



New Creation Teaching Ministry

**PASTOR'S MONDAY STUDY GROUP NOTES**

1987 Pastors Study Group Titles

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*Enquiries:*

**P.O. Box 403, Blackwood, SA 5051**

**Ph. (08) 8270 1861 or (08) 8270 1497**

**Fax: (08) 8270 4003**

**Email: [ministry@newcreation.org.au](mailto:ministry@newcreation.org.au)**

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## THE SIGNIFICENCE OF CREATION

### For Christ's People Today

#### The Knowledge of Creation

- (i) **Who knows what creation is?** Who can describe it?. It came through an act of God ((Gen. 1:1ff.; cf. 2:7; Psalms 33:6–9; 148:5–6; cf. Heb. 11:3), and because God is ineffable (Isaiah 44:6–7; 46:5, 8–10) we can neither know Him or His creation, unless he chooses—as in all things—to give revelation.
- (ii) **How did creation come about?** (a) by the word of God, cf. references above adding John 1:1–4, Heb. 2:1–3, (b) by the creative work of the Father (refs. above, I Cor 8:5–6; Heb. 2:10), of the Son (Col. 1:15–17, I Cor 8:5–6), and of the Spirit (Job 33:4; Psalm 104:29–30; Gen. 1:2).
- (iii) **Creation was perfect.** Gen. 1:31, Eccles 3:11, cf. I Tim. 4:4. Isaiah 45:18 (Isaiah 42:5; Jer. 10:12f.; 51:15f.; Psalm 115:16) shows the creation is not, and was not a chaos. (Note: below we will see that much of mankind thinks it is a chaos).
- (iv) **The creation has a *telos*, a goal, an end a fulfillment, a renewal.** Gen. 1:28f—an implied telos, Isaiah 46:8–10 cf. Ephes. 1:9–11, 3:8–11, Isaiah 43:6–7; 65:17ff.; 66:22f.
- (v) **Creation is good** (references for (iii), above), and declares the goodness of God, Psalm 19: 1:1ff; Rom. 1:19f. Note, too, creation was a thing of joy, Job 38:4–7.

#### Creation, The Fall, and the Curse

In Gen. 3:1–24, cf. Rom. 1:18–32, we see the fall of man and its effects. In particular we see, (i) the conflict between the serpent and humanity, (ii) the effects in woman regarding childbirth and relating to her husband, (iii) the elements of the curse. When linked with Rom. 8:18–25 we see that the perfect creation—with *its telos*—has been subjected to futility and decay.

Whilst the creation—celestial and terrestrial, visible and invisible—was one entity (e.g. Col. 1:15–17; I Cor., 8:5–6; Heb. 2:10; Rom 11:36), and required the obedience of all creatures, there was not only the fall of man but the rebellion of certain celestial creatures, Rev. 12:1–12; Isaiah 14:12–14; Ezekiel 28; cf. II Pet. 2:4. This has greatly affected the working of creation.

**Note:** Even though the curse is present the statements that creation shows the nature and glory of God still stand. It would seem we are to differentiate between the essential (ontological) nature of creation, and the provisional nature of things. The latter is linked with sin.

#### The Practical Pastoral Problem of the Human View/s of Creation

- (i) Sinful man seeks to deny the total creative power of God, and creation's essential nature because it all confronts him. Rom. 1:19–25 reveals the elements of denial since man, (a) refused God as He was, hence creation as it is, (b) introduced surrogate deity by idolatry, and (c) worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator.
- (ii) Rationalized views of God and creation are found in many religions and philosophies. Evolution is a concept which refuses initiation of creation by God, hence the reality of creation and the Creator do not confront man. Man's claim to 'creativity' is a way of usurpation of the powers of creation. This is seen in ancient

and modern humanism. Monism and dualism are related forms which seek to rationalize evil in the universe, and take away from the transcendence of God, and blur the true nature of good and evil. Idolatry is a distortion and fragmentation of the nature of God. In most cases it leads to the fear and confusion of animism.

(iii) Man demands some kind of theodicy in the light of the presence of good and evil. This is often a denial of the validity, or even the reality of the curse. God appears to have failed (cf I Pet. 4:19, Isaiah 45:18). In practice man is afraid of his world, and often fears its elements (I Tim. 4:1–3, cf. I Cor. 10:18–21), as in the current dread of uranium, and certain foods. Christians often evidence fear of Satan and his demonic forces as though, (a) Satan is very powerful and controls creation, and, (b) God has somehow failed, or scarcely exercises control, even in the face of Rom. 8:28, Gen. 18:25, etc.

### **The Aeons, the Kingdom of God, the Age to Come, and the ‘Ends of the Ages’**

(i) Rom. 8: 18–25 shows the good ultimate outcome of creation in conformity with the Old Testament prophecies of a good *telos*, and the New Testament rationalizations of these (e.g. Matt. 19:26; II Pet. 3:10ff., Ephes 1:3–14, 3:11; I Cor. 2:6f.; Rev. 10:1–7; Rev. chpt. 21 and 22).

(ii) All the *aeons* were created by the Son (Heb. 2:13), and are under him as the Messiah (Eph. 1: 19–21).

(iii) The Kingdom of God broke into the human situation of good and evil in Jesus the Messiah. See Luke 4:18; Isaiah 61:1f.; Matt. 4:23; 12:28 (cf. Luke 9:1f.; 10:1ff.). This can be equated with ‘the powers of the age (*aeon*) to come’ (Heb. 6:4). The actions of this ministry in Palestine by Jesus the Messiah were (a) to attack the powers of evil and defeat them through the word of God by the Spirit of God through the Messiah (Acts 10:36–38), and (b) to effect control of ‘nature’, and demonstrate God’s power in this regard. *This action had an enormous impact on those who feared illness, demons and death.*

(iv) The proclamation of the Gospel was attended with many of the signs and wonders which Jesus had done. These certainly gave evidence that the Kingdom of God was active via the Gospel. This, too, reassured those who did not believe God was (is) a faithful Creator. (Note: the demand for signs and wonders is always evil when it is seeking to make God prove Himself. God is Sovereign and does signs and wonders according to His own will and intention).

(v) We live in the tension of two *aeons*—one present evil, the other good and coming—and this is evident from I Cor. 10:11 and context. *This rationalizes the groaning and convulsion of Rom. 8:18–25 (cf. II Cor. 4:16–5:8; Phil. 3:21; Rom. 8:10–11; Rom. 7:24, I Cor. 15:55–58).*

(vi) Because the Kingdom of God has not yet come—in the eschatological meaning of the term—we do not have pure Kingdom living or its fullest action. Hence we must have only those signs and wonders which the King (Messiah) will do through his servants, and we must not seek signs as do the (religious) Jews or wisdom as do the (intellectualist) Greeks (I Cor. 1:22), because we live not by signs or wisdom, but by the word of the Cross Christ crucified. All will depend on how we ‘hold to the Head’ (Col. 2: 19) both for life, growth, direction and action.

**Note:** Our problems multiply when (a) we try to overcome the kingdoms of this world by seeking to ‘operate’ the Kingdom of God, (b) when we seek to make the penultimate *aeon* as the ultimate *aeon*, e.g. no sickness, pain, suffering, sorrow and death—as in Rev.21:1–5 thus seeking to perfect this sinful human scene. This is a refusal to accept the tension of the two ages, and so a refusal to walk by faith and not by sight, and take up the convulsive suffering and groaning of Rom. 8:18–25. This does not mean the Kingdom is not seen, nor that it does not—in some measure break through into this world even in this *aeon* (I Cor. 15:24–28, but the Revelation shows us we are a conquered people—in some sense and work by faith, and through our weakness. See Rev. chs. 13 and 14.

## THE SIGNIFICENCE OF CREATION—II

### The Purpose of Creation

This is difficult to define. In Ephes. 1:3–14 we have God's purpose in creation, i.e. the redemption of man. In Romans 8:1–25 is included God's plan for creation, i.e. its release into the glorious liberty of the children of God, and this we know is that the first heavens and the *first* earth will pass away (Rev. 21:1–3). and there will be a new heavens and a new earth (II Pet. 3:13). Proverbs 16:4 says, 'The Lord has made everything for its purpose.' This is comprehensible. It fits Genesis 1:31, and Ecclesiastes 3:11, i.e. everything created is functional. However Proverbs 16:4 continues, 'even the wicked for the day of trouble.' This means that everything will have its right end, and God will put everything to its use. Evildoers can only expect this to be judgement.

The best we can say is that (i) the present creation will give way to a new creation, i.e. the first creation will become the new creation. That is how God has willed it. (ii) The time of history is between (a) the initial creating of all things by God, and (b) the final judgement of all things. In history man does not live in a world which is moving towards a good climax—in, and of itself—but in a climax which will first destroy this creation (cf II Pet. 3:12) and then bring a new creation. Today most have a rationale of history as though history were inevitably moving to a good climax. Others see it as a catastrophic and deadly climax eliminating everything, but this is a recent view influenced by the nuclear threat.

What then is the purpose of creation?

### The Pastoral Understanding of the Purpose, Process, and Nature of Creation

- (i) What happens in creation is the outworking of God's will or counsel determined before time. See Ephes. 1:3–14, Isaiah 43:6–7, 46:8–10, Eph. 3:7–11. Pastorally we can always place hope before the flock of God.
- (ii) When we see man lives between the initiation of creation and the end judgements then we see that he will have no hope for the present time as having final perfection. Note:— As above we see that (a) history does not of itself make a perfect situation, (b) many systems seek to make that (Utopian) perfection. Some of these systems are found in Christian theologies. Proverbs 16:4, and the prophecies of judgements show that God accounts for evil in this present time of creation.
- (iii) Man is under the curse—the curse being that (a) of Genesis 3:17ff, and (b) of the direct wrath of God as in Romans 1:18–32, and Galatians 3:1–13. Man under curse curses God as an imperfect Creator, calling His nature in question when His creation is imperfect. Yet it is through man that this provisional state of creation obtains, as against its ontological perfection. Pastorally this must be communicated to the flock of God. The relationship of husband and wife, the pain of childbirth, the curse on the land, and the body being doomed to death are not abrogated by Christ's salvation until this age finishes. Of course the experience of God's love ameliorates them.

