which is in the heart of all humanity by virtue of creation is just as much covenant law as is the law of Moses.

And what is more, neither Jews nor Gentiles enter such a covenant relationship by means of their righteous actions. This is seen in clearest terms in Exodus 20:1ff, where the covenant made at Sinai is explicitly the result of God's redemptive action. Just as redemption stood as the basis for Sinai, it was creation which was the basis for the first covenant. Much of this has been discussed elsewhere, so suffice to say here that the first reference to covenant in the scriptures is in Genesis 6: 18, where the covenant with Noah is not a new covenant but is the confirming of a covenant already in existence, namely, the covenant of creation. All that is,

including men and women, is brought to being in covenant with God. We should see the curse upon the serpent and upon the ground (Genesis 3:14, 17) as being the result of covenant violation (cf. Deut. 27-28). Adam is a covenant violator (not, I should say, a covenant breaker in the sense that the covenant is somehow nullified; see Jer. 33: 19-21²³) and it is for this reason that he bears the curse. What is more, all who are in Adam share his state, both passively as well as by active participation in his rebellion.

Unrighteousness is covenant violation. As such it is failure under the law of the covenant. This does not mean just the Mosaic covenant since, as we have seen, covenant law has been written on the heart from creation. The Mosaic covenant is nothing else but the creational covenant formalised by redemption, in order that the creational covenant might continue to be applied (cf. 1 Pet. 4: 19).

A passage of great importance for this subject is Galatians 3:10-14.

For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law'. ¹¹Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law; for 'The one who is righteous will live by faith'. ¹²But the law does not rest on faith; on the contrary, 'Whoever does the works of the law will live by them'. ¹³Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'—¹⁴in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

The curse referred to here is the curse which the Mosaic covenant defined, as in Deuteronomy 27-28. As a result, when Jesus became a curse for us, he was taking upon himself the whole curse of Israel's covenant violation. On the cross he bore the full weight of God's wrath on Israel's covenant violation with the result that believing Israel was set free to be the people of God and so that the Gentiles might find themselves as also God's peoples through redeemed Israel. But, there is far more, if what was said about the creational covenant is understood. For when Christ bore the curse of Israel's covenant violation he was also taking the curse of the covenant violation of all creation. Hence the end of all things is the total purification of the creation from all defilement and impurity, the new heavens and the new earth in which righteousness dwells (2 Pet. 3:13).

How, then, does Paul say that the Father has made Christ Jesus 'wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption' (1 Cor. 1:30)? He surely means more than just that by his death Christ has made righteousness possible for us. His death on the Cross was not merely the removal of the curse.

At his baptism by John, Jesus insisted that it was fitting for him to fulfil all righteousness (Matt. 3:15) and on a number of occasions he is called 'the righteous one' (Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14; 1 Pet. 3:18; 1 John 2:1 cf 3:7). The Word, the Son of the 'righteous Father' (Jn. 17:25; cf. 1 John 2:29) has become flesh. Now there is [a] righteous Man, one who may be called 'God's faithful covenant partner'.²⁴ Once there was Adam, in whose covenant violation

²³ Although it is obviously broken in the sense that the obligations laid on men and women by creation and redemption have been rejected, and 'broken' is the word used on a number of occasions, for example at Jer. 31:31-34.

²⁴ The phrase is Karl Barth's, though I cannot locate the source.

we all participated and whose curse we shared. Now Christ, the righteous one has come and we are in *him*. When Paul said that ‘the righteousness of God is revealed’ in the gospel and that ‘the one who is righteous will live by faith’ the locus for this is Christ. He is the righteous one, he is the Man of faith. This is possibly what is meant in Galatians 2:19-20.

For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ;²⁰ and it is no longer I who live, but it is 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.

Another, more literal translation could be ‘I live by *the faith of the Son of God* who loved me and gave himself for me’.

His faith is, quite naturally, expressed in obedience: ‘My food is to do the will of him who sent me’ (John 4:34) and ‘See, God, I have come to do your will’ (Heb. 10:7; cf Ps. 40:8 ‘I *delight* to do your will’). But his obedience is not the obedience of a solitary person.

What Christ presented to God for his complete joy and satisfaction was a perfect racial obedience. It was not the perfect obedience of a saintly unit of the race. It was a racial obedience. God’s holiness found itself again in the humbled holiness of Christ’s ‘public person’. He presented to God a race he created for holiness. Remember that the very nature of our faith in Christ is union with him. The kingdom is set up by Christians being united with the work, the obedience, the holiness of the king. Christ, in his victorious death and risen life, has power to unite the race himself, and to work his complete holiness into its actual experience and history. He has power by uniting us with him in his Spirit to reduce time to acknowledge in act and fact his conclusive victory of eternity. When you think of what he did for the race and its history, you must on no account do what the church and its theology has too often done—you must not omit our living union with him. It is not enough to believe that he gained a victory at a historic point. Christ is the condensation of history. You must go on to think of his summary reconciliation as being worked out to cover the whole of history and enter each soul by the Spirit. You must think of the Cross as setting up a new covenant and a new humanity, in which Christ dwells as the new righteousness of God. ‘Christ for us’ is only intelligible as ‘Christ in us’ and we in him.²⁵

This is the meaning of such statements as

For just as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by *the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous*. (Rom. 5:19)

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in *him we might become the righteousness of God*. (2 Cor. 5:21).

For surely you have heard about him and were taught in him, as truth is in Jesus.²² You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts,²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,²⁴ and to clothe yourselves *with the new man created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness*. (Ephesians 4:21-24).

... having produced *the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ* for the glory and praise of God. (Philippians 1:11).

Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ.⁸ More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For

²⁵ P.T. Forsyth, *The Work of Christ*, NCPI, Blackwood, p 129f.

his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. ¹⁰I want to know Christ ... (Philippians 3:7-10).

Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith as precious as ours *through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: (2 Peter 1:1).*

Christ crucified, a scandal to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks, is nonetheless, indeed, 'all the more', our righteousness. We are made righteous, that is, justified, through faith (note, not *because of faith*) in the righteous one, whose shed blood was and is the blood of the new covenant poured out for many for the remission of sins. We are righteous, but we do not have righteousness — we have Christ who is our righteousness. Or, rather, as the mediator of the new covenant, he has us.

Christ — our Sanctification

He [God] is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption ... (1 Corinthians 1:30).

