



New Creation Teaching Ministry

2001 Monthly Ministry STUDY GROUP NOTES

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"Pastoral Dynamic Series"

Adelaide Pastors Studies 2001

The Church the Priesthood of All Believers—I

CREATIO EX NIHILO and the Human Response [Siew Tham]

The Church the Priesthood of All Believers—II

The Church the Priesthood of All Believers—III

The Church the Priesthood of All Believers—IV

The Story and History of the Everlasting Church

The Body of Christ and the Human Body [Siew Tham]

The Apostolic Ministry of the Church of God—I

The Apostolic Ministry of the Church of God—II

The Church of God: The Beautiful City of God

Being the Eschatological Church

***Note:** Some of the notes in these series have not been proofread.
Please accept any errors or omissions.*

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The Church the Priesthood of All Believers—I

In past Studies we have been looking at the nature of the church especially as regards ministry. We have seen first of all the gift of the Holy Spirit and of Christ for which the word *dorea* (gift) is used. We then saw the ministry gifts for which the word *domata* is used in the plural. Thirdly we saw the gifts distributed by the Holy Spirit are called *charismata*—in the plural. When it comes to the ministry of persons we saw that all members of the church are ministers (servants) and that where gifts and ministries are one, the church proceeds in its life and action.

Some scholars see a three-tiered ministry within the New Testament, namely bishops, presbyters and deacons. Others see a two-tiered ministry of elders (presbyters) and deacons. Yet others see that the church is simply the people (*laos*) of God, and whilst elders and deacons were present in the early church, yet they were of the people, chosen by them and ministering to and with them. The term 'priest' was not used of leaders. The word for a priest—*hiereus*—was not used for elders or leaders, nor for any Christian in the New Testament. In fact the evidence of history is that until St Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage during the mid-third century, the term 'priest' or *sacerdos* (Latin) was never applied to leaders. The process of sacerdotalisation was gradual, taking time to be accepted.

The controversy in which we will be involved will be to see whether the later use of *sacerdos*—a sacrificing priest whose ministry is mediatorial—has any place in the New Testament understanding, and whether or not it was a valid development from the terms 'elder' and 'bishop'. It is clear that the New Testament does not think of an elder or bishop as being the equivalent of a priest or high priest in the Israel economy.

In this first paper we will look at the passage of Exodus 19:5–6 and 1 Peter 2:4–10 to work out the meaning of 'the priesthood of all believers'. We will ask what this means in regard to the nature and purpose of the church in the world. In our second paper we will be looking at the ways in which the priesthood of all believers has been interpreted, asking ourselves whether the various views are valid, and whether the outcome of these applied interpretations is in conformity with the true nature of the church, and its worship.

THE COMMUNITY IS CHRIST

Before we proceed with these three papers we need to see that the church is Christ. The community is that of Christ. There is not a priesthood of believers which is not the priesthood of Christ and the priestliness of Christ. The Levitical priesthood of Israel has ceased because a greater than Aaron has come. There is now only one High Priest and that is Christ. His people, therefore, are a priestly people because he has embraced them into his own priesthood. It would be intolerable to have a priesthood, even of all believers, which could stand apart from Christ, doing its own thing. In Israel's economy, Levitical persons were used to represent priestly Israel in that they conducted the cultus (worship system) which included the sacrificial system, but *in essence* all members of the community were priestly.

An argument has derived from this fact for a coterie of sacerdotal priests in the New Testament church, namely, ‘All are priestly in the church, but only some are of the order of practising priests, and they represent the whole priesthood, that is, the remainder of the members of the church’. To maintain this would be to have these representative priests as an adjunct to Christ or as mediators between God and Man. It would lessen Christ as the one embodying all members of the church, and of the giving his ministry to all. He would no longer be uniquely High Priest to the *ecclesia*. It will be helpful here to quote Luther on this matter, but we will take it up more in detail in our second paper.

Against such distortions Luther protested that ‘our baptism consecrates us all without exception and makes us all priests. . . . We all have the same authority in regard to the word and the sacraments, although no one has the right to administer them without the consent of the members of his church.’ In particular, ‘those who exercise secular authority have been baptized like the rest of us. . . . They are priests and bishops. They discharge their office as an office of the Christian community’, and so may advance the reform of the church. All human callings are acceptable before God. ‘Every shoemaker can be a priest of God, and stick to his own last while he does it.’ ‘By virtue of his priesthood, the Christian exercises power with God, for God does what he asks and desires.’¹

The fact is that the priesthood of all believers relates to the *triplex munus*, that is, the truth that Christ is Prophet, Priest and King, and from this being of Christ the Lord of the church, the church is prophetic, priestly and royal. We will later contemplate this reality, seeing how it derives from the Scriptures, but for our purposes at this point we simply say that in Christ the church is priestly. As such it offers up spiritual sacrifices, which are not material or expiatory (1 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 12:28; 13:15; cf. Ps. 116:17). As the community, the Kingdom of Christ, they work out Christ’s priestly ministry to the world. They are ‘priests to his God and Father’ (Rev. 1:6), ‘a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on earth’ (Rev. 5:10).

We only need to add that whilst being the priesthood of all believers they are at the same time the prophethood of all believers, and the kingship of all believers.

INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMUNITY OF CHRIST AS BEING A PRIESTHOOD

We have seen many of the figures of the church as it relates to Christ, such as, the Body, the Bride, the Branches of the Vine—and so on. We seek in this Study to understand it as the priesthood of all believers. The term ‘priesthood of all believers’ arose during the time of the Reformation. It was not meant to be understood as ‘the priesthood of each believer’, or ‘every believer, individually’, but the priesthood of the body of believers. Together, all members of Christ constitute a priesthood. The term is intended to take away from the idea of individual, sacerdotal priests, that constitute a priesthood in the church which is other than the people known as ‘the laity’. It is intended to show there is no such division as clergy and laity. The Reformers believed the New Testament church was composed simply of ‘the people’, that is, the *laos*. Whilst the New Testament speaks of ‘your leaders’ (*ton hegoumenon humon*, Heb. 13:7, 17; cf. 1 Thess. 5:12–13) and ‘the elders who rule well’

¹ Quoted from *The New Dictionary of Theology*, eds. S. B. Ferguson and David F. Wright, IVP, Leicester, 1988. The article is ‘The Priesthood of All Believers’, by David F. Wright, pp. 531f.

(*hoi kalos proestotes presbuteroi*, 1 Tim. 5:17), there is no suggestion that these men are *sacerdotes*, that is, mediating, sacrificing priests. Indeed the Greek word for priest which indicates that kind of a priest—*hiereus*—is never used singly for a member of the church, but only for the corporate membership of the church. One Peter 2:5 speaks of ‘a holy priesthood’—*hierateuma hagion*—and in 2:9 of ‘a royal priesthood’—*basileion hierateuma*. Revelation 1:6 speaks of the church being ‘a kingdom, priests to his God’ and Revelation 5:10 says, ‘a kingdom of priests’. Revelation 20:6 speaks of those who share in the first resurrection for ‘Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they shall reign with him a thousand years’.

We will return later to deal with these and other references which speak of the church as a priesthood, but we need to understand the matter of the priesthood as we find it in the history of Israel, that we might more fully understand its meaning and function in the church. In the passages of 1 Peter 2:5–10 we can see that to be ‘a holy priesthood’ was to ‘offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ’, and to ‘declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light’.

THE MEANING OF PRIESTHOOD IN THE ECONOMY OF ISRAEL

Studies available on the priesthood in Israel are many and wide in their coverage, the meaning and purpose of the worship cultus of Israel being extremely important. Cyril Eastwood in his *The Priesthood of All Believers* gives three simple functions of the priesthood: (i) priests were servants of the Word of God, ‘And you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and will teach you what you shall do. He shall speak for you to the people; and he shall be a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God’ (Exod. 4:15–16). This was the ministry God gave to Aaron in particular when he was to be Moses’ mouthpiece to Pharaoh. Generally speaking it applies to all priests as Malachi 2:7, ‘For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts’; (ii) priests were to be servants of the law of the Lord (Neh. 8:1–8). Verse 2 has, ‘And Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could hear with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month’. Micah 3:11 shows the functions of judges, prophets and priests, castigating the latter for teaching ‘for hire’. Teaching was their task, whatever. In Leviticus 10:11 God had told Aaron, ‘you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes which the LORD has spoken to them by Moses’; and (iii) the priests were to be servants of the will of God, for in Deuteronomy 33:8 Moses said Levi was to be given ‘thy Thummim, and thy Urim’—the means by which God’s will could be discerned.

Informative as are these three points, they do not cover the main ministry of the priests, which was to conduct the worship of the Lord, including the whole sacrificial system. It is best, then, to look at Exodus 19:5–6 which covers the purpose of Israel; being *a* priestly nation, and in fact *the* priestly nation of God:

Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.

What is meant by these words? Firstly the matter of God's covenant with Israel involves Israel being a priestly nation. At this precise point in time Israel did not have a formulated priesthood, so 'priestly nation' could mean a nation which would have the worship of God via its own priests, and whilst this was true, the emphasis seems to be that the nation was a priest-nation *for* the other nations. God's covenant had been with Abraham and was to bring blessing to all nations. Israel, in the line of the Abrahamic Covenant promise, had been liberated from Egypt and would inherit Canaan. If, then, it would keep God's covenant it would prove itself the priest-nation appointed by God to mediate for all nations. At this point God is not stressing the matter of Israel's cultic priesthood, but it being the unique priest-nation for all the world. A high concept and function indeed! What we need to keep in mind, and which will come to the fore, later, is that Israel alone offers worship to God. Doubtless all nations offer their worship to their gods, but there is only one God to whom worship can be truly offered. That God is Yahweh, the only God, and Israel is the one worshipping congregation (*qahal*) so that it witnesses to the other nations of true worship. We will see that false worship can never effect any good, and true worship can only effect what is good. The main thing at this point is Israel's obligation to true witness to worship, and so to God Himself.

Whatever may have been the powers, operations, and vicissitudes of Israel's cultic priesthood *within* Israel, Israel was to be 'a light to lighten the Gentiles [the other nations]', and when we ask, 'Did it accomplish this?' then the answer must be 'No', unless we see Christ as Israel-in-himself, and thus as 'the apostle and high priest of our confession', that is, of the faith which should have been Israel's for the sake of the world, but which Israel as a nation had rejected via its leaders, although the faithful remnant² within Israel had accepted this. The faithful remnant constituted 'faithful Israel' since they accepted Jesus as Israel's Messiah. Their being ejected from Israel by its leaders—the Sanhedrin—meant: (i) Israel as God's priest-nation had failed; and (ii) the rejected Jews who followed Jesus now constituted the true priest-nation as the true covenant people, so that the promise of Exodus 19:5–6 now pertained solely to them. The mission of God,³ for which Jesus had come, had to do with both covenant and priesthood. He commissioned his followers to take up the commission *to* the nations *for* the nations.

In this sense the new *ecclesia* could be defined in the terms Peter used of it in 1 Peter 2:4–10.

Excursus: A Kingdom of Priests

It will appear obvious on first sight that 'the priesthood of all believers', as the

² When we say 'remnant' then we surely mean 'the essential Israel', for apostate elements in Israel, though often the major portion of Israel, were never true Israel, a point which Christ, Paul and others often taught. In the sense that the remnant kept faithfully to the matter of Exodus 19:5–6, then it could be said that Israel as God's own possession did not fail in their task to the nations.

³ By 'mission of God' we mean firstly the mission to all the nations planned by God before creation, and then that mission going out by the covenant with Abraham to all the world. It was in the seed of Abraham that all the earth was to be blessed. It is important that we see Exodus 19:5–6 as God's goal for the nations through Israel, and that we see 1 Peter 2:4–10 is the church fulfilling Exodus 19:5–6.

Reformers understood the phrase, is not meant in Exodus 19:5–6. The nation was to be priestly—the priest-nation for the other nations. The priestly order of Levi or Aaron was to be a mediatorial priesthood for all members of Israel. This was to be instituted according to the directions given to Moses. At the same time Israel was to witness to the nations the nature and order of true worship. It was to be a guardian of true worship in a world which was given to false worship, that is, worship of the idols and the unseen powers of angelic order. The day would come—as in the words of Isaiah 2:2–3:

It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say: ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

In regard to Israel being a priestly people as a whole, Exodus 19:5–6 pronounces them to be that. As to the operation of the priestly ministry within Israel, there was designated a special class of priests as the administration of the holy cultus required consecrated priests, but even then the priests were also of the congregation (*qahal*), chosen by God for their special work, and consecrated for the same.

THE CHURCH GOD’S PRIEST-NATION TO THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD

Without Exodus 19:5–6 Peter’s passage of 1 Peter 2:4–10 would be difficult to understand. First let us look at the text:

Come to him, to that living stone, rejected by men but in God’s sight chosen and precious; and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture: ‘Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and he who believes in him will not be put to shame.’ To you therefore who believe, he is precious, but for those who do not believe, ‘The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner,’ and ‘A stone that will make men stumble, a rock that will make them fall’; for they stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were no people but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy.

The first thing we must surely understand is that the passage is spoken to Christians who for the most part had been Gentiles. Secondly the quotations from Isaiah 28:16 and Psalm 118:22–23 concerning the rejected stone becoming the cornerstone is meant to refer to Christ and his rejection by Israel.⁴ It is into this stone that all believers—‘living stones’—are built ‘to be a holy priesthood’, so that the total membership will constitute the new priesthood, and this new priesthood will ‘offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ’. Whatever this new (Christian) cultus may be, it replaces the old

⁴ In Romans 9:33 Paul uses Isaiah 8:14 in the framework of Isaiah 28:16, and is making the same point as Peter, that Christ was a stumbling block to Israel.

cultus as the only cultus now authentic. What then is the conclusion regarding this new temple, the new priesthood? It is, 'But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light'.

The Priestly People Witnessing to the World

What is most important is that we see the *ecclesia* being priestly to the nations of the world. This is by declaring to them God's wonderful deeds and witnessing that God has made the church to be the people who have received mercy and so have been made to be 'God's people', that is, His *laos*. This verifies the church as the successors to the mandate to be God's priestly people to the nations. We need to keep in mind that all of this is a covenant matter as Exodus 19:5 reminds us. Of course it is the case in the Petrine text we are studying. Only because of the gospel are we now living stones in the new temple which is based upon *the* living stone—the *lithos* which is Christ and is therefore *alive*. Whilst the term 'temple' is not used, yet the text demands the idea, so that 'the house'—*oikos*—is understood as a spiritual shrine where the priesthood operates in offering up spiritual sacrifices.

We have observed that being priestly to the nations is declaring God's wonderful deeds—salvation—which brings people out of darkness into His marvellous light, but that is not all. The new and spiritual *oikos* is witnessing to the true worship, not as a heritage trust but as a revelation of the nature of true worship. It was of this worship that Jesus spoke to the woman at the well in Samaria. It was of this Paul spoke to the Athenians (Acts 17:22–31). Worship to idols calls for repentance since God's attested Man has come and has been raised from the dead. Paul distinguishes between worship in the flesh and worship in the Spirit (Phil. 3:3). How can Israel truly be worshipping God who has sent His Son, if they do not acknowledge His Son? Unless they come in from the cold they will be out there without being the true worshippers—their worship mandate taken over by the new *diaspora* (1 Pet. 1:1). Whereas Israel knew the tragedy of idol-worship and had rejected it, yet those who had habitually worshipped idols—the Gentiles—had 'turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come' (1 Thess. 1:9–10).

This Thessalonian reference is most significant. It is showing that Christ is the end of false worship, that false worship is under judgment, and that the gift of worship is God's way of grace, His saying to a pagan world, 'This is your way out of false worship—idolatry—back into true worship', for worship is love of God and devotion to His service.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS FROM WITHIN: THE NATURE OF SPIRITUAL WORSHIP

So far we have looked at the fact that Israel was a kingdom of priests, destined to act as a priest-nation to and for the world. For the moment the manner or form of that worship does not concern us, for our interest lies in whether Israel was conscious of its great calling, as also of God's presentation to it of its great destiny. If we look at Exodus 19:5–6 we see calling rather than command in the words, '*if* you will obey my voice and keep my

covenant’, for ‘*then* you shall be my own possession [etc.]’. One Peter 2:4 says, ‘Come to him’, in the light of ‘*for you have tasted the kindness of the Lord*’ (v. 3), and states that in contrast to Israel stumbling over the living *lithos*—the stone already shaped as the cornerstone—the people of Christ have the destiny of being the true priesthood.

It is true that Peter describes the fact of the present priesthood in action—‘a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ’, but we are not told the manner of these ‘spiritual sacrifices’. The writer of Hebrews in 13:15–16 of his book does give us some food for thought, though we are not sure he is alluding to the same thing as Peter has stated:

Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

Spiritual sacrifices in both books may be the same, but I think we have a wider range to consider.

What we have to consider is that this is the true worship fitted for universal practice. The writer of Hebrews in 12:22–24 tells us something regarding this:

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel.

This we see to be universal worship, the worship of the new house of worship as in 1 Peter 2:4–10. It is worship as we find it described so finely in the Book of the Revelation, and to which we will have occasion, shortly, to refer to via 1:6 and 5:10, but first we know that the Book of Hebrews tells us of the true worship which has come with the incarnation of the Son of God. Whilst what the writer of Hebrews sets before us may not be in that form in the minds of other apostolic writers, yet they would not but agree with the author of Hebrews as he presents his thesis. It swivels around the idea of 7:12, ‘For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well’.

This statement cannot be understood except in its context. It is set forward as the writer compares the Aaronic order of priesthood and the Melchizedekian order. Christ is not a priest after the order of Levitical priesthood, but after the order of Melchizedek. Whilst the offering of the sacrifice may seem to follow the same pattern in both orders, it is the nature of the sacrifice, and therefore the nature of offering, which differs. The Levitical order is in animal blood which cannot deal with the problem of human sin, but the blood of animals cannot be efficacious. Human priests have to die and be replaced by other priests. The order of Melchizedek springs from an endless life: Christ is a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. Levitical sacrifices were valid within the Mosaic Covenant, but Christ was of the order of an everlasting covenant, the one to which Jeremiah had referred (Jer. 31:31–34). Whereas Levitical priests had ‘somewhat also to offer’ (Heb. 8:3) yet their oblations were prescribed. Christ offered up himself, an offering unique to himself and to all spiritual sacrifice.

What the Levitical offerings—even the atonement offering—could not effect, Christ’s Melchizedekian offering did effect—the salvation of all men, for all time. By virtue of his blood Christ effected his entry into heaven on our behalf. By his incarnation ‘he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself’, ‘For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified’.

In the light of all this we understand Hebrews 7:12: ‘For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well’. ‘The law’ here does not mean the moral law as such. It means the law of worship, the way in which we see God and worship. Hebrew 9:14 helps us to understand this: ‘how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God’. The blood shed via the Levitical priest effected nothing total and permanent, but the blood of Christ so purified the conscience from dead works that the sinner could now worship and serve the living God. This new worship—which is always by the Holy Spirit—is the worship which Jesus prophesied would happen, which came at Pentecost, was talked about by the apostolic writers, lived and practiced in the New Testament church, and which is the worship of the spiritual priesthood. Hebrews 12:22–24 describes it, and all the great worship passages of the Revelation manifest it. It is no wonder that when an unbeliever enters such a worship ‘he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you’ (1 Cor. 14:24–25). This, then, is the action of the priesthood of all believers in the offering up of spiritual sacrifices through Christ Jesus, and it is also the telling of the wonderful works of God in calling His people out of darkness into the marvellous light of God.

THE MATTER OF THE KINGDOM OF PRIESTS IN HISTORY

If we are going to understand the idea of ‘a kingdom of priests’ as we find it in the New Testament, then we will need to refer to it as it is in Exodus 19:5–6. It is the key to understanding it in 1 Peter 2:5, 9–10. So it will be the key to understanding the references of Revelation 1:6, 5:10, and 20:6.

In Revelation 1:4–6 we read:

John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

This ascription of glory and dominion to the Son of God is a high one and takes in the church, telling us that he has ‘made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father’. In the light of all we have said of this spiritual priesthood it means that God’s Kingdom is His reign and rule, and that having transferred us from the powers of darkness into the Kingdom of His beloved Son, we now have access to Him and are one with Him in the work that He is doing. We are a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, which means we are the Father’s and the Son’s to command in that work. Thus we are rendering true priestly worship and service, especially as we render it by the Holy Spirit.

Revelation 5:9–10 really repeats the same ideas:

... and they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on earth.'

Again redeemed humanity has been renewed from its fall, to a position of dignity and authority, and will reign upon the earth. Whilst the statement does not exclude present reigning on the earth it would seem to refer primarily to the new earth.⁵ These two references certainly show the priesthood of all believers in its outward work for God among the nations.

The last reference of 20:6 can be explained in various ways. We will not attempt this because of the difficulty of the passage and its context. Even so the verse speaks for itself:

Blessed and holy is he who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they shall reign with him a thousand years.

This has been called the millennial reign which some see as Christ's present reigning, that is, from his ascension to his coming—the period in which Satan is bound in the bottomless pit—whilst others see it as a time of peace in history, to be followed by Satan's release from the pit and war between him and the saints of God. Whatever be the case we see 'the priests of God and of Christ' are the martyrs who reign—a kingdom—with Christ.

THE BATTLE FOR TRUE WORSHIP IS THE MATTER OF HISTORY

Whatever God required of the first couple was certainly true worship. Worship and service in both Old and New Testaments are certainly the one. Verbs of 'worship' and 'service' show these acts to be virtually synonymous. The serpent's endeavour was aimed at changing Man's worship to self-service, as indeed this was the case with the serpent's veneration of himself. Of course the serpent was aiming at bringing the couple under his lordship. The whole point of idolatry was—and is—to enslave Man in the purposes of the Satanic kingdom (cf. Eph. 2:1–3). God is shown to be only one god amongst other gods. The Old Testament text says much about the fallacy of idolatry, as well as its falsity. When in Psalm 115:3 it was written, 'Our God is in the heavens; he does whatever he pleases', it was not to say that God pursues His own thing, irregardless of the ideas of idols and humans, but that only God can carry out His will, whereas the idols and humanity are helpless. When, then, God commissions true worship in Eden, namely Genesis 1:28, then Man is responsible for true worship. He is culpable if he departs from it. Israel was granted the true worship at Sinai, to the point that it was prescribed to the last detail as to its practice. Exodus 19:5–6 calls for true worship. From Eden to the end of history the serpent and his brood seek to destroy the worship of God and set up the worship of Satan. Idolatry destroys the worship of God and creates a surrogate worship to—ostensibly—satisfy the

⁵ Ephesians 2:6 shows us as seated with Christ in the heavenlies, and 6:10ff. shows us battling with evil powers in the heavenlies, so that we are at present reigning with Christ, and in that partial sense we are a priestly kingdom in action as was intended Israel should be in Exodus 19:5–6.

heart of Man. Jeremiah 2:11–13 tells the whole story:

Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. Be appalled, O heavens, at this, be shocked, be utterly desolate, says the LORD, for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

Man's reservoirs (cisterns) are his waters of life. They are alternatives to the true Fountain of Life—God, the River of Life. A person's reservoirs are his source of life. Only alternatives to God—that is, gods—can assist him in regard to his life, so he worships these. In the Old Testament the barrier to false worship is Israel (Exod. 19:5–6) who worships true worship. In the New Testament it is the church as the priesthood of all believers who renders worship which is the only effective barrier to false worship, that is, idolatry. God purposed for Israel to be a royal priesthood to destroy false worship. How much of Israel's history is this very matter! Kings rule; kings fight; kings destroy what they oppose.

At the outset of Jesus' ministry Satan came to tempt him, and the drive of that series of three tests was that Jesus, disregarding God's word, and hearing the Devil's word, should not worship—serve—God, but himself. Even further, he should worship the Devil himself. This incredible and evil temptation was spurned. As Jesus came to destroy the works of the Devil (1 John 3:8), so he did in his ministry, in his death and resurrection, and does by his reigning at the right hand of God. He goes on destroying the works of the Devil via the church. He told his followers that the gates of Hades would not prevail against the church, meaning that the church would break open the gates of death. The church, then, is the church militant, and so we see in the Revelation that the battle is one for true worship. On the one hand the pure worship of God as Creator (4:6–11); for God and Christ in the matter of redemption (5:6–14); for Christ's redemption (7:9–17); for the time of judgment (11:15–18); for the overcoming of 'the beast and its image and the number of its name' (15:2–4); for the destruction of Babylon (19:1–5).

Paul said that the weapons of the church's warfare with Satan are not carnal—as are Satan's—but spiritual, and mighty to the pulling down of many strongholds. When we look at those weapons, as we did in our last Monday Study, then they look very weak—faith, hope, love, the gospel of peace, the sword of the Spirit—but in fact they are powerful to unmask evil and to bring many to Christ and thus to the true worship (cf. Phil. 3:3; John 4:21–24). As priests who are at the same time kings who battle Satan and his hosts, the use of the spiritual weapons is most effective. Unbelief, false hope, hatred cannot succeed against their opposites. The false gospel the Red Dragon proclaims to the world cannot deliver true salvation and thus inspire people to the true worship (Heb. 9:14; cf. Rom. 12:1–2), since anything that is devised is not ontological and so cannot essentially satisfy the participant. In the ultimate it is God who is adored, and not Satan and his clones—the beast, the image of the beast, and the false prophet. Israel worshipped the covenant God who delivered them from Egypt. The new people of God—the church—worship God in the covenant principle because of their being delivered from the world, the flesh, and the devil.

It may be thought somewhat irrelevant to include this section on the battle for the true worship of creation, but we do because it is 'the priesthood of all believers'—the church—which fights this battle along with Christ its Lord and with the spiritual weapons

given to it. As Israel was called to abandon idolatry and turn to the living and true God and witness true worship to the world, as well as intercede for these nations, so the New Testament church is now the true witness to the true worship of God. As Exodus 19:5–6 relates to ‘a kingdom of priests and a holy nation’, so in 1 Peter 2:5, 9–10 does the church become ‘a holy priesthood’, ‘a royal priesthood’ to witness to the world of Satan the ‘marvelous light’ and ‘the mercy of God’. All of this teaches us it is most important that we understand the priesthood of all believers to be indispensable to proper worship of God. If the church deviates from being the true priesthood then God’s purposes as regards worship will not be fulfilled.

CONCLUSION TO THIS FIRST STUDY ON THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

In this paper we have seen the priesthood of all believers as regards the witness of the church to the world pertaining to the true worship of God, a gift once given exclusively to Israel (Rom. 9:4: cf. Exod. 19:5–6; Deut. 4:5–8) but now, through Christ, given to the church as the true universal worship (John 4:19–26). Nothing must alter the *ecclesia* as the witness to, and proclaimer of, this worship. If even the *mode* of the priesthood of all believers is altered then the worship of God will be altered and this would bring about great difficulties. This indicates how important and unchangeable must be the priesthood of all believers. For this reason we must understand the nature of the church and its function in the world, especially in regard to the true worship of God. With this in mind we can now proceed to our second Study which deals with the place of the priesthood of all believers in the life and action of the church.