- (iv) The creation is subjected to futility i.e. cannot fulfil its ontological function but must live provisionally, though in hope of ultimate release into the liberty of the children of God. Thus man has not been able to destroy creation in his rage against God. Pastorally we must show man's guilt at not fulfilling the creational mandate as in Genesis 1:28ff, 9:1ff., cf. 4:17, 11:1–9. This pastoral insight is helpful to the obedient, and helps to explain the nature of present human rebellion and complaint against God.
- (v) Salvation–history must be placed alongside creation–history or history will be misunderstood. I Peter 1:18–21, Ephesians 1:3–14, 3:1–11, Rev. 10:1–7, Isaiah 43:6–7 must be understood, i.e. that the fall only—of this present age is not God's complete plan, and that He does not merely accommodate to the provisional for creation, but rather will bring it to its true ontological climax in the eschaton. Pastorally the flock should be continually taught this action of God. It will help to place the fall and the curse in its right context, and give immense hope (cf. Rom. 8:18–26; Gal 5:5, Romans 5:5; I Pet. 1:14; II Pet. 3:10ff; cf. Rev. 10:1–7). God is thus shown to be working in history, not merely tolerating it and allowing its evil to pass (Acts 17:30; Rom. 3:24–26). In the Gospels we see Christ righting much of the wrong (Luke 4:17ff; Matt. 4:23f, 12:28, Acts 10:38) but though the Kingdom is dynamic (i.e. the 'age to come' breaking through: Heb. 6:4) *it does not yet come in fullness*.

Salvation history is in and through all history. Grace works in many ways, i.e. through Covenant in its–varying forms, in Abel and his kind (1John 3:10ff, the patriarchs, Israel, and the church—cf. Heb. ch 11), but *the climactic victory is* through the incarnation of Christ, the cross, Resurrection, Ascension. This salvation victory is now being outworked in history (1 Cor. 15:24–28, Rev. 5:1–22 5). Pastorally the flock must know its present context in salvation history.

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## The Significance of Creation II (Cont.)

- (vi) God as Creator must not be seen only to initiate and sustain creation but to continually do new works in creation. (Isaiah 48: 3–8 needs careful consideration. See especially verse 7). These can come under the heading of 'salvation history', but His initiation of new and varied acts must be understood thoroughly, and not be seen as simply 'cause and effect'. More is spoken regarding creation in Isaiah than in Genesis.

For example the word *bara is* used in Genesis 8 times, and in Isaiah 18 times. *Generally* each birth is a new creation of God (Ps. 139:13–16) and in every action. He creates anew (Amos 4:13; Isaiah 40:26; 42 5 etc.), *but especially and particularly* God has created Israel (Isaiah 43:1f; 43:6–7), weal and woe (Isaiah 45:7), salvation (Isaiah 45:8), the *fruit of* the lips (Isaiah 57:18), new heavens and a new earth (Isaiah 65:17), Jerusalem and her people (Isaiah 65:18). In Isaiah there are new things created, and this means God is creating all the time, as He wills, and as the acts extend His covenant grace, and fulfill His counsel. As we have seen this *counsel is His will, and His will this counsel*. Pastorally this means that God will do things we did not dream

would happen, yet God is not formed into new creative acts by our faith. Our faith must be on the heels of His promises and principles we He enunciates.

- (vii) The immediate pastoral significance of the Gospel and the cower of the Spirit must be known. *This salvation–history action is immediately dynamic and creative*, i.e. man is not simply passing time between creation and the judgement (as a squirrel in a cage), and is not simply enduring the curse (even in good hope), but God’s creative dynamic is now bringing men and women into new creation (John 3:3–14; Titus 3:4–7; I Pet. 1:23; James 1:18; II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; cf. Ephes. 4:22–24; Col. 3:9–10; Rom. 12:2). Acts 20:17–35 should be studied closely, along with Rom. 15:14–21. The book of Acts describes (a) the acts of Christ as (b) they **work out in the** acts of the Spirit, and so (c) in the acts of the apostles, i.e. the church. Notice the conjunction of the Word, deeds issuing from the Word, signs and wonders given by God as attestations (Acts 14:3; cf. Rom., 15:18–19), and the power of the Spirit working to bring salvation and aid the flock of God (I Cor.; 2:4–5; I Thess. 1–5; I Pet 1:12). All of this is of the New Man (Christ) in this present age, but it is with a view to the age to come. Christ has given gifts to his church (Eph. 7:4–11) which are distributed by the Spirit (I Cor. 12:4ff.) for action! He has also given spiritual weapons to fight evil, but the ultimate outcome is by a decisive act of God in Christ, when all evil shall be defeated. At best the church is Christ’s people working with him. It is not an agency in itself detached from Christ, working the age to fulfilment and perfection. It is not a political entity. Pastorally we must alert the church to its own nature and function, but we—the pastors—must avoid using the local flock as a personal pastoral possession, and the action of the church as a means of extending our own personal kingdom!

### **Conclusion: God’s Creative Acts Go on in the Age of the Curse and Doom**

Salvation history—God in action salvifically in His own, though fallen creation—is of immense importance pastorally. It resolves the puzzle sinful man has of history, and gives present hope. God is not bound by creation but is its Creator. He is ‘faithful Creator’ in that He does not abandon it, but redeems it. He is not caught in its ‘fixed order’ (Psalm 148:6; Jer. 31:3–36) on the one hand, but creates as He will, and He is not caught in the sinful—provisional—order on the other. His salvation purposes and actions ensure that He goes on working now in this age, and will complete that action in ‘the age to come’. Man—especially believing man—is not caught between creation and judgement, but has true hope for ‘the new heavens and the new earth’ without the aid of the utopian and messianic humanism of rebellious and proud man, even man who is religious.

The doctrine of faith as found in Hebrews 11 seems almost identical with the doctrine of *hope*. In 11 :1–3 we see *that faith is linked with creation*, and in 11:38 *faith is linked with salvation*. In 11:39–0 *faith is linked with the promises* of God, virtually making it hope! This same principle is seen in Romans 4:1–21, where Abraham has faith in God linked with the promise of God, so that ‘In hope he believed against hope’. His belief was in ‘the God who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist\_’. This has to be the present creative action of God which Isaiah mentions so powerfully, and which we see to be linked with salvation rather than creation for its own sake

Pastorally these insights have to be worked through, the flock taught clearly, otherwise they will seek to have this penultimate age to be as the ultimate age, and

will be distressed at its slow-coming or non-coming, and will seek to force it to come or be transformed in their various ways, or become disillusioned with the Gospel that they think they know and turn to despair or to other systems.

What we must also keep in mind is that it is the Word of God which is primary. Creation came through the Word (Psalm 33:6,9; 148:5-6; Heb. 11:3; cf. Gen. 1:3; John 1:1-3; Heb. 1:2), and salvation comes through the word (e.g. Isaiah 55:1-11), and the new creation (redeemed man) comes through the Word of Christ, the Gospel. Any attempt to use techniques to create new things (cf. gift-actions, signs and wonders, etc.) apart from the Word must bring pastoral disaster in the long run. Matthew 7:21-23, 24:24; I Corinthians 13:1-3 and Revelation 16:1-14 show us this, as indeed the warnings of John 4:48, Matthew 12:39 and I Corinthians 1:22 indicate that faith-creative acts must spring from the promises of God, His own Word, and the Spirit who works them in this present age.

We, then, must not seek to improve the world, or the lot of man, or achieve the Kingdom by our actions lest we seek to be creative apart from the will of God. The incessant temptation to perfect the present evil age, or change it—the penultimate age—into the ultimate age is always with us. It accords with our perfectionist drives, and opposes the Scriptures which tell us we cannot have now in perfection that which can only come fully in the ultimate. We must not seek to utilize [the powers of] the Kingdom of God to make the fallen kingdoms of sinful man **into** Christ's Kingdom. I Corinthians 15:24-28 cf. Rev. 11:15-18; 12:10) shows us that Christ is doing this work in this present age.

Whilst we must be in and under Christ for this work we must not seek to accomplish it in and of ourselves. So many natural powers are available to us by which we can accomplish tangible results that we may think that we are actually bringing in the Kingdom of God, and/or cancelling the kingdoms of man! Even so we must believe God's promises for our future, and the coming of the Kingdom, that we will live in dynamic and encouraging hope, knowing that hope is being work to its conclusion even in this present time.

So we realize that God is the Creator-Creator, the Creator-Redeemer, and the Creator-Recreator. Only in the light of this can we understand John 1:1-3, I Cor. 1:30-31, I Cor 1:15-17, 1:19, 2:2-4, Eph. 2:8-12) and know we must live only in faith, hope, and love.

## LIVING PRESENTLY IN CREATION

### Review of Previous Studies: Creation Itself

#### Already we have seen,

- (i) that Creation is dynamic, brought into being as something in itself, and highly regarded by God.
- (ii) That it is primary in God's esteem because He has planned to redeem and restore it.
- (iii) Its history is therefore salvation history, redemption not being an expedient prompted by a contingency.
- (iv) That creation whilst having a 'fixed order' is not static but dynamic. This is shown (a) in its universal praise of God, (b) in the fact that it is always moving towards its end, has a sense of this movement, and so lives in hope, and (c) whilst God sustains His creation and redeems it, He does works within His creation which would seem to be miraculous, and each is a new work of creation, though seeming not to conform to some 'natural fixed order'
- (v) Creation lives in hope not only that it will be released from its bondage to corruption, but that it will fulfil that destiny planned and promised to it before time by God, who is redeeming it and glorifying it through Christ.

#### Pastoral Implications of the Above Review

- (i) Whilst man was in innocence and enjoyment of creation, he knew the truth of creation, but the fall spoiled that situation. Man came to live in dread both of present living, and coming death. Guilt distorts his view of God, whilst his conscience exercises tyranny over him. The pastor has to recognise this both for liberating via the Gospel, and for assuring him as a believer.
- (ii) When a man becomes a 'new creation', he can live in the creation via salvation, for God proves to be 'a faithful Creator'.
- (iii) The believer lives in this 'present evil age' whilst being a true citizen of 'the age to come'. This causes tension. (a) He may think that the things of sight have cancelled the reality of the things of faith. (b) Sickness, disease, the presence of evil and the constant conflict with powers of darkness may dishearten him because he believes that the ultimate age *ought to be extant now*. If he tries to make it to be so, he will inevitably fail. Living in the intersection of the two ages he must learn to live by faith, hope, and love in this age. *The pastoral ministry will emphasize the promises of God in His word, and assist the believers to live in them, not only by faith, but by obedience to—and participation in—God's plan. This will especially be in the works of Christ, by proclaiming the word of Christ, using the gifts and being God's agent in signs and wonders and the use of the spiritual weapons.*

In all these things the pastor must, (a) believe God is a faithful Creator, (b) live and work in the *love* of God, thus being constantly free in union with the Father and the Son, and being constrained to accept and obey the word through this living love, (c) live *by faith* knowing that within Creation God has liberated him, (d) live in *hope* knowing that the plan of God—God's true counsel from before time—will be fulfilled, and the triumph of God as the Creator will be seen. Pastorally we are in the same situation as the those members of the flock. When we see what it is all about, we can then help them.