We have so far examined the range of meaning contained in Paul's description of Jesus as our 'wisdom' and our 'righteousness'. In order to do that we needed to see that both Paul and his readers lived in a world which was conditioned by contemporary expectations as well as by the background provided by the Christians' heritage in Israel. When we come to the third item, Jesus our 'sanctification', we are also confronted by elements which we ourselves bring to the topic. In this area, the problem lies in the assumption by many that what we mean by 'sanctification' is what the Scriptures mean by it. In many modern Christian discussions, sanctification is generally taken to mean

that gracious and continuous operation of the Holy Spirit by which He purifies the sinner, renews his whole nature in the image of God, and enables him to perform good works. It differs from justification in that it is not a legal but a recreative act, is usually a lengthy process, and never reaches perfection in this life. While it is very decidedly a supernatural work of God, the believer can and should co-operate in it by a diligent use of the means which God has placed at his disposal.²⁶

There is no intention to call the need for godliness into question. The writer of Hebrews stressed that his readers ought to 'pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord' (Heb. 12:14). But at the same time the writer also described his readers as those who '*have been sanctified* through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all' (Heb. 10:10). In other words, 'sanctification' is not implied in the quest for godliness. If anything it is the presupposition. A clear understanding of what it means to be sanctified will, for men and women of faith, provide a stimulus to godly living. But it must be said at the commencement that sanctification is not a process. It is an already accomplished fact. Thus we read such statements as

But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. (Rom. 6:22).

To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: (1 Cor. 1:2).

But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God. (1 Cor. 6:11).

For the unbelieving husband is made holy through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy through her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. (1 Cor. 7:14).

For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. (Heb. 10:14).

²⁶ Louis Berkhof, *A Summary of Christian Doctrine*, Banner of Truth, London, 1938/1960, p 133.

... who have been chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ and to be sprinkled with his blood: May grace and peace be yours in abundance. (1 Pet. 1:2).

Along with such statements as these are the repeated descriptions of believers as 'saints', a word which simply means 'holy ones'.

It could be that at this point we may be thinking, 'But I do not feel holy', or, 'I see that in me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing' or some such sentiment. If that is so, then we must acknowledge that there is a certain validity in recognising our weaknesses. But what we ought to do is provide a framework from which to evaluate them. It may be, for instance, that what we see as a failure could be an indication of the work of Christ actually having taken place! That is, it is more than likely that those Christians who are most aware of their own personal weakness are those whose sensitivities have been brought to life by the Spirit of holiness. So, an awareness of failure may be no more than a demonstration of the great work of redemption having taken place. Ezekiel 36:25-31 illustrates this:

I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. ²⁸Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. ²⁹I will save you from all your uncleannesses, and I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you. ³⁰I will make the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field abundant, so that you may never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations. ³¹*Then you shall remember your evil ways, and your dealings that were not good; and you shall loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominable deeds.*

So, we need a framework.²⁷

GOD IS HOLY

In the book of Leviticus we encounter the declaration by God, 'I am holy':

For I am the LORD your God; sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming creature that moves on the earth. ⁴⁵For I am the LORD who brought you up from the land of Egypt, to be your God; you shall be holy, for I am holy. (Lev. 11:44-45)

Again, in Isaiah 57:15, God declares

For thus says the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with those who are contrite and humble in spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite.

The usual definition of 'holy' as a reference to God is that he is morally pure, totally separate from all evil. While that is undoubtedly true, it is of little help in understanding what it means to say that God is holy, since it only says what he is not. He is not touched by sin.

²⁷David Peterson's, *Possessed by God*, Apollos, Leicester, 1995, is a very helpful work. The book is the result of the Moore College Lectures of 1994 and is a very thorough examination of the matter the New Testament theology of sanctification and holiness.

But that says nothing about God before there was sin to be considered. Can we, then, ask what it means to say that God is holy in himself, that is, not compared with men and women or with evil? After all, the Scriptures ask, ‘To what can we possibly compare God?’ (see Isa. 40:18).

From Isaiah 6:1-3 we may see that God’s holiness is his glory.²⁸ Likewise, Moses declared that God is ‘majestic in holiness’ (Ex. 15:11) and, as noted above, Isaiah records that God’s name, that is, his whole being, is holy. These statements are presented with no explanation. All we know of God’s holiness is as it exposes the lack of moral purity of men and women. This was Isaiah’s point in 6:4-5. But we may perhaps be able to understand something of the truth of God by seeing the way holiness is described when it touches creation.

When discussing the requirements for holiness in Leviticus, in particular the questions of holiness and cleanness, Gordon Wenham refers to the work of M. Douglas. He writes

M Douglas has tried to discover the deep underlying principles that unite these concepts of holiness and cleanness. She argues that holy means more than separation to divine service. It means wholeness and completeness. ... She quotes Lev. 21:17-21, listing imperfections that bar one from acting as a priest, and summarizes: ‘In other words, he must be perfect as a man, if he is to be a priest’. ... The idea of wholeness or normality as the notion implicitly assumed to be essential to holiness and cleanness is the key determining the divisions of the animal kingdom according to Douglas.²⁹

The root of the Hebrew word for holy is **קדש**, *qdash*, meaning to cut. When applied to humans or to objects we may understand it to mean that a person or thing has been cut off and separated for God. But as applying to God himself we may understand his holiness to mean that God is complete, the word cut implying that God is not in anyway dependent upon his creatures for his being. Hence Isaiah’s description of God as the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, who dwells ‘in the high and holy place’ (57:15).

HOLY TO THE LORD

Within the Scriptures there is a considerable space devoted to the people of Israel and, in particular, to Israel’s role as God’s *holy* people.

... you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites. (Exodus 19:6).

Israel’s identity, its life and even the utensils used in its worship are described as holy. For example, the first reference to Israel gathering together is given in Exodus 12:16,

On the first day you shall hold a solemn assembly, and on the seventh day a solemn assembly; no work shall be done on those days; only what everyone must eat, that alone may be prepared by you.

The word translated as ‘solemn’ (*NRSV*) is the Hebrew **קדש** (*qdash*), so that the *AV* translated the phrase as ‘an holy convocation’. The occasion was solemn because it was holy and it was holy because God had called it. Similarly, after the death of the firstborn of Egypt, God instructed Moses,

²⁸ ‘God’s glory is his holiness revealed’; Peterson, *Possessed by God*, p 18.

²⁹ G.J. Wenham, *Leviticus*, N.I.C.O.T., Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1979, p 23ff.

Consecrate to me all the firstborn; whatever is the first to open the womb among the Israelites, of human beings and animals, is mine. (Exodus 13:2).

Later, the choice of the firstborn of Israel was modified to be the choice of the Levites.