CREATIO EX NIHILO AND THE HUMAN RESPONSE

ABSTRACT

The problematic human response cannot be understood unless seen from the vantage point of the *ex nihilo*. An examination of this term and the relation of the Creator to His creation will be discussed.

OUTLINE

1. Introduction

2. *Creatio ex nihilo*

An explanation of the term and the historical development in the second century will be discussed briefly. It is a term not about the beginning but a term used to describe the relationship of the Creator to His creation.

3. The Humanistic Perspective

It shows how we have used our concept of time and space in understanding creation, thus distorting it. God is eternal. He is continuously working, i.e. from our perspective.

4. Some Biblical Examples

The interpretative principle of *ex nihilo* is applied to creation and to the stories of Abraham and Sarah, Hannah and Elizabeth.

5. The Response of True Humanity

The response of the Man, Jesus Christ, will be explored. In understanding His response, we will understand our human response.

6. *Energema, diakonia, charismata*

This section will show that it is from the *energema* of the Father, through the *diakonia* of the Son and the *charismata* of the Spirit.

The human response cannot be understood unless one starts from the point of *ex nihilo*. The 'independent' human response outside of God is 'filthy rags' and the true response is in the Spirit through the Son to the Father. This is not a mere academic doctrine but the practical experience of the people of God.

Hymns:

New Creation Hymn Book, vol. 2, no. 32, 'Unworthy, Unable, but Called'.

New Creation Hymn Book, vol. 2, no. 61, 'Out of My Nothing I Was All'.

'I'm Nothing, I'm Nobody, I'm No One' (unpublished).

CREATIO EX NIHILO AND THE HUMAN RESPONSE

1. INTRODUCTION

I have not written this as an academic paper. It comes out of a personal difficulty in comprehending the nature of the human response. Having been brought up in pietism within a culture that is intensely egocentric, it was near impossible for me to understand the Christian response. I have always responded to God with my own brand of pietism and superimposed that onto the mediatorial role of Christ, thus making Him secondary. My difficulty is made even more frustrating by my inability to put across what I understood to those whom I work with. The usual argument is whether one's response to God is a product of one's will or the will of the sovereign God? I do not want to engage the philosophical arguments of God's sovereignty and free will here as this is not the intention of the paper and neither is this the proper question to ask when Christ has taken us into the communion He has with His Father. The understanding of our participation in the Triune Communion takes us away from a philosophic speculation to a concrete relational framework. This paper does not represent the end of my struggle. It seeks to share something of what I have understood thus far.

Last year at the Pastors' School, I presented the paper on *dorea, domata and charismata*. It is a challenging topic. I had to struggle with the New Testament texts and it was rewarding. In the conclusion of the paper, I quoted from C. S. Lewis's book *Mere Christianity*:

Every faculty you have, your power of thinking or of moving your limbs from moment to moment, is given you by God. If you devoted every moment of your whole life exclusively to His service you could not give Him anything that was not in a sense His own already. So that when we talk of a man doing anything for God or giving anything to God, I will tell you what it is really like. It is like a small child going to its father and saying, 'Daddy, give me sixpence to buy you a birthday present.' Of course, the father does, and he is pleased with the child's present. It is all very nice and proper, but only an idiot would think that the father is sixpence to the good on the transaction. When a man has made these two discoveries God can really get to work. It is after this that real life begins. The man is awake now.¹

I commented then, 'We have now arrived at the point where we can begin.' Now, where is this point? At that time I did not define what this point is. As I thought about this after the School, I believe this is the point of *ex nihilo*.

2. CREATIO EX NIHILO

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1, *NRSV*).

It has often been said that the Hebrew word *bara* used in the first verse of Genesis means creation out of nothing (*ex nihilo*). It is true that the word *bara* is used mainly in reference to the work of God in creation. However, it is not used exclusively in that way. It means to create (qualified); to cut down (a wood), select, feed (as formative processes): - choose, create (creator), cut down, dispatch, do, make (fat).²

¹ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (Great Britain: Fontana Books, 1952), p. 123.

² Strong's Dictionary. Examples of uses other than reference to creation are Josh. 17:15, 18 (clearing the land); 1 Sam. 2:29 (make fat); and Ezek. 21:19, 23:47 (cut).

As we all know, ‘any error about creation also leads to an error about God.’³ At New Creation, we have often started at creation or pre-creation in much of our discourses. I do not need to emphasise this point further. The idea of *ex nihilo* may be inherent in the use of the word *bara*.⁴ However, this is not made explicit in the Old Testament writings. There is a reference in 2 Maccabees 7:28 which alludes to the idea of *ex nihilo*.

I implore you, my child, to look at the heavens and the earth; consider all that is in them, and realise that God did not create them from what already existed and that a human being comes into existence in the same way.

There are two passages in the New Testament that allude to the idea of *ex nihilo* (Rom. 4:17 and Heb. 11:3), and we will look at them later. The idea of *creatio ex nihilo* becomes more evident in the writings of the early church. This development was made necessary when in the second century the early church had to debate with the proponents of gnosticism and philosophy.⁵ The dualism of the gnostics and the absolutism of Greek philosophy made it imperative that the early church must not be ‘captured’ by the prevailing thought forms of its times.⁶ Tertullian, Theophilus of Antioch, and Irenaeus were among those who asserted that creation is *ex nihilo*.⁷ In the fourth century, Athanasius also wrote against the confusion in the thinking of creation.⁸ It appears that the church fathers realised the centrality of the doctrine of creation in coming to an adequate doctrine of God. Their writings are worthy of study but we will not detail them here. The references to their theses have been made in the footnotes.

The assumption of cause and effect is dominant in Greek philosophy and ours as well. This is well highlighted in this song from the film, *The Sound of Music*, when Captain von Trapp was dancing with Maria:

Nothing comes from nothing,
Nothing ever could,
So somewhere in my youth or childhood
I must have done something good.

Greek philosophy is concerned with the cosmos and the orderliness and harmony within it. It was Plato who taught that God worked on pre-existing matter to fashion the universe. Two passages from the New Testament refute the assumption of causation. They assert the freedom of God in bringing the world into existence, and our absolute dependence on Him:

By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word [*rhema*] of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible (Heb. 11:3, *NRSV*).

(. . . as it is written, ‘I have made you the father of many nations’)—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist (Rom. 4:17, *NRSV*).

While the two passages do not make a direct reference to the idea of *ex nihilo*, this idea is implied and they express the relationship of the Creator to His creation. ‘Our God is in the heavens; he does whatever he pleases’ (Ps. 115:3, *NRSV*). God is not

³ Thomas Aquinas in *Summa Contra Gentiles*, II.3.

⁴ G. von Rad, *Genesis*, (Great Britain: SCM, 1972), p. 49. T. F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith* (Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1988), p. 95.

⁵ F. Young, ‘Creatio ex nihilo: A Context for the Emergence of the Christian Doctrine of Creation’, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol. 44 (1991), p. 147.

⁶ *ibid.* p. 139.

⁷ *ibid.* pp. 142–7.

⁸ T. F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, (Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1988), p. 97.

compelled in any way or by any need to bring forth the creation. He did it willingly. God is love, and in the freedom of His expression, He creates out of love, i.e. out of who He is.

The creation is distinct from God. The creation is not an emanation from the Being of God. That would introduce the divine element into creation. The creation is other than God and it is this 'other' that He loves.⁹ The idea of *ex nihilo* does not imply that in creation God is fashioning, or giving form to, that which already exists. That idea would imply that God is some form of a craftsman. It also does not imply that God made something from nothing. The early fathers did not use spatial concepts to understand creation. To imply that the 'nothing' became 'something' is to assert the omnipotent God rather than the God who is love. It would be like pulling a rabbit out of a hat.

We need to make a few comments regarding our concept of time at this juncture. We live in time and space, and we understand many things in that framework. However, God is eternal and that is another way of saying that He is timeless, or as Scripture says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty' (Rev. 1:8, *NRSV*).

We cannot use a time–space concept and fit our understanding of *creatio ex nihilo* into that. The idea of *creatio ex nihilo* is not about the beginning. It is not even about the relationship of the beginning, as if there is a subsequent relationship that will develop with time. It is about the relationship of the Creator to His creation for all of time. Therefore the new creation must not be understood in terms of the time–space framework. It is not another epoch in the creative work of God, but the fulfillment of the relationship between God and His creation in His one timeless act of *creatio ex nihilo*.

We need now to define more clearly something of the relationship expressed by the term *creatio ex nihilo*. Romans 4:17, '. . . and calls into existence the things that do not exist.' This is the *nihilo* that God brought into existence. There was no prior existence. Taking all the above into consideration, we need to conclude that '*creatio ex nihilo* is therefore nothing more than *creatio ex Deo*.'¹⁰ Ian Pennicook commented on the term in this way:

About *ex nihilo*—to what extent is this really true? I know that it is traditional to say so, but is it what Scripture says? Heb. 11:3 says that what is seen became out of what does not appear, having just said that the ages were created by the *rhema* of God. If this is taken, then might we not say that creation is *ex Deo*? That would certainly fit with the new creation. And it would lead more easily to *theosis*.¹¹

3. THE HUMANISTIC PERSPECTIVE

His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Thus he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become participants of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:3–4, *NRSV*).

⁹ We will not discuss the love relationship within the Triune Godhead as this has been dealt with in previous schools at NCTM.

¹⁰ D. F. Duclow, 'Divine Nothingness and Self-Creation in John Scotus Eriugena', *Journal of Religion*, vol. 57:2 (April, 1977), p. 114.

¹¹ Personal communication.

These two verses in 2 Peter present problems for us who are locked in time and space. The statement that God has given us everything we need cannot be understood from our time–space perspective. I talked about this in the Pastors' School of 1996.¹² We need a relational model where all that has been given is found in Christ who has embraced our humanity. I then used the principle of discovery to enable us to comprehend this from our time–space perspective. The Pastors' School of 2000 and the recent Summer School have added further insights to this theme. We cannot help but see things from our time–space perspective. However, the time when we realise what God has given is not the time of God's giving. God has given in His one timeless act of *creatio ex nihilo* and He is not bounded by time. The time when we realise what God has given is the time of our discovery, or the time when our eyes are opened.

Let me paraphrase 2 Peter 1:3–4 in the negative to highlight the point that is made. We do not have anything that we need for life and godliness unless God has given them to us through His divine power. Furthermore, unless God has given them to us, we will not be able to escape the corruption that is in this world. We have nothing unless it has been given to us. This is our *ex nihilo*.

What we see against this perspective of the *ex nihilo* is the humanistic response. It insists on the efficacy of the human judgment and response. It does not start from the point of *ex nihilo*. Its starting point is the existence of the individual who denies the entire bestowal from on high. Its foundation is the self-sufficiency of the individual. It does not even consider the time when one was 'nothing', i.e. before one has been given existence. Even if it acknowledges this, then it does not take the Trinity seriously in the creation. That the creation was through Christ and for Christ is made clear in Colossians 1:15–17.¹³ It also does not take seriously the High Priesthood and mediation of Jesus Christ on our behalf. It looks at the human response from the earthly vantage point of self-existence and not from God's vantage point of the *ex nihilo* and all that He has given and enabled us in our response.

Since we must not conceive of God within the parameters of time and space, there is a sense in which this creative act is present, i.e. continuing. We may think of this in terms of God creating, sustaining and bringing all things to fulfillment. Such a framework may still indeed introduce the elements of time and space, thus distorting the way we think theologically. Within the relational rather than the time–space framework, we see the Triune God in the one creative act which creates, sustains and fulfills. To this we may say that creation is a continuous act, *creatio continua*. That is why Jesus said, 'My Father is still working, and I also am working' (John 5:17, *NRSV*). If this is so then from our perspective the *ex nihilo* applies to the present and the future as it did to the beginning of time. It is within this framework of non-time that John can write that the Lamb was slain from the creation of the world (Rev. 13:8, *NIV*).

We will now apply this principle of the *ex nihilo* to a few biblical examples.

4. SOME BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

As we have noted above, the term *creatio ex nihilo* does not apply to a time–space framework. It is not about our relationship to the Creator at the beginning of time. It

¹² S. K. Tham, 'The Principle of Blessing' in *The Fullness of the Blessing of Christ*, New Creation Pastors' School, 1996.

¹³ The studies for the Monday Pastors' Study Group in 1999 on Christology are helpful here, especially the studies in March and November 1999.

expresses the relationship of the Creator to His creation for all time. The creation responds to the Word of the Creator. In using the *ex nihilo* as the interpretative principle, I am adopting the line of reasoning put forward by R. Anderson.¹⁴

In the creation account in Genesis, we note the words, 'Let there be . . .'. This is the creative word of God. God speaks and He brings into existence that which He commanded and which has no prior existence. This is the *ex nihilo*. The creative Word brings about the response. Or we may put it this way: The response from creation is incorporated within the creative Word.¹⁵ We will see how this is applied to the following biblical accounts:

Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner' (Gen. 2:18, *NRSV*).

While the creation account in Genesis asserts that what was created was good, yet in the second chapter it noted that the singularity of Adam was 'not good' (Gen. 2:18). Now Adam did not realise this. Or as we say colloquially, Adam did not know what he was missing because he had not experienced 'the other'. The creative Word of God went to work again¹⁶ and Adam was put into a deep sleep. This was the *ex nihilo* again. Eve was created out of Adam. Adam 'participated' in what God was doing, but he was the respondent to the creative Word.

The story of Abraham and Sarah is well known to all of us. It is a classic story of the contrast between the humanistic perspective and the *ex nihilo*. Ishmael represents all that Abraham sought to bring about from his own devices. On the other hand, Isaac represents that which came from the barren womb, the *ex nihilo*.

Abraham and Sarah knew the promise of God to them. But with advancing age, they approached the end of their physical capacity in realising the promise. Resorting to the comfort that the cultural framework offered, Abraham sought the fulfilment in firstly his trusted servant and secondly through the offspring of Sarah's maid, Hagar. These were the cultural norms of the day, but cultural norms do not authenticate the work of God. They imitate the work of God and detract from the reality of our participation in God. They offer us a sense of accomplishment that clouds the real accomplishment of the Triune God. The grace of God kills before it makes alive, as R. Anderson used to say. Had Abraham and Sarah brought forth the promised son in the virility of their youth, then they might have said that they did it themselves. The grace of God brought them to the point of the *ex nihilo*, i.e. past their age of child bearing. They were at the point where to bring into 'existence'¹⁷ another being for their posterity was physically impossible. So it was from that point where 'existence' was not possible that God 'calls into existence the things that do not exist' (Rom. 4:17, *NRSV*). Again it is the creative Word that brings about the response. It underlines the covenant relationship between God and His creation.

Just as we see the creation of Eve took place when Adam was put into a deep sleep, in a similar manner Abraham was put into a deep sleep (Gen. 15:12) when God 'made [cut] the covenant' with him. The Word of God creates *ex nihilo*.

¹⁴ R. Anderson, *The Soul of Ministry* (Kentucky, Westminster John Knox Press, 1997).

¹⁵ The creation is the work of the Father, Son and Spirit. This is not the place to discuss this. An understanding of creation that does not acknowledge the roles of the Three Persons of the Triune Godhead leads to a deficient understanding of who God is.

¹⁶ We cannot help some of our expressions that infer an earthly time-space framework. It is difficult to express *creatio continua* without our time-space framework.

¹⁷ This is not to infer the possibility that we have the same creative powers as God. We are pro-creators. The Word of God creates. The word of man responds. Ours is not the creative word. The Word of God creates *ex nihilo*. We need to be brought to that point for the Word of God to be creative.

We see the same scenario with Hannah and Elizabeth. They both went through the experience of barrenness like Sarah (1 Sam. 1 and Luke 1). Hannah's response was:

The LORD kills and brings to life;
 he brings down to Sheol and raises up.
 The LORD makes poor and makes rich;
 he brings low, he also exalts.
 He raises up the poor from the dust;
 he lifts the needy from the ash heap,
 to make them sit with princes and
 inherit a seat of honor.
 For the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S,
 and on them he has set the world
 (1 Sam. 2:6–9, *NRSV*).

She understood the point of *ex nihilo*. Grace kills before it makes alive. Our initiation at baptism is the initiation of death and the subsequent raising up to new life. The problem with Christians and our churches is that we refuse to die. We want new life superimposed on the old. We do not want to get to the point of *ex nihilo*.

5. THE RESPONSE OF TRUE HUMANITY

Now as the One who is the perfect humanity, we can look at Christ's response as the model of our response. Three times in John's Gospel it was recorded that Jesus said that He could do nothing on His own:

Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise' (John 5:19, *NRSV*).

I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me (John 5:30, *NRSV*).

So Jesus said, 'When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own, but I speak these things as the Father instructed me' (John 8:28, *NRSV*).

There is a tendency today to see the Triune Godhead as an egalitarian social community as we emphasise the oneness. However, Philippians 3:21 and 2 Corinthians 5:19 both record that it is the Father working in Christ to effect His purpose:

He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself (Phil. 3:21, *NRSV*).

. . . that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us (2 Cor. 5:19, *NRSV*).

So what of ourselves? Just as God is at work in Jesus Christ, so He is at work in us, 'for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose' (Phil. 2:13, *NIV*). The purpose of God is accomplished by God Himself.¹⁸ This is so because it is the Father who works 'all of them in everyone'.

¹⁸ 'He saw that there was no one, and was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own arm brought him victory, and his righteousness upheld him' (Isa. 59:16, *NRSV*).

... and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. (1 Cor. 12:6, NRSV)

6. ENERGEMA, DIAKONIA, CHARISMATA

Returning to the last Pastors' School, the presentation on *dorea*, *domata* and *charismata* was inadequate as I had not worked out the significance of the Triune passage of 1 Corinthians 12:4–7. I glossed over the passage, commenting that there was little difference in the use of the words, *energema*, *diakonia* and *charismata*. As I struggled with the text, I was given a chance to redeem myself at the Pastors' School in Perth a month later. I include here the comments I made then, and which are relevant to our discussion.

In the context of the *pneumatikos* (1 Cor. 12:1), Paul refers to the diversities of the *charismata* (gifts), *diakonia* (service) and *energema*¹⁹ (activities or workings), while contrasting them with the unity of the Triune Godhead (1 Cor. 12:4–7). These are aspects of 'administering God's grace in its various forms' (1 Pet. 4:10, *NIV*). It has been pointed out that we should not make too much of the differentiation in the *charismata*, *diakonia* and *energema* in the passage above, as all three issue from the same Triune God with the same intention.²⁰ While this may be so, as there is a unity and a common intention of the Triune Godhead, however, the *energema* is not the same as the *diakonia* and the *charismata*. Ultimately it is all the workings (*energema*) of the Father. This *energema* is effective both in Christ (Phil. 3:21) and in the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:11).²¹ By this the apostles were equipped for service (Eph. 3:7) and the body of Christ shares in it (Eph. 4:16).²² That is why Paul commented in Philippians 2:13, 'it is God who is at work [*energeo*] in you, enabling you both to will and to work [*energeo*] for his good pleasure'. So it is God who is at work and He creates both the will and the deed which take shape in the lives of the believers (Gal. 5:6).²³ We may conclude that the *diakonia* and the *charismata* result from the *energema* of the Father 'who works all things in all [people]' (1 Cor. 12:6, *NASB*).

While we consider the services [*diakonia*] and refer to ourselves as servants of God, it should be noted that the first servant of God is Christ Himself (Rom. 15:8). The Gospels tell us that He came to serve and not to be served (Matt. 20:28). Our service 'continues Christ's service for the outer and inner man' and is carried out 'on Christ's behalf'.²⁴ As we have seen earlier, Christ gave gifts [*domata*] for the building up of the body of whom He is the Head. The *domata* of Ephesians 4:8 were given 'to equip the saints for the work [*ergon*] of ministry [*diakonia*]' (Eph. 4:12). So we see the *energema* of the Father flowing through the *diakonia* of Christ and to us as we participate in Christ's service. In the context of our union with Christ, and when we see that what Christ gives [*domata*] is identical with His being, then we see that in our service it is Christ continuing His *diakonia* through us. This must be the basis of our giving to God in His service. Otherwise, it will be mere pietism and much weariness in the flesh (Eccl. 12:12).

¹⁹ The term *energema* is derived from the noun, *ergon*, which means work or to be engaged in something. It is used, 'as a rule, to the working of God', H. C. Hahn, 'Work, Do, Accomplish', in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 3, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Regency Reference Library, Zondervan, 1967), p. 1151.

²⁰ G. Fee, *First Corinthians*, pp. 586–7. He also cites from F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians* (London: NCB, 1971), p. 118, that 'Gifts, service and working are not distinct categories'.

²¹ H. C. Hahn, 'Work, Do, Accomplish', p. 1152.

²² *ibid.*

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ K. Hess, 'Serve, Deacon, Worship', in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, pp. 544–9.

So this is why the Christian response has to be understood as the *energema* of the Father working through the *diakonia* of the Son and manifested in the *charismata* of the Spirit. Our response is the enabling of God who created *ex nihilo*. This is also why Paul could write:

. . . 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 (Gal. 2:20, *NRSV*).

. . . it is God who is at work [*energeo*] in you, enabling you both to will and to work [*energeo*] for his good pleasure (Phil. 2:13, *NRSV*).

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The Church the Priesthood of All Believers—II

Our first Study was based mainly upon 1 Peter 2:4–10 in conjunction with Exodus 19:5–6. The aim was to see the nature of priesthood in the Old Testament and the New, and in particular the meaning of ‘the priesthood of all believers’. Does it mean that all believers constitute a corporate priesthood? In the Old Testament Israel was called ‘a kingdom of priests and a holy nation’, in Exodus 19:5–6 and 1 Peter 2:9–10. Even so Israel had a core body of priests and Levites. They managed all worship, and the priests were sacerdotal, that is, sacrificing, mediatorial priests. Is there a parallel of these in the New Testament church? The answer is, ‘No. There is one priest, Christ, and he is High Priest of the *ecclesia*.’ We saw there is no equivalent body of representative priests in the church. We then examined the meaning of the statement, ‘the priesthood of all believers’ and we say that in both the Old Testament and the New the people of God—(i) Israel, and (ii) the church—are in their generations the witnesses to the true worship of God. This worship cannot be replicated outside the Jewish *qahal* (congregation) and the Christian church. The primary meaning of ‘the priesthood of all believers’ is the celebrating of worship, and acting in priestly operation to all the nations, provided we see this as God’s mission for the church and through the church, that is, ‘the whole counsel of God’. In other words, ‘the blessing of Abraham’ as in Galatians 3:14 and other places.

J. G. Davies says it well:

This priesthood is to be understood in terms of election and is a continuation of that of the Old Israel. According to Ex. 19.5f., ‘Now therefore, if you will obey my voice, and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples: for all the earth is mine: and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ Hence priesthood and covenant are closely related and the purpose of the latter indicates the function of the former. God’s choice of Israel and his covenant relationship were in order that he might use Israel for a universal blessing (*cf.* Gen. 11.3; Isa. 55.3ff.; 56.6ff.). The religion of Yahweh was not to be the exclusive privilege of Israel, but was for all mankind, and her election was to be the medium of blessing to all nations. Israel was therefore chosen by God that He might be revealed through her to the Gentiles. In exercising this mission Israel would fulfil the purpose of her election by bringing God to all men and all men to God. Hence the meaning of Israel’s priesthood is to be found in the exercise of a mediatorial function *vis-à-vis* God and the world.¹

In this second Study we will seek to show the nature of priesthood in the church, that is, the structure of the priesthood of believers and its functions and operations. In this we will have to trace the historical theology of priestly ministry and see whether or not there has been a departure from apostolic worship and the mode of priestly ministry. A departure is a serious matter and must be rectified.

THE BURNING QUESTION: WAS THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT A SACERDOTAL MINISTRY?

Our answer is an unequivocal ‘No!’ A host of church historians and theologians firmly echo this ‘No!’ to our question. A look at some of these scholars will help us to see why the present liturgical and doctrinal situation of the apostolical priesthood of all believers is so radically different from the biblical one. Edward Schillebeeckx, the Roman Catholic theologian, says:

¹ Article, ‘Priesthood, Priesthood of All Believers’, in *A Dictionary of Christian Theology* (ed. Alan Richardson, SCM, London, 1969) pp. 274–5.

It is clear from the pre-Nicene literature especially that the early Church found it difficult to call its leaders ‘priestly.’ According to the New Testament, only Christ and the Christian community were priestly. The leaders were in the service of Christ and the priestly people of God, but they were never called priestly themselves. Cyprian was one of the first Christians to show a clear preference for the Old Testament terminology of the sacrificial priesthood and compared this with the Christian Eucharist.

In this way, there was a gradual sacerdotalization of the vocabulary of the Church’s office, although this was initially used in the allegorical sense. Cyprian was also the first to say that the *sacerdos*, that is, the bishop as the leader of the community and therefore also in the Eucharist, acted in this capacity *vice Christi*, that is, in the place of Jesus. Augustine, on the other hand, refused to call bishops and presbyters ‘priests’ in the sense of mediators between Christ and the community.²

Cyril Eastwood comments:

In the writings of the Early Fathers the doctrine of the universal priesthood has a central place. It is directly connected with the High Priesthood of Christ (Polycarp and Origen); with the layman’s ordinances (Clement of Rome); with the Eucharist (Clement of Rome and Justin Martyr); with the unity of the Church (Clement of Alexandria); with questions of Church discipline (Tertullian); with free access to the presence of the Father (Origen); with the Church’s missionary task (Polycarp and Origen); with the conception of the Church as a High Priestly Race, and with the offering of spiritual sacrifices. The last two are mentioned in the writings of all the Fathers. The significance of this lies in the fact that the transition which took place under Cyprian was directly connected with these two ideas. As a difference in the idea of priesthood emerged, so also a difference in the idea of sacrifice followed. A new note was sounded by Cyprian, it was the authority of the priest. So the High Priestly Race gave place to a High Priestly Class, and the spiritual sacrifices gave place to a priestly sacrifice offered to God in the Eucharist. All authority was given unto the Bishop who unquestionably controlled the Church’s teaching, worship, discipline, and ministry, and in an ill-defined and mystical sense he controlled also that most sacred treasure of Gospel—the offer of divine grace. This sort of teaching persisted in the Church without any serious and decisive opposition until the appearance of Martin Luther in the sixteenth century.³

We will be looking at the reasons for the changes in the doctrine of priesthood—those changes which have happened in history—for they are of major importance, since the basic worship of the *ecclesia* is the Eucharist, where the biblical idea of a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving has been changed to a propitiatory, piacular sacrifice which requires a sacerdotal priest to celebrate it. First, however, we will see what was the nature of leadership in the early church and whether it was priestly in the sacerdotal sense.