#### God Acting Now Within His Creation

We have seen man's dilemma, namely that the things of sight seem to deny that God is acting in creation, yet God has done signs and wonders in creation, both in Israel and

the church, and this especially when Jesus of Nazareth was in Palestine. He defeated darkness wherever he went because he was Messiah, and with him the Kingdom of God came in power. He told his disciples they would do greater works than he had done (John 14:8–14), and promised power to witness to him when the Spirit came upon them at Pentecost. It is clear from the book of Acts that all this happened. Paul also speaks of this in Romans 15:18–19. All of this is part of God's faithfulness as a Creator for such faithfulness is shown by, and in salvation. Pastorally the pastor is able encourage the flock to press on to the promised end. Again in Romans 4:16ff., Paul speaks of the principle of faith being dynamically active now, creating miraculous operations, knowing that these are based not upon some separate law or principle—which the spiritual man can abstract from the word and utilize on his own— but upon faith in God's promises, which are one with God's nature and His plan for creation. The flock must be brought to understand this.

### **A Problem in Understanding the Way of God's Actions**

In II Corinthians 12: 1–10 Paul appears to show that **the way of weakness is the way of true power**. He discredits the way of power without love in I Corinthians 13: 1–3 (cf. I Cor. 12:31). Yet we have seen the power of Christ, the Spirit, and the Kingdom in the Gospels. Are we now not free to carry on 'Kingdom action' as Christ and the apostles carried it on? The answer must be, 'Yes'. There need be no qualifications to this if we really understand what we are saying. Thus we need to check what we believe is the way of the Kingdom. Yet even this will not be helpful unless we come to terms with the fact that we are (i) not living in the ultimate age, (ii) have no promise that possessing the Kingdom now (cf. Luke 22:28, cf. Acts 14:22, Matt. 5:~11) we will bring in the Kingdom in this age by proclaiming the Gospel in the power of the Spirit, by signs and wonders—and so on. The times of the Kingdom are in the Father's hand (Acts 1 :7). We are simply to proclaim the Gospel and God will do the rest, i.e. *He* will bring it in in His own time.. We need then to know what God is doing—e.g. I Corinthians 15:25–28), and what are the principles by which He works. Notice that when we feel obliged to summon up every effort to utilize the power of the Kingdom for accomplishment that we may fall into the 'the Elijah Syndrome'

### **The Elijah Syndrome**

I Kings chapters 17–19 give us a picture of the prophet. Being God's prophet he was trained meticulously by God to bring His word to Israel, and to destroy apostasy. This *long* training prepared him for Mount Carmel where a great sign and miracle was performed, destroying 850 evil prophets. Elijah ran 26 miles from Carmel to Jezreel before the king's chariot. The idolatrous queen—Jezabel—threatened to destroy him and he was shattered. God watched over his servant but Elijah complained that he was no better than his fathers, and whilst he had done everything possible he was the only faithful one left, and now was in danger of being murdered. God informed Elijah that he had 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Our problem is (i) we try to get power into our hands to use, i.e. 'Kingdom power', (ii) we work according to the rules (?) but do not achieve what we desire, (iii) we strive harder and weary ourselves like the prophet, (iv) even if we have success (as did Elijah) yet we grow angry with our brethren, thinking we are the ones alone who work this way, so that others must be slacking! (iv) wearing ourselves out we tend (a) to think God is not with us, and (b) that the principles we have worked out and made operational are not, in fact, effective. God has to show us it is not in the outwardly dynamic operations that we achieve true goals, i.e. not by the earthquake, the terrific winds, or even by fire (the fire had worked before!) but in and by 'the still small voice'. By this we come back sensibility, resting on the Lord, and following His commands.

## **The Significance of Creation—IV**

### **Present Hope and Future Creation**

#### **The Redeemed Walk by Faith and Not by Sight**

This is how Paul describes the believer who now lives (II Cor. 4:16–5:8) with the ends of the age having come upon him (I Cor. 10:11). Having been justified by faith (Rom. 5:5) he must go on walking by faith. Now 'we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God' (Rom. 5:2) and even though we presently suffer (Rom. 8: 17–25; II Cor. 4: 16) yet we are not ashamed to hope because we have already experienced God's love in our hearts (Rom. 5:5), and this is the foretaste of things to come. The closest thing to 'sight' the believer experiences is the activity of the 'age to come' (Heb. 6:4; cf. Ephes 1:21) in the signs and wonders given by God, the action of the spiritual gifts which transcend the natural workings of man. This 'age to come' really approximates to the Kingdom of God even now working our midst. If we do not have natural sight of things we certainly have 'the sight of faith'. The reason we do not experience much more of "the age to come" may be that we will disdain God's plan for working in 'this present evil age' (cf. Jude 17–23; cf. John 17:8–26).

There is a seeing ('sight') of faith for *the word of truth is* around us and in us, and is real to us, and the word of God is effectively God. Again, we presently experience God's love and we must do all things in love (I Cor. 16:14).

#### **The Redeemed Walk by Hope**

Whilst we do not have sight in regard to the things which are unseen, the things of the future, yet hope and faith are one when 'faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen'. Paul says, 'For in this hope we were saved [of adoption of sons in glory]. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience' (Rom. 8:24–25).

Hope is substantial to us in a world that is seemingly irrational, subject to arbitrary calamities, criminal activity, disease and sufferings of various kinds—so much so that believers often ask God how it can be so, and how He can watch its convulsions and (seemingly), do nothing. How, then, can it be substantial? The answer is: (i) Since God is the 'God of all hope' then He can assist us to have hope, (ii) God's word, being one with Him cannot fail. The promises of that word are wholly substantial, (iii) God's prophetic word—pertaining to the past—has been substantiated by its predictions and promises already having come to pass, especially as they have been fulfilled in Christ (II Cor. 1:20). One can believe that promises pertaining to the future will also be fulfilled.

#### **The Ontological and Soteriological Thrust to the Fulfillment.**

So far in this series we have seen that the pastoral problem which confronts us is how we can claim –and proclaim—that we may trust our souls to a faithful Creator (I Pet. 4:19) *vis–s–vis* the world of sight, with its seeming contradiction of such trust. We answer that there are two powerful thrusts. *The first is* the ontological thrust in man and nature, for in the light of the Scriptures we cannot deny the functional nature of man and creation as both relate to God's Law, His mandate for obedient action, and the glory which God has destined for His elect. That is we say that man is innately creature, son and servant, designed to come to the completeness of himself. Innately he

feels the thrust forward to his destined fulfillment. *The second* is the presence of salvation. For what has man been saved? He has been saved to fulfil that for which he was created. Salvation (cf. Irenaeus' Recapitulation) restores man to what he was /is to be.

Hope then is not at all dependant upon sight. Those who must have signs and wonders to support them may indeed have these through God's grace but 'more blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed'. yes, and go on in deepening hope!

### Hope Fulfilled

Presently the Spirit of hope keeps revealing the Father, the Son, their past works and their present working. What godly hope is waiting for is the purging of the things of sight, and the revelation of the things which will come—indeed are coming—to perfection continually, now both processively and progressively, and then into final perfection. Thus the great prophecies such as Isaiah 2:1–4 (cf. Micah 4:1–7); 1 1:1–9; 65:17ff.; 66:22ff.; I Cor. 15:42–57; I Thess. 4:1–17; Rev. chs. 21–22 will be fulfilled. We may well ask whether the utter harmony of all things will pertain to the present creation, i.e. that literally the lion and the lamb shall lie down together, or whether such sayings are figures of peace to come. We may ask—in regard to II Peter 3:1–12—whether there will be a physical dissolution of the universe, or simply a purifying as symbolised by fire. It does not matter: we know that in the end all things will be filled up, unified, reconciled, and harmonised. Then we will see what God has been about in history in all His creation.

### Pastoral Presentation of Creation

We have seen in past studies that men, and women— even those who are redeemed—are afraid of creation, fearing the; evil powers can effect terrible things, are not sure of God's personal love and providence, sense God as remote and are not sure that all things will ultimately work together for good. Seeking to comfort them, calm their fears as to sickness, trouble and death will prove difficult—if not fruitless until they came into assured hope. They must be shown the plan of God as both creation and salvation are in His hands. The pastor or teacher should work ceaselessly proclaiming God as the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End, the One Who was, and is, and is to come, so that they may live in assurance, and become eager to share in the outworking of His plan.

In short, what we must to seek by the Word of God, and through the Holy Spirit is to show them as far as is possible (I Cor. 2:1–14) the 'things to come'. What they see in the future will establish and strengthen their hope in the present, 'living hope' being very powerful. They must be shown the completion and fulfilment, of each redeemed person as he or she is finally conformed to the image of the Son, having been raised from the dead—the last enemy, death, having been destroyed with all **other enemies**. To inhabit this holy place they must see they have been given the glorified body, being wholly glorified, inhabiting the heavens and the earth in the Holy City, sharing in the ultimate unity, fulness, harmony and reconciliation of all things. Week by week we need to show the ultimate glory of the church as the pure and beautified wife of Christ, Christ the glorious Bridegroom, the Holy City as the centre of power and life as its gates are opened to the nations day and night and its tree of life for the healing and sustaining of the nations. Also they must see the people of God as 'kings and priests unto God', i.e. a people of glory ministering to all creation.

The greatest object of hope is of course the sight of the great throne, the Eternal **Father and** the Lamb seated up it, and we—His people—seeing Him face to face! Then it is we will understand our evil in polluting His creation. and His grace in redeeming us, and renewing us and all creation.

There can be no greater privilege than to be the proclaimer and assurer of these great things as continually say, 'You can entrust your souls to the faithful Creator.'

## THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CONVERSION

### Resource Materials For the Theology of Conversion:

Bible Dictionaries, Manuals and Dictionaries of Theology. Articles on Conversion, Confession, Repentance, Faith, and the New Birth (Regeneration).

Books: *Conversion* (Erik Routley, Muhlenburg Press, USA, 1960), *Faith Justification, Conversion and the New Birth* (G. Bingham, NCPI, n.d.).