For all the firstborn among the Israelites are mine, both human and animal. On the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I consecrated them for myself, ¹⁸but I have taken the Levites in place of all the firstborn among the Israelites. ¹⁹Moreover, I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and his sons from among the Israelites, to do the service for the Israelites at the tent of meeting, and to make atonement for the Israelites, in order that there may be no plague among the Israelites for coming too close to the sanctuary. (Numbers 8:17-19).

The significance of the Levites' role may be seen in the final statement. The sanctuary, the Tabernacle, is a holy place and to violate it is forbidden to any who is not 'sanctified'. The items used in the sanctuary were equally holy, as were the various sacrifices. Thus,

Then you shall take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle and all that is in it, and consecrate it and all its furniture, so that it shall become holy. ¹⁰You shall also anoint the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and consecrate the altar, so that the altar shall be most holy. (Exodus 40:9-10).

When discussing the way the sacrifice was to be eaten, a prohibition was expressed this way:

All who eat it shall be subject to punishment, because they have profaned what is holy to the LORD; and any such person shall be cut off from the people. (Leviticus 19:8).

What is plain from the various injunctions and descriptions is that holiness was not merely ritual. In other words holiness was not a status conferred on various people and things by common agreement. Holiness was dynamic. That which was holy was so because God himself had given it that holiness. This is illustrated by 2 Samuel 6:3-7.

They carried the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart ⁴with the ark of God; and Ahio went in front of the ark. ⁵David and all the house of Israel were dancing before the LORD with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals. ⁶When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen shook it. ⁷The anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God struck him there because he reached out his hand to the ark; and he died there beside the ark of God.

What is plain is that holiness in Israel relates to the active presence of God among his people. This is surely the implication of Isaiah 57:15.

For thus says the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with those who are contrite and humble in spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite.

If God is holy, dwelling in the high and holy place and his name is holy then He himself is distinct from his creation. But if he also dwells with the humble and contrite, then it must follow that by doing so he actually makes the humble and contrite holy.

THE HOLY PLACE

When the story of creation was told, the climax was not the account of the creation of Man but the great moment when all was complete — the rest of the Sabbath. Genesis 2:3, the only use of the Hebrew root **קדש**, *qdash*, in Genesis, tells us that God blessed the seventh day *and hallowed it*. The day was made holy. The story of the formation of the man and the woman which follows places them, as we have seen elsewhere, within the sanctuary. Theirs, and in particular *his*, is to serve as priest in the sanctuary, although plainly he cannot do it alone. He is quite inadequate to fulfil his responsibilities without his wife.

I suggest that the overall impression we get from the account of creation is that Adam was created to be the priest in the sanctuary of Eden and that his mandate was to fill the earth and subdue it *so that* the nations would universally join him in the worship of the (enlarged) sanctuary of the whole earth. Another aspect of this is evident in Genesis 3:8 where

They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

The phrase ‘the time of the evening breeze’ (cf. ‘the cool of the day’) is literally ‘the spirit/wind/breath (Heb. **רוח**, *ruach*) of the day’. The only previous use of *ruach* was in Genesis 1:3 where the spirit or wind of God blew over the face of the waters. There the *ruach* was involved in the creation; here he is continually present to the creation (a feature which is observed elsewhere, for example, Neh. 9:20; Ps. 104:30 etc). God is present in the sanctuary, hence the sanctuary is holy. What is more, the sin of Adam *demand*s that he be excluded from the sanctuary. The event of the ‘death’ of Adam (see Gen. 2:17) is paralleled in Leviticus 10:1-3.

Now Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu, each took his censer, put fire in it, and laid incense on it; and they offered unholy fire before the LORD, such as he had not commanded them. ²And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. ³Then Moses said to Aaron, ‘This is what the LORD meant when he said, “Through those who are near me I will show myself holy, and before all the people I will be glorified.”’
And Aaron was silent. (Leviticus 10:1-3).

As Habakkuk expressed it, ‘Your eyes are too pure to behold evil, and you cannot look on wrongdoing’ (Hab. 1:13). *God’s holiness is not simply a reaction to evil, but evil is a violation of holiness* (cf. Isaiah 6:1-5).

The exclusion of Adam from the sanctuary of Eden did not mean that the purpose of God was suspended. As we know, from the time of Abel and then from Seth onwards there was genuine worship. The actual formalising of worship in a sanctuary is seen in the redemption of Israel from Egypt. The call of Moses (Ex. 3-4) sets the stage:

Then he said, ‘Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground’. ... ¹²He said, ‘I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain’. (Exodus 3:5, 12).

It is for this reason that the assembly of Israel is a 'holy convocation'. God is bringing them to the sanctuary and therefore he has made Israel a holy people.

You are children of the LORD your God. You must not lacerate yourselves or shave your forelocks for the dead. ²For you are a people holy to the LORD your God; it is you the LORD has chosen out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession. (Deut. 14:1-2).

It is the great salvation through the sea which particularly identifies God as holy. Thus Exodus 15:1-18.

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD:

¹I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea.

²The LORD is my strength and my might, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him.

³The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name.

⁴Pharaoh's chariots and his army he cast into the sea; his picked officers were sunk in the Red Sea.

⁵The floods covered them; they went down into the depths like a stone.

⁶Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power — your right hand, O LORD, shattered the enemy.

⁷In the greatness of your majesty you overthrew your adversaries; you sent out your fury, it consumed them like stubble.

⁸At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up, the floods stood up in a heap; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea.

⁹The enemy said, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them. I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them".

¹⁰You blew with your wind, the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

¹¹Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? *Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendor, doing wonders?*

¹²You stretched out your right hand, the earth swallowed them.

¹³In your steadfast love you led the people whom you redeemed; *you guided them by your strength to your holy abode.*

¹⁴The peoples heard, they trembled; pangs seized the inhabitants of Philistia.

¹⁵Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed; trembling seized the leaders of Moab; all the inhabitants of Canaan melted away.

¹⁶Terror and dread fell upon them; by the might of your arm, they became still as a stone until your people, O LORD, passed by, until the people whom you acquired passed by.

¹⁷*You brought them in and planted them on the mountain of your own possession, the place, O LORD, that you made your abode, the sanctuary, O LORD, that your hands have established.*

¹⁸The LORD will reign forever and ever.'

While the identity of 'the mountain' may be unclear (Sinai or Zion?) the main point of the redemption is not; it is

the mountain which God had prepared for a sanctuary ... and chosen as a dwelling place. ... The planting of Israel upon this mountain does not signify the introduction of the Israelites into the promised land, but the planting of the people of God in the house of the Lord (Ps. 92:13), in the future sanctuary, where Jehovah would perfect his fellowship with his people, and where the people

would show themselves by their sacrifices to be the 'people of possession', and would serve him forever as their King.³⁰

The description of Israel at Sinai is powerful. As the people gather at the foot of the mountain, God addresses Moses.

Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites: ⁴You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. ⁵Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, ⁶but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites.' ... ¹⁰the LORD said to Moses: 'Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes ¹¹and prepare for the third day, because on the third day the LORD will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.' ... ²¹Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Go down and warn the people not to break through to the LORD to look; otherwise many of them will perish. ²²Even the priests who approach the LORD must consecrate themselves or the LORD will break out against them.' ²³Moses said to the LORD, 'The people are not permitted to come up to Mount Sinai; for you yourself warned us, saying, "Set limits around the mountain and keep it holy".'²⁴The LORD said to him, 'Go down, and come up bringing Aaron with you; but do not let either the priests or the people break through to come up to the LORD; otherwise he will break out against them'. (Exodus 19:3b-6, 10-11, 21-24).

By their obedience the people will be God's 'treasured possession' but their standing as his holy people is completely by his choice. He has set them apart as his 'priestly kingdom'. Hence they must be consecrated, they must consecrate themselves, if they are to meet God in his sanctuary. But even within this arrangement, even the priests were too unholy to come into the presence of God.

This was later clarified when Aaron was designated and 'consecrated' as high priest (Ex. 28:3). His garments were ornate, not for their own sake but because he dare not minister in the sanctuary apart from 'the splendour of holiness', 'so that he may not die' (Ex. 28:35). As the leader of Israel's worship, the high priest had a role of supreme significance.

You shall make a rosette of pure gold, and engrave on it, like the engraving of a signet, 'Holy to the LORD'. ³⁷You shall fasten it on the turban with a blue cord; it shall be on the front of the turban. ³⁸It shall be on Aaron's forehead, and Aaron shall take on himself any guilt incurred in the holy offering that the Israelites consecrate as their sacred donations; it shall always be on his forehead, in order that they may find favor before the LORD. (Ex. 28:36-38).

Even the offerings of the people were not of themselves of sufficient purity to be brought into the presence of holiness. Aaron, as indicated by the insignia on his turban, was to 'take on himself any guilt incurred in the holy offering that the Israelites consecrated as their sacred donations'. Apart from the mediation of the high priest there could be no worship. Unless he took upon himself the guilt of the people their offerings were unacceptable. That is why, for example, on the day of Atonement, Aaron must first offer a bull as a sin offering for himself (Lev. 16:6); then he may present the offerings for the atonement for the sins of the people (Lev. 16:7ff).

³⁰ C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *A Commentary on the Old Testament, Volume I*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, (1958), *The Pentateuch Volume II*, p 55f.

The climax of the redemptive action of the exodus was the completion of the Tabernacle. This construction was the representation of the presence of God with his people and of his intention for all creation. The closing verses of Exodus highlight this.

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. ³⁵Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled upon it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. (Ex. 40:34-35)

Israel's worship was not to be understood simply as the carrying out of some cultic ritual; on the contrary the ritual was God's gift to them in order that they may come into the sanctuary, the place where God in his holiness is to be known. This is the meaning of the sacrifices of Israel. The statement that 'without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins' is not a threat but a gracious provision. When longing for access to the presence of God the psalmist recognised that

If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? (Ps. 130:3)

but immediately added

4 But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered. (Ps. 130:4)

THE HOLINESS OF GOD'S NAME

The climax of Israel's worship was the building of the Temple. The dedication of the Temple resulted in the glory of God, his holiness, filling 'the holy place':

And when the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of the LORD, ¹¹so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD. (1 Kings 8:10-11).

Yet while this was a climactic moment it was not the last word. It was one thing to have 'the Temple of the Lord', it was quite another to be a people who sanctified his great name. See Jeremiah 7:3-4

Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your doings, and let me dwell with you in this place. ⁴Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD'.

If God is present in holiness then the people who are holy because they are his must be holy in all their conduct. Otherwise the truth of God's holiness is effectively denied. In Ezekiel 36, part of which was quoted above, we read,

The word of the LORD came to me: ¹⁷Mortal, when the house of Israel lived on their own soil, they defiled it with their ways and their deeds; their conduct in my sight was like the uncleanness of a woman in her menstrual period. ¹⁸So I poured out my wrath upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for the idols with which they had defiled it. ¹⁹I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the countries; in accordance with their conduct and their deeds I judged them. ²⁰But when they came to the nations, wherever they came, they profaned my holy name, in that it was said of them, 'These are the people of the LORD, and yet they had to go out of his land'. ²¹But I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations to which they came.

²²Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. ²³I will sanctify my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD, says the Lord GOD, when through you I display my holiness before their eyes. ²⁴I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. ²⁵I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. ²⁸Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. (Ezek. 36:16-28).

The significance of this is that Israel cannot live in the land, the land which has at its centre the sanctuary, unless the people are made holy and so as God is seen to be holy in them. And the primary way that God will be seen to be holy is when he makes the unholy holy in such a way that they are totally and irrevocably transformed. But in order to do this there must be judgement. That principle has already been firmly established. Sin which is allowed to continue defiles the sanctuary. Judgement is the purging of the sanctuary, and Obadiah observes that

... on Mount Zion will be deliverance; it will be holy, and the house of Jacob will possess its inheritance. (Obadiah 17 *NIV*)³¹

Malachi warned

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight--indeed, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. ²But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; ³he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the LORD in righteousness. ⁴Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years. (Malachi 3:1-4)

And when the New Testament is examined, the same theme comes through.

She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. (Matt. 1:21).

But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Bear fruit worthy of repentance. ⁹Do not presume to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our ancestor"; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ¹⁰Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. *He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.* ¹²His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.' (Matthew 3:7-12).

³¹ So also AV, ASV. *NRSV* has 'the house of Jacob shall take possession of those who dispossessed them'.

Although it comes as a climax in the Synoptic Gospels, John's Gospel puts the cleansing of the Temple towards the commencement of his account of Jesus' ministry. John the Baptist cried out, 'Look the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world' (1:29). Although it has always been there, John is making clear that the cleansing of Israel is with a view to the cleansing of the whole world. Chapter two of John's Gospel contains two events which highlight the purpose of God. The first event is the changing of the water into wine. But it is particularly the changing of the water used in the Jewish rite of purification (John 2:6). This miracle is put first because it highlights the transformation of Israel from its dead activism into the dynamic community of God. First it should be recalled that Isaiah looks forward to the vindication of Israel in terms of a wedding (Isa. 62:1-5) and then that the abundance of wine is also used as a figure for the joy of the last days (Amos 9:13-14; Hos. 14:7; Jer. 31:12 etc). Jesus is about the restoration of Israel, but he is also about her cleansing, hence the second event of chapter two, the cleansing of the Temple. But the imagery of John's Gospel carries far deeper significance, some of which is quite easy to observe. In John 1:14, John wrote that 'the word became flesh and lived among us'. To someone conscious of the language of the Old Testament, this would be a clear pointer to the fact that in Jesus the Tabernacle is again present (the word for 'lived' in John 1:14 is the same word used in the Old Testament for the dwelling of God among his people in Joel 3:17 LXX) and that just as God 'dwelt' in the Temple in Jerusalem but that Temple was destroyed, so now Jesus is the new Temple, the place, or person, where God is met in his holiness. Thus John 2:19-21,

Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up'. ²⁰The Jews then said, 'This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?'
²¹But he was speaking of the temple of his body.