LEADERSHIP IN THE EARLY CHURCH

Ernst Käsemann in his *Essays on New Testament Themes* tells us that we are baffled at the beginning of our search in the New Testament church for what we now call ‘offices’ in the New Testament. After his introductory words here below, he presses the point that the word *charisma* is the key to understanding what we might call ‘church order’:

As soon as we begin to investigate our subject, we encounter a contradiction. We make the remarkable discovery that the New Testament has no technical definition of what we are accustomed to call ecclesiastical office, although it speaks without inhibition of the office and the functions of the secular power and of the Old Testament priesthood, and indeed refers by name to a multiplicity of ecclesiastical offices and functions. From time to time the word ‘Amt’ (‘ministry’) appears in Luther’s translation of the Bible: when it does, we find that the word in the original is usually *diakonia*. This is symptomatic. For the New Testament seems of set purpose to have avoided the technical conception of office which could have been expressed by such words as *leitourgia* [ministry, ministration], *time* [honour] and *arche* [ruler]; the use of these would have implied the presupposition and recognition of an authoritarian relationship which has no place in

² *The Language of Faith: Essays on Jesus, Theology, and the Church* (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, 1995), pp. 137–8.

³ *The Priesthood of All Believers: An Examination of the Doctrine from the Reformation to the Present Day* by Cyril Eastwood (Epworth Press, London, 1960), pp. xi, xii.

the ordering of the Church and which indeed is the precise target of the polemic found in such passages as Matt. 20:25f.; 23:11; I Cor. 3:5 and I Peter 5:3 against claims to domination and to positions of power.⁴

It is quite clear, then, that the church had no monarchical leadership, for Christ alone was Leader of the church. He was Lord over all things *for* the church (Eph. 1:20–23) and so was Lord *of* the church. Even so, the term ‘monarchical’ as a pejorative term does not fit with Christ. Christ as Husband is Head⁵ of the church (Eph. 5:21ff.), but then in that loving mode of the Husband archetype. He is loved as Lord because of his love to his bride, firstly in saving her and then in leading her. There can never be another in that unique role of leadership. Nor, may we add in passing, can there be any High Priesthood by another than Christ, since he is the church’s High Priest. Even the term ‘apostle’ applies to him significantly in Hebrews 3:1, so that the church can only be apostolic through him, as the apostolate depends upon *the* Apostle, and not from the apostles who receive their ministry from him. He is the Apostolate and they apostles by reason of him.

It is interesting that we should talk about leaders,⁶ but this may be because of our reflection on the ways in which churches have been led since those early days. We have already talked concerning the terms *dorea*, *domata* and *charismata* and whereas we look on them as gifts either to persons, or persons as gifts to the church given by Christ, most it seems think now of the elder/bishop as leading the church. There is a strong probability that in many cases we are reading later elder/bishop back into the apostolic beginnings.⁷

It is best, then, for us to look at the beginnings of the church in its movements and its life. We have seen in other studies that Jesus said:

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Matt. 16:18–19).

Whilst the words were spoken to Peter it was not Peter who would build the church, and it was later revealed that Christ himself was the rock on which the church was built (1 Pet. 2:4f.). In Matthew 18:15–20 the church is simply ‘two or three . . . gathered together’ and they, corporately, have the power of binding and loosing. We note in these Matthean passages that the church is closely linked with the Kingdom and we know that the Kingdom is an eschatological matter. This was the case when the church was born at Pentecost: the church was shown to be eschatological—the eschatological community.

In Acts 2 when the 120 followers gathered and the Spirit came upon them, Peter explained the phenomenon in terms of the prophecy of Joel:

And in the last days it shall be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams;

⁴ Published by SCM Press, London, 1964, p. 63.

⁵ The use of the term ‘Head’ without it being understood within the term ‘Lord’ would simply make Christ someone in a church order, perhaps the highest on a descending order of offices.

⁶ We should be aware of the fact that the term ‘leaders’ can call out strong reaction in fallen humanity, because it is associated with law, command and government. The Gospels show us that Jesus’ disciples had a desire to be leaders, that is, rulers. Jesus constantly had to teach them that he came as God’s servant—to serve. The greatest among them would be he who served the rest. The Gentiles love lordship over others. This reaction to those set to lead can be a powerful and yet unrecognised factor in the way that we exegete leadership in the NT church.

⁷ We say ‘apostolic beginnings’ (plural) because ecclesiology is researched under the heads of ‘Pauline’, ‘Petrine’, ‘Lukan’ (Luke–Acts), ‘Johannine’—and so on. It is considered by some to be theologically naive to think the church just broke into being at Pentecost and in other situations Jewish, Samaritan and so on. Making allowance for background cultural differences, it would seem to me the church would be essentially one. We find today in many countries that churches grow in much the same way and that, cultural differences accepted, they spring from the same word, have the same Lord, and exhibit the same marks, that is, one, holy, catholic and apostolic.

yea, and on my menservants and my maidservants in those days
 I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.
 And I will show wonders in the heaven above
 and signs on the earth beneath,
 blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;
 the sun shall be turned into darkness
 and the moon into blood,
 before the day of the Lord comes,
 the great and manifest day.
 And it shall be that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved
 (Acts 2:17–21).

This, as we said above, makes the company to be an eschatological community; all being in the work of prophecy, signs and wonders, and in anticipation of the ‘day of the Lord’. Because through centuries we have been trained to see the church as an institution or organisation, and so to have structure of clergy—whatever names we may give to them—and to see the rest as ‘the people’ (laity: *laos*), then we cannot really think that the church does not need to have structure and form. It does not mean that the church was without structure and form, yet as we will see there *seemed* not to be form and structure as we would have them be (*sic*). Reading back into the New Testament the matter of our present structure and hierarchy⁸ which, in fact, has obtained for many centuries, we assume this must always have been the case. For this reason Käsemann is difficult for us to understand when he says that the whole life of the church is in *charisma*:

‘The charisma of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord’, says Rom. 6.23. Other charismata only exist because of the existence of this one charisma to which they are all related, and they only exist where the gift of eternal life is manifested in the eschatologically inaugurated dominion of Christ. ‘God’s gift of grace’ is thus a misleading translation of the Greek word, because it does not indicate that the gift is inseparable from the gracious power which bestows it, and that it is indeed the manifestation and concretion of this power, so that eternal life is not one gift among many, but *the* sole and unique gift of the End. There are variations of expression in Rom. 5.15 (*charis, dorea, dorema*) but the thing signified is still the life which has appeared with the coming of Christ and has laid hold on men. The same is true of I Cor. 12.6,11 where the various charismata are described as *energemata* from which the *phanerosis tou pneumatos* [manifestations of the Spirit] of v. 7 follows. The Spirit is our present participation in eternal life, but we can possess him and participate in his gift only as he possesses us. Eternal life does not encourage sleeping partners or uninvested capital. We can only have *charis* (which in Paul is normally to be understood as power) to the extent to which it seizes hold of us and to which the lordship of Christ acting through it brings us into the captivity of his service . . . All this adds up to the same thing: the manifestation of grace, of the Spirit, of eternal life, of the divine calling—this all happens eschatologically in Christ.⁹

Käsemann’s thesis is that Christ is everything, and that it is from—as also within—his life that all gifts come, but then to be in Christ through the Spirit is to participate in all gifts, whatever category is named, that is, *charis, dorea, doma*. He includes everything, such as ‘the functions of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers and admonishers’. He adds, ‘The cybernetic charismata extend from the “first-fruits” mentioned in Rom. 16.5 and I Cor. 16.15 to “those who are over you” in I Thess. 5.12, who may well correspond to the pastors of Eph. 4.11 and the “bishops” of Phil. 1.1’.¹⁰

The picture we get from his reasoning is a church which is a ferment, composed as it is of gifts which in their workings and services are constantly operative through love, but the expression of them is manifestations of the Spirit, even that of leadership, provided we grasp its nature in its time and function. If we can speak of the Spirit both inspiring and controlling the people (*laos*) of God then we can see that all are in ministry (Eph. 4:12), and ministry

⁸ Structure and hierarchy must not be read as though we are making a pejorative statement. We are saying that we should not read present structure and hierarchy back into the New Testament church. Whether both were present in the life and nature of the church and its gifts is something we will have to research.

⁹ Käsemann, pp. 64–5.

¹⁰ Käsemann, p. 69.

which is directed by the Spirit. It is no less charismatic to be an elder or deacon than it is to be a healer, for all gifts are ‘to profit withal’. All gifts work together by the Spirit and in that sense all things operate ‘decently and in order’.

Excursus: Effects Essential to Truly Comprehending the Church

On the day of Pentecost Peter was the spokesman fulfilling Christ’s prophecy of Acts 1:8 that when the Spirit came upon them—the apostles—then they would witness to Christ. At the same time we have to remember that all—the 120—who were baptised in the Spirit spoke out ‘the wonderful works of God’. Peter built on all that the Spirit-baptised group had witnessed to. This dynamic ministry of 120 people is the first corporate witness of the *laos* of God. Of course, with the coming of the Spirit came also those things which Jesus said would attend the coming; namely the fellowship being remembranced of all things Jesus had said; the teaching of all things; the leading into the truth; the ability to convince the world of sin, righteousness, judgment; and things to come, that is, things eschatological. In other words they had received magnificent revelation and their thinking was radically changed.

The fact that thousands responded to the event, repented, were forgiven their sins in baptism, and ‘they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers’, and were now ‘the fellowship [*koinonia*]’, meant a new situation had arrived. Their love for one another, and the sharing of meals and of their goods with the more indigent among them speaks of a miracle in which mutual submission, love, and the assurance of the apostolic leadership all combined to make a company of transformed human beings such as had never been before. It is in the light of this fellowship that we should seek to understand this first community who lived in the joyful ferment of a fellowship which was one in its vocation of sharing God’s mission to creation via the gospel, and the life of which was different from a religious community—that is, an institution or organisation shaped by human reasoning. I mean that its life was lived in faith, hope and love—these three dynamic virtues which nothing else can surpass. Only a person who has lived in this *koinonia* is competent to expound the true nature of the church. Only he who lives in faith, hope and love can personally know this unique community.

That is why it seems to me that scholars have first to be debriefed of their own predilections and factors which affect the way they can see, perceive and discuss such matters as authority, offices, gifts—and so on. For example, a person can be against authority, law and leadership as a fallen sinner, and not even realise his/her state. Those who were baptised in the Spirit on the day of Pentecost—including the 3,000 who believed in Christ—were debriefed of all wrong approaches to God and the church, because they had been converted and regenerated by the gospel through the Spirit of truth. They would need to live in the truth and not revert consciously or unconsciously to their former ways of thinking for their understanding to be valid. I visualise a person, for example, who for reasons perhaps not known to him or her, developing a whole theology which would be hierarchical or anti-hierarchical, or for that matter anything because motivated by misconception. Rare is the person who can be spiritually enlightened and objective without prejudice in perception. Of course perceptions per se are notoriously undependable because of personal factors which determine them.

**ELEMENTS RELATING TO THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION
OF THE CHURCH**

In previous Studies we have noted the matter of leadership in the church, and have developed the notion that there was a certain authority in the ministry of the elders/bishops. We proceeded on the basis that elders and bishops were the same, that they were pastors and that a single elder in a church could not be the case. Elders as such were not singly monarchical, or corporately oligarchical. In this present Study we have seen that eldership could have been

charismatic, but in any case the whole Body of Christ was charismatic. Eldership, whatever its form, was enveloped in that. In order to understand this we need to set aside the way in which pastors and elders operate in modern churches. If we can imagine a palpable community using all their gifts in the mission of God to creation, in the virtues of faith, hope and love,¹¹ then the matter of order in practice would have to be understood differently. Our idea that leadership gives shape, form, direction and validity to the actions of the church is not correct.

Perhaps we have this idea because we think of a single pastor shepherding his flock. Matthew 9:35–38 gives us a picture of true shepherding:

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.’

To Jesus the ‘harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd’ were Israel without a true shepherd. His ministry to them was shepherding. To make the figure of shepherd and flock then one deals with sheep, but people are different; the figure cannot be precisely applied. Pastors do not own them or herd the sheep, but act as under-shepherds of the ‘great Shepherd of the sheep’, Christ, who in turn is appointed as the Shepherd by His Father who is *the* Shepherd. Like Christ they seek to serve, and not to rule. Their people respond to love and care and exhortation as in ‘thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me’—and so on. We are not to use people as a shepherd uses animals, that is, for their products. We are dealing with live persons who are made in the image of God. We dare not rule them for the sake of authority or to delineate our own position of authority (*sic*).

A Medley of Leaders

We may now pass on to the principle of leadership. Is it confined to pastor–elders? It would seem so in these days, though there are churches who are structuring themselves with an executive officer, qualified managerial staff, professional psychologists and therapists, and likewise employing trained clergy as chaplains so that there are no longer just pastors. Excepting this new pattern, how are we to think of clergy and the people? We certainly have a lot of enquiry to do regarding leadership in the New Testament. Generally it is limited to passages such as 1 Thessalonians 5:12–22, James 5:14–15, Hebrews 13:7 and 17, and the Pastoral Epistles, namely the passages of 1 Timothy 3:1–13, 5:17–19, and Titus 1:5–9. One Peter 5:1–4 combines the ideas of pastors and elders. Indeed all these passages seem to refer to pastors or elders as the one.

Undoubtedly in the cases of the above references we are not limited to pastor–elders as the sole leaders. In the early Epistles apostles figure largely as those who lead. They were those who spoke the apostolic word in the apostolic way, and by this means churches came into life. Are there not the equivalents to apostles today, and for that matter for the other four *domata*? Of course we except the original apostles of Christ in our likening, but we see (i) there were apostles other than the twelve; and (ii) that all *domata* were and are functional to the working *ecclesia*. In Acts 14:21–23 the apostolic band ‘appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting’. In Titus 1:5 Titus had been told to ‘appoint elders in every town’. In effecting the making of elders those who made them were of authority. Timothy had hands laid upon him by elders, with Paul also sharing in this. By this Timothy had been given a gift which seems to have been that of an evangelist and, even more, the gift of a teacher for teaching.¹² It seems that those of what we might call ‘the apostolic band’, such as the men

¹¹ Paul makes it clear in 1 Corinthians 13:1–3 that gifts only have value when used in the service of love. Faith without love cancels the value of love and the gift. Without hope, love is not love. The three are one.

¹² For Timothy’s reception of a gift or gifts see 1 Timothy 4:11–16 and 2 Timothy 1:6–7.

who accompanied Paul, were held in esteem and as having authority. Paul commends many of them to various churches. In 2 Corinthians 7:15 Paul speaks of the way Titus was received by the Corinthian church, ‘And his [Titus’s] heart goes out all the more to you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, and the fear and trembling with which you received him’.

Paul also speaks of others who deserve recognition with respect, such as in Romans 16:1–16. Prisca and Aquila are looked on by Paul as ‘fellow-workers’, and Paul says that he and ‘all the churches of the Gentiles’ give thanks for their ministry. In 1 Corinthians 16:15–16 Paul speaks of Stephanas, ‘Now, brethren, you know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints; *I urge you to be subject to such men and to every fellow worker and laborer*’. It is remarkable that Paul enjoins, ‘I urge you to be subject to such men and to every fellow worker and laborer’. What does he mean by this? Surely to subject oneself to another implies some kind of authority. The idea in Ephesians 5:21, ‘Be subject to one another’, may be a general injunction, but Paul seems immediately to refer it to: (i) wives to husbands; (ii) children to parents; and (iii) servants to masters. So, being subject to Stephanas is another type case of submission.

Paul’s letter to the church at Colossae also provides ‘a medley of leaders’. It is clear that it was through ‘Epaphras our beloved fellow servant’ that the church at Colossae was born. At the same time, ‘He is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf’. In chapter 4 he appears again as a fellow worker for the Kingdom of God, and ‘he has worked hard for those in Laodicea and those in Hierapolis’ (4:12–13). What does all this mean? Is Epaphras a church builder or a church shepherd? What is his ‘office’? Beginning at 4:7 we see a list of ‘fellow workers’ and ‘faithful ministers’, and ‘workers for the kingdom of God’. They are Tychicus, Onesimus, Aristarchus, Mark ‘the cousin of Barnabas’, Jesus Justus, Luke ‘the beloved physician’ and Demas. In what category are they? Paul would have them all honoured. Surely they are among the *leaders* of the churches.

I think, then, we might need to revise our ideas of pastor–elders being the prime ones in leadership. I have suggested in earlier papers that all the *domata*—the ministerial gifts of Ephesians 4:11—were such that the churches looked to them all with great respect. Without them being pastor–elders may they not be among the leaders suggested in 1 Thessalonians 5:12, and Hebrews 13:7, 17? It seems that four of the five *domata* moved among the churches, that is, the apostles and prophets and teachers, and if Philip and Timothy are examples, evangelists also. We should be careful not to specialise the pastor–elders. Early on in the church the pastor–elders received their authority—if we may call it that—through the apostolic band, and would look to them for help. All Paul’s churches—if we may call them that—are always under his authority which had been given by Christ and is one with the authority of the word they proclaim. The churches seem to look to them for matters of belief and practice. Two Corinthians 10:5–6 is surely aimed at the Corinthian church. The same letter (1:23–24) shows that Paul in no sense dominates by his authority for after all the whole of his work has been as a servant to the churches, ‘But I call God to witness against me—it was to spare you that I refrained from coming to Corinth. *Not that we lord it over your faith; we work with you for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith.*’ Without doubt the Pauline church was dependent upon the apostolic ministry of Paul to them. We could speak similarly of all to whom John and Peter wrote. Both Peter’s Letters refer to him as an apostle of Jesus Christ. All apostles and elders only have authority by the fact that they serve, not because they have been elected into a superior office (*sic*). Indeed the key thought which Paul presents is that ministry is a mercy of God. It is by this mercy that they minister: ‘Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart’ (2 Cor. 4:1).¹³ The fact of mercy must keep the servants of God in humility.

¹³ For an expansion of this idea of ministry by mercy see pages 52f. of David L. Bartlett’s book *Ministry in the New Testament* (Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1993).

So, then, we have this ‘medley of ministries’ without constant specific demarcation of them into categories. Our present ‘clergy and laity’ categories are clearly missing. It seems, too, that the apostles and their fellow workers spread themselves across many countries, even continents, and that workers remained interlinked. We can think of them as a powerful, mobile fellowship of workers caring for the churches as they were involved in God’s mission to creation. They thought of themselves as operating significantly in the vital eschaton which motivated them to urgent ministry. Ideas of organisation or institutional ministry were absent. Before we embark on an ‘Oh, times have changed; the situation now is different’, let us beware of careless rationalisations.

I also think we have some parallels today in the churches. On the one hand, fairly secular minds are working on managerial and promotional exercises, and on the other we have a multiplicity of workers in a multiplicity of situations across innumerable church and missionary situations. What, then, is the dynamism which moves so many in mission today?

Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers as Leaders

In previous Studies we have dealt somewhat with these but we need to see the lineage of these various *domata*. We have covered the *apostles*. As for *prophets*, they are shown to be linked with *apostles*. Paul says that truth—in this case the revelation concerning Jews and Gentiles being one as the church—was ‘revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit’. Formerly he had said, ‘You are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets’. The apostolic truth was the truth of the apostles and prophets. In Israel, the faithful set a high score on the prophets, and so in the church. We have elsewhere mentioned two things: (i) that Christ was *the* Prophet beyond all prophets, so that the community was deemed prophetic at Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:14ff.); and (ii) that whilst all the church was constituted as prophetic, yet the prophets uttered prophecies as charisms, but there were other prophets such as Agabus (Acts 11:27–28; 21:10) who were looked to for their prophecies. Prophets are found as a group also in Acts 11:27, 13:1f., and 15:32, *passim*. The daughters of Philip the evangelist are either prophetesses or women who prophesied (Acts 21:9). Prophets, then, are regarded quite highly and their words are carried out.

Evangelists—as such—are named only in Ephesians 4:11 and Acts 21:8. Timothy is enjoined by Paul to ‘do the work of an evangelist’, but it would seem that evangelists are the messengers who proclaim the gospel, probably in the train of the apostles who opened up virgin ground, so to speak. In any case they are bracketed with the apostles and prophets and linked with them in ministry. Philip’s home at Caesarea seems to have been an open house to all brethren.

We have dealt considerably with *pastors* in previous Studies and there seems no need to comment except to show that their category was one amongst many. Churches were not privatised in the sense that many are today, for people were not ‘under’ pastors: pastors developed from within the flock and were one with all members, not having dominion over their faith. Often *pastors* has been coupled with *teachers* in exegesis of Ephesians 4:11, but since all in this verse are those who teach, it is better not to couple these two.

In regard to *teachers* we have considerable information. In Acts 13:1 we find that at the church in Antioch there were ‘prophets and teachers’, that is, in the plural. Why was this? They were one with the church and after their praying and fasting the Holy Spirit told them to separate Paul and Barnabas ‘for the work to which I have called them’. The laying on of hands was not to ordain them, but to equip them especially for the ministry ahead.

THE PEOPLE OF GOD WHO ARE THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

In the Old Testament, Israel was exclusively the ‘people’ (Heb: *am*) of God some 2,000 times. The term for congregation was *qahal*. In the LXX *am* was translated *laos*, and the same in the

New Testament for the people of God who are the *ecclesia*.¹⁴ As we have seen in our series of Studies there was no division of clergy and laity. Technically ‘laity’ means *all* who are God’s people, *all* in the church. Gordon Fee in his *Gospel and Spirit*, subtitled ‘Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics’,¹⁵ has two diagrams, the first being a large circle named ‘laity’ and surmounting it a smaller circle named ‘clergy’, that is, those who are not laity. His second diagram is of a circle larger than the first large circle, and obviously enlarged by the inclusion, within it, of the former circle named ‘clergy’. This small circle within the large one is now named ‘leaders’ and the whole circle is named ‘people’. Fee certainly makes his point. I suppose that a circle which named all ministries, and all gifts both domatic and charismatic—which incidentally are both one *as* charismatic¹⁶ (I Cor. 12:28f.)—would then indicate the powerful people situation in ministry. None would be without a gift and so none without ministry, for all are ministers (Eph. 4:12) and the interrelation, interdependency, and unity of all members of the Body of Christ all share the operations of the church on mission with God.

This, indeed, is a wonderful presentation and cuts across any clergy–laity idea. It might be bewildering to be faced with such a dynamic and varied church as it was in action, but better this than the kind of hierarchical order that we now seem to receive and even espouse. None but the Holy Spirit could create and raise up the church of the apostolate, but then it lived in the empowerment, guidance and life of the Spirit, producing the fruit of the Spirit, living in unity and love, receiving and giving ministry, and alert in the proclamation as the community of purpose.

CONCLUSION: THE NEED FOR RESTORATION OF UNDERSTANDING THE ECCLESIA AND SO THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

If this could be understood and recognised as the true nature of the church and its action, then there would be great hope for us, today. We have seen in the history of the church that a change in doctrine brought changes in practice and worship. Many believe that the circumstances of history, of environment, the movements of nations, and of culture, brought about these changes and that, generally speaking, they have been for the good. This, of course, is much debated. Surely, at heart, the configurations of the church, the people of God, does not have to change. We will deal with the elements of history and change in our next Study, assured that through history the Lord of the church has not been inactive, and that indeed he has worked the will of God for His creation, and will do so, until the climax of the *telos*. What deeply occupies us is that it is Christ’s High Priesthood which is worked out in the church, and through the church.

Thus we have yet to see the nature of this priestly ministry of Christ within the community and then out to the world from the community. It is in and through the church that Christ’s priestly ministry operates. In the *triplex munus* the church is prophetic, priestly and kingly.

¹⁴ In our next Study we will deal with this matter in full detail.

¹⁵ Published by Henrickson Publishers Inc., Peabody, 1993, p. 122.

¹⁶ We mean that the *domatic* gifts of ‘first apostles, second prophets, third teachers’, then the *charismatic* gifts of ‘healers, helpers, administrators, [etc.]’, are put together as though they are the one, that is, of the one *charisma*.

The Church the Priesthood of All Believers—III

THE MATTER OF PRIESTHOOD IN THE COUNSEL OF GOD— IN SALVATION HISTORY

INTRODUCTION: PRIESTHOOD AND GOD'S OVERALL PLAN FOR HISTORY

There are many reasons given in reply to the question, 'Why did God create the universe?' We will not permit ourselves the luxury of examining these answers but select a well-known one, 'He created all things for His glory'. That is close to another answer, 'He created all things to manifest His glory'. To whom and what does He manifest His glory? The answer must be, 'To the all things He has created'. We note that 'All thy works shall praise Thee', and the beautiful injunctions to all creation to do this in Psalm 148 must mean that God is intelligible to all creation in the sense that it continually worships and serves Him. By creation we mean all things, and not only Man, whilst recognising that Man was to be lord of creation, and in effect its leader responsible for ruling it. He has created Man for this purpose. Created from nothing that appears, all creation is to be in the service and worship of God. So far as we can see, the future of all creation is linked with the future of Man in the *telos*. Only when he is glorified will all creation be glorified, and share in 'the liberty of the glory of the children of God' (Rom. 8:17–30). All this glorification can be understood as eternal life which is a gift from God's immortality. Thus 1 Timothy 6:16 says God alone has eternal life, whilst Titus 1:1–2 and 3:7 speak of the 'hope of eternal life', and 1 Corinthians 15:53–54 speak of us putting on immortality.¹

Primal Man, Worship and Personal Altars

When we seek to understand what Man is to be about in his earthly life, then about the best we can obtain is his doing the mandate of God, given in Genesis 1:28f.; that is, serving God as the steward of creation and, as we have seen, Edenising it. We have also seen that Eden was indeed the sanctuary of God, and with it was the seventh day of God's rest, in which life was to be lived by Man. By understanding the revelation of the Second Adam who was Prophet, Priest and King, we can understand that the First Adam was meant to be prophet, priest and king. The ejection of the primal couple from the Garden would not have cancelled God's calling and gifts, albeit their exercise would be under considerable difficulties.