### The Psychology of Conversion:

*Psychological Seduction* (K. Kilpatrick, Nelson, USA, 1983), *The Rebuilding of Psychology* (Gary Collins, Tyndale Press, USA, 1977), *The Battle For the Mind* (W. Sargent, Pan Books, London, 1957). *The Meaning of Guilt* (McKenzie, no details). Cf. *The Concentration Camp & Other Stories* (G. Bingham, NCPI, 1983, pp.55–95), and *The Justice Men & the Great Rage* (G. Bingham, NCPI, 1985).

### Rough Notes on the Theology of Conversion

**In the Old Testament** the verb *shub* has the idea of 'to turn' or 'to return'. See Psalms 19:7; 51:13; Isaiah 6:10. It is used generally for turning or being turned without necessarily meaning 'conversion' but see the principle of turning from evil to good, in many cases (see Concordance references in Ezekiel of the use of term (*shub*) especially 18:30–32, and in Lamentations 5:21, 'Turn us O Lord and we shall be turned.' (AV); 'Restore us to thyself O Lord that we may be restored' (RSV). We need to see the mutuality of returning and (being) restored.

**In the New Testament** the verb *epistrepho* (translated for *shub* in the LXX) is generally used for 'to turn'. See Matt. 13:15; 18:3; Mark 4:12; Luke 22:32; John 12:40; Acts 3:19; 28:27. This verb is really not used in the NT in a passive voice. It can be transitive and intransitive, but one must convert (especially Matt 18:3; Acts 3:19; 26:18), i.e. one comes to conversion by deliberately turning around. This pertains to the psychology of conversion. So *do faith* and *repentance*—always associated with the total act of conversion. *Conversion* has come to be used of the total complex of the salvific act and experience which embraces conviction of sin, repentance, faith, forgiveness and cleansing of sins, justification, regeneration (the New Birth) adoption, the reception of love, accorded holiness and the Holy Spirit.

### Summary of the Term 'Conversion' in the OT and the NT

It is helpful to see that the verb can be used transitively, intransitively, and reflexively, i.e. one can convert another, be converted, and convert oneself. This gives room for the work of God, the response of the will of man, and for one to turn oneself when commanded or motivated.

### Rough Notes on The Psycho–Theology of Conversion

Conversion in Society is used for many things such as conversion from one ideology, philosophy, diet, life–style (etc) to another. It is obvious that a conversion experience can be partly influenced by elements brought to bear on the person who is converted. Technically speaking conversion is a matter of the will. The will is influenced by a number of things such necessity, pleasure, attraction, persuasion, threat, fear and desperation. Whilst the will may be influenced it is *relatively* free to make its own choice. Inner elements as well as overt influences help to make the choice. Even so the choice is always that of the person Conversion under stress or duress —e.g.

‘brainwashing’—does not mean the will is irrevocably captured. We might note here that there is one dynamic which changes man directly and permanently, namely love. The direction of any conversion is determined by the type of love. Only God’s love can bring about an authentic conversion.

### **A Biblical Ontology of Man in Relation to Conversion**

Our thesis is: Man and creation having been brought into being as perfect (i.e. wholly functional) initially knew the system of innocence, i.e. guiltlessness. Through the fall man experienced existential guilt, and has thus come into guilts for his committed sins. Guilt leaves him a prey to many elements, such as conscience, law, and accusation. Guilt (i.e. the guilt of sin,) is itself dynamic and man-in-sin (in-guilt) seeks always to justify (vindicate, prove himself) himself to escape the anguish of both guilt and shame.

Self-justification occupies the major part of man’s operations in life. Because he has no basis of innocence on which to build self-proving (self vindication, self—justification) he intensifies his guilt and shame by constant failure to be just (justified) before man and God. He is thus constantly open to accusation from himself, others (who are also in the competition for self-proving) and the powers of evil.

From the psychological insights into brainwashing we recognise that guilt (either true or false) builds up to a point where abreaction is precipitated. The main factors in the build-up of guilt to the point where it is beyond toleration are conscience and the memory. (Note that these two factors—conscience and memory—need to be explored). Abreaction brings immediate—though not lasting—release from guilt because the sins (faults, weaknesses) of the past are rejected, remorse for them is experienced, and some sort of personal expiation by contrition and turning from them brings a catharsis of the old and so the mind is prepared for a new system. Obviously the new system is adjudged genuine *truth(sic)*. Sargent gives detailed accounts of inducing this happening. Since human beings can be wrought upon for brainwashing we must recognise it as a phenomenological principle which can be utilized for good or evil.

### **Cultural and Christian Conversion Systems**

#### **Functional but Non-Christian Conversions systems**

The operation of brainwashing can be classed as a conversion system. The examples which Sargent gives of the tribal and cultural ways of dealing with accumulated guilt (my interpretation) such as the use of drugs, alcohol, dancing, religious sacrifices, mystery teaching and rites, demagogic preaching and mob hysteria—amongst others—all show there is some kind of experience induced which leads—whether satisfactorily or otherwise—to some conversion experience or state. These may be temporary or otherwise. Both Sargent (op. cit. pp. 15—264) and Kilpatrick (op. cit. pp. 90—101) speak of *new birth* experiences open to devotees. Those desiring them seem dissatisfied with natural birth and require some ritual which will re-birth them. Today there are psychological rebirthing therapies. Being cleansed and new appears to rehabilitate the devotee from the old, so that life begins anew

#### **The Christian Conversion System**

My understanding is that the non-Christian systems of conversion and the Christian system are one functionally, i.e. the psychological processes of both are identical. This would have to be so when considered ontologically. since man is essentially immutable, though provisionally mutable. As I would see it the forces using or manipulating the conversion processes are either that of man and evil, or of the Holy Spirit.

If this is true then it would explain why certain functional (phenomenological) elements are common to non-Christian and Christian conversion. When one operates *apart* from the Spirit of God then its outcome will differ from the outcome of that which *is operated* by the Holy Spirit.

Note that the elements of conviction (of sin, crime, errancy, etc.), repentance, confession and faith are at work in both cases. New birth is part of the whole conversion complex, along with forgiveness, purification, justification and liberation.

### Two Basic Thrusts in Conversion

The first thrust is the *ontological*, and the second the *soteriological*. By ontological thrust we mean that man has a sense of things as they are essentially, i.e. ontologically. He can never be fully at peace when he is unontological or anti—ontological, which is why the person or system seeking to bring about conversion always has a leverage. In other words he—the man being brainwashed—has always sensed that he is malfunctioning regarding certain actions, and so cannot be at ease in this life. Another way of saying this is that there is always the kick—back of guilt when one is not ontological. This at the same time relates to *existential* guilt, i.e. being an existent ~n a functional world but not measuring up—as a person—to what one ought to be. Objective guilt or guilt *de jure* (guilt—at—law) rarely tallies with guilt *de facto* i.e. one’s own subjective guilt feelings. Even so the existent can be manipulated both by existential guilt and guilt feelings, and so can be brainwashed and converted.

The *soteriological* thrust is a matter for debate. God being God, has He always intended salvation for man, and has He put the salvific process into the world by *creation* (ontologically) or is the salvific process *provisional*? The Scriptures make it clear that God planned salvation prior to time and creation. Does God being Creator, Father and King imply He is innately Saviour and so has built the salvific process into creation and man, so that salvation is congruous with the nature of man and God or is *grace* something quite different from the creational ontology? *Grace always appears to be linked with the restoration of that which has fallen from the ontological*. It appears to be outside that which is immediately ontological, but in that which is eschatological.

Given in that grace is not directly part of the ontological order, the *need* of grace will always be present either as a felt need, or as an element to be rejected by angry man because of his guilt and pride. In his pride he will always seek to register himself as just, i.e. just)ified by his deeds. His guilt will be rejected in the face of this pride since it implies imperfection and guilt. The only way out of guilt for this person is to intensify his self—justifying activities, and by nature of the case—since guilt is ineradicable and innately dynamic—he will be a candidate for self—working abreaction, or an alien brainwashing system which is really a system promising ultimate and authentic salvation.

### Conclusion Regarding a Biblical Ontology Relating to Conversion

We can conclude reasonably that man who is awry and displaced ontologically has a hefty matter with which to deal. Conversion systems which seek to lever those with existential and objective guilts must always succeed, even if only temporarily, because the manipulators seem to work towards the equivalent of the ontological, and thus have existential authority as their support system. The main weakness will be that such systems are not based on love, and do not work towards love. The persuaders and manipulators themselves are persons of guilt, and thus not in a position to achieve authentic conversion. Only the Holy Spirit can achieve authentic conversion even though the functional principles by which the Spirit does so are psychologically at one with what might be called religious and secular brainwashing. The goal of spiritual conversion is authentic, but the goal of the manipulators is not, even if it appears to have some justification in the immediate situation.

Christian conversion is a living system, since conversion is the constrained response to the love of God. By this love—explicated and outworked in and by the Atonement— man can receive authentic forgiveness, genuine purification, justification *de jure*, the grace of adoption, and respond to this offer by repentance and faith, thus ‘converting’, i.e. turning himself from what was to what is now his, and which will one day be his both *de jure* and *de facto*.

*The area, then, in which to seek to understand conversion is the theological one. The inner work of the Spirit will effect the steps, but to know—the theology of sin, guilt, atonement and its ethico-moral fruits, the nature of faith, repentance, confession and conversion is to be well equipped both in the evangelistic and pastoral elements of conversion ministry.*

*All of this (above) presupposes a biblical theology, anthropology, and cosmology.*

Geoffrey Bingham. June, 1987.