What is more, in cleansing the Temple, Jesus is heralding the prospect of the Gentiles again being able to worship, since the Temple traders were effectively prohibiting that by doing their work in the court of the Gentiles. And, of course, the presence of Gentiles in the Temple for worship indicates that the Gentiles or, more accurately, the nations are again made holy as they were when, before the fall, they were in Adam (Acts 17:26).

When Jesus taught his disciples the issues of prayer ('The Lord's Prayer', Matt. 6:9-13; Luke 11:1-4) he began by saying that the primary matter was that the name of the Father in heaven should be hallowed, that is by God himself. From what has already been said, God's name cannot be hallowed by those who are not themselves already holy. This is similar to Jesus prayer in John 12:27-28.

Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say — 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. ²⁸Father, glorify your name'. Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again'.

God will glorify his name when it is hallowed, that is, revealed as holy, and in John 13:31, immediately after Judas has left the group, Jesus said,

Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him.

What were separate though related threads in the Old Testament come together in Christ. He is the place where God dwells with mankind. He is Emmanuel, 'God with us' (Matt. 1:23). The demons recognised this when they cried out, 'You are the Holy One of God' (Mark. 1:24). He is also the sacrifice by which the sins of the people are removed. And here John's Gospel is different from the Synoptics, for in John Jesus does not

eat the Passover lamb with his disciples at the last supper; he *is* the Passover lamb. Indeed, John implies that Jesus was crucified at the very moment when the Passover lambs were being slaughtered. The apostle Paul saw the same things in 1 Corinthians 5:7, 'Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed'.

The third thread is particularly dealt with in the letter to the Hebrews. It is the matter of Christ our great high priest. He is the one who sanctifies (Heb. 2:11) and he does it because he is the high priest with a view to the act of propitiation, the sacrifice of atonement (Heb. 2:17). The high priesthood of Jesus is more than just figurative. He actually stands as the one who absorbs the sin of the people into himself (recall Exodus 28:36-38 above³²). For this reason we come to the high priest because 'he is able to save for all time those who approach God through him' (Heb. 7:25). Most significant is Hebrews 9:11-14.

But when Christ came as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation), ¹²he entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. ¹³For if the blood of goats and bulls, with the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer, sanctifies those who have been defiled so that their flesh is purified, ¹⁴how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God!

This high priest enters the Holy Place through a Tabernacle (tent) which is not humanly constructed. That Tabernacle is the body which God has prepared for him (Heb. 10:5). And this high priest offers not the blood of bulls and goats but his own blood. But note the result of that in verse 14; he purifies the conscience from dead works, that is from works which could never satisfy the requirements of holiness with a view to entrance into the sanctuary, in order that we might 'worship the living God'!

That is why Hebrews 2:11 not only calls Jesus the one who sanctifies but describes the readers as 'those who are sanctified'. Thus Hebrews 6:19-20.

We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain, ²⁰where Jesus, a forerunner on our behalf, has entered, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

The reality, as distinct from the feelings we discussed above, is that, as the high priest and as the lamb and as the Temple/Tabernacle, Christ has sanctified us.

Since the law has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered year after year, make perfect those who approach. ²Otherwise, would they not have ceased being offered, since the worshipers, cleansed once for all, would no longer have any consciousness of sin? ³But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin year after year. ⁴For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. ⁵Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,

'Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me;

⁶in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.

³² Is this the implication of 1 Pet. 2:24, 'He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed'? This verse stands in the context of an address to those who are described in terms of the temple and sacrifices, and are given the same titles as Israel, 'a royal priesthood, a holy nation'. And it should be recalled that there are some commentators who believe that 1 Peter, like Hebrews, is addressed to Christian Jews.

⁷Then I said, "See, God, I have come to do your will, O God" (in the scroll of the book it is written of me).'

⁸When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), ⁹then he added, 'See, I have come to do your will'. He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ¹¹And every priest stands day after day at his service, offering again and again the same sacrifices that can never take away sins. ¹²But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, 'he sat down at the right hand of God', ¹³and since then has been waiting "until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet." ¹⁴For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. (Heb. 10:1-14).

He has done it all. He has absorbed our guilt, not merely the guilt of Israel, but the sins of the whole world and as a result it is the whole world which is now engaged in the worship. This is what Paul describes in Ephesians 2:11-22. There Jews and Gentiles, once separate and hostile entities, both share the same access in one Spirit to the Father and, in the new humanity of Christ

the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; ²²in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God. (Eph. 2:21-22).

So when Paul told the Corinthians that God had made Christ our sanctification, he was then able to proceed to say,

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? ¹⁷If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple. (1 Cor. 3:16-17)

The same point can be made about individual believers:

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? (1 Cor. 6:19).

The obligation to godly living is indisputable, but what must be stressed is the context in which that obligation is lived out. It is the obligation of those who have received full and direct access into the presence of God. It is 'our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have obtained access into this grace in which we stand' (Rom. 5:1-2). So,

... just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification.

²⁰When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹So what advantage did you then get from the things of which you now are ashamed? The end of those things is death. ²²But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. ²³For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:19-23).

The free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord *because it is in him that we receive the blessing of sanctification*. Without holiness we cannot see the Lord and in him we have it. God has made him for us 'wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption'.

Christ our Redemption

He [God] is the source *of* your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption ... (1 Corinthians 1:30).

Our studies so far have revealed that Paul's brief summary *of* the place *of* Christ is undergirded by a vast understanding *of* what is in the scriptures. That does not mean that at every point all the material that is available should be expressed, but it is plain that when Paul describes Christ as, in this case, 'our redemption' we would expect that in his thinking there is a rich store from which he could draw were the need to arise. In particular, we will see that redemption is a matter *of* great wonder.