When we come to the matter of Cain and Abel we see they understood the *need* for sacrifice. Were they taught by Adam, or was the need for offerings recognised as ontological? If their father, Adam, was by nature prophet, priest and king, were they not also of the same ilk? Is it not expected of every human being that since he or she was created with both the ability and obligation to make sacrifices to God—primarily sacrifices of praise

¹ Man is not immortal by reason of creation. That the eternal God gave him the opportunity to eat of the tree of life and live forever shows that he was not going to live forever without it. He chose the tree which led to death. There will be a resurrection unto life for the faithful and one unto judgment for the unfaithful (cf. John 5:29). Whilst human existence will go on forever only the 'unto life' speaks of immortality. A name for the second—'unto judgment'—is spoken of as 'the second death'. Greek views of human immortality have seated themselves home on the Western mind, and the Hebrew idea of Sheol as a shadowy place, so unlike Paradise, is in some cases a dreary form of immortality, not of beautiful life. For the risen Christ to say he holds the keys of Death and Hades (Sheol) must have brought intense joy to those who believed in him.

and thanksgiving—all ought to worship in this way. Such worship would appear to be indispensable to true human living. There may be questions asked about the mode of Cain's sacrifice but what was essentially wrong was his attitude, that is, his *nous* or mind. What is more, Cain was expected to know that his offering was lacking. Abel's offering was in order as to *nous* and mind, for it was accepted. We can only speculate on the idea that Adam ought to have been the priest of these sacrifices. If not, then it would show that every man is his own priest in the offering of sacrifices. Since Man was from the beginning in covenant relationship with God, what need was there of priests?

MAN CREATED AND FORMED SO AS TO BE THE VISIBLE EXPRESSION OF THE INVISIBLE GOD

In asking about Man's purpose of being in history—and seeking to answer that question—we have scarcely noted the matter of his being in the image of God. That God was—and is—King over all creation is shown by Man being the reflection of that Kingship. Reflecting Kingship is a task of vast proportions and calls for great moral powers; powers that are exercised properly where guilt is absent, and the conscience is strong. That all creation is to be under Man is clear from Genesis 1:28 and 9:1–7. Romans 1:21–23 shows that the order for Man was full worship of God:

. . . for although 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. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever! Amen.

In this passage Paul shows us by the negative, God-rejecting action of wicked men, what was the true reflection of the image of God, namely worship of Him. This worship was constituted of: (i) honouring God as God; (ii) giving thanks to Him for Himself, creation and all His gifts; (iii) being 'reasonable' in their thinking;² (iv) worshipping (honouring) and serving God as Creator; and (v) basing worship on the truth of God. This shows us the kind of worship Man originally offered to God and from which he departed. The terms 'worshipped and served' indicate the action, (i) of veneration (*sebomai*); and (ii) of service, that is, worship as service (*latreuo*).

In this context we gather that the fullness and perfection of Man is dependent upon his way of worship. His worship shows his relationship to God, that is, by his true worship as he is in full communion with God and thus displays himself as the true image of God. In worship—service he is glorifying God. Any departure from this will reflect his Creator in a deficient way. I believe it is at this point that we can claim that Man was created to glorify God by being fully in His image. *God's purpose in creating Man was to reveal Himself to the creation through Man so that all creation would be in the glory of God and so be in worship of Him and service to Him.* Worship is not so much an act of adoration and submission accompanied with offerings—though these are part of it—as it is full communion with God and doing the will of God by appropriate acts in both time and eternity.

It is Who and What God is that is revealed by Man, that is, the One who is holy, righteous, good, loving and truthful. Better it is said, 'God is holiness, righteousness, goodness, truthfulness and love, but is by no means an aggregate of these things, but the unity of them, so that they are one in the *koinonia* (fellowship) of the Godhead'. Whilst creation declares His eternal power and deity, Romans 1:20 equates these with His invisibility. Colossians 1:15 can be translated 'He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God', or, 'He is the visible image of the

² Romans 12:1 speaks of 'reasonable' worship, whilst 1:21 says 'they became vain in their reasonings'. Both words derive from the same root.

invisible God', by the exercise of those properties given to him; that is, God's nature making true humanity, and thus true humanity being the visible image of God. Without doubt Man was intended as visible to reflect the invisible God. Nothing else in creation was so constituted, not even the most beautiful of the archangels.

It would seem, then, that Man was to communicate the nature of God to creation. A single man or woman could not do this since all the attributes of God demand corporate sociality, such as is present in the Triune God. Christ as the full image of God contains within himself the corporate humanity for which he died, so that He is social being itself. To this it has to be added that God planned the everlasting covenant before time, so that it runs through all time. Humanity, and indeed all creation, exists under the reality of covenant, whether men choose to be in that covenant or not.³ For our purposes we mean that all human creatures have direct access to God by covenant and in relating as such to God thereby reflect Him by the image that they are.

PRIESTHOOD AND SACRIFICE IN HISTORY AND IN GOD'S PEOPLE

The Matter of Priesthood from the Beginning

We have suggested that Adam was created for the ministry of prophecy, priesthood and royal rule. Even so, Cain and Abel made their own offering to God. These offerings were first fruits—Cain's of the soil, Abel's of the flock. We would take these to be thanksgiving offerings, except for God's word to Cain, 'If you do well, shall you not be accepted?' This has been translated, 'If you do well shall you not be forgiven?' Did God mean 'Forgiven of the sin of Cain's wrong offering', or 'Forgiven of your sins as Abel has been of his', meaning the offering was a sacrifice of a peculiar nature, that is, for atonement?

We know little of priests and the significance of altars in times prior to the Flood. Noah built an altar and offered burnt offerings on it of all clean creatures. What was the significance of these offerings other than thanksgiving for the saving act of the Flood and Ark? The three patriarchs built altars,⁴ but we are not told whether or not they offered sacrifices on them. They were certainly memorials of events.⁵

Two priests come⁶ before us, the first being Melchizedek 'prince of peace'⁷ and of Salem, and Jethro 'the priest of Midian'. As for Israel before and when in Egypt, there seem to have been no priests appointed. Israel was 'the people of God'. Before priests were appointed the whole nation were God's people, and the statement of Exodus 19:22 concerning priests—'and also let the priests who come near to the LORD consecrate themselves lest the LORD break out upon them'—seems to be an anachronism, or the term 'priests' must mean 'leaders of some sort or another', perhaps linked with the elders of the tribes and the elders of the travelling community (cf. Num. 11:16f.; Exod. 24:9–10). We shall now try to understand Exodus 19:3–6.

³ Here we need to refresh ourselves in the whole idea of covenant, since it entails the whole matter of relationships between God and Man, and between all human creatures. W. J. Dumbrell has written much on the matter of covenant, especially in *Covenant and Creation* (Paternoster Press, Exeter, 1984). My book, *Love's Most Glorious Covenant* (Redeemer Baptist Press, Castle Hill, 1997) also deals with the subject of 'the everlasting covenant'. A simple coverage is in *Comprehending the Covenant* (NCPI, Blackwood, 1999).

⁴ Abraham built altars at Shechem, Bethel-Ai and Hebron (Gen. 12:7–8; 13:18). Isaac built an altar at Beersheba (Gen. 26:25), and Jacob built an altar (Gen. 33:20; 35:7).

⁵ Theologically, altars where priests and sacrifices have not been mentioned are called 'lay altars', a question-begging term.

⁶ The matter of the Melchizedekian priesthood is taken up seriously in Psalm 110, where the priest addressed as after that order is called to the right hand of God. Of course, as we shall see in Hebrews, his order transcends that of Aaron, and his world beyond that which Israel has known.

⁷ In the cases of Melchizedek and Jethro there are no mentions of sacrifices, as such. Priests were from early times persons of wisdom, that is, 'one learned wisdom at the lips of the priest'.

The Matter of Israel Being a Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation

And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, ‘Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.’

What we first need to note is the *if*, and the *then*, that is, ‘*if* you will obey my voice and keep my covenant’, for this *if* places the responsibility of Israel to respond in gratitude for what God has done for them. He has executed His plagues upon Egypt, He has borne them on eagles’ (plural) wings, and He has ‘brought you to myself’, a wonderful outcome to be sure. Motivated by such grace they will surely be eager to participate in the three elements. What they will be and do is not commanded. Participation is invited! The *if* presupposes the *then*.

We note that apart from a memorial altar built to be a memorial of Israel’s defeat of Amalek (Exod. 17:15) the building of altars and the offering of sacrifices were prescribed after this statement of God to Israel. It is legitimate to say that Israel was not ‘a kingdom of priests and a holy nation’ prior to God’s pronouncement here. That it was God’s chosen people is never in doubt, but what was it chosen for? The answer must come in the three terms, ‘my own possession’, ‘kingdom of priests’, and ‘a holy nation’. We will seek to understand these terms and the context in which they are uttered. They are uttered at the beginning of this pericope solely to ‘the house of Jacob’, and ‘the people of Israel’, and ‘the children of Israel’, at the end of the utterance:

- (a) **‘My own possession [*segullah*] among all peoples for the earth is mine.’** We can say, ‘The King’s special treasure: He treasures it highly; it is unique. Undoubtedly it delights him’. In one sense Deuteronomy 7:6–11 is a commentary on this phrase, ‘my own possession’. This is God’s elect people, but His wonderful treatment of His people has already been shown through the events in Egypt and the Exodus itself. This possession is a dynamic, purposeful unit, elected for God’s purpose.
- (b) **‘A kingdom of priests’** is a term here unique in all the Old Testament. In this case God is King over all the earth (cf. Gen. 14:22; ‘the LORD God Most High, maker of heaven and earth’), and so His people relate to His Kingship. Alan Cole comments:

It is the universal priestly status of Israel to which attention is called. This is all the more understandable in view of the fact that there does not as yet seem to have been any priestly caste within Israel itself. Presumably the basic thought is of a group set apart peculiarly for God’s possession and service, with free access to His presence. The thought of acting as God’s representative for, and to, the other nations of the world cannot be ruled out. Whether realized at the time or not, this was to be the mission of Israel (cf. the ultimate promise to Abraham in Gn. 12:3). God’s ‘particularist’ choice of Israel has a wider ‘universalist’ purpose.⁸

Walter Kaiser also sees the passage to have universal connotation:

Three titles summarise the divine blessings that an obedient and covenant-keeping Israel will experience: they would be a ‘treasured possession’ (v.5), ‘a kingdom of priests and a holy nation’ (v.6; see Notes). The first signified that Israel would be God’s valuable property and distinct treasure (Deut 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Ps 135:4; Mal 3:17, cf. Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9) set aside for a marked purpose. Furthermore, they were to be at once priest-kings and royal-priests (Isa 61:6; cf. 1 Peter 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6)—*everyone* in the whole

⁸ *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary* by R. Alan Cole (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, Tyndale London, 1973), p. 145.

nation. This expression was not a parallel phrase or a synonym for a 'holy nation'; it was a separate entity. The whole nation was to act as mediators of God's grace to the nations of the earth, even as Abraham had been promised that through him and his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen 12:3). The last title designated Israel as a separate and distinct nation because her God was holy, separate, and distinct, as were his purposes and plans (Deut 7:6; 14:2, 21; 26:19; Isa 62:12; cf. 1 Peter 2:9).⁹

The theme that Israel was to be the priestly nation for all nations is strong in the Keil and Delitzsch commentary. Deuteronomy 14:2 reiterates the principle of a holy people, as does Leviticus 11:44. Psalm 135:4 says, 'For the LORD has chosen Jacob for himself, Israel as his own possession', which is confirmed by Malachi 3:17, 'They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, my special possession on the day when I act, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him'. Titus 2:14 reiterates the same idea in the New Testament, 'who gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds'. Isaiah 61:6 underlines the priestly nature of the nation, 'but you shall be called the priests of the LORD, men shall speak of you as the ministers of our God; you shall eat the wealth of the nations, and in their riches you shall glory'. Quite numerous are the references to the nations coming to Israel to partake in her sacrifices, and to learn her law and her worship. Whether these are literal references to Israel in Palestine or to the church and the New Covenant worship has to be determined:

The object of Israel's kingship and priesthood was to be found in the nations of the earth, out of which Jehovah had chosen Israel as a costly possession. This great and glorious promise, the fulfilment of which could not be attained till the completion of the kingdom of God . . . The spiritual attitude of Israel towards the nations was the result of its priestly character. As the priest is a mediator between God and man, so Israel was called to be the vehicle of the knowledge and salvation of God to the nations of the earth. By this it unquestionably acquired an intellectual and spiritual character; but this includes, rather than excludes, the government of the world. For spiritual and intellectual supremacy and rule must eventually ensure the government of the world, as certainly as spirit is the power that overcomes the world.¹⁰

John I. Durham's comment directs us to the basic thought, that is, that Israel is 'a display-people, a showcase to the world of how being in covenant with Yahweh changes a people'. From the point of view of this paper Israel is making visible the nature of God, especially the God of covenant:

The phrases 'special treasure,' 'kingdom of priests,' and 'holy people' are closely related to one another, and although they each refer to the whole of the people who will pay attention to and follow the covenant, they are not to be taken as synonymous, either all three of them or the second two of them. Israel as the 'special treasure' is Israel become uniquely Yahweh's prized possession by their commitment to him in covenant. Israel as a 'kingdom of priests' is Israel committed to the extension throughout the world of the ministry of Yahweh's Presence. ['Priests'] here is exactly what it appears to be, a noun in construct relationship with ['kingdom'], and it describes what Israel was always supposed to be: a kingdom run not by politicians depending upon strength and connivance but by priests depending on faith in Yahweh, a servant nation instead of a ruling nation. Israel as a 'holy people' then represents a third dimension of what it means to be committed in faith to Yahweh: they are to be a people set apart, different from all other people by what they are and are becoming—a display-people, a showcase to the world of how being in covenant with Yahweh changes a people.¹¹

What then do we derive from these quotations? First of all we see that God's Kingdom of Israel is not only personally precious to Him but has a universal function. No other nation is, as such, holy, priestly and royal in its constitution. The Keil and Delitzsch comment speaks of the enormous moral resources needed to lead the world in character commensurate with that of God. If we refer back to our stated purpose of God's creating the world, then it is that humanity will be that community which reveals the true nature of God, for angels and other creatures cannot effect this revelation. The invisible God is visibilised in the true image of

⁹ *Exodus*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, by Walter C. Kaiser Jr (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1990), p. 416.

¹⁰ *The Pentateuch, the Second Book of Moses—Exodus*, by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, reprint 1980), pp. 97–98.

¹¹ John I. Durham, *Exodus*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 3 (Word Books, Waco, 1987), p. 263.

Himself. We have no problem in saying Christ, the incarnate Son, thus visibilises God, but then to do this it is required of him that he be truly Prophet, truly Priest and truly King of all the nations.

Excursus: The Nature of the Priest at the Time of the Sinaitic Covenant

We wrongly assume that at the beginning of Israel's formation as a kingdom of priests—that is, at the time of the Sinaitic Covenant—priests were fully formed as sacerdotal. We need to question this. The weighty sacrificial cultus was given by God and related to the tabernacle, that is, to what Moses was shown on the Mount. It was a revelation, so the whole system was revelatory of the God who had delivered them from Egypt and welded them into a nation. If we look at idolatrous nations, then we can understand that they feared to approach their gods directly, so terrifying or sacrosanct they were. Priests were not just one with the people, but a race on their own as always have been shamans, gurus, pundits, custodians of occult wisdom and practice, and other hierophants. The history of the people of faith was their personal relationship with God and their living in His love. Korah was correct in what he claimed, 'all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them'. His error was in saying, 'why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?' which was something Aaron and Moses had not done; they had been appointed to their positions. In the case of Moses, Aaron and Miriam in Numbers 12:1–12 it was much the same principle, for Moses had been the primary prophet, and this was probably linked with him being a priest.

In Micah 3:11 the principle is that Israel's heads (leaders) *give judgment*; its priests *teach*; and its prophets *divine*. Malachi 2:7 says, 'For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and men should seek instruction [or, law; cf. Lev. 10:11; Neh. 8:7–8; Num. 27:21; Deut. 17:8–11] from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts'. Priests, then, were not simply employed in sacrifices and congregational worship, but in the whole matter of life lived before God, and in the nation being concerned with all the nations of the earth. We do not have time or space here to trace the development of the sacerdotal priesthood in Israel, but we can say—with Christ's High Priesthood in view—that sacerdotal ministry in Israel began at Sinai and ended with Christ's death on the Cross. Whilst many priests and many sacrifices added up to something in the community of faith—Israel—the sacrifice of Christ was 'the one full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, satisfaction and oblation for the sins of the whole world' and finished the need, for ever, for further sacrifices.

THE CHANGE IN PRIESTHOOD AND THE CHANGE IN LAW

In discussing the differences between the Aaronic and Melchizedekian priesthoods, Hebrews 7:12 states, 'For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well'. The writer of Hebrews has a thesis, namely, that the law given at Sinai and the priesthood which operated in that new cultus was not sufficient to bring salvation to Israel, let alone to the world. All of it was a shadow of things to come. Undoubtedly the whole cultus given to Israel was to present Israel to the world as God's *segullah*, His priestly nation displaying their access to Him, and a holy nation displaying God's holiness to the world. The Aaronic priesthood was to work to this end. In itself it could not be a class of elite persons, for each priest was to offer sacrifices for his own sins before he offered sacrifice for the people. Sacrifices were of many kinds, designed to express thanksgiving, praise and worship, for many were non-bloody sacrifices. The priest—as we have seen—was also to teach the law, and give out wisdom as an appointed hierophant. Behind all these activities

were the clear facts that Israel was directly beloved of God, each person had access to God, and all were holy, and as such all members of the covenant manifested God in His glory.

If we hold to the thesis of this paper, that God as invisible manifests His glory through His people so that there is a witness of Himself to the world, yet—as the writer of Hebrews shows—whatever was the purpose and use of the Levitical law from Sinai onwards, it ‘was only a shadow of things to come’. That *shadow*, of course, spoke of the *reality* ‘of things to come’. All priestly offerings—especially bloody sacrifices—were valueless since there is no moral power in animal blood. Whatever value God may have assigned to bloody sacrifices in the light of the one, coming True Sacrifice of Christ, yet no Israelitish sacrifice *of itself* was effective.¹²

CHRIST THE TRUE AND UNIQUE HIGH PRIEST

We may firstly speak of the necessity of a unique High Priest, appointed only by God (Heb. 3:1–2; 5:1–10), and to do a work which would give humanity full access to God, so that none would have more or less access to God than another or others. This High Priest would have to be truly Man or he would not be able to represent Man to God (Heb. 2:14–18) and effect access for him (Heb. 10:21–22). He was to be God as Son of God (Heb. 1:5–13) or he could not represent God to the people and, if rightly understood, give God full access to Man. This High Priest would have to be given the children who are God’s elect so that they could be God’s special possession (Heb. 2:12–13; cf. John 17:2, 9, 11, 12, 24), be royal members of God’s Kingdom, and wholly priests unto their God, and by reason of the sacrificial blood of that Priest’s offering (Heb. 10:8–12) be sanctified and given to spiritual worship out of their priesthood (Heb. 9:14; cf. 13:15–16). All of the children given to him (Heb. 2:12–13; etc.), having total access by him to God (Heb. 10:19–22), could now as members of the New Covenant (Heb. 10:16–18) be the new community which by its life and action would visibilise the glory of the true God.

THE CHURCH NOW THE PRIESTLY PEOPLE OF LOVE AND GODWARD WORSHIP

Although we have chosen in the last paragraph to speak of the efficacy of Christ’s High-Priesthood in bringing the community of Christ—the church—to be the visible manifestation of God, yet we must not miss the work of the Risen Christ in intercession for his people, enabling them to be since Pentecost what Israel was to be from Sinai onwards, that is, this visibilising of the nature and character of God. Of course all materials regarding the church in the Acts, Epistles and the Book of the Revelation cannot but confirm the picture we have drawn, although not all are presented in the direct language of Christ’s High-Priesthood. They do present God as love in the vast work He has accomplished through Christ and the Holy Spirit in the salvation of the world, and in His care for His people.

The people of God are the people of love; love for their inner life as the Community of Christ, and then love for all the world in the proclamation of the gospel to all nations. Jews and Gentiles are welded together as the one new race (Eph. 2:11–18) so that: (i) Jew and Gentile are now one; (ii) they both have access to the Father together through the Holy Spirit; and (iii) as such they are joined together and grow into a holy temple in the Lord. We see them, then, as fulfilling the *if* and the *then* of Exodus 19:5–6.

In Ephesians 3:6 the mystery of the church is made known, namely ‘how the Gentiles are

¹² Although the law of Israel, given by God, was one which had to be carried out by faith, God accepted the action of the worshipper’s faith, but animal blood could not—*ex opere operato*—effect atonement and forgiveness. It is possible to see all sacrifices as being made valid through the one great sacrifice of Calvary.

fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel'. In 3:7–12 the church is manifesting the wisdom of God's plan 'to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places'. That is, the church as God's treasured possession, as His priestly, royal and holy people, and telling creation Who and What God is. That is, He is being glorified in the midst of His creation. He has given, through Christ, open access to Himself (cf. Rom. 5:2; Eph. 2:18; 3:12; Heb. 10:19–22). We note here, also, that the whole life and activity of the church is its true worship of God and its service to Him.

When creation sees this worship and service, then it is conducted to the nature of God, to His glory and the praise of His glory for which He created it.

THE PRIESTLY MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH: CHRIST AND THE SPIRIT IN THE WORSHIP

It is said, by some, that Christ's priestly ministry has nothing to do with the internal worship of the church. This is intended as a rebuttal to those who say the church in its worship and service works out the High Priesthood of Christ. Certainly there is no such unmistakable statement of this case. Even so, in Hebrews 8:1–12 there is a clear example of Hebrews 7:12, 'For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well'. In these seventh and eighth chapters the Writer is saying that the mode and matter of worship changes with a change in priesthood. He is discussing Aaron and Melchizedek. These two chapters require deep and detailed study. In any case Aaron's worship is an 'on earth' one, and Melchizedek's an 'in heaven' one. Aaron's worship is out-dated and out-paced by the word of Melchizedek. Christ is the minister in the heavenly sanctuary. Every high priest must have 'something to offer'. Aaron has nothing which fits the heavenly sanctuary. Christ has offered that which pertains to the heavenly sanctuary. *Christ leads us in the worship which is in the heavenly sanctuary.* This was the worship he pointed to in John 4:20–24, and which Paul claims is ours in Philippians 3:3, 'For we are the true circumcision, who worship God in spirit, and glory in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh'. Notice here that it is the worship of the church, as against the worship of Israel, to which Paul refers. It concurs with Christ's saying that the coming worship would be 'in Spirit and in truth'. So then, Christ is the minister (*leitourgos*) in the heavenly sanctuary, and by him we also worship on earth, and yet at the same time in the heavenly sanctuary.

THE THREEFOLD MINISTRY AND WORSHIP OF GOD'S PEOPLE IN THIS AGE

It is now time for us to consider what is meant by 'the priesthood of all believers'. We have said that it is not 'the priesthood of every believer or any believer, but the priesthood of the body of believers—the corporate priesthood'. Let us look at the text:

Come to him, to that living stone, rejected by men but in God's sight chosen and precious; and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture: 'Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and he who believes in him will not be put to shame.' To you therefore who believe, he is precious, but for those who do not believe, 'The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner,' and 'A stone that will make men stumble, a rock that will make them fall'; for they stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy' (1 Pet. 2:4–10).

Note there is only one true and effective High Priest in all history, that is, Jesus Christ. There is only one true and effective sacrifice that has been offered once for all, and for all sins of all humanity throughout history. There is only one true and effective temple, that built of living stones on Christ the hitherto prepared, living cornerstone. This means no other priest, no other sacrifice and no other temple is needed. In another way of speaking, the Priest, sacrifice and temple are Christ.¹³ None of these need to be repeated, renewed, re-enacted or re-presented.¹⁴ Ultimately the sacrifice is seen to have happened, for the Lamb—as it had been slain—shows the marks of the past event (Rev. 5:6ff.). Christ is *the Prophet, the Priest, the King*. In the ultimate ‘God and the Lamb’ are the temple (Rev. 21:22) and that temple in the present must be the one we see in 1 Corinthians 3:16, Ephesians 2:19–22 and 1 Peter 2:4–10. It must also be that eschatological temple we find in the Old Testament.

Because Christ’s sacrifice was sacerdotal, he being the *sacerdos*, and because it was effective for all time, having accomplished the forgiveness, cleansing and justification of all humanity, that is, for all who have faith (Rom. 3:24–25), then no mediatorial sacrifice has since been needed. In 1 Corinthians 11:23–26 Paul makes it clear that by *doing* the Lord’s Supper we are ‘holding forth’ or ‘exhibiting’ the Lord’s death until he comes, that death which we are remembering. What we are doing in remembrance are the acts of breaking bread as his body was for us, and eating it, and drinking the cup which was his blood of the New Covenant shed for us. The acts of eating and drinking are the way of exhibiting, that is, ‘setting forth’ his death for us. It appears that Christ’s *eucharistesas* (‘having given thanks’: 1 Cor. 11:24) was repeated. Historically the event came to be called ‘the eucharist’. It seems to have a connection with 1 Timothy 4:4–5, ‘For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving; for then it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer’, that is, what God has created is sanctified by thanksgiving and prayer.

What, then, is ‘the priesthood of all believers’? It must be no less than what is spoken of Israel in Exodus 19:5–6, and we ought to refresh ourselves in that. It is the new, elect race of God, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s *segulla*, who, because of Christ’s works, now have even more wonderful works of God to communicate to the world than Israel had, and having been Gentiles can tell of being called by God out of darkness into His marvellous light—light they had not hitherto known. So great have been God’s mercies.

It is in this context that Peter says all believers are living stones being built together into a spiritual house of which Christ is the living foundation stone, in order to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable through Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Sacrifices

What are ‘spiritual sacrifices’ and what does it mean that they are ‘acceptable through Jesus Christ’? One immediate answer is Hebrews 13:15–16:

Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

It seems that ‘to do good and to share what you have’ is part, if not all, of ‘spiritual sacrifices’. Certainly there is no hint of bloody sacrifices or of things mediatorial, but at the same time he who is ‘the minister [*leitourgos*] in the sanctuary’ leads us in worship which is

¹³ Just as Christ is the head of the church and his body is the church, and all are members of his body, so the temple is his people, he being the cornerstone, and all builded into him (1 Cor. 3:16; cf. 1 Pet. 2:4–5). He is the second and last Adam, and all his people are in him—‘in Christ shall all be made alive’—so he is *all* redeemed humanity.

¹⁴ *The Prayer Book of the Church of England*, 1662, Prayer of Consecration—‘he once offered a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, satisfaction and oblation for the sins of the whole world’.

spiritual. In Philippians 4:18 the gifts sent to Paul are counted as ‘a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God’. Again, in Philippians 2:17 Paul says, ‘Even if I am to be poured as a libation upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all’. He means by this that there is a possibility that he may die for the sake of the Philippians’ faith. Both Paul and his people are joyous in such a sacrifice. Paul also speaks to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:6), ‘For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come’. That is, his death will be a sacrifice, but not in any sense a peculiar one. It is similar to Romans 15:16, ‘to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit’. ‘Priestly service’ could certainly be equated with 1 Peter 2:9 where it is declaring ‘the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light’.