## THE POWER CONNECTION

### Introduction: Whose is the Power?

We know that in the N.T there are various words for power, but the two main ones are *exousia* which is authority, and *dunamis* which is ability or power as we know in the word *dynamic*. We need to see whether man innately has power, or can be given power which he may then use. A simple run down of the use of *dunamis* is as follows:

- (i) The word is used 77 times.
- (ii) 43 times this power is shown directly to be God's power.
- (iii) 4 times it is used to show the power was Christ's.
- (iv) Christ works by God's power or has God's power—8 times including the power of the Holy Spirit.
- (v) Power is given by Christ to others 2 times and it was twice promised that power would come to them through the Holy Spirit.
- (vi) The power of the Holy Spirit is mentioned 6 times.
- (vii) The Gospel (or the word of the Cross) is said to be the power of God 3 times explicitly and is inferred generally.
- (viii) Once a person is said to be full of power (Acts 6:8, cf. 6:3), but often persons are filled with the Holy Spirit and hence power in accordance with Luke 24:49, and Acts 1:8. When the Gospel is preached in the Spirit there is power (I Cor 2:4-4; I Thess. 1 :5; I Pet. 1:12).
- (ix) Certain men are said to have power 9 times.
- (x) 3 times the Kingdom of God is linked with power, and twice with 'the age to come'.
- (xi) 3 times power is linked with 'signs and wonders'.
- (xii) The power of God is said to *effect* something or someone 27 times.
- (xiii) Where godly men exercise power they deny it is essentially the own Acts 3:12; 4:8-12.
- (xiv) Men or evil forces exercises power, (a) II Thessalonians 2:9, (b) Revelation 13:2, cf. 16:12-14, Matthew 24:24. See Acts 8:18ff.

### Analysis of the References and Power

Any analysis on mere numbers of occasions and contexts in which the word *power is* used will be deficient, but some overall picture can be seen. The principle of who has power, the reasons for having it, and the use of it need to be look at. The following can be seen:

- (i) All power belongs to God—and none to man.
- (ii) Christ as a man and as anointed by God had the power of the Spirit to do the Father's will. He used this power for all things in his life, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension.
- (iii) His disciples had no power until they are given it (Luke 9: 1f, 10: 1f). They were promised power through the Holy Spirit and received it at Pentecost. This power was and is primarily for *witness*.

- (iv) When the disciples did miracles, signs and wonders they accredited them to Christ himself (e.g. Acts 3:1–16) They insisted they had no power of themselves. They knew that they did what they did from God.
- (v) The power of God did (and does) the following things. (a) assisted Jesus in all that he did, (b) assisted the apostles to witness to Christ, to preach the Gospel, to deliver a dynamic word, (c) aided believers to abound in hope, (d) raised Jesus from the dead, raises us to spiritual life and power, and will raise us from the dead, (e) causes us to live with Christ, (f) caused Paul—and others—to minister through grace (cf. Eph. 3:7: see ‘(b)’ above), (g) to fulfil every good work (c.f. II Thess. 1:11), (h) to share in suffering (I Tim 1:8), (i) guards us for a future salvation (I Pet. 1:5), (j) enables us to participate in the Divine Nature (II Pet. 1:3), (k) assures the coming or *parousia* of the Lord Jesus Christ, ‘at the right hand of the power’ (II Pet. 1:16).

### **The Place of Power and Weakness**

- (i) Man as man is not weak—as a man (cf Gen. 1:26ff; Psalm 8:3ff.), but fallen sinful man has no moral–spiritual power (Rom. 5 6, cf. Jer. 10:23).
- (ii) When man recognizes his own innate weakness, admits it, and lives in dependence upon God, then he is strong in God’s power, especially as he is in the purposes of God. See Acts 1:8; Romans 9 17; 1Corinthians 1:2–31; 2:1–5; 15:43; II Cor. 4:7; 6:7; 12:1–10; 13:4; I Thess. 1:5; II Tim. 1:7. The conclusion here is that *a man is never strong in himself, has no innate power and can only exercise the power of God when he is recognises that he is wholly weak in himself, and as such have faith in God for the power he needs to proclaim and live the truth.*
- (iii) God as the God of power assists Christ to be powerful in his (Christ’s) weakness. Christ always declared himself to feed on his Father, to be led and enabled by his Father to do His work. He recognised the power of the Spirit in him. All these statements pertain to his manhood. If Christ was weak without the Father’s assistance, then where does that place us? In this regard it is interesting to see in Revelation 5:1 –that the Lion is the Lamb, i.e. the power of the Lion lies in his lamb–like humility (cf. Phil. 2:1–11). See also I Corinthians 13:8.

### **The Pastor, Preacher and Power Ministry**

Is it possible to gather from what is set out above that God gives power unconditionally to His servants and expects them to use it? Is it possible to misuse power from whatever source is may come? Is there a power which does not come from God? What of psychic powers, occult powers, and mental powers?

It is clear that the believer should work in great power in preaching the Gospel, in exercising the particular ministry and gifts God has given him, in opposing the enemy and overcoming him (them). Ideally then every servant of Christ should be powerful, through grace and faith, to proclaim and live the truth.

### **Power Need**

- (i) *All human beings seek power of one kind or another.* They have fear of death (Heb. 2:1–15, cf. I John 4:18). They need to prove themselves (cf. Gen.10:9ff;

- 11 :1f. 4:28f; Acts 8: 12–22; 10:20–23; II Thess. 2:3–4). They are after a name, a tower, a kingdom (Gen. 11:1ff.). Sinful man is so wrong. He has existential guilt. He is always trying to prove himself. The higher the accomplishment the ‘higher’ the justification or self–vindication he supposes.
- (ii) *There is power for the preaching of the truth*, (a) the Holy Spirit and his power, (b) the Word of God is God actually speaking now, and so this ‘word of the Cross’, this Gospel of salvation’ is its own power to effect dynamic and radical salvation, new birth, justification, forgiveness and sanctification. *The word brings deeds* (Rom. 15:18)
- (iii) *There is the power of signs and wonders* (Rom. 15:18–19). Note: signs and wonders are not innately powerful, it is *the power of God* which causes them and makes them effective. See John 2:23–25; Acts 2:43; 3:12f; 5:12; 14:3; 19:11. *God attests the word by signs and wonders when He sees fit*.
- (iv) *There are signs and wonders which are wrong*. Matthew 24:24; II Thessalonians 2:9; Revelation 16:13–14. See also Matthew 12:38–42; Mark 8:11; Luke 11:16. In I Corinthians 1:22, ‘For Jews demand signs’, cf. John 4:48–54. In Matthew 7:21–23 shows that sign–doing *per se* is not necessarily good but often deceptive.
- (v) *God’s signs and wonders are often judgements against evil powers as they are support for His people*. See the 10 plagues in Egypt (cf. Jer. 32:20; Numbers 14:11–12), Numbers chapters 12 and 16; II Chronicles 26:16–21; the 3 series of 7 plagues each in Revelation chapters 5–19.

### Power Use

*God’s people are called upon to use power*. It is power used in humility and from the point of view of weakness, as we see above (‘The Place and Power of Weakness’). We need to see that we are strong only in Christ (Rom. 8:36–37; II Cor. 2:14; Phil. 4:13; II Cor. 12:9).

*God’s power is presently ours, but is so by faith*. See Joshua 3:5–7; Judges 6:11–12; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8 (Eph. 5:18); James 4:7, I Peter 5:8–9; I John 2:12–14; 4:4; 5:4; Revelation chapters 2–3, ‘He that overcomes’; 12:1 i; 15:2.

*Gifts, weapons, signs and wonders used in faith and love are the working out of God’s power*. We need to see *the gifts* are given by God to work in certain situations, and they must be used in love, for love (I Cor. 13:1–3, cf. Matt. 7:21–23).

*Weapons are spiritual and are given to fight evil*. See II Corinthians 10: 3–4; Romans 13:11–14; I Thessalonians 5:8; Ephesians 6:1–18. *Signs and wonders* are not just the mechanistic use of *gifts*. God uses signs and wonders (a) to attest the word, and (b) to work judgements. A question to ask is, ‘What discipline, authority and control should be exercised in the use of the proclamation of the word, the use of gifts and weapons, especially as they relate to signs and wonders?’

### Conclusion to ‘The Power Connection’

We recognise that it is dangerous on the one hand to live out of faith, to fail to proclaim and live in the truth by the power of God, i.e. the power of Christ, of the Spirit, all in the grace of God. It is equally dangerous ever to seek from our own powers to accomplish the will of God, even by proclaiming what we believe is the word of God, using the gifts and seeking to effect signs and wonders.

It is right, appropriate and necessary to live in personal weakness, thus living in the power of God. To say we are weak when we should be strong in Him is untrue and an escape from the reality of the truth. To be true persons of the truth we must have the power of God appropriated by faith and obedience and exercised *only* in the love of God.

# **The Spirit and the Kingdom of God**

## **The General Nature of the Kingdom**

We understand to the Kingdom of God to be the reign and rule of God in all times, places and conditions. In this sense the Kingdom ever was, and ever will be. God always has and will be Sovereign over all. Whilst we can have biblical verification of these statements we do not need them. The nature of God—as God—demands them.

## **The Particular Nature of the Kingdom**

The initially undisputed reign and rule of God became disputed at a point in the history and action of creation. Heavenly powers rebelled against God and sought equality with Him if not precedence over Him (cf. Rev. chapter 12). The serpent in Eden tempted man to similar disobedience, and autonomy. The Kingdom still obtained but had—and has—rebels within it. This is known as 'the world system', i.e. a system in which Satan is the head, his fallen celestial powers under him, and into which man has been caught by deceit, seduction and threat. This is sometimes known as 'the kingdom of darkness' (Luke 11:18; Col. 1:13; 16:10–11) and is a counter-kingdom within the entire Kingdom of God.

The history of the Kingdom is that certain celestial powers never rebelled, and there have been human beings who, though fallen in Adam, are people of faith and hence loyal subjects within God's Kingdom. Such are known as 'the people of God'. Seth and his progeny; Noah and his progeny; Abraham, Isaac; Jacob and his progeny, all represent the stream of the true people of God, and so loyal—by grace—within God's Kingdom (see Heb. chapter 11; Gal. 3: 9,29).

The O.T. prophets prophesy the coming actions of the Kingdom of God, and link it—one way and another—with Messiah, the Davidic King—Messiah; the Son of Man, the Righteous Branch, and the Suffering Servant. The N.T.—through John the Baptist—announces the coming of the King. Jesus also announces it, but as the King, for he was anointed by the Holy Spirit at his baptism. The Kingdom thus came in his own person (Luke 3:21–22; 4:18–21; 11:14–23, Matt. 12:28; John 18: 33–37). This Kingdom he appointed to his followers (Luke 12:32; 22: 28–30).

In the work of the Atonement—the Cross and Resurrection with the vindication of the Ascension—Messiah defeated the powers of evil, and liberated men from the powers of darkness into the Kingdom of the Son of His love' (Col. 1:13–14). The 'Gospel of the Kingdom' (Matt. 3:2; Mark 1: 14; Isa. 57:2) now became 'the Gospel of salvation' whilst still being 'the Gospel of the Kingdom' (cf. Acts 2:36–38; 8:5, 12; 19:8; 20:21–25; 28: 23, 31).