The English word 'redemption' is the noun from the verb 'redeem', which is derived from the Latin *re(d)-emere*, meaning 'to buy back'. When the scriptures are the focus *of* our enquiry, we discover that there are a number *of* words with generally the same meaning as in English which relate to the subject *of* redemption.³³ But our starting point must be the way that the Corinthians would have understood Paul and this letter contains sufficient information to show that the word 'redemption' would not have been foreign to the readers. They would, *of* course, have known the word from its secular usage, but it is plain that they had had sufficient experience *of* Paul's teaching, in both word and deed, to understand his meaning.

Paul could assume a fundamental transformation in the Corinthians; they had received Christ and had done so in far more than an intellectual way. Thus in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 he makes the claim that washing, sanctification and justification had brought about a deliverance from past sinful behaviour.

Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom *of* God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, 'thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers - none *of* these will inherit the kingdom *of* God. "And this is what some *of* you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name *of* the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit *of* our God.

He is not saying that they had deliberately left those former practices, which would no doubt have been perfectly true, although he does on many occasions in his correspondence urge that the act *of* leaving those former practices was a necessary result *of* cleansing etc and not the means by which deliverance had come. They had been set free by the action *of* God. That is why he continues in the same chapter to argue that they should

Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself. '90r do you not know that your body is a temple *of* the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? "For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6:18-20).

They had been bought with a price (cf. 7:23), which Peter identified as 'the precious blood *of* Christ, like that *of* lamb without defect or blemish' (1 Pet. 1:19).

Later, in chapter 12, when dealing with the subject *of* the gifts *of* Christ through the Spirit, Paul began by reminding the readers that once they had been 'enticed and led astray

³³ Among them are the Hebrew words גָּאֵל (*ga-al*), גֹּאֵל (*go-el*), 7-*J5* (*kopher*) and פְּדִיּוֹן (*pidyown*) and the λυ- (*lu-*) word group in Greek. See H. Ringgren, גָּאֵל in TDOT Vol. II, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1975, p 350ff.

to idols that could not speak' (12:2). Now they had received the Spirit who had evoked the cry 'Jesus is Lord', not merely as a credal statement but as the content *of* the revelation, that now they saw that the Lordship *of* Christ had come to them in deliverance and that they now belonged to him and not to their past masters. His discussion *of* the gifts and the Corinthians' abuse *of* them revolves around the fact that these gifts come from the Lord Jesus and should be understood and used in that context but the point for us is that the Lordship *of* Christ has demonstrably come to them.

This means that, whatever background Paul may have had, the probable starting point in the use *of* the word redemption was the experience which the Corinthians had had *of* the action *of* redemption (by whatever name). So, what would they have understood by the word/concept 'redemption? Even before their experience *of* the Lordship *of* Christ they would have doubtless been familiar with the practice *of* the redemption *of* slaves, prisoners *of* war and prisoners condemned to death.³⁴ For example,

The reference to 'wages' paid to slaves introduces a curious feature *of* ancient slavery that was an important means by which a slave could secure freedom. The peculium was money or property that legally remained in the possession *of* the owner but was available to the slaves for their own use. Slaves could, and did, save funds allotted to their use and purchase their own freedom. The expectation *of* manumission was an effective incentive for good service.

A popular form *of* manumission was sacral manumission. The slave's freedom was purchased in a pagan temple in the name *of* the deity and with funds furnished to the deity by the slave. The deity served as an intermediary, negotiating the purchase in the place *of* the slave, who could not enter into a legal contract. The slave became free and the fact was recorded in the temple's records. Some have thought this to provide the background to the redemption language for the atonement in the New Testament, but the pertinent passages (e.g., 1 Cor. 6:19; 7:22-23; Gal. 3:13; 4:5) employ different terminology (the general words for any kind *of* purchase) from that employed in the inscriptions for sacral manumission. It was not a 'fictitious sale', and the slave did not become a slave *of* the deity. The same function *of* intermediary was served by a friend or free relative, an association, or an informal dinner club.

The most frequent form *of* manumission was by the master, especially in his will. It might also be done formally before a magistrate or informally before friends. Manumission was *often* conditional, entailing continuing responsibilities to the former owner, who remained the patron *of* the freedman.³⁵

Obviously there are similarities to the material in the New Testament, especially to the reference in 1 Corinthians 7:21-24 to slaves who can gain their freedom. Also there was a synagogue in Jerusalem known as 'the synagogue *of* the Freedmen' (Acts 6:8) and the Roman governor Felix (Acts 23:26) was a freedman *of* the imperial household.³⁶

But however significant these manumissions were, they hardly compare with the dimensions *of* the liberation that is described as happening to believers within the New Testament. Their freedom from bondage is described in terms which make mere social conditions pale into insignificance. That does not imply that social bondage is not a difficulty. It is and it is

³⁴ F. Buchsel, ἀπολτροσις, TDNT, Vol. IV, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1967, p 352.

³⁵ Everett Ferguson, Backgrounds of Early Christianity (Second Edition), Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1993, p 57f.

³⁶ Cf. 'Felix' in The Oxford Classical Dictionary (Second Edition), N.G.L. Hammond and H.H. Scullard Eds, OUP, Oxford, 1970, p 443.

often serious. But it does imply that there is far greater misery imposed on men and women which only revelation can disclose.

REDEMPTION IN ISRAEL

In order to understand Paul's meaning, we ought to again recognise that the revelation which exposes our misery is both unique as well as in a continuum with all that God has revealed throughout history. Hence an examination *of* redemption within Israel is not merely in order to provide an alternative to the background we would otherwise term 'secular'. On the contrary, the paradigm by which to understand the present action *of* God within history is the revelation he has already provided *of* himself, his purposes and actions.

Redemption plays a significant role within the life *of* Israel. From the beginning *of* their life as a nation the people *of* Israel were commanded to consecrate the firstborn *of* both humans and animals to the LORD (Ex. 13:2, 12), as the price *of* their deliverance from Egypt had been the death *of* all the firstborn in Egypt (Ex. 12:29; 13:12-16). In practice that meant that the firstborn was to be put to death as a sacrifice (and so to become part *of* the priests supply). However, in the case *of* unclean animals, a redemption price could be paid (Num. 18:14-17) or, in case *of* a donkey, a replacement provided (Ex. 13:13). The firstborn males were to be redeemed by the substitution *of* the Levites (Num. 3:45), although the difference in the number *of* firstborn and the number *of* Levites at the time was to be made up by means *of* a payment *of* five shekels per person.