Romans 12:1–2 likewise helps us to understand such sacrifices:

I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Here no animal offering is to be offered to God, being killed in the process, but the body—the alive body—of the believer. Redeemed by Christ, filled and energised by God with the Holy Spirit, and supplied with all gifts essential to true worship in the harmony of the church body, each person is active in worship—service within God’s plan.

As we have indicated, the whole priestly people manifests the nature of God, and this is to glorify Him in the eyes of all creation. Here each person lives, through the body, his or her worship to God in every movement, every motion, every work, every faculty the life of God. Looking, seeing, hearing, speaking, acting are all perceivable, even down to ‘body language’. Human beings understand human actions, and so worship here is intelligible, or, as Paul says, ‘reasonable’. The whole priesthood, that is, that of all believers, worshipping God in this manner appropriate to His most glorious Being, are showing that God has succeeded in His purpose for creation—that they may know Him in all His nature, that they may understand that He is love, that He is light and that He has created all things for their goal of glorification, sanctification and perfection.

Our future Studies will concern the way in which history has developed, and the apostolic ministry has been accorded or not accorded its true place in the principle of sacrifice and other priestly operations. This will cause us to explore in detail what the corporate priesthood means in the light of the apostolic church and the gifts and ministries of all members, so that we can compare it with what is happening in the churches today.

From the NCTM Monday Pastors' Study Group, 2nd April, 2001. Pastoral Dynamics Series (cont.).

Gordon Fee in his *Gospel and Spirit*, subtitled '*Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics*',¹⁵ has two diagrams, (**see following pages**) the first being a large circle named 'laity' and surmounting it a smaller circle named 'clergy', that is, those who are not laity. His second diagram is of a circle larger than the first large circle, and obviously enlarged by the inclusion, within it, of the former circle named 'clergy'. This small circle within the large one is now named 'leaders' and the whole circle is named 'people'. Fee certainly makes his point. I suppose that a circle which named all ministries, and all gifts both domatic and charismatic—which incidentally are both one *as* charismatic¹⁶ (I Cor. 12:28f.)—would then indicate the powerful people situation in ministry. None would be without a gift and so none without ministry, for all are ministers (Eph. 4:12) and the interrelation, interdependency, and unity of all members of the Body of Christ all share the operations of the church on mission with God.

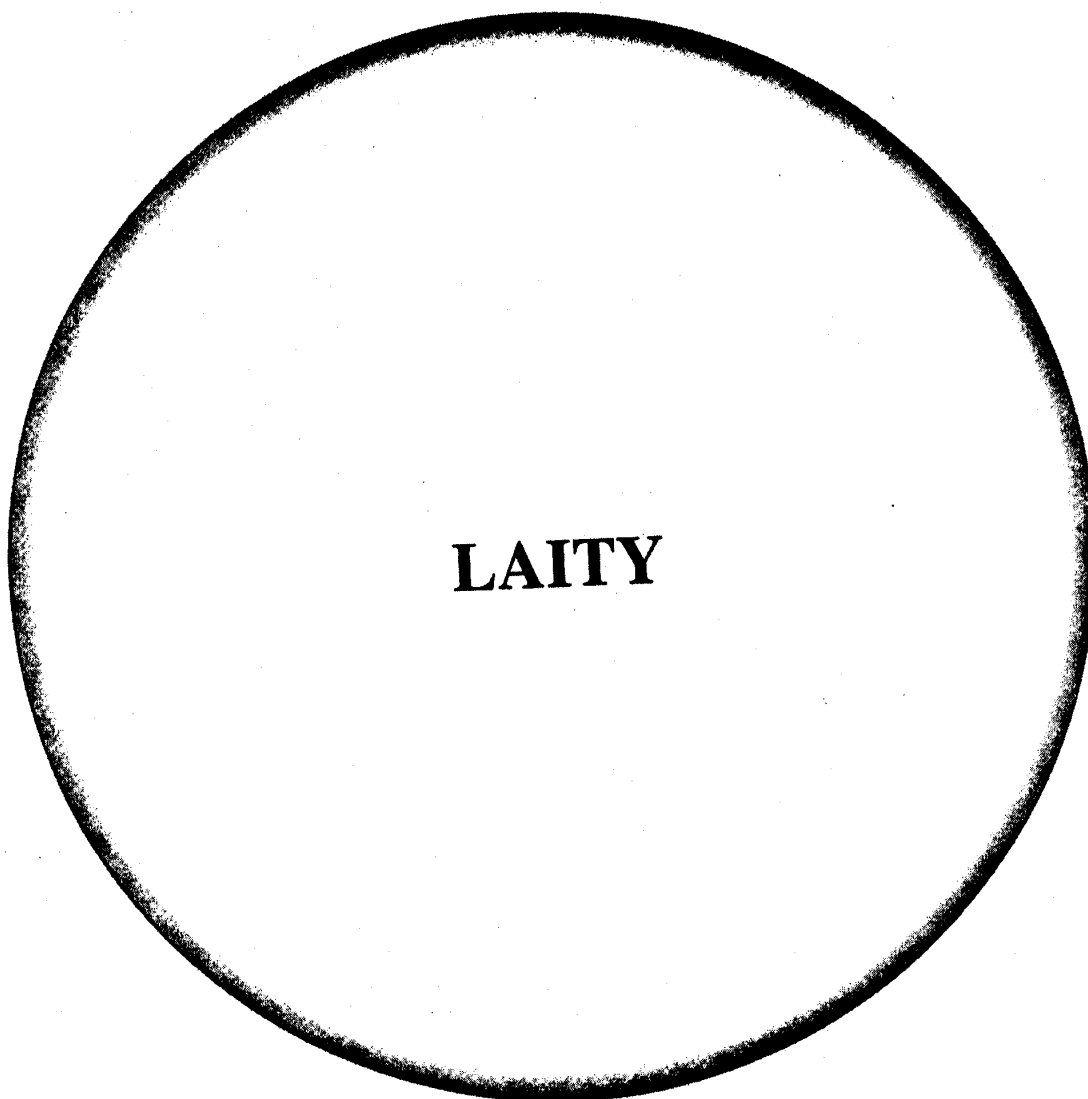
This, indeed, is a wonderful presentation and cuts across any clergy-laity idea. It might be bewildering to be faced with such a dynamic and varied church as it was in action, but better this than the kind of hierarchical order that we now seem to receive and even espouse. None but the Holy Spirit could create and raise up the church of the apostolate, but then it lived in the empowerment, guidance and life of the Spirit, producing the fruit of the Spirit, living in unity and love, receiving and giving ministry, and alert in the proclamation as the community of purpose.

¹⁵ Published by Henrickson Publishers Inc., Peabody, 1993, p. 122.

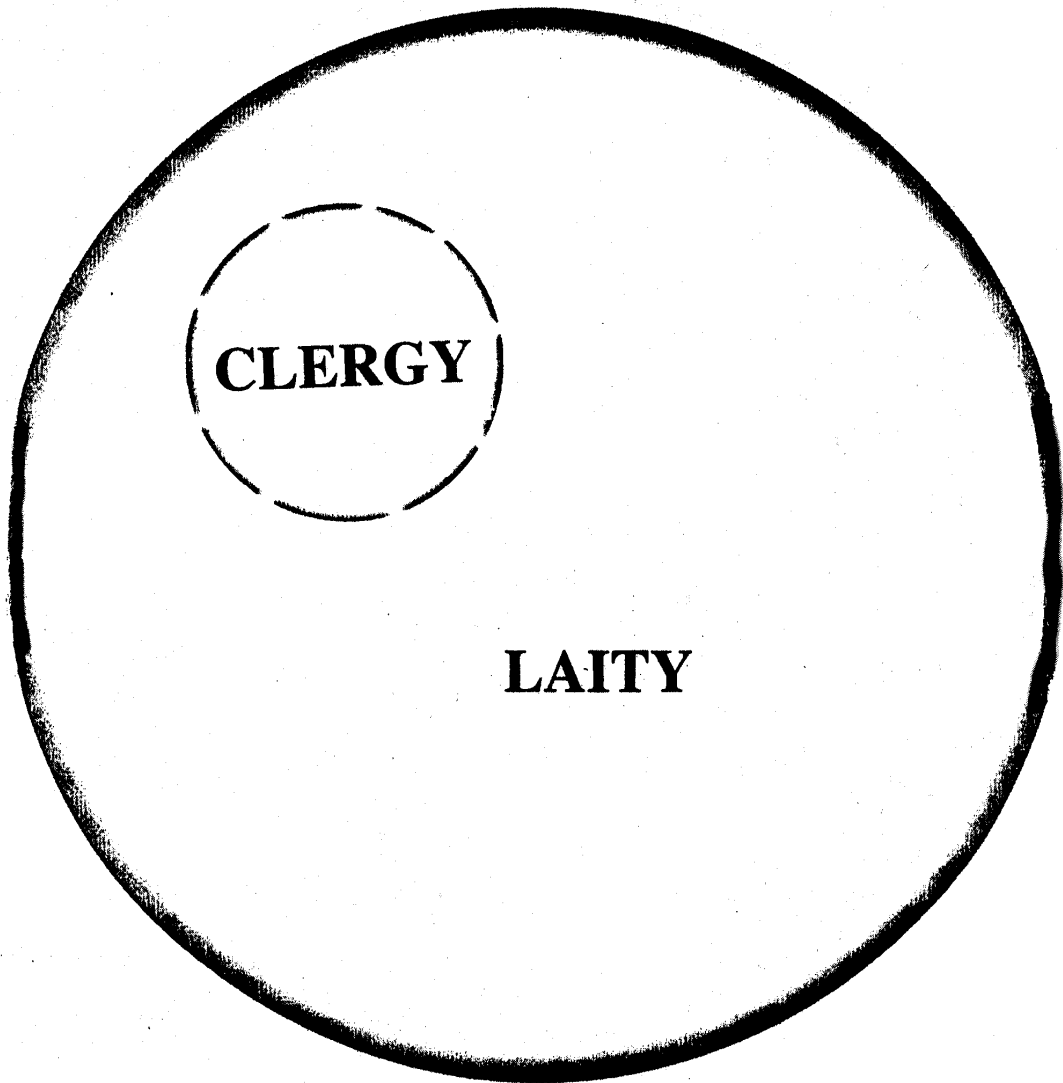
¹⁶ We mean that the *domatic* gifts of 'first apostles, second prophets, third teachers', then the *charismatic* gifts of 'healers, helpers, administrators, [etc.]', are put together as though they are the one, that is, of the one *charisma*.



**THE CHURCH AS
CLERGY AND
LAITY**



**THE CHURCH AS
LAITY WITH
CLERGY**



**GIFTS AND MINISTRIES—DOREA, DOMATA,
CHARISMATA**

GIFTINGS, SERVICES AND WORKINGS

The Church the Priesthood of All Believers—IV

THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH ORDER

We have seen that the ultimate people of God will be the church, the church which was in being from the beginning—the people known as the people of faith and love,¹ especially as depicted in Hebrews chapter 11—followed by the *qahal* or gathering of Israel, and what we know now as the *ecclesia* or church built by Christ. We take it that when he said, 'I will build *my church*', then he was speaking of the new church which we call the apostolic one, that of the New Testament.² We suggest that there has ever only been one church, but that it has been in various stages and forms throughout history. We have said that the purpose of God creating the world was to glorify Himself. Creation tells forth His glory continuously. Man, who is an essential part of creation, is intended to show God's glory—especially His moral glory—by being the image of God. We have noted in our last Study that what we call the moral glory of God cannot be shown by the physical creation, of itself. It requires Man to be in perfect moral living to manifest fully the true glory of God. That is, God is love, goodness, righteousness, holiness and truth; those moral properties which constitute His being. Man is given these elements so that he may be Man and reflect God's glory. They are not intrinsically part of him, but are essential to his being truly, wholly human and are continually supplied from God, though only as he is continually obedient to God; otherwise they become ego-centred and cease to be as they originally came from God.

We have seen that those in the church are 'to be to the praise of his glory' (Eph. 1:11–14). Praising God's glory is virtually manifesting that glory, that is, in the manner that an image reflects the reality. Examples of this action are, 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven' (Matt. 5:16), that is, the way that we live in light will show God's glory. This can be greatly multiplied by similar Scriptures. Only when there is 'glory in the church by Christ Jesus' (Eph. 3:21) can the church be to the praise of His glory, it being 'the fulness of God' (Eph. 3:19). In Matthew 5:43–48 it is the church showing the Father's love in perfection through loving relationships. In the Revelation it is the whole church fully praising and honouring God for His ministry of salvation (Rev. 5:9–14; 7:9–14), His victory over evil powers (11:15–18), His ways of judgment (15:1–4; 16:4–7), and the ultimate defeat of all evil and the climactic event of the Marriage of the Bride and the Lamb (19:1–8).

Without Man being redeemed and formed into the *ecclesia*, the living temple of God (Rom. 12:1–2; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; Heb. 12:22–24, 28; 13:14–16; 1 Pet. 2:4–10; cf. John 4:20f.; Phil. 3:3) and created as a spiritual priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, the moral glory of God will not be seen, and so God will not be glorified in all the creation. The Praise (*Hallel*) Psalms³ are occupied in the worship of God. We have noted that Psalm 148

¹ We take 'by faith' in Hebrews 11 to be the mark of the historic church. One John 3:10–18 shows that love was another mark, as Abel was both a man of faith and a person of love.

² Hebrews 11 speaks of the people of faith from the time of Abel to the time of Abraham, and then from Abraham to the time of Christ. For this writer and the people of God, 'faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen'. They hope for what has been promised by God. Yet they did not receive the fulfilment of promises here—'And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect' (vv. 39–40). All the time they were seeking 'a homeland', 'the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God'. For these people of faith the city had the same configurations as has the New Testament church, that is, the Holy City. Thus Stephen can talk of 'the [*ecclesia*] in the wilderness' (Acts 7:38). The temple at Jerusalem resolves itself into the temple which is the NT *ecclesia* (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; see Isa. 56:6–8).

³ The Hallel Psalms are Ps. 113 – 118—the 'Egyptian Hallel'—and are sung at the Feasts of Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles and Dedication. The 'Great Hallel' are Psalms 146 – 150, which with 145 are sung at all morning services. All Psalms must have contributed much to the life, thought, and worship of Israel the nation.

enjoins all creation to be one in its being to the praise of His glory. This appears to be the destined occupation of creation of which Man is *a*, if not *the*, most significant part.

The Visibilising of God

We saw, in particular, that the church throughout the ages has visibilised God by being His *segullah*, His chosen and treasured possession beyond all nations, as His priestly Kingdom for all nations, and His holy nation so that it can bring the nations as yet unsanctified to full consecration to the worship and service of God. By using the word ‘visibilised’ we mean nothing more and nothing less than what is set forth in Colossians 1:15 where Christ is said to be ‘the visible expression [image] of the invisible God’. The word ‘visible’ is not present in the text, but ‘the image of the invisible God’ indicates the effect of revealing the nature of God. Hebrews 1:3, ‘He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature’, is likewise showing God as He is. John 1:18 is also along this line of unveiling God, ‘No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known’. Jesus’ statement to Philip in John 14:9–10 amplifies the point:

Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me, Philip? *He who has seen me has seen the Father*; how can you say, “Show us the Father?” Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does his works.’

We can scarcely say, ‘He who has seen the church has seen God’, yet because the church is *in* the Son it is *in* the image of God and so can declare the Father. Paul speaks of the church at Thessalonica being ‘in the Father’, and the church is almost exclusively called ‘the church of God’. It is the church which worships and serves God ‘in the Spirit’. The Holy Spirit joins in revealing God (John 16:14–15).

THE ACTION OF GOD IN HIS PEOPLE, THE CHURCH

The church is not a subject in that it goes out to act from itself to accomplish something. But God accomplishes something by it. We have spoken generally of God flowing His properties or essences into Man at creation, emphasising the fact that Man by exercising these will be a medium of revealing God. It was intended that all mankind would reveal God by living out His moral glory. Moses had felt the need of knowing that moral glory in order to lead God’s people to Canaan. They were to proceed in the light and the power of that glory. Moses spoke of the glory in terms of ‘presence’, that is, God’s Presence. Although acclaimed as His covenant people, they had already provoked God by their idolatry, for idolatry visibilises the god through the image and the way that worship–service is given. Moses wished his people to be seated into God’s glory so that the elements of Exodus 19:5–6 would be manifested in action. A close study of Exodus 33:12 – 34:10 is required to see this.

There is no such thing as a passive display of God’s glory. The manifestation of God’s attributes is not possible except by participation in God. We may determine to imitate or copy His qualities of love, righteousness, holiness, truth and goodness, but these are only active *when His people are sharing in His plan*. It is in the action, the forward movement, the mobility of the plan being fulfilled that the moral properties come into operation, for they are pro-active, never merely imitable in a passive sense. This participation or *koinonia* of God and Man is participation in the will of God, which is participation in the plan of God. *Supply* in the Old Testament was not merely providence—that which kept alive—but the provision for the people to be God’s people in action. Likewise *supply* in the New Testament.⁴ God is not

⁴ The idea of supply, such as when Israel was travelling in the wilderness, bound for Canaan, may be thought to be life-sustaining provision, but it was more than that. It was the supply given in order to enable them to fulfil His will and plan. Likewise the prayer in the NT, ‘Give us this day our daily bread’, is not for the supply of daily sustenance so much as for the power and life to share with God in ‘Thy will be done’.

seeking to visibilise His glory by training His people to be morally correct, but to visibilise His nature by their sharing His plan. Of course we must understand His word to be aiding in this visibilising, for there are no gifts and ministries which are not related in one way or another to the word of God.

The actions of God are those which cause His people to love Him, that is, His creating and redeeming operations. He creates His people as a worshipping and serving people by His own honouring of them and His own mission to them, His working to glorify, sanctify and perfect them, this being the goal of His intention, the eschatological outcome which enables them to operate in the new age, the age beyond the *telos* but for which the *telos* is designed. The church does not so much share in this His pre-*telos* mission as it *is* His mission in action in this present age—the *segullah* nature of Israel, its priestly kingdom, its holy nation being for all nations—this is God on His mission. So Israel was to be to the praise of His glory. Now it is the church which is mission and is on mission in this eschaton.

At this point we need to note that Israel was sinful. Much of its father Adam was in its life. It so often itched to have God visible to its sight that it walked by sight and not by faith, that is, it was idolatrous. Idolatry visibilises the god behind the image: not that there is anything there to visibilise. Israel needed grace to pardon its idolatry and recreate it as the true people of God in its worship–service. Paul states that the church is also to be to ‘the praise of the glory of His grace’, for without grace it would not be the church, and without grace it could not function as the church, the living image of God.⁵

EQUIPPING THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY

We are now in a position to understand the supply of God for the church so that it might participate in Him and His plan for creation. We have already spoken of much of this when dealing with the gifts and ministries of the church in other Papers. In Acts 2:42 we saw the elements by which they lived—‘And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers’. The four elements are essential to the new community life. ‘The apostles’ teaching’ is the word of God which had already been opened to them in the blessing of the Spirit at Pentecost, as he had led them into all truth, had taught them all things, and had remembranced all Christ’s teaching. This teaching was powerful for their understanding and action as the church. The *koinonia* must not be seen as other than the fellowship with God—‘with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ’—and with one another in socially spiritual life which was of the most dynamic kind. *Koinonia* was always to be love in relationships and so in action, as it immediately manifested itself in the daily distribution and all which we understand to be worship–service. If we understand ‘the breaking of bread’ to be the holy communion of the Lord’s Supper, then it represents worship–service at its best, making the presence of the Lord alive to all.⁶ ‘The prayers’ were the three-hourly prayer times carried out at the temple and were further participation in the worship–service ministry. The community gathered together for these times which were thus most powerful. Together these four elements were the life of the church.

⁵ It is right to question whether the church is the image of God, whether it comes within, ‘Let us make man in our own image’, yet the church being Christ—as it is *in* Christ—is the authentic image of God. All members, personally, are in the image of God, and also corporately. Just how much we should work from God the Reality to the church the image, is a matter for clear thinking.

⁶ Acts 2:46 speaks of gathering together for meals, and this may be what is intended by the statement ‘the breaking of bread’, but probably it was the remembrance–eschaton enactment of the Lord’s Supper which was part of any meal of the church. Paul seems to make much of this in 1 Corinthians 11:23–34. The eucharist—if this is what that was—was certainly that form of worship set out in Romans 12:1–2, namely, the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving which is always based on the once-for-all sacrifice of the Cross.

The Functional Supply for Church Worship—Service, That Is, Glorification of God

We now turn to the supply which was essential for the life and action of the church. We have touched on these in previous Studies but we now desire to bring them together:

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills (1 Cor. 12:4–11).⁷

In this passage Paul speaks of a Trinitarian supply of three elements: (i) different giftings (*charismata*) which are given by the same or one Spirit, that is, gifts in action by the Spirit's inspiration; (ii) different servings (services; *diakoniai*) given by the same (one) Lord who is Christ the Servant; and (iii) different workings (energisings; *energemata*) by the same God, that is, the Father, who energises so that workings or operations can be effected (cf. Phil. 2:12–13). These three elements each have variety in themselves and are different categories, so to speak, although they all work for the one unity in harmony, that is, they function together.

Whatever the application of these three elements they are essential for the Triune working within the body that the body may accomplish its task/s. It would seem, then, from the text of verses 7 to 11, that working of gifts, services and workings are themselves manifestations of the Holy Spirit⁸ and are for the common good, that is, to profit all members of the body. These *charismata*, servings and workings (operations) are one with other terms for gifts. The first of these is *dorea*, the second is *domata*, and the third is *charismata*—and all are linked in with *services* and *workings*. *Dorea* is a special gift, and if we may say, one of high standing. It refers to God's gift of grace (Eph. 2:7), of Christ (2 Cor. 9:15), Christ's gift to us (Eph. 4:7),⁹ the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; 8:20; 10:45; 11:17), the gift of God's righteousness (Rom. 5:15, 17; cf. 2 Cor. 5:21). *Domata* is the word used in Ephesians 4:8 of the five ministries, namely apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher.¹⁰ The word *charismata* is well known since it embraces gifts which seem to be beyond the ordinary—that is, natural—gifts or talents, although this is not necessarily the case. In 1 Corinthians 14:1 *charismata* are called 'the spirituals' (*ta pneumatika*). One Corinthians 12:28–30 seems to mingle *domata* and *charismata* to some degree so that they are not necessarily exclusive of one another.

In 1 Peter 4:10 the writer emphasises the fact that as each has received a *charisma* so he, with all others, ought to minister it as the manifold (variegated) grace of God, and adds that the exercising of it is by the strength which God supplies (*choregei*). Romans 12 has another list of gifts (*charismata*). Paul says in verses 4–6:

For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith . . . ,

⁷ In footnote 4 we have talked of supply as that given by God by which the church subsists and is enabled to do the will of God. Here we are speaking of supply as we find it in Philippians 1:19 which can be rendered, 'by the supply of the Spirit' (*epicoregias*), or, 'that which the Spirit supplies'.

⁸ In 1 Corinthians 12:10 there are 'operations of powers', that is, *energemata dunameon* or 'workings of miracles'. In Ephesians 4:12 we have 'the work [*ergon*] of ministry'.

⁹ 'Grace has been given as Christ apportioned it' (NIV); 'a special gift, a share in Christ's bounty' (REV).

¹⁰ See also its use in Matthew 7:11, Luke 11:13, and Philippians 4:17.

thus confirming the teaching he gives elsewhere, that the church is a body of gifts and ministries as all persons are members one of another, that is, a concerted ministering body.

THE TRUE ORDER OF THE CHURCH

Whilst agreeing that the above investigation into gifts needs a wider and more detailed presentation I would now like to present what I believe was and is the true nature of the church, namely that it was Christ's body supplied with Christ's gifts and ministries so that it could be effective in God's mission for the world, that is, that it could be that company (*koinonia*) which visibilised the living God to creation, and in being to the praise of His glory could help to bring creation to its true *telos* with a view to the action of eternity. By *telos* we mean that climax in which all members of God's people would—along with all creation—be sanctified, glorified and perfected.

I believe the key is given partly to us in Ephesians 4:7–16. If we take the text of verses 7–11, we have:

But grace was given to *each of us* according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it is said, 'When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.' (In saying, 'He ascended,' what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is he who also ascended far above all the heavens, *that he might fill all things*.)¹¹ And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

This list, here, of *domata* shows us a picture different to what is presented to us today where, effectively, a church is headed up by a pastor or group of pastors or priests. What was essential to the nature of the apostolic church was the tandem ministry of the five *domata*. Whilst agreeing that the first twelve—or thirteen—apostles were irreplaceable, yet I believe the five *domata* are intended to be continuous in action until the Parousia. It appears to me that what we name as *dorea*, *domata* and *charismata* are indispensable to the order of the church, by nature of the case. This is not a claim for a static, repetitive state of the church: to the contrary, it is a claim for a continuously dynamic state. The virtual shrivelling up of the *domata*, and the excision of some of the *charismata*, with the failure to emphasise the place and importance of the *dorea* has brought into being the intensely hierarchical state of churches like that of Rome, the virtually hierarchical ministry of pastor-led and pastor-controlled congregations of the more Pentecostal kind, and the haphazard and arbitrary nature of so-called 'contemporary worship'.¹²

I want to gather together numerous elements I have emphasised in past Studies concerning pastoral dynamics because I believe that the successors to the ministries of the *domata* are essential and quite probably, too, are extant. Since these five gifts were essential 'to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ', how could it be that with the excision of these gifts the church could attain to its fullness in Christ, maintain it, and have a fully effective ministry? I assume that not only the *domata* but also the *dorea* and *charismata* are essential for 'equipping the saints for the work of the ministry'; thus building up the church in love, and

¹¹ The *telos* is when all things will have been headed up (united and consummated) in Christ (Eph. 1:10), filled up in him (Eph. 1:22–23), reconciled in him (Col. 1:19–22) and harmonised in him (Col. 3:14). All members of his body will have been first justified and forgiven sins, and sanctified to Christ's worship–service (1 Cor. 6:9–11; cf. Rom. 12:1–2).

¹² At this point of the Study I wish to indicate that I do not believe the state of the church was egalitarian or democratic, any more than I think it was structurally, fully hierarchical as we understand modern hierarchy.

confronting the world with the gospel. The three diagrams given with this paper will illustrate my argument.