The Kingdom became known as 'the Kingdom of God and Christ' (Ephes. 5:5; 1 Cor. 15~24–28; Rev. 11:15). From Pentecost to the Parousia of Messiah the victory of the Cross is being worked out in history as seen in (i) I Corinthians 15:24–28, and (ii) the book of the Revelation, especially chapters 12 to 20.

Only with this background known to us can we now discuss the Spirit in relation to the Kingdom of God.

## The Spirit and the Kingdom of God

### Acts 1:1 –8

- (i) For 40 days Jesus spoke of the Kingdom to his disciples (v.3).
- (ii) He insisted they stay in Jerusalem—i.e. not preach the Kingdom until they received the gift and power of the Spirit (v.4).
- (iii) He promised the baptism (or the outpouring on them) of the Holy Spirit (v.5)
- (iv) Linking the concepts of the Kingdom and the outpouring of the Spirit the disciples asked whether that meant an immediate restoration of the Kingdom to Israel (v.6).
- (v) Jesus (vss. 7–8) told them that the matter of Israel and the Kingdom was in the Father’s hand. They would receive the outpouring of the Spirit and be empowered to witness to him Messiah—and this would be to all Jewry in Palestine, to Samaria (the Samaritans) and to all the nations (Gentiles ‘the end of the earth’ cf. Psalm 2: 7–9; Isa. 42: 1–2).

The conclusion from this passage is as follows: (i) they were to preach the Kingdom to all nations through the Spirit of God. The Kingdom would be restored not only to Israel but to all nations. Matthew 24:24 confirms this, i.e. the Kingdom will not ‘come’ until its Gospel is preached to all the nations. (ii) there would be no true preaching of the Kingdom without the Spirit.

In the O.T. every promise of the outpouring of the Spirit is linked with the promise of the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel. See Isaiah 32: 15–20; 35:1–10; 41:17–20. 44:1–5; 61:1–4; Ezekiel 36:24–28; 37:1–14; Joel 2:28–32/Acts 2:17–21; Zech. 12:10–13:9). Thus *the disciples saw the renewing of the Kingdom and the outpouring of the Spirit as being together.*

### Acts 1:1 – 8 with 2:1–21

Here we see that Acts 1:8 in considering the preaching of the Kingdom *through the Spirit* refers it to all nations—Israel, Samaria and the Gentiles (nations). That is in regard to *time* (cf. Matt. 24:24; I Cor 15: 24ff.). Acts 2:17–21 also refers the action of the Spirit in time, i.e. from Pentecost to the ‘great and manifest day’ (2:17–20) which is the *duration* of the pouring out of the Spirit, and the *duration* of prophetic utterance (2: 17–20). This must be exactly *the period of time* defined in I Corinthians 15:24–28 in Matthew 24:24.

### Jesus, the Kingdom, and the Spirit in the synoptic gospels.

- (i) Jesus was anointed by the Spirit to be the Messiah Son of the living God, to fulfil his appointed work in the Kingdom (Mark 1:1–11: cf. Mark 1: 14–15).
- (ii) He was *driven* by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil (Mark 1:12–13). As Israel was taken out of Egypt to be the living epitome of the Kingdom it was led by the Spirit through the wilderness to establish a holy Kingdom (Exod. 129:5–6). Tempted (tested) it fell into worship that belonged to another kingdom (Exod. 32: 1–14), and ‘grieved His holy Spirit’ (Isa. 63:10). Jesus the tested Messiah could then now announce his ‘Kingdom platform’ as in Luke 4: 18–21.
- (iii) The failure of Israel in the wilderness (Isa. 63: 9–11; Exod. 32: 1–14) was transcended by God in His grace as we see in Isaiah 63:11–14, cf. Exodus 33. ‘Like

cattle that go down into the valley, *the Spirit of the Lord gave them rest. So thou didst lead thy people to make for thyself a glorious name* .

(iv) Christ proceeded—as the King—to do the work of the Kingdom, but only by the Spirit of the Lord (Luke 4:18–21; Matt. 12:28). We note that he had been conceived by the Spirit, anointed, tested, and then he ministered by the Spirit, offered himself up by the Spirit, was raised by the Spirit and caused (enabled) to ascend by the Spirit.

*We thus conclude—via the Synoptists—that all the he did was by the Spirit and all of it with a view to the Kingdom.*

### **The Book of Acts, The Spirit, and the Kingdom**

We have linked Acts 1–8 with 2:1–21, and seen that the Spirit will be poured out from Pentecost up until the great and notable day of the Lord', i.e. *the period* of I Cor. 12:24–28 and Revelations chapters 12–20. We have seen this equals *the time* of Acts 1:8 for bringing the Gospel to Jews, Samaritans and the nations (Matt. 24:24). When we closely study the sermons in Acts we see *they primarily tell of Jesus being Messiah*, which must mean 'King of the Kingdom'. This is confirmed by Acts 8: 5 and 8:1~, i.e. *the Gospel of Messiah is the good news of the Kingdom*. This is substantiated by Acts 20: 20–27 which makes the Gospel of the grace of God to be the preaching of the Kingdom of God (cf. Acts 19: 8–9; 28:2–27; 28:3–31).

Acts 1:8 holds the key to the Spirit and the Kingdom. The Epistles insist that there was no preaching of the Gospel apart from the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 2: 1–5; I Thess. 1 :5 I Pet. 1:12; Heb. 2:4, cf 6:4). We can say, then, that the power for preaching was by the Spirit, and thus as Jesus preached the Kingdom, so did they. *Acts 8:5–8 tallies with Matthew 12:28. i.e. as to the mode of proclamation.*

### **The Apostolical Use of the Keys of the Kingdom in Acts**

In Matthew 16:16–19 Jesus evokes from Peter the confession that he is the Messiah the Son of the living God, i.e. the King of the Kingdom. Jesus then says he will build his church on the rock of this confession. He told them—in the plural—that he would give them—the apostles—the keys of the kingdom of heaven, 'and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound [*have been bound in heaven.* and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed [*have been loosed*] in heaven.'

At that time *if* any nation was within the Kingdom, then it was Israel. In Acts I :6–8 the apostles asked concerning its restoration *to* Israel, and were told that the Father has that in hand. Rather they were to teach the Kingdom to Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles (the nations). The question is, 'How do (did) the nations come into the Kingdom?' Surely by the use of the apostolical keys. The further question is, 'By the simple preaching of the Gospel, or by some special apostolical action?'

What is often missing in later thinking about the matter is the background of the day where Jewish thinking did not envisage the Samaritan nation and/or the Gentile nations having the door of the Kingdom opened to them. It would have been a vast leap in thought to envisage that! At Pentecost the Kingdom was opened to Israel for this was evident by the outpouring of the Spirit on all. Note that the apostles were present.

In Samaria (Acts 8) the Gospel of the Kingdom was preached by an evangelist (Philip) and was received and the people were baptized but there was no outpouring of the Spirit *until the apostles came down*. At Caesarea Peter the apostle was present and the Spirit was poured out. Thus initially and principally there was no opening to any of

the peoples—Jewish, Samaritan, and Gentile—without *the use of the apostolical keys to the Kingdom*. The point of saying this is to show that without the outpouring of the Spirit in accordance with Acts 1:8 the Kingdom of God is not opened, but it is opened by the Spirit. This accords with John 3:1–14 where Jesus said that entrance into the Kingdom was by birth through the Spirit. The Kingdom then, has been opened to all nations (cf. Matt. 24:24), not that everyone in all nations will enter—only *the elect*.

### **The Church, The Spirit, and the Gospel of the Kingdom**

Matthew 16: 16–18 links the building of the church and opening of the Kingdom of God together. When we see that Israel was led towards being a kingdom by the Holy Spirit, as in the interpretation of Isaiah 63 (cf. Haggai 2:5), the prophecies by the Spirit of the Kingdom to come, and the announcement of the Kingdom by John the Baptist and Jesus, as well as Jesus' Kingdom operations in Palestine, then we see the Kingdom has always been under the guidance of the Spirit. He has always had the true people of God linked with this Kingdom. The church, then, is not the Kingdom but is linked very close with it. Statements as in Acts 14:22, Matthew 5:10, and II Thessalonians 1:5 show that the church is persecuted because it is the agent of the Kingdom. The book of Revelation also portrays this constant warfare. In this age the Spirit supplies the church with power to proclaim the Kingdom, with gifts to equip it for true living, and with spiritual weapons to fight the powers of evil. Whilst the church is not named in the action of 1 Corinthians 15:24–28 it is nevertheless empowered and led by the Spirit and hence participates in that spiritual warfare.

### **The Holy Spirit Coming Upon the Church For the Work of the Kingdom**

There can be no question from Acts 1:8; 24ff.; 8:14–17; 10:44/11: 15–18; 19:1–7 that the various outpourings of the Spirit had in mind (i) bringing the recipients to regeneration, and (ii) bringing them to power for the ongoing work of the Kingdom. In Acts 6:1–10 we see seven men filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom, amongst whom are Stephen and Philip. Regenerated and filled with power they do great works. When—so to speak—more (or fresh) power is needed, prayer for power, signs and wonders brings a fresh out—pouring of the Spirit on all the church (Acts 4:23–33). Infillings of the Spirit comes at special times such as Acts 4:8 (Peter), 7:55 (Stephen), 13:9 (Paul: cf. 9:17). It is clear from references such as Acts 1:8; 8:29; 10:19–23, 44; 13:2–4; 15:8, 28; 16:6–10; 1 Cor. 2:1–5; 1 Thess 1:5; Heb. 2:2–4; Heb. 6:4; 1 Pet. 1: 12; Rev. 1: 10; 17, 11, 17, 29, 3:6, 13, 22; 4:2; 5:6; 17:3; 19:9 and 22:17 that the Spirit is always promoting the work of the Kingdom. Church history shows that when the church lacks power, true utterance of the word, society is sinful and prayer is made, repentance happens and the Spirit of God comes upon His people so that the church is revived and the work of the Kingdom of God issues afresh under the Spirit.

We have seen then the relationship of the Spirit and the Kingdom. Knowing the Kingdom is that of God and His Christ (Ephes. 5: 5; Rev. 11:15) we can recognise that he has persisted from the beginning, working towards the final coming of the Kingdom. We cannot of course 'use' the Spirit but we can be led by him, walk in him be constantly filled by Him so that the work of the Kingdom proceeds to its consummation. We must live by the Spirit.