The Hebrew word *ga-al* is used in particular in the realm *of* family and property law. Should a person have been forced to sell his property because *of* a debt, his next *of* kin was, if he was able, obliged to 'redeem' the property. The story *of* Naomi selling her late husband's property (which included her daughter-in-law Ruth!) is a good example. The 'next *of* kin' is a translation *of* the Hebrew word *goel* meaning the 'redeemer' (Ruth 4:1ff; see also Jer. 32:6-8). The next *of* kin is 'the one with the right to redeem'.³⁷ Furthermore, these provisions applied where a person had sold himself in to slavery to pay a debt; the relatives had the option *of* redeeming him (Lev. 25:47ff). *Of* course, where the required payment could not be made, the law also required that the slavery would finish and the transferred property be restored at the next jubilee year.

Of more significance is the recognition that God is the redeemer *of* his people. David prayed, 'Redeem Israel, O God, out *of* all its troubles' (Ps. 25:22; cf. Ps. 107:2) and Job expected that God would be his Redeemer, his vindicator, and that he would see him in that role (Job 19:25-27). God is the *goel of* the fatherless (Prov. 23:11), that is, *of* those who have no human *goel* and David prayed for personal deliverance from his enemies.

Answer me, O LORD, for your steadfast love is good; according to your abundant mercy, turn to me.

"Do not hide your face from your servant, for I am in distress - make haste to answer me. "Draw near to me, redeem me, set me free because *of* my enemies. (Ps. 69:16-18).

A primary element is the use *of* 'redemption language' in connection with the Exodus. Thus Exodus 6:6-7.

³⁷ NRSV margin.

Say therefore to the Israelites, 'I am the LORD, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. 'I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians

Here the point *is* that of release from slavery by the judgment of the captors but the notion of payment of a ransom *is* not present. Other uses are in Exodus 15:13 and Ps. 77:11-15. The redeemed people have been liberated from captivity in order that they may be God's own possession.

Developing from this *is* the language of the second half of Isaiah (also called Deutero-Isaiah) where the redemption from Egypt *is* used as the pattern for a new redemption, initially from Babylon. Ringgren writes,

In Deutero-Isaiah. In light of this the use of *g'l* in Deutero-Isaiah is intelligible. This prophet understands the release from Babylonian captivity as a new exodus, and thus he uses the root *g'l* to describe it. In addition, he uses *g'l* to convey the idea of restoring a broken covenant relationship. In Isa. 51:10 the word *ge'ulim*, 'the redeemed,' clearly refers to those who had been delivered from Egypt, and in 48:20 the redemption is described as a going forth from Babylon and a leading through deserts (v. 21), thus a new exodus. In 44:22 the redemption is connected with forgiveness of sins (as in Ps. 103). In 44:23 the act of redemption is designated as a glorification of Yahweh that summons all nature to rejoice. In 52:9 this rejoicing is depicted as rejoicing of the king, who welcomes the returning Yahweh and his redeemed people. Finally, 43:1 speaks once again of the restored relationship between Yahweh and Israel: 'I have redeemed you, I have called you by name, you are mine.' In this connection, it is worthy of note that (just as in Lam. 3:58f.) the redemption is the subject of an oracle of salvation introduced by '*al fra*', 'Fear not.' The ptcp. *go'el*, 'redeemer,' appears as an epithet of God nine times in Deutero-Isaiah. In seven of these cases it is used as an expansion of the messenger formula *koh 'amar yhv'h*, 'Thus says Yahweh,' and twice it appears in connection with '*al tira*', 'Fear not' (41:14; 54:5). Once this epithet is connected with *moshia*, 'savior' (49:26). Otherwise its connection with the context is rather loose: Yahweh, the 'Redeemer,' helps his people (41:14; 49:7f), defeats Babylon (43:14; 47:4), is king and everlasting God (44:6), teaches and leads (48:17). Isa. 60:16 is dependent on 49:26. An overall view of the use of *go'el* in Deutero-Isaiah shows that it is used as a stereotyped divine epithet, which can even be used without any direct connection with a specific redemption mentioned in the context.³⁸

REDEMPTION IN ALL THE WORLD

If Israel is the paradigm, its purpose must surely be more than as a clue to the New Testament language. Its role is to demonstrate the character of God and his dealings with all men and women as exemplified by the way he has bought Israel for himself *in order that* he may gather 'a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages' (Rev. 7:9). And who are these people? John *is* told that they are those '**who are coming**³⁹ out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb' (Rev. 7:14). Here the language *is* evidently drawn

³⁸ גֹּאֵל, in TDOT Vol. II, p 354f.

³⁹ The Greek is ἐρχόμενοι (erchomenoi), a present participle. I take it that the translation which renders it as a past tense may be more dependent on a prior theology than on any principles of language.

from the **Old Testament** description *of* the Exodus, as is the passage which immediately follows,

For this reason they are before the throne *of* God, and worship him day and night within his temple, and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them.

“They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; “for the Lamb at the center *of* the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs *of* the water *of* life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. (Revelation 7:15-17).

The language may be drawn from the Old Testament but the New Testament insists that salvation is for the whole world. God so loved *the world*; Jesus is the propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins only but for *the sins of the whole* world. Israel (as represented by the Jews who opposed Jesus) may have been ‘*of* [their] father the devil’ (John 8:44) but ‘*the whole world lies in the evil one*’ (1 John 5:19).

It is the coming *of* Jesus and the subsequent provision *of* a gospel which is ‘for the Jew first but also for the Greeks’ which exposes the *reason why* the Old Testament should reveal God as it does. Israel has its role as God’s chosen people *because* God has, in fact, chosen to save the world, to reconcile the world to himself (2 Cor. 5:19). The goal *of* history is the total purification and restoration *of* the whole creation (Rom. 8:19-22; 2 Pet. 3:11-13; Rev. 21:1).

Paul’s description in Ephesians 1:13-14 is significant.

In him you also, when you had heard the word *of* truth, the gospel *of* your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal *of* the promised Holy Spirit; “this is the pledge *of* our inheritance toward redemption as God’s own people, to the praise *of* his glory.

Paul is addressing Gentiles (cf. 2:11) and says that the gospel is the gospel *of their* salvation (cf. Titus 2:11), that their reception *of* the Spirit was pledge *of* their inheritance towards redemption as God’s own people. Two matters arise from this: the first is that Jews and Gentiles alike share a common state *of* misery through bondage and the second is that the salvation has a future as well as a present aspect to it.

THE COMMON BONDAGE

Israel had been held in captivity in Egypt; when the birth *of* Jesus was announced Joseph was told to ‘call his name Jesus for he will save his people from their sins’ (Matt. 1:21). To be in bondage to sins means to be incapable *of* avoiding their demands. Jesus later said that ‘whoever commits sin is the slave *of* sin’ (John 8:34). In Romans 5:12-21, Paul describes the universal need for justification.

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned -“sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. ‘Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression *of* Adam, who is a type *of* the one who was to come.