The thesis is this: the church was the body of Christ in full unity and action because it was the community operating with gifts (*dorea*, *domata* and *charismata*), services (*diakoniai*), and workings (*energemata*), being in the Father, headed by Christ, and giving worship—service in the Holy Spirit. I have much time in my thinking for the principle of hierarchy in God’s creation, as also in His church, but I am afraid that the word itself is repugnant to many and must be dealt with fully before it can be introduced into our thesis and I propose to do this separately. There is a practice of a form of hierarchy in the church which I do not think is valid. The clergy—laity hierarchy does not seem to fit the principle of the people of God being one body. The terms ‘friends’, ‘brothers’ or ‘brotherhood’, ‘children of God’, ‘sons of God’, ‘family’, ‘household’, ‘saints’, and others, all seem to point to a community of which elders, pastors, deacons and leaders are members along with all other members. There is no denying that in all this there are elements of hierarchy for there are still the ‘husband—wife’,¹³ ‘parents—children’, ‘apostle—apostolate’, ‘elder—younger’, ‘leader—led’, ‘teacher—taught’, ‘pastor—flock’ relationships. These are all essential for true unity. They do not counter the love unity but strengthen it and thus are all ‘to the praise of His glory’ in the action of worship—service before God and for God.¹⁴

The question of how all the gifts, services, and workings operate, and under which system they are required to be, is answered by the continual Triune supply of them. Christ, as Head and King of the Kingdom, has direction for his people, and as *Leitourgos* in the heavenly sanctuary he enables worship—service in the church on earth (cf. Heb. 8:1–2; 13:15; 1 Pet. 2:5). The Holy Spirit as ‘the Spirit of worship’ (John 4:23–24; Phil. 3:3) certainly makes all worship ‘rational’ (cf. Rom. 12:1) and as the Spirit of love, unity, and fellowship, makes certain that the use of all the supply does not become irrational.¹⁵ We might say that the Spirit is the unseen Conductor of all true worship—service. In the ultimate it is to the Father that this worship—service is directed (John 4:23–24), and since the church is ‘in the Son’ who is himself the eternal Intercessor, then the gifts, services, and workings are under Triune direction. By this we see that the Triune God does not leave the church to be free to worship without any direction or motivation from Himself.

To repeat: the thesis I put forward is that the church is the community which is active by means of its gifts, ministries and workings—all given by God—that is, active in worship—service which itself covers all the life and work of the church. We note, for example, that pastors, as such, do not appear to formulate or control embodied worship. Paul, as an apostle, may recommend the general use of prophecy as against the general use of tongues (1 Cor. 14:13–25) but he does not prescribe. Indeed all of 1 Corinthians 14 is recommendation and not prescription, for it is the Spirit who leads worship. It is when the congregation is in the Spirit, in Christ the *Leitourgos* and in the Father as His children, that worship is at its fullest. In this paragraph we have used the term ‘embodied worship’ as referring to the church gathered in a place and worshipping, but in another sense all worship is embodied because the

¹³ There is a hierarchy of a kind in 1 Corinthians 11:3, ‘But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God’. Because of the non-descending order of this relationship, and because ‘head’ is supposed to refer only to ‘source’ or ‘original’, this verse is taken to be non-hierarchical. The opposition to finding hierarchy in this verse may well spring from the repugnance some scholars have for human hierarchy, and this is understandable. What if, however, this is the proper form of hierarchy—the form that it takes, that is, Man’s head being Christ, the woman’s head being her husband, and Christ’s head being God? In this form of hierarchy—the Father being in Christ, Christ being in the man, the man being in the woman, and then the woman being in the man, the man being in Christ, and Christ being in the Father, the Father being in all—nothing can be found which is harsh or tyrannical. Even so, the idea of *kephale* (head) as only meaning *origin* or *source* can be questioned, as indeed it is, presently. The passage of Ephesians 1:19–23 certainly has a different meaning for *kephale*, and Ephesians 5:21–24 requires the wife to be subject to her husband as is the church to Christ.

¹⁴ We will seek to see further the necessity of the giftings—servings—workings for the structure, nature and unity of the church, believing that they are indispensable to the love operations which manifest God’s moral glory.

¹⁵ I can think of nothing more calculated to give us a window on the nature of worship—service and am puzzled why this is not more understood, explored and emphasised.

body of Christ is worshipping by all it does—proclamation, overcoming Satan, serving both God and Man, fulfilling needs, interceding, fellowshiping in holy action, and so on.

LEADERSHIP OF THE CHURCH

In the April 2001 Study (pp. 6–9) of our present Pastoral Dynamics Series I suggested that ‘the leaders’ of 1 Thessalonians 5:12–13, Hebrews 13:7, 17 and James 5:14–15 were not necessarily only the pastors,¹⁶ though we should include them also as authentic *domata* and not see them as officers but as those having a *charism* and hence being dynamic members of the body, exercising pastoral care. The other four *domata* also constitute leaders though for the most part their ministries were mobile. If we keep in mind that all gifts and ministries were interdependent then we see that the tiered ‘clergy’ and ‘laity’ which we have today were neither present nor essential.

What we need to see was that the pastor–elders, who were indeed local leaders, looked to what we might call ‘the apostolic overlay’. By this we mean the apostles and their co-workers. Take Titus as an example. How do we classify him? In Titus 1:5 Titus had been told by Paul to ‘amend what was defective, and appoint elders in every town’. This shows that Titus was familiar with apostolic doctrine and had authority as an apostolic delegate. Paul had also sent Titus to Corinth, and in 2 Corinthians 7:15 spoke of the way that the church had received him: ‘And his heart goes out all the more to you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, and the fear and trembling with which you received him’. Certainly Titus was a leader. I now quote further from my April Pastors’ Study:

Paul also speaks of others who deserve recognition with respect, such as in Romans 16:1–16. Prisca and Aquila are looked on by Paul as ‘fellow-workers’, and Paul says that he and ‘all the churches of the Gentiles’ give thanks for their ministry. In 1 Corinthians 16:15–16 Paul speaks of Stephanas, ‘Now, brethren, you know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints; *I urge you to be subject to such men and to every fellow worker and laborer*’. It is remarkable that Paul enjoins, ‘*I urge you to be subject to such men and to every fellow worker and laborer*’. What does he mean by this? Surely to subject oneself to another implies some kind of authority. The idea in Ephesians 5:21, ‘Be subject to one another’, may be a general injunction, but Paul seems immediately to refer it to: (i) wives to husbands; (ii) children to parents; and (iii) servants to masters. So, being subject to Stephanas is another type case of submission.

Paul’s letter to the church at Colossae also provides ‘a medley of leaders’. It is clear that it was through ‘Epaphras our beloved fellow servant’ that the church at Colossae was born. At the same time, ‘He is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf’. In chapter 4 he appears again as a fellow worker for the Kingdom of God, and ‘he has worked hard for those in Laodicea and those in Hierapolis’ (4:12–13). What does all this mean? Is Epaphras a church builder or a church shepherd? What is his ‘office’? Beginning at 4:7 we see a list of ‘fellow workers’ and ‘faithful ministers’, and ‘workers for the kingdom of God’. They are Tychicus, Onesimus, Aristarchus, Mark ‘the cousin of Barnabas’, Jesus Justus, Luke ‘the beloved physician’ and Demas. In what category are they? Paul would have them all honoured. Surely they are among the *leaders* of the churches.

If we look closely at 1 Thessalonians 5:12–14 we see that those ‘who are *over you* in the Lord and *admonish you*’ are to be esteemed in love because of their work. They might well be the elders but notice that Paul calls all his readers ‘brethren’ and exhorts them likewise to admonish, encourage, and support others in patience. All are brethren and have like ministry. In Hebrews 13:7 the writer says, ‘Remember your leaders [*ton hegoumenon*], those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith’. He indicates they were leaders in the past ‘who spoke to you the word of God’ and the members of the church are to fashion themselves on their fruitful lives. Hebrews 13:17 obviously speaks of the present leaders and exhorts submission to them, ‘for they are keeping watch

¹⁶ I propose to re-write the booklet *Shepherds of the Flock* (NCPI, 1985) in which I took the position that ‘the leaders’ were primarily the pastors.

over your souls, as men who will have to give account. Let them do this joyfully, and not sadly, for that would be of no advantage to you.’ If we look further to Peter’s words of 1 Peter 5:1–5 then we will see how pastors, being shepherds under the Chief Shepherd, should conduct themselves with the flock of God. Those who are younger should submit themselves to the elders and *all* are to clothe themselves with humility towards one another. Here is no clergy–laity paradigm.

Often, today, we have assumed that the NT church leaders are what we see as our contemporary clergy or pastors, but it could well be that the leaders we have described in the last two paragraphs are not necessarily only local elders/pastors, but include that ministry which seemed to be to local churches by mobile ministries of apostles, prophets, evangelists and teachers. It seems that the churches looked to their founders who came in teams, visiting the churches from time to time. Such ministries would fit with all local gifts and ministries including those of pastors. The visiting ministries are given on the principle that all Christ’s people are members one of another, and all minister for the common good.

AN EVALUATION OF THE PAULINE APOSTOLICAL MINISTRY PRESENTATION

The thesis I have presented is that the *koinonia*, that is, the fellowship of the *ecclesia*, is a matter of giftings, servings, workings, energised from the Triune God so that the *dorea*—‘God’s gift of grace, Christ’s gift to us, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and God’s righteousness—the *domata*—apostles, prophets, evangelists pastors and teachers, along with all other gifts and ministries (*charismata*), is the way in which the church works out the will, that is, the counsel, of God. The church is God’s chosen and treasured possession, His priesthood, His special holy people who tell the nations the wonderful deeds of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvellous light. They form a spiritual house, being living stones joined together on the foundation of Christ the living foundation stone, and as such they offer up spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving through their worship–service leader, Christ the *Leitourgos*. As such, the church of the New Testament did not exercise a stratified ministry: ministry was an harmonious unity. Serving and humility were marks of the *ecclesia*. In the Triune God the marks of the deity of the Three Persons are mutual honouring, serving, giving and receiving, all of which amount to love. Likewise this is the order of the church for such is *koinonia*. All members are in the Three Persons as the Three Persons are in them. So in the church the mutuality of love¹⁷ ensures the church being ‘to the praise of His glory’, that is, its visibilising of the nature of God and His glory.

In evaluating this interpretation of the order of the church we need to take other interpretations into account. One school of thought is that my proposition is faulty in that I have given only one ecclesial system—Paul’s. I have insisted on the continuity of *dorea*, *domata* and *charismata* as essential to true *ecclesia*. There are other systems such as the Matthean, the Lukan, the Petrine and the Johannine, as also the one of the writer of ‘Hebrews’. More to the point is the understanding that the Pastoral Epistles were not written by Paul, nor was Ephesians, so significant to the doctrine of the church. Of the Pastoral Epistles it is said that a changed order from the Pauline ‘charismatic’ one, shows the church now to have a layered ministry of elder–pastors, deacons and people—later to be called ‘laity’.

Ernst Käsemann is one who is supportive of the fact of a change in the Pastoral Epistles from the Pauline order but regrets it for he sees deterioration in the church where it departs from the charismatic order:

¹⁷ It is right to speak about ‘the mutuality of love’ and at the same time it is imperative to indicate that there is also the mutuality of righteousness, holiness, goodness and truth, for these are all God’s moral qualities and none is apart from the others but all constitute the whole of God.

It would not be practical for us to extend this investigation of the relation between office and community over the whole of the New Testament. But it is nevertheless useful to sketch in bold outline, and as a kind of foil to the Pauline outlook, that antithesis of it which has gained a foothold in the New Testament itself, especially in the Pastorals and in Luke's writings. The Church order of the Pastorals has sometimes been seen as an expression of the fact that Christians were settling down in the world. This may be true to some extent; the dwindling of the element of primitive Christian eschatology is certainly evidence for it. But more important still is the fact that the community of which the Pastorals are the mouthpiece is being heavily pressed back on to the defensive and its order represents something in the nature of a stockade erected against its assailants in a last despairing effort for survival.¹⁸

The case for the growth of offices and tiered ministries such as bishop, presbyters and deacons on the one hand and laity on the other, seems to have been fairly well established, but I, myself, doubt it. Whilst useful insights may be gained by looking at supposed Matthean, Lukan, Petrine, Johannine and Pauline church orders, surely the church is the church, the body of Christ and all that Paul describes it as being. We also have the picture in Revelation chapter 1 of Christ, the one risen from the dead, as King of kings and Lord of Lords, as walking amongst the candlesticks and doing what he describes in his letters to the seven churches. In them is no fuss about offices. The Lord holds the churches in his right hand. An ecclesiology—Johannine?—developed from them would be quite useful, but it is the life and behaviour demanded by Christ which is the point.

I believe that in the battle for the church order as given in 1 Peter 2:4–10 we have forgotten—whichever side we may be on—that the church may not have been operating functionally over the centuries, in its development of the clergy–laity system as a fixed, ontological order, as though its hierarchical structure is valid. Such a system seems almost to demand the excision of certain—if not most—*dorea*, *domata* and *charismata*. These elements may always have been present in spite of the more formulated hierarchical clergy–laity structure. What of the changes in the church down through its 2000 years of history, of the paradigm shifts as they are now being called? What of them? It seems to me the three giftings, services and workings are no less needed in any age, since—I believe—they are essential to the nature of the church and its proper functioning.

One key to understanding the living order of the church through which Christ offers life to the world is to look at the medley of ministries we find in the world today, a medley which relates to the life of the church. We talk about 'para-church ministries', whatever that strange title may mean. Have there not always been ministries in the church which do not fit the church order of the day? Churches elect elders, but are there not elders in the congregation, unrecognised as such but which fit the bill better than some elected professionals? Have not the clergy been placed in office with the expectancy that they will supply what only the full *dorea–domata–charismata* tandem ministry could accomplish? Might it not give a chill to the spine to believe that in spite of the presence of professional offices Christ has been ever in the midst of the candlesticks and that numerous ministries are not 'para-church' but true church ministries? This thought could send us on an expedition, seeking to recognise ministries which, even though they through the centuries have been unrecognised, are yet properly active.

CONCLUSION: CHURCH ORDER MUST NOT BE AN IDOLATRY

Let us be clear, search for church order is not in order to dismantle the clergy–laity system. Other elements, anyway, seem to be threatening that order, and one of them is the push for an egalitarian church, an undesirable prescription to say the least. No less undesirable is the democratic form of church, for reasons contained within democracy itself. If there is only a 'lay'

¹⁸ 'Ministry and Community in the New Testament', an article in his book *Essays on New Testament Themes* (SCM, London, 1964), p. 85. His whole essay is most valuable in giving us fresh views of the NT church order.

desire for the equivalent of clerical power then the drive will simply sustain and extend the human desire to rule. If unseating pastors means a gain to the so-called 'laity', then nothing good will have been accomplished. It is not political oversight or undersight we seek to obtain, but the freeing of the *koinonia* from bondages which may have come. Nor can this be effected by attempted reformation or revival. What is needed must come by obedience to the Lord of the church who is at the same time King of the Kingdom.

The Book of the Revelation should teach us that Satan and all his powers gnash their teeth regarding the church. The church fights against the powers of the false trinity of chapter 13—the red dragon, the beast, and spirit image-animater, the false prophet. Church order seems to be a matter for religious debate rather than for spiritual battle, yet spiritual proclamation is tied in with the *koinonia* of the holy people and the Lordship of Christ as the Battle-Leader of his people. The red dragon seeks to work within the church as the man of sin seeks to show himself as leader within the temple of God, the temple being the church (2 Thess. 2:3–4). What we discover from Revelation chapters 2 and 3 is that the church lives even where Satan's seat is, that it can think itself alive when it is virtually dead, that evil seeks to live within the church but that its Lord will not give up on it. So much so, that the church defeats the beast, refusing its mark and is counted as part of 'the armies of heaven'. Under its conquering Lord it fights the forces who are in conflict with the Creator and Redeemer of creation. This is the church which constantly faces new configurations of history but is not defeated by them.

The *ecclesia*, we have said, is not a subject in itself, free to go its own way. The Triune God is the working subject and enables His love-community to be His agent in history, to set forth life which is eternal in quality, and so to dispense forgiveness of sins and eternal life to a needy world as it—the church—lives within that Divine life. It is inconceivable that He leaves the church to its own devices. The church is His medium of visibilising Himself, and the events of the last 2000 years show how wonderfully He has used it, often in spite of itself. Its history as 'church' has far outclassed any equivalent community. Its great contribution is its eschatology, the fact that it is moving towards God's Intention for all creation, the Intention which takes it into 'the age' to come, or 'the ages upon the ages', and not just to a heavenly refuge or a retreat where its life is enjoyed passively. Browning's 'Rabbi Ben Ezra' with its astonishing, 'Grow old along with me! The best is yet to be, The last of life for which the first was made; Our times are in His hand', is perhaps milder than some of our hearty eschatological banners, but it says that in and through the church, God is fulfilling His pre-creation plan. No wonder He loves His church.

READING LIST FOR ECCLESIOLOGY

It is admitted that the following Reading List is a limited one, but the books recommended have their own, larger Reading Lists which saves me work! The books in this list have so far been my background reading to the Monday Pastors' Studies on the series entitled 'Pastoral Dynamics-2000 –2001'.

*Allen, Roland. *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's Or Ours*. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1962, reprint 1993.

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* Roland Allen's publication are many, and I have chosen two which are typical of him. Roland Allen, *Pioneer, Priest and Prophet* by his son, Hubert J. B. Allen, has a list of his writings.

I have not listed the various articles I have read but most of these are available in Theological Dictionaries. One cannot speak on the Church without being involved in the present flow of Studies on the Trinity but I have not listed them. Likewise I have not listed the books on Worship, and they are many. My reading on our subject has not been only those listed.

My book *Christ's People in Today's World* (NCPI, Blackwood, 1985) should be useful.

The Story and History of the Everlasting Church

INTRODUCTION: STORY AND HISTORY

A story is the narrative form of events and happenings to and by the subjects and objects of that tale. Mostly it is intended to grip the reader or hearer, and if possible to fascinate and involve that one. A story can be true or fictional, and it can have many aims. One of these is to entertain. By nature of the case a story writer has freedom to vary elements of his tale, so as to shape it the way he thinks is best for his readers and his own reputation as a storyteller. The recording and telling of history is not quite along the same lines. It must be as factual as possible in every detail. Ideally nothing of the historian should enter into it. Even so, historians have their view of history which is their contribution to understanding the nature of history. In theology we can cite salvation history as one way of understanding what we might call 'biblical history'. It has been said, 'One may even go so far as to say that the true glorification of God on earth, which is the perfect worship, has been fulfilled by Jesus Christ in his ministry.'¹ One of the points we have been pressing in our Studies on the church has been that Man was created for the purpose of being 'to the praise of his glory' (Eph. 1:11–14). If this is true then one way of seeing and understanding history is to see it in the light of this thesis, that is, that God has created Man to reveal His glory to the whole of creation, both celestial and terrestrial. More particularly and more powerfully, that community which we call the *ecclesia* is to be a corporate working out of being to the praise of His glory. We need also to see that to be to the praise of His glory means that the church has to participate in Christ, not simply imitating who and what God is but being in the action of God. We will see at the *telos* that God's glory is that He creates, creates the church as His people, and involves them in becoming that community which reveals God to all creation, and forever—that is, beyond the *telos*—as God's partner in the outworking of what He will be doing in 'the age to come', that is, all future action He has planned. One John 4:9–10 tells us that the unseeable God reveals Himself as love by the death of His Son.

We seek, then, in this Study to tell the story of the church in the form of history as it has always been in existence and operating to the praise of His glory. That being the case, let us review briefly the meaning of 'being to the praise of His glory'. It is this, that God is Spirit and invisible to sight. Man cannot see Him, and it may be that celestial creatures hide their eyes from sight of him, as in Isaiah 6:2 where the seraphim covered their eyes with two wings; for as 1 Timothy 6:16 (cf. John 1:18; 1 John 4:12) says, God 'alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen or can see'. The celestial creatures certainly worship God, and it may also be that ultimately they see elements of God through Man. The creation is ever telling the glory of God as Psalm 19:1–4 says, and as Psalm 148 confirms, is a principle of its being, that is, glorifying God which is another way of saying it is to be to the praise of His glory as celestial creatures can articulate that glory. By 'creation' we mean that non-rational part as distinct from the human part of creation. The non-rational part can and does operate to the praise of His glory *as Creator* but only the rational (human) part can glorify God as moral being. This is because Man is made in the image of God, and the moral properties or essences of God can only be shown by Man as he is the image of God.² What God will have matured Man to be at the *telos* will be to the glory of His

¹ *Worship Its Theology and Practice* by J.-J. von Allmen, Lutterworth Press, London, 1965, p. 21.

² Some theologians claim that man is not 'the image and glory of God' as stated in 1 Corinthians 11:7, but he is *in* the image of God and the true image of God is Christ. For our purposes in this disquisition it does not much matter what view we take. It is through Man that God's attributes are revealed, that is, His glory.

grace, but also along the line of that action, Man will be showing (i) the glory of His grace (Eph. 1:5–8; cf. 2:7); and (ii) His full, moral glory (1:12–14).

At this point it will be good for us to introduce preliminary thought on what it is that Man will be glorified for. It will be so that for all eternity he will be ‘to the praise of the glory of God’ by being ‘a kingdom of priests unto our God’ and by reigning on the earth (Rev. 5:10). What Man as God’s image does is in line with what God does, and this reveals—and will continue to reveal—the personal and moral glory of God.

THE BEGINNING OF THE STORY OF THE CHURCH

The church consists only of those who were ‘born crucified’,³ for the church is of those whose names are written ‘in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain’ (Rev. 13:8). The text also, allows an interpretation—the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. It indicates that the whole matter of the Lamb was planned before creation. One Peter 1:20 puts it, ‘He was destined before the foundation of the world but was made manifest at the end of the times for your sake’. Paul has similar language in 2 Timothy 1:8–10, ‘God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago, and now has manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel’. One Corinthians 2:7 is in much the same mode—‘But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification’—showing that the whole range of salvation was planned before creation, and creation was/is something which simply had to be.

Our question is then, ‘For what was the church envisaged and created?’ and the answer must be—as we have seen—‘To be to the praise of his glory’. But substantially what does it mean? It means that the people of God will inherit the world, and that they will reign on the earth, and this very fact will show the nature of God as Creator, Redeemer and as the eternal Father and King. It will be seen in the sanctification, glorification and perfection of His people known in this later age as the church (*ecclesia*) as it was known in Israel as the *qahal*, which was the gathered congregation. What we need to add here is that all from Abel to the end (God’s *telos*) such as Noah, Abraham, true Israelites and the later church, are the church, the beloved possession of God, a priestly and holy people. The writer of Hebrews develops this theme and his conclusion is noteworthy, ‘These all died in faith, not having received what was promised, but having seen it and greeted it from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city’ (Heb. 11:13–16).

THE FALL OF MAN AND THE RISING OF THE SERPENT

Man as created—that is, the man and the woman—were the image and likeness of their Creator. They were fitted to their environment and set for being to the praise of the glory of their Creator; but Eve was beguiled by the serpent and then persuaded her husband, Adam, to eat of the lethal tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Many things have been noted about this event, but one important element was that the serpent insinuated that

³ A phrase used by the French preacher Lacordaire. L. E. Maxwell in his book *Born Crucified* explains: ‘By this he meant that all the members of the divine Head died in and with the last Adam when he laid down his life on Calvary’. The book was published in 1958 by Oliphants, London and the page no. is 7.

God's blessing and commission of Genesis 1:28 were not sufficient. The serpent discounted them both, whereas fulfilling that commission was the way in which the couple—indeed the whole human race—would work to the praise of His glory.

Another important element of the event is that the message of Genesis 3:15—that the seed of the woman would destroy the serpent—began the conflict between Man and the serpent, later described as 'that ancient serpent who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world'. The serpent had his own plan in mind. He sought to develop enmity between God and Man, to destroy the goal of Man's being to the praise of the glory of God by becoming God's *segullah*, the priestly people, and the holy nation, that is, the ultimate in being to the praise of God's glory. The serpent sought to see the destruction of all that is moral—holiness, righteousness, goodness, truth and love. He desired to build a city—later seen as Babylon—to outclass and defeat the Holy City. He desired to imitate and then outclass the Being of the Triune God—as shown in Revelation chapters 12 to 20. He desired to bring forth a woman who would defeat and outclass the woman who would bring forth the seed, namely Babylon. This was the conflict engendered to defeat the woman, the church, and her holy offspring. The serpent would have all creation doing his will as he said 'above the stars [celestial creatures] of God I will set my throne on high' (Isa 14:12–14). His son would be 'the son of perdition' described in 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4, 'Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God'.

The implications of the son of perdition are that far from God being glorified in God's temple—that is, in His people—this evil offspring of Satan and the counterpart of the true Son of God will be seeking the praise of his own glory as though he were God Himself. This tallies with Revelation 13 where the beast that has risen from the sea as the creation of the red dragon, and receives a mortal wound which is the counterpart of Christ's death at the Cross. To show that he is as good as Christ—if not better—he, too, rises from the dead, his mortal wound being healed; and as the counterpart of the risen Christ, he exercises power over the nations, which was the purpose of Christ's resurrection and ascension.

In this section we have shown enough to see that the Serpent wants to achieve the goal which God has set before Himself. God's real purpose is to create a community—a body of people—every member of which is conformed to the image of His Son and thus total in glory, fitted to be in every way to the praise of the glory of Himself, exercising all the more properties, essences, qualities and attributes which are innately His, and by love given to each and all of His elect children. They and not Satan and his 'world' of fallen angels and humans will people the age and ages to come as kings and priests.

We have to draw the conclusion that when the Second and Last Adam came to earth as God becoming Man, then he was 'manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil' (1 John 3:8), so that the church could triumph as the true fellowship (*koinonia*) of God and the family (*patria*) of the Father and the royal priesthood (*hieratuma*) giving total worship and service to God. This means that the true church has not only to pursue righteousness, holiness, goodness, truth and love, and thus glorify God, but by means of these moral gifts of God it has to add to its work the overcoming of Satan which is a vast task indeed.

THE EMPOWERING OF MAN TO FULFIL GOD'S PRIMAL COMMISSION

Genesis 1:26–28 describes God giving His commission to the first couple and so to the whole race. 'Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created

them. And *God blessed them*, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”’

We take it that when God created all things they were capable of being what they were and doing what they were created to do. We would also have to realise that they would ever depend upon God for their action so they could be pro-active. In Genesis 1:20–22 we see that having created the birds and sea creatures that ‘God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.”’ In this situation *blessing* means the power given to be able to fulfil the commission given. In Genesis 1:28 God blessed Man and said, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth’. So to Man was given the power (blessing) to fulfil the commission given to him. Without that blessing Man would not be able to fulfil the commission for which he was created so that he might be God’s partner in His plans for creation, and for the age beyond the ages, that is, the era beyond the completion or *telos*, when all things would have been sanctified, glorified and perfected. Undoubtedly the blessing was accompanied with a sense of peace and joy, for the one blessed lived in a good state of being. That blessing by God resulted in the one blessed then blessing God.