## **Living in the Spirit in the Kingdom**

The Sermon on the Mount may in some sense be called a directory for living in the Kingdom. Some passages in the Epistles warn us that certain ways of living are incongruous with the Kingdom and will prevent us ultimately inheriting that Kingdom (1 Cor. 6: 9–10; Gal. 5:18–21; Ephes. 5: 5–6). By Colossians 1: 13–14 we see that we are in the Kingdom, now. Romans 14:17 tells us that that ‘the kingdom of God is ... ‘righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit’. 1 Corinthians 4:20 says, ‘The kingdom of God does not consist in talk, but in power.’ Whilst the church and the Kingdom are not the one, the church must proclaim the Kingdom, hence it will suffer (II Thess. 1:5). It is not just that the church proclaims the Kingdom, but that Christ is Lord of the church, the Spirit guides, leads and empowers the church for Christ, and so the Kingdom is proclaimed. The gift of the Spirit is personal for each person in Christ, and is also for the whole church. We will look at some of the reasons for the gift of the Spirit:

### **(i) The Gift is Given for Power to Witness to Christ**

Acts 1:8 makes that clear. This witness we have seen (above) at Jerusalem and following, Samaria and following, and Caesarea and following. We do not receive the Spirit for power *itself*, but for power to witness to Messiah. We see various modes of witness, and they cannot be stereotyped. See Peter and John in Acts 2–5, i.e. proclamation at Pentecost, healing of the lame man and further proclamation, witness before the Sanhedrin, judgement of Ananias and Sapphira, and further witness to the Sanhedrin. See Stephen in Acts 6–7, dynamic debate, signs and wonders, prophetic witness to the Sanhedrin. See Philip in Acts 6 and 8, preaching at Samaria with signs and wonders and conversions, speaking to the Ethiopian eunuch. See Barnabas in Acts 4:36–38, and chapters 11–15. See Paul in Acts chapters 9, 11, and 13 to 28, cf. Romans 15:18–19. See the words ‘witness’ and ‘testimony’ in the books of Acts (1:8; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39; 10:41; 13:31; 22:15; 23:11; 26:16; 26:22). In Revelation & witness’ or ‘testimony’ is always linked to ‘the word of God’ or the commands of God which are the same thing (Rev. 1:2; 1:9; 6:9; 11:4–7; 12:11; 12:17; 19:10; cf. Ephes.6:17; Rev. 19:14–16).

When we realize that every element of testimony or witness comes from the Spirit himself, and none of it is apart from the word of God, then we understand that it is the truth being brought to the world—the truth of God’s dynamic and overcoming Kingdom it is Notice also the gifts and weapons and leading of the Spirit mentioned above. These are essential for witness to Christ’s Lordship.

### **(ii) The Gift is Given For Love**

The witness of Messiah is absent without love. It is evident from Acts that the new community was one of love, e.g. Acts 2:42–47, 4:32–33, cf. 11:23. Romans 5:5 shows the Spirit pours in love at conversion. See also Romans 15:30; Ephesians 1: 13–1,5 and Colossians 1:8. Where love is present so is true witness, and so is the Spirit. N.B. I Corinthians 13:1–3 show gifts are ineffective as a witness to Christ where love is not present in their use. Such use of the gifts would have to be apart from Christ himself and from the Holy Spirit.

**(iii) The Gift is Given For Living Under Christ's Lordship**

In I Corinthians 12:3 Paul shows we say 'Jesus is Lord!' by the Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit we cannot proclaim that Lordship. It is part of the saving Gospel (Acts 2:3~38; 10:36; Rom. 10:9). Without the Spirit we cannot live under Christ's Lordship. His Lordship is also Headship of the church, and he directs the church in its actions. Note that the Holy Spirit exalts Christ's Lordship in all its aspects (John 16:12-15 cf. Ephes. 4:16).

**(iv) The Gift is Given for Knowing and Living Under God's Fatherhood**

Galatians 4:4-6 shows we cry to God as Father by the Spirit, thus activating the relationship God has granted to us. See also Galatians 3:26; Ephes 3:14-1254; 4:6. This is a further witness to Christ, since we put him on in baptism and participate in his Sonship (Gal. 3:26; 4:6). We work with the Son for the Father's Kingdom (I Cor. 15:24-28).

**(v) The Gift is Given for Purification and Holiness**

Acts chapters 10 and 11 are given over to what might called 'the purification of the Gentiles', which is the same as their entrance into the Kingdom. Peter had to be shown that God had made the Gentiles clean (10:15). Peter later said to the Jewish Christians, 'He made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith.' That cleansing was given directly in the form of the remission of sins (10: 44 48) with the gift of the Spirit. This included their act of repentance (11:15-18). Forgiveness and sanctification by faith are together (26:18). See also I Corinthians 6:11. Without **holiness there** is no witness to or of Christ.

**Conclusion: The Spirit, the Kingdom, and the Life of the Kingdom are Inseparable**

We cannot understand the Holy Spirit or the Kingdom apart from one another. We must keep this wholly in mind, and consequently act in accordance with its reality.

## CHRIST'S HEADSHIP IN CHURCH AND HISTORY

### CHRIST HEAD OF ALL THINGS

The following Scriptures show Christ's headship:– (i) **By creation**. John 1:13, Col. 1: 15–17, Heb. 12–3, 1 Cor., 8:5–6, and this headship is ontological. In one sense we should say 'The headship of the Word', 'the headship of the eternal Son', but because the Word (John 1: 1–4) the Son (Heb 1:2–3) has become incarnate, the terms 'Jesus', 'Jesus Christ', and 'Christ Jesus', are used even when speaking of his being prior to, and being at, creation. (ii) **By redemption**, i.e. by his victory of the Cross (Gal. 1:4, 2:19–20, 6:14, Col. 2:14–15, II Tim. 1:10, Heb. 2:14–15), by his resurrection (Acts 2:15, Rom. 1:4, I Pet. 1: 13, Rom. 5: 10, Rom. 10:9) for his resurrection makes him Lord over both death and life. He is also Lord by his ascension (John 16: 10, Acts 2:33–36, 5:31 Heb. 1:3, 1:13).

What is immensely important is that Christ has been made, and continues to be 'head over all things' as is set out in Eph. 1:20–13. His Lordship is not only to do with his being prior to his incarnation (cf. John 17:13, 20ff., Phil. 2:5ff., Rom. 8:3, Gal. 4:4), but it is in Christ that God has planned all (Ephes. 1:3–14, 3:1–11, etc.). II Cor. 1:19–22 (cf. Luke 24:25, 44f.) shows us that Christ is the heart, substance and fulfillment of all things.

### Christ The Head of All Things For The Church

Eph. 1:21 (cf. Col. 2: 10) makes him head over all things, for (i) he created them (Col. 1: 16–17) and (ii) he renews and unifies all things, 'filling them up', 'reconciling', and 'harmonising' them, for it is impossible both creationally and redemptively that they should be outside his control (ii) Ephes. 1:20f. (cf. Heb. 1:3, Heb. 10:12–13) is linked with Psalm 110: 1 f., and also connected with Psalm 2 (cf. Heb. 5:5–6). 'For the church' means that his victory (Jesus is Lord) means (a) that since he rules all things his church is kept in victory and true supremacy, and (b) that it ministers with him, fighting with him in this last age to defeat and destroy the enemies (I Cor. 15:24–28, cf. Rev. 152) so that they will be one with him 'in the age to come'.

### Christ Is Head Of The Church.

Statements regarding this fact are: – (i) Eph. 4: 15, (ii) Col. 1: 18, (iii) Eph. 5:23 (cf. Rev. 19:6–9, Rev. chs 21–22) (iv) Eph. 2:19–20, cf. I Pet. 4:6–8), (v) Col. 19, 13, 9–10. Rev. 1:12–20, cf. 2A, 8, 12, 18, 13, 7, 14 show his practical headship, and his strong control over his church, consonant with Rev. 1: 12–13 where the glorified Christ is in the midst of the [sevenfold] church.

What then are the purposes and functions of his Headship of the church? Being ontologically Head, the Vine, the Shepherd, the Bridegroom, the true High Priest, the True Prophet, and the True King of the people of God all indicate that Christ as Head is 'the source and origin' of his people, but also Leader and Ruler of them, and for them. The Body has its identity only in him, receiving the benefits of his multi-faceted Headship, i.e. over the Family, Head of the branches as the Vine, Head of members of the Body, Shepherd of the Flock, thus his people operating prophetically, as the priestly and worshipping community, the royal community, being his Bride. He has given to the Body his own fulness, hence they share with him in the fruits of his victory (Eph. 4:7ff.), and presently fight evil powers with him (I Cor. 15:24–28). In him they participate in God's plan for history. We must closely examine II Cor. 11: 1 ffr. and in fact all the triumphalism (along with the philosophy of non-suffering) of the 'super apostles', and the nominated false apostles, as well as these heresiarchs spoken of in Acts, the Epistles and the Revelation.

### **The Life of the Head and the Body**

The Head has given to the body:–

- (i) the mandate for proclaiming the Gospel,
- (ii) the gifts of ministry (Eph. 4:7–11),
- (iii) the gifts for ministry,
- (iv) the leadership of the eldership,
- (v) the weapons for warfare,
- (vi) the grace for community life – grace flowing continuously from the Father and the Son, via the Spirit,
- (vii) the power for the internal life of the church, for proclamation of the Gospel to the world, and for fighting the forces of darkness.

If the Body remains true to the Head then Head and Body work as one. If the Body is 'headless' (the Flock Shepherdless, The Branches without the Vine, the Priesthood without the Priest, etc.) then there is chaos and an unontological situation, i.e. chaos and tragedy. We should closely examine (a) Ephes. 4:11–16, especially 4: 15, and Col. 2:16ff. especially 2:19. We must also see the references which speak of Christ's relationship to the church in Rev. chs. 2 and 3. Christ is in the midst of the church, showing his Headship in dynamic ways, rebuking, encouraging, judging, executing judgement, and helping in the conflict.