“But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man’s trespass, much more surely have the grace *of* God and the free gift in the grace *of* the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. “And the free gift is not like the effect *of* the one man’s sin. For the

recognise its powerful presence. Hence the constant burden *of* attempting to ‘suppress the truth’ without ever being able to do so.

Having chosen to be his own god, Man must serve that god, and that god is insatiable. This is what is meant by ‘the flesh’, whenever the word ‘flesh’ is used in a negative way. Furthermore, there are other claimants to the role and place *of* God. Satan and his demonic powers are equally vicious in their tyranny *of* Man and, as we have seen above, the whole world is carried along in ‘willing’ submission.

There are elements to being participants in a fallen creation which are more obvious. Sickness and subjection to human tyranny are two *of* those elements, but a word *of* caution is needed. Attempts to alleviate the suffering *of* others is to be commended; neither is there any virtue in us suffering ourselves when steps can be taken to improve our situation. But the caution is this: any attempt to alleviate the results *of* guilt while not removing the guilt itself will only change the form *of* the bondage but will leave the content untouched. Yet the attempts to alleviate the suffering can so *often* appear as a salve to the conscience that we can assume that we have somehow ceased to be in bondage ourselves because *of* our actions.

Of course, since we are ‘dead in ... trespasses and sins’ (Eph.2:1), *of* ourselves we are incapable *of* doing anything to remove the source *of* the bondage, namely our guilt. Neither can the leopard change his spots nor the Ethiopian his skin (Jer. 13:23). Only God could deliver Israel from Egypt, as contrasted by Moses’ effort to effect justice by killing the Egyptian (Ex. 2:12ff). There must be a total work by God.

THE UNIQUE REDEEMER

Romans 5:12-21 sets out what God has done. The Adam-Christ contrast is Paul’s description *of* the great work *of* redemption from bondage and death through a work *of* recreation. A similar description is in 1 Corinthians 15, but here contrasts Adam and Christ and their respective deeds. Through one man’s trespass the many died but the grace *of* God and the free gift in the grace *of* the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many (vs. 15). The one Man, Adam anticipates but is opposed by the one Man, Jesus Christ (vs. 14). So that the effect *of* Adam’s transgression, namely, judgment and condemnation (vss. 16, 18) and death (vs. 17), is not merely reversed but abundantly removed. In the act *of* righteousness *of* one man justification (the act *of* making righteous) and life come to all (vs. 18). The result is that all who receive the abundance *of* grace and the free gift *of* righteousness will reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ (vs. 17).

What was his act *of* righteousness? In Mark 10:45, Jesus told the disciples that ‘the Son *of* Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many’. If we think *of* a ransom as the price paid to release someone from bondage, we may also tend to think *of* that bondage as being somehow illegitimate, as in the case *of* kidnapping. But if the Old Testament provides the paradigm then we will quickly see that there need be no thought *of* Jesus being a ransom to buy *off* God or anyone else. On the contrary, there is an incalculable debt owed by men and women and as a result they have been sold into a fearful bondage. As the ransom, Jesus pays the debt in his own person. It is this point which Paul is at pains to make in Romans 3:21-26.

But now, apart from law, the righteousness *of* God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, “the righteousness *of* God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For

there is no distinction, “since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; “they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, “whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; “it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.

Redemption is in Christ Jesus, for God put him forward as a propitiation through faith in his blood. God justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.

There is an Old Testament paradigm for this. It is in the story of David and Goliath in 1 Samuel 17. The prominence of the slaying of Goliath is a demonstration that David was the one who conquered for Israel. After David’s triumph all Israel had to do, indeed, all Israel could do, was accept that the victory had already been won for them. After that victory, there were no more Goliaths to fight, by anyone, ever. After the wrath of God had been absorbed by Jesus on the cross (propitiation),

the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. 1sAnd he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them. (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

This is the redemption. We do not, therefore, have redemption; we only have Christ. This helps to explain why there is the temptation to measure our standing as believers in terms of our new capacity to live holy lives. The matter of Romans chapter 7, which we have already referred to, is an explication of this. While we continue to measure ourselves against the law and our (presumed) ability to obey it, we will see that in us, that is in our flesh, dwells no good thing. It is the miracle of redemption that having been set free we now desire to obey the law since that no longer condemns us. To that extent, and without doubt, we are a new creation. But the principle is that it is only the person ‘in Christ’ who is the new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). Likewise, after lamenting his continuing inability to be free from ‘this body of death’ (Rom. 7:24) Paul continues by returning to the fount of his liberty: ‘There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus’ (Rom. 8:1)

This is the reason for the future aspect of salvation mentioned earlier. Romans 5:17 says that ‘much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ’. The verb, ‘will exercise dominion’⁴¹ is a future tense. The same word is used in Revelation 5:9-10.

They sing a new song: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation;

‘°you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth.’

What is presented to us in Christ is a dramatic redemption. If the Son sets us free we are free indeed. But we are free *in Christ*. And we are saved in hope. For the present there is ‘the sufferings of this present time’ (Rom. 8:18) which in the context of Romans probably refers to the suffering caused by remaining sin (that is, the topic of chapter seven). Within Revelation, the promise of a future reign is more likely to be in the context of persecution as well as the problem of sin. But either way, there is a future redemption:

⁴¹ βασιλεύουσιν (basileousin).

[the seal of the Spirit] is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:14)

In Galatians 5:5 Paul calls this 'the hope of justification'.

This does not mean that our redemption is in any way lessened. 'For freedom Christ has set us free (Gal.5:1).' we have been washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:11). But neither does it mean that we are now sinless or that we have new capacities which raise us above other men and women. No - in fact we are those who 'groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies' (Rom. 8:23) and who can only rest on the provision of God for us. 'We do not even know how to pray as we ought' and were it not for the deep intercession of the Spirit on our behalf we would be lost (Rom. 8:26-27). All we have is Christ. But that does not mean that we are deprived or that one day we will have the deficiency made up. Far from it. To have Christ is to have all that we will ever have. To have Christ by faith is still to have him in all his fulness - 'and you have come to fulness in him' (Col. 2:10). All that remains is the consummation of the intimacy which is now ours in the Spirit, when our union with Christ known now by faith becomes the union of sight as we are joined to him at the great marriage feast of the Lamb. And to have Christ is also to have absolute security:

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. 'And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

3'What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 3ZHe who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? 33 Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 3°Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. 35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36As it is written,

'For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.'

3'No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. **(Romans 8:28-39).**

Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. "But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; "God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, "so that no one might boast in the presence of God. "He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, "in order that, as it is written, 'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord'. (1 Corinthians 1:26-31)