With the fall of Man the commission to Man was not withdrawn, nor did it cease to be his responsibility, for ‘the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable’ (Rom. 11:29). The blessing was not withdrawn, for Man had been called to fulfil the commission. The ground was cursed for Adam’s sake, and later cursed Cain for his crime. Cursing is really the blessing annulled or suspended and in practice is the opposite to the blessing.

THE LINE OR STREAM OF BLESSING FOR THE FULFILMENT OF GOD’S HISTORY

In Genesis 9:1–7 Noah was *blessed* by God and told, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth’, so that God was reiterating the blessing of Genesis 1:28. Man was to proceed afresh with this blessing, but Ham sinned and Canaan was cursed. In Genesis 12:1–3 we see the blessing God bestowed on Abraham:

Now the LORD said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves.’

The blessing of Abraham is in the line of the blessing given to Adam and Eve and then Noah. As with these two it was to be a universal blessing, and was linked with the everlasting covenant God had made with Man and the whole of creation. God had always had the nations in His sight; when He saved Israel from Egypt and brought them to Sinai, there He made a particular covenant with them. Jacob was one who highly regarded the blessing which Isaac was to pass down from Abraham and he obtained it by deceit. It contained the same thought as the blessing of Abraham, for in Genesis 27:29 we read: ‘Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may your mother’s sons bow down to you. Cursed be every one who curses you, and blessed be every one who blesses you!’ In turn Jacob blessed the twelve tribes. As Genesis 49:28 has it: ‘All these are the twelve tribes of Israel; and this is what their father said to them as he blessed them, blessing each with the blessing suitable to him’. The only stated blessing was to Joseph:

... by the God of your father who will help you, by God Almighty who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that couches beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb. The

blessings of your father are mighty beyond the blessings of the eternal mountains, the bounties of the everlasting hills; may they be on the head of Joseph, and on the brow of him who was separate from his brothers (Gen. 49.25).

That Israel was especially chosen to bring the blessing of God to other nations we have already seen in Exodus 19:5–6. That God uniquely blessed Israel was shown by the Aaronic blessing of Numbers 6:22–27:

The LORD said to Moses, ‘Say to Aaron and his sons, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them, The LORD bless you and keep you: The LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you: The LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.’

Deuteronomy chapters 27 – 30 speak of both God’s blessings and cursings which will come according to Israel’s obedience or disobedience towards Him. Such are unique to Israel in all national history. God’s Edenic blessing was to follow Israel particularly as His *segullah* (beloved possession), His priest nation and His holy people being to the evident praise of His glory, that is, visibilising Him to the other nations. Of course there were what we might call special blessings invoked for various persons, families and situations in Israel’s history but they can be understood only in the light of the primal blessing of Genesis 1:28.

In the New Testament the matter of being in a state of blessedness is powerfully present, because of God blessing His people for service and ministry, that is, being for the praise of His glory. We know that Christ was sent by God, ‘to bless you in turning every one of you from your wickedness’ (Acts 3:26), and that those who will inherit the Kingdom will be those who are the ‘blessed of my Father’. Quite significant is Peter’s statement in Acts 3:25: ‘You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God gave to your fathers, saying to Abraham, “And in your posterity shall all the families of the earth be blessed”’ (Acts 3:25). This is what Paul calls ‘the blessing of Abraham’ in Galatians 3:13–14—‘Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed be every one who hangs on a tree”—that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith’. So through the gospel the ‘blessing of Abraham’ is extended to the nations as had been prophesied. Having worked and achieved the blessing, Christ as he began ascending blessed his disciples and thus the whole church. ‘Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven. And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God (Luke 24:50–53).

That surely was the blessing which was to carry the new people of God through to the climax of time, the *parousia* of Christ and the *telos* of God. The original, primal blessing was not rescinded. It was present in Christ’s blessing. If we ask when and how that blessing was given, then for the disciples it began to be when Christ breathed on them in the upper room: ‘And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained”’ (John 20:22–23). Prior to his betrayal by Judas he had told them of the powerful revelation of all he had said to them, the teaching of all things, the leading of them into the truth, and the glorification of himself by the Holy Spirit. This means that Pentecost was the outpouring of the mighty and most effectual blessing. From Pentecost onwards baptism would be—as Luther put it—the ordination of every member of the church, the endowment of the power and enlightenment of all things by the Holy Spirit. Christ was ordained to the ministry in his baptism, so likewise are we. There must be a point in which this happens, and only baptism can be it. One Corinthians 12:12–13 verifies this.

Most outstanding, then, in the line of God’s blessing Man is Ephesians 1:3: ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places’. The description of that blessing then follows from

verse 4 to verse 14, covering sanctification, the sonship, salvation and the revelation of the mystery of Christ heading up and unifying all things. All of this blessing has been poured out on us so that (i) the Jews (1:11–12); and (ii) the Gentiles (1:13–14) who have come into God’s grace in Christ will be to the praise of God’s glory. In our last two Studies we have been emphasising that only Man as the image of God can visibilise God in the way that cannot be the case through the non-rational part of creation which, at the best, visibilises His glory as Creator, but not as moral Being, Redeemer and Transformer of Man. We have said that creation glorifies the Creator, but that Man, being the image of God, visibilises Him as to His moral being, that is, His moral glory.

What is of particular interest to us is that again in history Man is blessed so that he can share in the plan of God, share with Him in its fulfilment, and so glorify God. For this reason we need to look at the matter of God’s blessing redeemed Man with ‘the whole blessing’. Markus Barth in his Commentary on Ephesians has this to say on verse 3:

... the full spiritual blessing. The Greek can be translated by ‘all,’ ‘every,’ ‘every kind,’ ‘the whole’ spiritual blessing. When the Hebrew equivalent for ‘all’ is used in phrases similar to Eph 1:3 it gives the noun to which it belongs an intensive meaning. The same may be true of the use of ‘all’ in Ephesians: the interpretation has to avoid any shade of doubt that the blessing may be a composite of many parts. There is no hint that God’s one full blessing should be split up into several distinct parts. The blessing given ‘in Christ’ and described in the following eleven verses is an indivisible and perfect whole. If any of its many aspects or dimensions were missing, it would not only be incomplete but distinct from the ‘blessing [given] in Christ.’ Instead of expressing joy in but one, two, or three feats of God, the author praises the one Christ (4:5) whose oneness is matched by the singleness of the total blessing. The totality of God’s gracious manifestation is extolled in the blessing of 1:3–14. This part of Ephesians is a summary of the whole message the apostle wants to give.

If we take the blessing to be ‘whole’, ‘total’, ‘full’, then it must be to the new body of believers—the church—what Genesis 1:28 is to the human race, and in particular to Israel. Indeed the original commission is itself brought afresh to the people of God. That original commission was given in Eden to the Edenic couple and so to the human race. The second blessing of God is ‘spiritual’ as against ‘earthly’, and was given ‘in Christ Jesus’, that is, it is now Christ who is the blessing and his people being *in* him are *in* the blessing. Nor is it only given ‘in Christ Jesus’ but at the same time is *in* Christ Jesus ‘in the heavenly places’. The closest we can get to the ‘Eden’ of the first couple is ‘the heavenly places’ of Ephesians. Eden was a special, spiritual realm even as it was earthly. ‘Heavenly places’—the sphere of spiritual habitation and action—is a term we need to understand and requires special treatment. Sufficient here to show that this supra-earthly arena⁴ is under Christ’s Lordship (Eph. 1:20f.); is where Satan operates (2:2); is where Christ is seated and we with him (2:6); is where principalities and powers operate (3:10); is where Christ fills all things (4:10); and is where ‘spiritual hosts of wickedness’, that is, ‘the world rulers of this present darkness’ do battle against the authentic rulers (angelic principalities and powers) and the people of God (6:12). We can see the need for spiritual blessing in order that the church may share with Christ in destroying the works of the Devil and exalting the works of God. When, then, Paul tells the Roman church that he is sure he will come to them ‘in the fullness of the blessing of Christ’, (Rom. 15:29), he is speaking about ‘the whole blessing’ that is given to the church and all members in it in particular. All are blessed *wholly*.

THE BLESSING OF THE MINISTRY

Having seen that the blessing is given in heavenly places we need to see what it means that ‘Christ ascended on high and gave gifts to men’. We take it that these gifts are moral—

⁴ It is inevitable that we will think of ‘the heavenlies’ as a place but it is rather a sphere of certain operations, and even an ‘aboveness’ as distinct from a ‘lowness’.

spiritual and are given out of ‘the unsearchable riches of Christ’ (Eph. 3:8; cf. Col. 2:3), for such are his riches, that is, moral–spiritual in nature. Markus Barth in his commentary on Ephesians⁵ and the passage of 4:7–13, has a special comment titled ‘The Church without Laymen and Priests’:

The meaning of 4:12 is entirely different when the nouns preceded by different prepositions describe one and the same purpose of the ministries mentioned in vs. 11, and when no comma is placed between the first two parts of v.12. Then the ministries of vs. 11 are given to the church in order that ‘the saints’ become ‘equipped’ to carry out ‘the work of service,’ even ‘the building.’ Earlier and later passages in Ephesians show that the ‘good works’ to be done by the church and her members can be summed up in this way: this community makes known or lets shine the light of God’s goodness, wisdom, gospel to the powers of this world. Eph 4:12 may indeed underline the fact that the ‘saints’ are not a part of the church but all her members, without excluding any one of them. All the saints (and among them, each saint) are enabled by the four or five types of servants enumerated in 4:11 to fulfil the ministry given to them, so that the whole church is taken into Christ’s service and given missionary substance, purpose, and structure. This interpretation challenges both the aristocratic-clerical and the triumphalistic-ecclesiastical exposition of 4:11–12. It unmasks them as arbitrary distortions of the text. Are, therefore, the existence and function of a clergy simply dispensable? Indeed, the traditional distinction between clergy and laity does not belong in the church. Rather, the whole church, the community of all the saints together, is the clergy appointed by God for a ministry to and for the world. This way two widespread opinions are refuted: the assumption that the bulk of the church members are reduced to the rank of mere consumers of spiritual gifts, and the notion that the church as a whole must strive primarily for a ‘build-up’ which benefits only herself. As an alternative the following message is conveyed: the dignity and usefulness of the special ministries given to the church are as great or as small as their effectiveness in making every church member, including the smallest and most despised, an evangelist in his own home and environment.⁶

We include this quote to show that all members of the church are ordained—in and by baptism—and are participators in the ‘whole’ blessing, as also the priesthood of all believers, constituting the church as living stones bonded together, and as those who shall be the reigning community on the new earth to come.

THE HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE BOTH OF THE *TELOS* AND THE ‘BEYOND *TELOS*’

It is only when we see the ultimate purpose of God for the church that the church and its purpose of being becomes fully intelligible, and our faith is fully informed. We rightly speak of the eschatological notion of the church, for it is the church of the resurrection (Rom. 6:4–5; Col. 3:1) as well as the community of the Cross (Rom. 6:3f.; Gal. 2:20). It is the church of the ascension (Eph. 2:5–6) as well as of coming resurrection (1 Cor. 15:3ff.). It is the church which is presently bringing the nations to the obedience of faith (Rom. 1:5–6; 15:18–19; 16:25–26) before this aeon is consummated. It is the church which is presently being to the praise of His glory. It is the church of the *eschaton* become that of the *telos*.

As the church of the *telos* it sees the destruction of all Satan’s works—of the Devil (the red dragon), of the first and second beasts, of Babylon the mother of harlots, of fallen angels, of all unclean and evil spirits, and knows evil is forever banished and the way of true worship–service forever unhindered. In this present age it is involved in the defeat of these opponents of the church and the Kingdom of God and of the Triune God Himself. In the *telos* it participates in the marriage of the Bride and the Lamb. It is the Holy City and participates in Paradise. It shares with all creation as all its members emerge from history as conformed to the image of the Son of God and living in the liberty of the glory of the children of God—kings and priests unto their God. It is the Family before the Father and worships in the temple which is God and the Lamb. So intimate, free, and glorious it is at the *telos*! The *telos* is the

⁵ Markus Barth in the Anchor Bible on Ephesians, 2 vols, Doubleday, New York, 1974. See vol. 2, pp. 447–84.

⁶ *ibid.* pp. 479f.

time of the unification of all things, the filling of them, the reconciling of them, and the harmonising of them—all under Christ.

Now, in the knowledge of all this we revel in joy. Then we will revel in the reality of it. All will have been sanctified, glorified and perfected. This being so, what will there be—so to speak—beyond the *telos*? Better still we ask, ‘In what does the *telos* issue?’ The old hymn says, ‘That will be glory for me’, and of course it will be; but the questions which need to be asked are, ‘How will this be to the praise of His glory?’ ‘What will be the place of the church in eternity, and what will be its action?’ for it is clear that the *telos* is not a static state, however glorious it will be. The *telos* closes off this present *aeon* and at the same point in action opens the age to come in which all will be to the praise of His glory. We repeat, it is not until we see the place of the church in eternity that we will understand it here, in this world. The breathtaking view we have of our role on the new earth should inspire our faith by reason of this hope and give us dignity and honour in our present ministry. We will not comprehend the counsel of God, that is, the purposed plan of His will, and so the nature of the church, until we have understanding of it before time, in time, and beyond time. We will not see its identity or have full comprehension and joy within it. This is the historic perspective God would have us know so that we may live in it in great joy.

THE BEYOND THE BEYOND

In 1 Corinthians 2:7–13 Paul spoke of God’s plan for our glorification, ‘But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification’. He then describes what will be the state of that glory: ‘But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him”’. If this is beyond our present way of perception, then how will we know it? Paul answers: ‘God has revealed [it] to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.’ He then shows us that the Holy Spirit searches the depths of God, so that the Spirit, when given to us, reveals to us what we need to know, especially all that God has given us. Having knowledge of what is to come is called ‘prolepsis’ and it is the true basis for hope, and we are personally enriched by that knowledge. This knowledge must be not only of what takes place *at* the *telos* but what is *beyond* the *telos*, or we might say, the substance of the continuing *telos*.

In John 14:1–25 Jesus taught his disciples that he was/is in the Father and the Father in him as he had already said in 10:38. He later said (John 14:20), ‘In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you’. By ‘that day’ he meant Pentecost with the full revelation by the Holy Spirit of ‘all the truth’ (cf. 1 John 2:20ff.). Marvellous as was this day, there is a ‘beyond’ it. There is, then, ‘that day’, that is, the day of the Parousia. The revelation then will be gloriously beyond ‘that day’ of Pentecost. In John 17:20–26 Jesus prays for the apostles and the church that they may be one, as he, the Son, is in the Father and the Father in him, and then that they may be one in the Father and him. This is a powerful prayer, and Jesus shows that it is seated in the glory of the Father and the Son. He then prays, ‘Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory which thou hast given me in thy love for me before the foundation of the world’ (John 17:24). It is that glory and its union of the saints which the church now experiences on earth. How great it is, but then in the *telos* and ‘that day’ that we will comprehend ‘beyond’ this day. It will be the era of the glory in which the royal priesthood will know all that it needs to know, and by which it will live and serve, glorifying God to all creation. This is almost a parallel with 1 Corinthians 13:8–12:

Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I

reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood.

Again, in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 Christ tells us the future of those who overcome now. His promises are all to do with the *telos*. Of great importance is the promise of 2:17: ‘To him who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone which no one knows except him who receives it’. This is the promise of knowing our identity in the new age—no little matter! No less significant are the promises of power over the nations (2:26–28), and ruling them as one is seated with Christ (3:21).

In Revelation 5:9 heavenly creatures sing a new song:

... saying, ‘Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on earth’ (Rev. 5:9–10).

In the new age the church will be the royal priesthood, reigning on the new earth, being priests unto God and all creation (cf. Rev. 1:6). In Revelation 14:13 the voice from heaven says, ‘Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth’. Then the Holy Spirit adds: ‘Blessed indeed . . . that they may rest from their labours, *for their deeds follow them*’. Obviously these ‘deeds’ approximate to what John calls ‘a full reward’ and to Paul’s ‘gold, silver, precious stones’ as against ‘wood, hay, stubble’ (1 Cor. 3:10–15). In other words, ‘that day’ will reveal what we are, and the characters we have built by what we call (i) self-emptying in the interests of others (*kenosis*); and (ii) self-filling (*plerosis*) for doing the will of God, so qualifying us as royal priests who will be competent to ‘reign on the earth’ forever as Abraham’s children living in their true inheritance.⁷

Technically there is no ‘beyond the beyond’, for what happens at the *telos* is the eschaton come to fulfilment, in which is the church as it will be in all ages to come. In the *telos* the Kingdom likewise has fully come. It is just that we need to realise the church will reign on earth under its Lord who is its Head and its Shepherd, leading his people to springs of living water. It will be—as ever—‘in the Father’ (1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1), and empowered by the Holy Spirit. In one sense the *telos* is forever, but in another sense, the beginning of that ‘forever’. As the people of God in this age we approach that ‘forever’ proleptically. As the people of eternity we will see creation from its inception and trace all things down through the ages to its triumphant conclusion, yet at the same time we will view all beyond the climactic point of the *telos*. Only then shall we know as we are known, shall we understand all history and all that will be yet ‘future’ to us at that point.

It is this which will then move us beyond description, but if in this present age we comprehend in hope what we have recounted above and even more that we have comprehended, and which is now available to us, then we will be moved to greater praise and adoration of God than perhaps we have ever known. We can even now look back on the wonder of creation, and its working to God’s praise and glory. We look at the church from Abel onwards and marvel that it alone has brought substantial moral reality to the world. P. T. Forsyth has written: ‘It represents the greatest moral, fraternal and international force that has

⁷ Christ did not empty himself of ‘self’ as though he had been proud and egotistical. His ‘self-emptying’—whatever it was—was necessary to his incarnation and then the redemption of the world. His self-filling was likewise not egotistical, but essential for him to be fully a man-for-men, and resulted from continuing obedience and using the gifts of God which He gives to right-minded human beings. The reference to the blessing of Abraham is Romans 4:13, that is, inheriting the whole earth, which is obviously linked with Revelation 5:10, that Abraham and his people would reign on the earth as royal priests.

entered history as yet' (*Socialism, the Church and the Poor*, p.6, 1909). We need, then, to evaluate closely this great priesthood which serves—and is to serve—God, Man and the creation. We are to glory in this marvellous identity.

THE BODY OF CHRIST AND THE HUMAN BODY

Hymns: We are a chosen people (NCHB 2:89)
The church's one foundation (NCHB 1:193)
Church of the loving Lord (NCHB 2.52)

Readings: Acts 2:12-21; 1 Corinthians 12:1-31; Ephesians 2:11-22, 4:1-16; Colossians 1:15-20.

INTRODUCTION

This topic was suggested to me by Geoff. I looked at the topic initially with reservation because I felt some reluctance in making the comparison of a material human body with the body of Christ. This is because I do not think it appropriate to work from the material to the spiritual. One should not work from the created to the Creator. However, Christ made comparisons with nature in the discourses with His disciples and Paul did use the argument from the human body in his desperate attempt to quell the excesses of the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 12). He used the comparison with the human body in a more composed manner when writing to the Romans (12:4-5) and Ephesians (4:4-16). In so doing both Christ and Paul did not use the argument from below, i.e. they did not use the comparison as the starting point of their argument, but rather as an illustration of what the body of Christ may be like. So it is with this as the premise of the paper that I proceed.

THE BODY OF CHRIST

In using the expression 'the body of Christ', it is obvious that the reference is made to a living body as Christ is alive. Current usage of the term 'body' also refers to an association of persons, structures or organisation. Unfortunately it is this latter connotation that seems to be in vogue. Paul's letters were not addressed to the church as an institution. He wrote to the people whom he termed 'the holy ones', i.e. the saints, in a locality. He wrote to people who were called out by God, incorporated into the body of Christ and made alive in the Holy Spirit. These people comprised the body in that locality. They did not have a constitution or charter of incorporation. They did not have a mission statement. They were people made alive by God and they lived out the new life which they had experienced. What they did was the result of their union with their God through the redemptive work of Christ and the Spirit. They expressed themselves as they were directed by the Spirit and by one another because of the union with their God and with one another. Paul said that we are 'one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another' (Rom. 12:5, NRSV). I feel that this statement has often been understood sociologically in terms of our cultural framework and thus distorts and may even prevent our coming to know and experience the true union in Christ. What does it mean to be in the body of Christ and what does it mean to be members one of another? I trust that the discussion on the Triune God and the reference to the created human body may point us in the way we should think about the answers.

I have contrasted the way we understand the church as the body of Christ or as an institution in the table below setting out the sections in the letter of Paul to the Ephesians.

Body of Christ or Institution

Body of Christ	Ephesians	Institution
A living organism	1:1-3	An inorganic structure
Chosen by the Father	1:4-23	Self choice
Incorporated into Christ (Her charter is Christ)	2:1-22	Incorporated by law (The charter is the Constitution)
Invigorated by the Spirit (The Holy Ghost)	3:1-21	Upheld by human effort (The legal ghost)
Union with God	4:1-6	Union with common goals
Ministry	4:7-32	Tasks / sociality
Pastors / elders	4:11	MD / CEO
A family (persons)	5:1-6:9	An association (aims)
Worship / witness	6:10-24	Social activities (club house)

Table 1. A division of the letter of Ephesians contrasting the differences between the church as the body of Christ and an institution.

This is not an analytical division of the letter to the Ephesians. The broad divisions highlight the points made here and conveniently contrast with the secular understanding of the church. The divisions into the various Persons of the Triune Godhead is artificial as the Triune God is one and cannot be categorised by its distinctive Persons. In his letter, Paul moves freely from one Person of the Triune Godhead to another as he wrote in this section (Eph. 1:4-3:21). While there are aspects of the church which are institutional, these sociological expressions are not the determinants of the church. They are not the primary issues but are part of the necessity in any earthly community. We may call these issues sociological necessities and they are determined by the life of the church. Where there is no life, then these sociological expressions become all that is left to show and that is why these then assume primary importance. The body of Christ is not determined sociologically, but by the God who brought it into existence.

I will not be commenting in any detail on the table above but will make references to the respective points raised there as the discussion progresses.

CHURCH OF THE TRIUNE GOD

‘The Church is not simply an institution. She is a ‘mode of existence,’ *a way of being.*¹ So began Zizioulas in the introduction of his book. And he continued to point out that the church is bound to the Being of God. In other words, the church as the body of Christ has to be understood in terms of its relationship to the Being of God.

The church is the church of the Triune God. As living parts of the body of Christ, we are chosen by the Father, incorporated into the body of Christ and made alive in the Spirit. This is the process of the Triune church builder. Any other process is an imitation of the real thing. We did not choose to be part of the church of God. In our fallen state, we are unable to see God or to acknowledge Him. God comes to us as Redeemer and opens our eyes to see Him. In other words, the Father calls us and gives to us the capacity to respond.

¹ J. D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1993), 15.

The church as the living body of Christ is incorporated into Jesus Christ. The church is not incorporated by the charter of the constitution though it is necessary by the laws of the land for any association to be formed. The church is incorporated by the charter of Christ - His incarnation, death and resurrection. It is the work of God.

The Holy Spirit of God makes the church alive. Our activities do not make us alive. We can have lots of activities, but those activities do not necessarily indicate the presence of life. Muscles that are deprived of their blood supply can also twitch as any student of physiology knows. It is the movement of the Holy Ghost in our midst that makes us alive in Christ. Yet it is possible for there to be movements in parts of the body under some conditions despite being severed from its vital blood supply in Christ. They do not have the Spirit's breath of life and the movements are only imitations of life, probably prompted by the shadow of the legal ghost. When the Holy Spirit make us alive in Christ, He also seals the union we have with God – a union made possible by the incarnation of Jesus Christ who has taken our humanity into Himself and made us one in His own body.

In this work of Jesus Christ, He has made us all a family – a family because of our common parentage. We have God as our Father. We can therefore call Jesus our brother. The Holy Ghost made all that real in us. The legal ghost can only mimic that by some kind of a comradeship which only falls apart when the task is over.

THE INCARNATION AS THE THEOLOGICAL CENTRE

It is my feeling that not enough attention has been paid to the incarnation of Jesus. We acknowledge that He came in the flesh and became a human person. We may go further to say He was² indeed a real human person just like us. We acknowledge this so that we have a proper doctrine of the cross and redemption based on a perfect man. Beyond this we do not really think much more about the incarnation. This is a truncated gospel. We have separated Christmas and Easter. The cross is presupposed in the incarnation and unless we have the incarnation as the theological centre then we are in danger of coming together as a loose association of persons or believers as a legal entity and not as the integrated body of Christ. This is what happens when the salvific act is thought of only in terms of the cross as a legal transaction and devoid of any depth of understanding of the incarnation and assertion on the union with Christ. In His incarnation Christ has taken all of our humanity into Himself and there He dealt with our sins and imperfections until finally He emerged the Victor in the final act on the cross. Until we can see that 'His arteries dripped our deadly blood' and that 'we hang within His bones'³, we have not fully understood the incarnation. The body of Christ cannot be fully understood until we make the incarnation the theological center. T. F. Torrance made this remark in writing about the body of Christ.

This body is what it is through the incarnation of the Son of God in Christ who has gathered up and reformed the human race in himself, and through the astonishing event at Pentecost when God poured out his own Spirit upon the disciples of the Lord Jesus thereby giving birth or rather rebirth to the Church and making it participate in his own divine life and love.⁴

² The use of the past tense is deliberate as many think of Christ as having finished His work on the cross and now has returned to the Father in heaven and is no longer a human person. There is still a touch of docetism in the church.

³ New Creation Hymn Book, Vol. 2, No. 61, v. 5-6.

⁴ T. F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 254. The cross and the atonement is assumed in the context in which he wrote.

What the incarnation brought to us is union with the Triune God. This has been a subject that is often been avoided as we are fearful of the notion of 'man being made divine'. We are not to understand this union in terms of our material being.⁵ The union that is forged here is a mystical union (Eph. 5:32). That is probably as far as one would want to go.

THE BEING OF GOD

I have indicated in the introduction that one should not work from below in trying to comprehend the things of God. Much of the way we understand the church and the body of Christ is anthropocentric, i.e. we start from a human centre in our material world and then work towards a theology. That is the reason why many have gone for an institutional understanding of the church. It is rational and appeals to our understanding of the material world.