### **The Head, and His Appointed Heads of the Church**

In our last study we saw the following

- (i) The fact of leadership:– See Acts 14:23, 15:6, 20:17, 28, Ephes. 4:11; 1Thess. 5: 12, 1 Tim–3:1ff., 5:17f., Titus. 1:5ff., Heb. 117, 17, 1 Pet. 5:1ff. cf. Rev. 4:4 (etc.). Note:– The Elders in the Revelation are spoken of as male.
- (ii) Terms for leadership: 'rulers' (*hegoumenoi*), Heb. 13:7, 17, 24, cf. Acts 15:22, 'overseers' (*episcopoi*), Acts 20:28, Phil. 1A, I Tim. 3:1,2, Titus 1:7 'those over you' (*proistamenous*), I Thess. 5:12 (cf. I Tim 14,5,12), 'elders' (*presbuteroi*), Acts 11:30, 14:23, 15:2,4,6,22,23, 16A, 20:17, 21:18, 1 Tim. 5:1, 17,19, Titus L5, James 5:14, 1 Pet. 5: 1, 'pastors' or, 'shepherds' (*poimenas*), Eph. 4:11, cf. John 10: 1– 16, Heb. 13:20, 1 Pet. 2:25. All these are male.
- (iii) The task of teaching belongs to elders (1 Tim. 12, 6:17, Titus 2:9, see Acts 20:17ff.), whilst women can learn ( I Tim. 2:11, cf I Cor. 14:35). Older women can teach younger women (Titus 2:3), with perhaps a husband–wife pair also able to teach (Acts 18:26).

The questions then remains as (a) to the total relationship of each member (person) to Christ as Head, (b) the corporate relationship of the community to Christ as Head, (c) the place of the Eldership as the entity through which Christ speaks and leads (cf. Acts 15:6, 19–20, 22), and (d) the entity by which Christ teaches the true word, and confutes heresy, wrong doctrine and wrong practice (Titus L5–16, Jude 14) etc. We also have to see the place and authority of the apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher, and the relationship to the head through the elders and them, as well as members to members ( Eph. 5:20, 1 Cor. chs. 12 to 14, Acts 2:42ff., 4: 32:33, Phil. 2Aff. Ephes. 4:1ff.) and all members working together under their Head.

## ***BEYOND THE CROSS***

### **The Eternal Nature of the Cross**

Probably no thoughtful Christian doubts the eternal nature of the Cross. It may be that some of us have never considered the point we are raising. However because it has pastoral implications for us we must consider' it. 'It is often said these days, 'Well of course you come first to the Cross, are forgiven, and regenerated, but then you go on beyond the Cross.' Such statements are no; wholly thoughtful but we know what they mean. For example, Easter Day follows Good Friday and Pentecost follows Easter Day. Whilst the Cross—so to speak—give the believer a launching it is the Holy Spirit who takes him on further. Also there is the church, its membership, its exercise of gifts, its use of weapons, its evangelism, its concern with lost and suffering humanity. To stay at the Cross would appear, to be morbid and inactive. Real action has to happen *out there!* (NB. Whilst Pentecost follows the Cross in time, it is not *beyond* the Cross, but with a view to the Cross)

Whatever the value of such comments to see the following elements. (i) *There was a Cross before time—at least in intention if not more* (I Pet. 1: 19–20; Rev. 118). That it was planned before time can be seen (Ephes. 1:5–7; 11 Tim. L9; I Cor. 2:7). (ii) *The matter of the Cross was prophesied before Christ's coming* ( I Pet. 1:10–12; Luke 24:25–27, 45; 1 Cor. 15:3–4), (iii) Christ saw the Cross as indispensable (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:32), (iv) The action of the Cross happened in time—at Golgotha—the description of its happening taking up about one-third of each Gospel, (v) the message or word of the Cross is spoken of as having continuous present action (I Cor. 1: 18; Gal. 2:20), and (vi) all of history has had its origin and action from Christ crucified, i.e. the Lamb 'as it had been slain' (Rev. 5:1– 19:21) when he opened (opens) the seven-sealed book. In this sense the Cross has always been and will always be—in the person of Christ crucified. We are, then, justified in speaking about *the centrality of the Cross* to all things.

### **The Present Centrality of the Cross to, and in All Things**

When we realise that the Cross was before time, in time, and is even beyond time (as we know it) then we realise we can never go beyond the Cross. But what do we mean by the statement, 'the centrality of the Cross, to all things'? Our answer is along the following lines:

- (i) In the Cross Christ defeated all the enemies of man. sin, the flesh, the world, the principalities and powers, Satan, death, and the law. That Cross broke the power of the idols, the fear of death, of wrath and of judgement. As we shall see we need to live—by faith—in that finished work. We never leave it behind! If we do not have recourse to the Cross every day—by faith—then evil powers still have power over us.
- (ii) That same action of the Cross redeemed man from the penalty, pollution and power of sin. Through its grace the radical change called regeneration was effected. Man was forgiven, justified, and even sanctified. This action of the Cross demanded the application of its effects or fruits by the Holy Spirit (Titus 14–5; 1 Cor 6:11; Rom. 82;

II Cor. 3:17). Even so we need to live as forgiven, justified, cleansed by the power of the Cross—not only once in the past but continually every day (cf. I Cor. 1: 18—‘the word of the Cross is the power of God to those of us who are being saved’).

(iii) That at the Cross there was a once—for—all action which at the same time carries its effects into every part of life, as is seen by the use of tenses which refer to the Cross. We see in the following:

(a) Romans 6:6: ‘We know that our old self (old man, or humanity) *was crucified with him*’. The verb (*sunestaurōthe*) is an aorist indicative passive.

(b) Galatians 5:24; ‘And those who belong to Christ *have crucified* the flesh with its passions and desires’. The verb (*estaurōsan*) is an aorist indicative active.

(c) II Timothy 2:11: ‘if we *have died* with him. The verb (*sunapethanomen*) is an aorist indicative.

(d) Romans 6:10: ‘the death *he died* to sin’. The verb (*apethanen*: twice in this one verse) is an aorist indicative.

(e) Colossians M: ‘For you *died*’. The verb (*apethanete*) is an aorist indicative.

(f) Galatians 2:20: ‘*I have been crucified with Christ*. The verb (*sunestauramai*) is a perfect indicative passive.

(g) Galatians 6:–14: ‘the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by which the world *has been crucified* to me, and 1 to the world’. The verb (*esiauratai*) is a perfect indicative passive.

The first 5 references are in the aorist which means the action was definite, completed, and not to be repeated. The last two are in the perfect meaning the action which happened in the past is still going in its effects. We see then that we are wholly dependant for our death having *once* been completed so that we do not have to go on being crucified. However the perfect indicates that we can never go beyond the Cross because its effects are *ever happening* to us.

(iv) Justification is a once—for—all action of God, but we live in it by faith. i.e. we continue to draw upon the work of the Cross—we are never beyond it. This is seen in Gal. 5:3–5 where Paul warns against falling away from grace (cf. II Cor.6:1–2), i.e. justification. He also says we have ‘the hope of justification’, i.e. we look forward to it, meanwhile walking *by faith*.

(v) Sanctification is by faith. i.e. a gift of God, as also a fruit of the Cross (1 Cor. 6:11; Titus 14–5; Heb. 9:14; 10:22; John 16:16). Apart from the Cross and the Spirit there is no cleansing and no sanctification. The action of the Cross and the Spirit is needed all the time. We look forward to ultimate holiness but our present holiness depends (a) on what happened in the past by the Cross, and (b) what now happens because of that Cross. See Romans 6, and Colossians 3. What has been put to death (past) we now put to death (present) and so live in practical holiness. We cannot go beyond the Cross to do this.

(vi) The action of the Cross goes on bringing forth fruit every moment. So Isaiah 53:11 ‘He shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul’, and this based on the principle of fruitfulness of death to self (John 12:24)—the corn of wheat dying, bring fruitfulness.

(vii) There is only one message—‘Christ crucified’—(I Cor. 1:17–2:5), i.e. to bring to salvation, to keep in salvation, and to bring to ultimate glorification (Rom. 8:30). To depart from this is death and curse (Gal. 1:6–7; 3:10; 5:5–6). Note: By Romans

15:18–19 we see the primacy of the word (the word of the Cross, the word of grace, etc), which is followed by works, attended and attested by signs and wonders, and accomplished—as proclamation—by the power of the Spirit. None of these things goes *beyond* the Cross but *is for* the word of the Cross. See that it was the word of the Cross Le the word of L—race to which believers were entrusted (Acts 4:33; 6:8; 11:23; 13:43; 14:3; 14:26; 15:11; 15:40; 18:27,20:24; 20:32). Since, (i) the word of grace (the Gospel) is also the word of the Cross, and (ii) since it is the same word of grace to which believers are committed, then we can never go beyond the (word of the) Cross. NB. In Acts 4:33; 6:8 and 11:23 and even 15:11 grace seems to be something of a power, rather than the word itself, but this does not mean it was a power other than of, or from the word.

- (viii) To proclaim Christ means to live in his Cross and suffer deeply. See 11 Corinthians 4:7–15. This is the offence of the Cross (I Cor. 1:21–25). In this matter we can never go beyond the Cross but are always involved in it.
- (ix) All history is dependant upon the Cross and its power. It is the Lamb who is on the throne with the Father, working out the judgements and the consummation of victory—by the Cross (Rev. 5:1 to the end: 1 Cor. 3:24–28). Thus all history is involved in the Cross. Not one particle of it is apart from the Cross.

### **The Tension of Two Ages**

We must recognise there are two ages (*aeons*) in which the believer is involved (I Cor. 10:11), i.e.

- (i) the present evil age (Gal. 13; Ephes. 1:21; 1 Cor. 1:21f.), and
- (ii) the age to come (Ephes. 1:21; Heb. 6:4).

Whilst Christ has achieved victory over the old age with its prince (Satan) and its other evils and powers, yet it must be constantly defeated in this age, and *can only presently be defeated by reason of the Cross* Gal 4; 2:20; 3:10–14; 5:24; 6:10).

This being the case we need to heed 1 Corinthians 1: 18, 2:2–5 and Galatians 6:14.

### **Conclusion As to the Ongoing Effects of the Cross**

It should be clear that the work of the Cross (Cross, Resurrection=Atonement) is never left behind, outmoded or transcended but it is also true that because of it we do make progress in our salvation, that the church in proclaiming the Gospel of Christ must go on under the Lordship of Christ, living as the Body of Christ, making practical progress in holiness, worship, service, works, maturity and victory over evil (I Cor. 15:24–28), and this under the power of the Spirit, and by the use of spiritual gifts, the attestation (by God) of signs and wonders in the context of

- (a) the word, and
- (b) the works which come from that word (Rom. 15:18–19).

Whilst we see these as the fruits of the Atonement, as also the elements attending its proclamation, then we need have no worry about ‘going on beyond the Cross’.