I have struggled to overcome this institutional understanding of the church. I had thought that if one could move the thinking of a church towards that of a community then we may have a good start. The Triune Godhead then becomes a model of the community. However, in doing so, the sociological model of the community still prevails and we are then back to an institutional framework. This is the cultural stranglehold upon the church. In other words, holding to a concept of the Triune Godhead and the communion that exists among the Persons of the Godhead, one may still be unable to break through this cultural stranglehold. Unless we attempt to define what we mean in terms that transcend the cultural framework, then we may still be talking in cultural terms.

That was also the problem of the early church in trying to move away from the cultural and philosophical comprehension. The understanding of the Triune God in the early church was bogged down by the way the Personhood of God was understood. Without going into details of the technical terminology of *persona* and *substantia*, those concepts have been tied to a material understanding of being.⁶ The concept of person then becomes that of a concrete individuality⁷ and this makes the doctrine of the Trinity totally incomprehensible. While the community may be emphasised in this way, it leads to a sociality and ultimately to an institutional understanding of the church and we see that fully developed after Constantine. The introduction of the term *substantia* to help make the doctrine of the Trinity more meaningful did not really free the doctrine from its material base. That is why today we have a sociological orientation in the doctrine of the Trinity and this has caused aberration in our comprehension of God. What has happened is that while the approach may have been thought to be ontological, the ontology was linked with protology and the church was still not able to free itself from a base in materialism.

The church fathers wrestled with this and broke this linkage by tracing 'the world to an ontology outside the world, that is, to God.'⁸ They introduce the doctrine of *creatio ex-nihilo*.⁹ This liberated the doctrine of the Trinity from its ontological necessity and 'transposed it to the sphere of freedom.'¹⁰ With this understanding the church fathers were able to trace the concept of 'being' back, not to the substance, but to the

⁵ This issue will be discussed in the section that follows.

⁶ A brief summary of the way the church fathers understood these terms is given in Ted Peters, *God as Trinity*, (Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 34-37.

⁷ This is discussed at length in the first chapter of J. D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 27-65.

⁸ Ibid, 39.

⁹ This was discussed briefly in a paper presented to the NCTM Pastors' Study Group in March 2001.

¹⁰ J. D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 39-40.

person. In so doing, 'the being of God could be known only through personal relationships and personal love. Being means life, and life means *communion*.'¹¹ It was only when the concept was tied to a person, a non-material being, that there was freedom and love. This becomes an important point in ontology that God as the Father creates not out of a necessity, but out of freedom and love. Zizoulas commented in his the introduction to his book,

It is a way of *relationship* with the world, with other people and with God, an event of *communion*, and that is why it cannot be realized as the achievement of an *individual*, but only as an *ecclesial* fact.¹²

With this the church fathers were able to break the nexus with the material world and move to a non-material understanding of creation and being. It also freed the church from seeing creation as the emanation of the Being of God which leads to pantheism. In this the fathers restored a true ontology to the Being of God.

We often think of the material as the reality in this world. But there is another reality. That is the reality of the relational. We may think of the relationship with someone who is not physically present, but nonetheless, the relationship is still real. Even after a long period of absence, the relationship is still as real. We often think of someone who had passed on and the memory of the relationship is still real to us.

We need to move from the material to the relational in our thought processes. We need to see the possibility of a new kind of reality in the relational. 'It is our relational activity which is the basic reality on which all else depends.'¹³ That is why Jesus told us to 'seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well' (Matt. 6:33, NIV). The problem with our society today is that it does not see relationship as a reality in itself. They see relationship as dispensable. In other words, relationship is just a kind of a tool that you use to get where you want to be. That is wrong.

Habakkuk recognised the reality of the relational when he closed his book with these words.

17 Though the fig tree does not blossom, and no fruit is on the vines;
though the produce of the olive fails and the fields yield no food;
though the flock is cut off from the fold and there is no herd in the stalls,
18 yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will exult in the God of my salvation.
19 GOD, the Lord, is my strength;
he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,
and makes me tread upon the heights.
(Hab. 3:17-19, NRSV)

Despite the devastation of the land by the Assyrians, Habakkuk's vision transcends the material to the very being of God. It is not that he was assured of the restoration of the land and that something better might come out of this, though he might have that hope and assurance within him, but that the relationship with the covenant God was the primary reality in his life.

¹¹ *Ibdi.* 16.

¹² *Ibid.* 15.

¹³ R. Wallis, 'The Church: A Communion of Persons,' in T. Hart & D. Thimmel (Eds.), *Christ in our Place*, (Great Britain: Paternoster, 1989), 105.

A LITERARY AND BIOLOGICAL PREMISE

There are two pieces of work, one literary and the other biological that I want to refer to in order to enable us to see in a more tangible way the strength of the relational. The literary work is by John Donne writing in his *Meditations* and the other is the biological working of the human body. Both will enable us to conceptualise this a little better.

NO MAN IS AN ISLAND

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were: any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bells tolls; it tolls for thee. (John Donne, *Meditation 17*).

This piece of prose is well-known and it summed up well the oneness of humanity in Jesus Christ. Donne was well read minister of the church and was well aware of the oneness of the body of Christ for he wrote earlier in his *Meditation*,

The church is Catholic, universal, so are all her actions; all that she does belongs to all. When she baptizes a child, that action concerns me; for that child is thereby connected to that body which is my head too, and ingrafted into that body whereof I am a member. (John Donne, *Meditation 17*)

In this *Meditation*, Donne was aware of the mortality that all humankind will face one day and in particular his own. What it seeks to express is something of corporate humanity. While he may have used a material basis for his analogy, yet he is able to transcend that in his understanding of the oneness of humanity.

THE HUMAN BODY AND THE FEEDBACK LOOP

This is the section where I have some concern as I have expressed in the introduction. So often we take what is created and work that back to the Creator. In many instances this has been most useful and enhanced our understanding of the Creator. However, as has happened so often, this analogical approach becomes uncontrolled and leads to an erroneous conclusion. While we are allowed to use this approach as Paul did, this needs to be controlled by what we know from revelation given by the Creator. I feel justified in doing this along with Paul's teaching on the body in passages such as Romans 12:3 ff., Ephesians 4:7-16; 1 Corinthians 12:4-31.

Here I move cautiously to the endocrine system of the body to help us conceive in a more tangible way the relationship within the body, both of Christ and human. There are other systems in the body that manifest an integrated working together. In these systems, there is a neurological connection that enables the regulation of the functions. However, in the endocrine system, there is no direct connection among the organs working together. There is only the blood flow through these organs and as the blood passes through their sensory receptors, they sense the fluctuation in the internal environment of the body. They are regulated by what we call chemical transmitters. In other words, they sense the function of the other organs by detecting the complex chemicals (hormones) produced.

The body as a living organism is open to change and indeed it must to maintain its *milieu interior*. Otherwise the living organism will succumb to the drastic changes in the environment. The body does this through feed back loops among its constituent parts.

This is best understood in the endocrine system of the body. Figure 1 shows in a diagrammatic form the regulation of the production of thyroxine in the body. A hormone that regulates a certain function in the body does not work in isolation. It is in turn regulated by a stimulating hormone. For example, the hormone thyroxine is controlled by a thyroxine stimulating hormone (TSH) secreted by the pituitary gland in the brain. When one hormone over-functions to upset the dynamic equilibrium of the body, either a controlling hormone is produced by the brain to suppress it or less of the stimulating hormone is produced so that there is less stimulation. So when there is excess thyroxine production, then less of the TSH is produced. When the particular hormone under-functions, then the reverse process is set in place to stimulate it to produce more. So in hypothyroidism, the TSH is raised. In other words change is taking place all the time within the molecular processes of the body. Why is this so? It is to ensure the optimal effective function of the body.

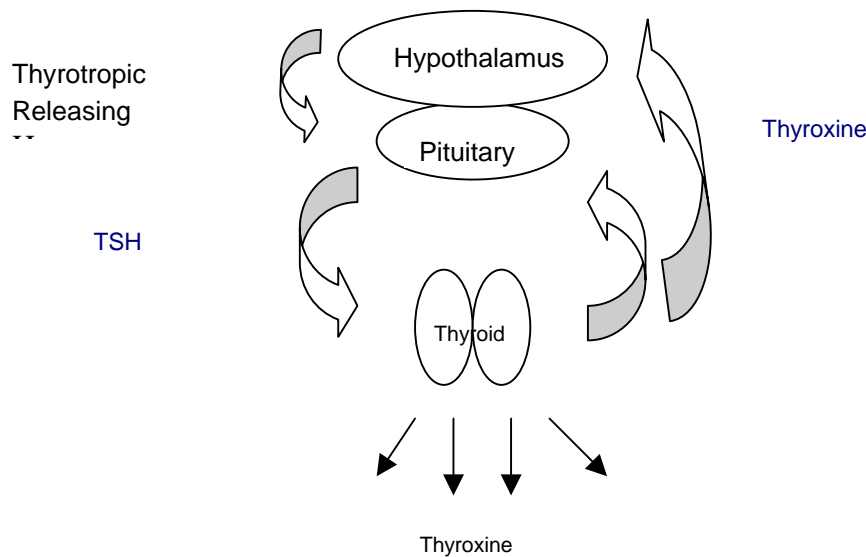


Figure 1. The feedback loop in the endocrine system.

GIFTS AND MINISTRY

Paul used this imagery to back his argument in his letter to the Corinthians. In the living body of Christ, the Triune Godhead exercises the controlling function as He must in His sovereignty and as the One who created *ex-nihilo*. The Father energises all with the gifts of Christ and the Spirit. We function in participation with Christ and the Spirit moving with them in all that they do in fulfilling the Father's will. It is this sensitivity to the moving of the Spirit that is lacking in many churches, and in its place, we resort to the legality of the constitution or the comfort of our culture. So many of our churches have replaced the Holy Ghost with the legal ghost which is present in all our business meetings.

This can be diagrammatically represented in Figure 2. Now if this feed back loop is operative in the body created for humankind, then in using the analogy of the body it must have some relevance in our understanding of the spiritual body. The component parts of the body interact with each other. This affects the function of other parts, but they also receive feed back from the other parts so that the body may be whole and functioning in the way for which it is created. So it is with the 'spiritual body'. Just as in the *perichoretic* relationship of the Triune Godhead, there is giving and receiving from each other, it is so in the biological as well. In the operations of the body of Christ then there must be the giving to and receiving from each other as I

have attempted to show diagrammatically below. In other words, what I do will have an effect on others. At the same time I also receive input from others through what they are doing. It is with this sensitivity and receptivity under the control of the Holy Spirit that the body of Christ function to fulfil that which it is called to.

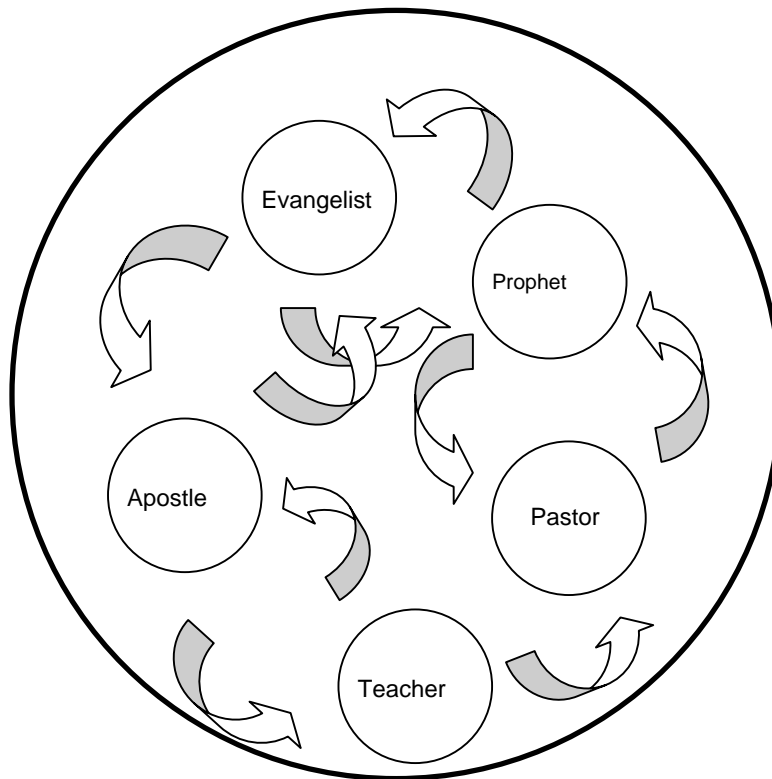


Figure 2: The feed back loop in the body of Christ and in ministry.

I have indicated my reservation about making an argument from below. However, the presentation of this feedback loop is not of necessity an argument from below. I want to put to you that this is an argument from above. Humankind is created in the image of God. We have noted that covenant precedes creation and not the reverse. This is because the Triune Being exists in covenantal relationship and relates with creation in the same way. The Persons in the Triune Godhead gives to and receives from each other. They are not three individuals existing in a symbiotic relationship much like the way we conceive of persons relating in the 'body' of Christ in an institutional manner. It is the way we understand the term 'person' as 'individual' that gives rise to problems in our understanding. To conceive of 'person' as 'individual', at best, can only produce a loose association of individuals. That gives rise to the sociological model of a 'give and take' attitude of compromise. That can never lead us to experience the reality of the oneness and union in the body of Christ. If I may follow Paul and use the analogy of ourselves as organs in the body, then we may get a better perspective of the relational dimension of the body as I have given in the feedback loop above (Figure 2). The organs receive from and gives to each other and in the process provoke a response from the other so that the body as a whole may function optimally, or in theological terms, find its realisation in the eschaton. If what is happening to the 'other' produce no effect or response from us, then we are not yet an integrated body, but merely a loose association of individuals. We need to be able to feel what John Donne had written in the prose quoted from his *Meditation 17*.

HIERARCHY AND FEEDBACK

In the endocrine model that I have given above, while there is control and feed back between the organs involved, there is also a hierarchy of functions. The thyroid gland, while controlling the metabolism in the body, is subject to the control from the pituitary gland in the brain and the pituitary gland is in turn subject to the regulation from the hypothalamus. While there is this hierarchy of operations, each controlling centre is in turn subject to feed back from the organ they control.

CONCLUSION

Much of the activities with the church may be termed sociality rather than ministry. This is because an institution determines its activities, but the church does not determine its ministry. Ministry precedes the church. It is ministry that determines and produces the church¹⁴. By ministry I refer to the ministry of the Triune Godhead – Father, Son and Spirit. The church is born or comes into being as a result of the activity of the Triune God. It does not bring itself into existence as some may think. Therefore the ministry of the Triune God precedes the church and determines the church. The church in its expression continues the ministry of the Triune God. There can be no other agenda for ministry in the church.

We need to move from the material concept of personhood to see the reality of the relational. An organ in the body is not an organ without those connecting links either biochemically or neurologically. In conceiving of this, we need to move from thinking of ourselves as individuals to that of organs (persons) within the body because we exist one in the other. 'The persons are made one, not so as to commingle, but so as to cleave to each other and have their being in each other.'¹⁵

Today there is a sociological stranglehold on the church in terms of our understanding and responses. We have subordinated theology to culture and always will because of our fallen nature. We try to avoid this by making the Spirit an adjunct in our endeavour. This cannot be so as this is not the divine intention. The divine intention is incorporation into the body of Jesus Christ. This is the work of the Father, Son and Spirit.

¹⁴ R. S. Anderson, 'A Theology of Ministry', in *Theological Foundations for Ministry*, ed. R. S. Anderson (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1979), p. 7.

¹⁵ St John of Damascus, *De Fide Orthodoxa*, 1.8. Quoted in Roland Walls, 'The Church: A Communion of Persons' in T. Hart and D. Thmmell (Eds), *Christ in Our Place*, (Great Britain: Paternoster, 1989), 102.

The Apostolic Ministry of the Church of God—I

INTRODUCTION: THE CHURCH AS THE SPECIAL PEOPLE OF GOD

In other papers we have described the purpose of the church as it has been from the beginning, and will be to the end. It is important from its beginning to the new age of eternity as that community which lives in the *koinonia* of God as it participates intimately with God, working with Him throughout eternity as His kingly and priestly people, reigning upon the new earth, as also indwelling the new Eden as 'the apple of His eye'.

The people of Israel, called the *ecclesia* or 'congregation' in Acts 7:38, and known as *qahal* in Israel or *edah* when gathered, was especially known as God's 'special possession' (*am segullah*). The term is used in Exodus 19:5–6; Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Psalm 135:4; and Malachi 3:17, and all these references should be read to see the full meaning. *Am segullah* is translated in the LXX by *laos periousios*, the identical term used in Titus 2:14 for 'a people of his own'. If we are tempted to think of God's 'own possession' in sentimental terms then we should hesitate. In 1 Peter 2:9 the *laos eis peripoiesin* (God's own people) is based on the same expression. The idea behind *periousios* is not just that of Israel as God's property, but of 'his rich possession'. To be God's people is to be in possession of all His gifts and this accords with Romans 9:4–5 where the gifts are given to Israel, not only for her own benefit, but also for her worship—service to God in the world and among the nations (cf. Gen. 12:1ff.). In the sense of the Abrahamic Covenant it is a people who will inherit the earth (Rom. 4:16).

The first use of *am segullah* is in Exodus 19:5–6 and is spoken of as God's choice of Israel for His own personal possession, but in choosing it is called to function among the nations of the earth. Israel is to be 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation', i.e. God's priest-nation among, and for, all the nations of the earth. Being rich with God's gifts (Rom. 9:4–5) it is equipped for such a task. We note that Israel has just been delivered from Egypt and God has shown His salvation. Now they are to 'hear His voice' and 'obey His covenant' in order to be His true *am segullah*.

What does all this mean for the church who like Israel is a delivered people and *laos periousios*? They are a people 'zealous for good deeds' as in Ephesians 2:10 they are 'created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand' for their doing of them. It now remains for us to understand what 1 Peter 2:9–10—the parallel in the New Testament of Exodus 19:5–6—really means.

The first matter we must understand is that the development of the *am segullah* is the *laos periousios* of 1 Peter 2:9–10, i.e. the people of Pentecost which began the new *qahal* or *ecclesia*. This established, we can now see that the church Christ said he would build does not ignore or supersede the *am segullah* but is its ongoing in a new fashion, but with the same goal God had; (i) for Abraham and his descendants; and (ii) for Israel in the terms of Exodus 19:5–6 (cf. Isa. 61:6) as stated fully in 1 Peter 2:4–10. We need to see whether the *laos periousios* which is the equivalent of the *am segullah* is the people God is calling out for all eternity as 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' (Exod. 19:5–6), i.e. 'a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people'

(1 Pet. 2:9). Is this, then, the special people for all eternity, as described in Revelation 1:6, 5:10, and 20:6, and if so, are the only people of God—those who enter the City of God and ever reign upon the earth?

THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH AS RELATING TO THE TRIUNE GOD

The Church and the Father

It is thought provoking that the *ecclesia* is: (i) God's eschatological people; and then (ii) the people of the *telos*, which having come to its climax opens what Paul calls 'the age to come' (Eph. 1:21). What is surely demanded then is knowing whose church it is, and where it figures in the matter of the Persons of the Trinity.

It is perhaps surprising to discover that the church is nine times called 'the church of God'. It is never called 'the church of Christ' as such. In the two Thessalonian letters it is twice said, 'The church of the Thessalonians which is in the Father'. Once it is said, 'the churches of God' and once, 'the churches of Christ'. We read that God has it linked with 'varieties of working' (1 Cor. 12:6), that He appoints (1 Cor. 12:28–30) certain gifts (*domata*) and other gifts (*charismata*), whilst in fact the Son gives gifts (*domata*) and the Spirit distributes 'the spirituals' (*charismata*). The grace of God operates in the churches in many ways.

In 1 Peter 5:2 the elders are told to 'feed the flock of God'. By association here it is the flock of Christ, but in fact it is the Father who is *the* Shepherd. This is seen in Isaiah 40:11, 63:11, Jeremiah 31:10, and Ezekiel 34. In Isaiah 63 there are many under-shepherds. In Ezekiel 34 the leaders of Israel are shepherds but God will dismiss and punish them and in their place will make David His shepherd, and this we see in John chapters 10 and 21—Jesus is the 'good shepherd', i.e. the true Shepherd, the pastor who has been prophesied. Even so, the Father is the Shepherd as of Psalm 23. The Father at least from the time of Abraham has had His people in mind for eternity.

At this point we need to refer to *am segullah* not as 'God's pet people', kept by Him, but as the people of the Kingdom, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom (Acts 20:25; 28:23, 31), and being in the work of the Kingdom in opposition to Satan's aeon (Eph. 6:12, *passim*).

The Church and the Son, Jesus Christ

Jesus said, 'I will build my church' (Matt. 16:18) and says that where they gathered in his name there he is in the midst of them (Matt. 18:15–20). Here he parallels the church with the idea of 'the church of God', yet there is unity which is wholly one with the Father's possession. In Romans 16:16 we read 'the churches of Christ' and perhaps this lines up with Colossians 3:3–4 where the church is Christ's and is 'hid with Christ in God'. Ephesians 1:22 speaks of him being 'head over all things for the church', and then in Ephesians 5:23 as head of the church, and its Saviour. Colossians 1:18 says he is 'head of the body, the church'. Whilst he is the head of the body it is *his* body for all its members are his (Rom. 12:5). There is not a body which is composed of his people and is attached to the Head, for all are his members as also members one of the other. The figures of husband, body, vine show the church to be totally *in* him, and the *en Christo* is the key to the church as community. To this church he gives gifts, for both the ministry gifts of *domata* and the functional gifts of *charismata* are of himself, i.e.

he is *the* apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher. This is why the church has its life and action from him.

What we have said in the above paragraph pertains to the nature of the church as it is Christ's people in relation to him, but the church is the active, militant people on the ministry of the Kingdom (Col. 1:13; Romans 14:7–9, 17). The church and the Kingdom are never apart, just as Covenant and Kingdom are not apart. Christ came on the basis of the Kingdom, as Mark 1:14f. shows, but as Matthew 1:21 (cf. 3:1–12) indicates his coming was for the forgiveness of sins (cf. Mark 1:4)—the promise of the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31–34 (cf. Heb. 10:16–18). According to God's promise to David (Isa. 55:1–5, 8–9; 2 Samuel 7:12–21; Ezek. 34:23–24; Ps. 89:3) his seed would be Messiah, King of God's people and head of the Davidic Covenant which would be as the New Covenant.

Our conclusion regarding Father and Son is that they reveal each other to members of Christ's Body so that the ethos of the church is that of family (cf. Eph. 3:14–15; 4:6), as both work in the people of God.

The Church and the Holy Spirit

The birth of the church was at Pentecost, the day when those of Israel were filled with the Holy Spirit so that the new people of God gathered in Christ's name and proclaimed the 'wonderful works of God'. From this point onwards the church lives by this third Person of the Trinity. Both the Acts and the Epistles set him forth as being the power of God (cf. Acts 1:8), as he reveals the Father (Gal. 4:4–7; Rom. 8:14–16), and Christ as Lord (1 Cor. 12:1–3). He is the Spirit of truth and witness (Acts 1:8; 1 John 5:7–9). He is the Spirit of love (Rom. 5:5; 15:30; Col. 1:8), fellowship (Phil. 2:1; 2 Cor 13:14), and unity (Eph. 4:3; cf. 1 Cor. 12:12–13), and by him true worship is made (John 4:20f.; Phil. 3:3). He is, as Christ told the disciples, 'another paraclete' (John 14:16; 16:7), so that Christ is present in the church to all things and in all things by the Holy Spirit.

Much, much more can be said of the Spirit and his relation to the church but he is primarily the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, and with them attends to the *laos periousios* so that it may develop and mature, building itself up in love (Eph. 4:15–16) as it moves towards the day of the *telos* and the new age (*aeon*: Eph. 1:21).

We may also speak of the Holy Spirit as the eschatological Spirit. In Revelation the Spirit is the sevenfold Spirit (1:4; 4:5; 5:6; cf. Isa. 11:1–2) who speaks to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3; seven representing fullness, perfection and maturity in the book. In Revelation 5:6 the seven horns and the seven eyes are the seven spirits—the sevenfold Spirit—of the Lamb, showing the intimacy of Christ and the Spirit, and their work together.

The Church of the Triune God

The New Testament is alive with descriptions of the Father's work, the Son's work and the Holy Spirit's work, in and for the church. At this point we have to remind ourselves that the church is the *am segullah* of the Triune God, and really the whole point and purpose of creation. As Titus 2:11–14 shows, God was about training this people through Christ's death, for Christ was about redeeming us 'from all iniquity and purifying for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds'. Why develop this *am segullah* or *laos periousios*? To be His people for eternity, His people of the *koinonia*, His 'kingdom of priests' in worship—service whose communion with

Him is such that they are: (i) the praise of the glory of His grace which redeemed them; and (ii) to the praise of His glory, i.e. the people who visibilise His own glory to all creation, the glory which is the action of God in all creation.¹ We ought to note here that because Man is said to be gregarious, and because human beings devise human groupings and human companies, much of the true way of being *true community when it is simply an arbitrary gathering* is unknown or abandoned, so that we may have a community of ‘sight’ rather than of the faith that makes us one in the Triune God. Much of our thought regarding the church is invalid because we do not understand its protology, its historic life and its eschatology. In our last paper we touched on much of these matters, but our aim now is to show that the church is not an arbitrary gathering of Christians which figures ways of continuing as a community without knowledge of what God has created it to be and how it is constituted.

THE DIVINE ORDER OF THE *ECCLESIA* FOR LIFE AND MINISTRY

It seems that time and again we come back to the matter of church order. The reason we do this is that if the life of the church is to continue then it needs an order of being and doing, in conformity with God’s will. In 2000 years we have devised many patterns and elements for churchly *being* and *doing*, but the question is whether God has not already given the church a form and order which is what it needs and all it needs—i.e. a functional way of life—so that it never needed ‘development’ in the sense that the church needed to go beyond its order and way of operation as we see changes discussed by the early church fathers.

The order we have so far indicated is: (i) the *dorea* (free gift) of God has been given to the church. Indeed this high gift of God is the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; 8:20; 10:45; 11:17), God’s righteousness (Rom. 5:15–17), so that it is by *dorea* that we reign in righteousness in Christ; (ii) the *domata* (Eph. 4:7–11) which are the five gifts of ministry—apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher; (iii) the *charismata* (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 1:7; 7:7; 12:4, 9, 28, 30, 31; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6; 1 Pet. 4:10) which are gifts for ministry and carry with them authority for the task assigned to them.

In this order we have also seen in 1 Corinthians 12:4–6 the Trinitarian linking of gifts given by the Spirit, servings linked with Christ the Servant, and workings linked with God the Father. One Corinthians 12:27–30 heads a list of gifts with three *domata*—apostles, prophets, teachers—and then includes five *charismata*, after which he asks the question whether all members of the body have the same gifts and all the gifts, meaning that is not the case.

The problem before us is to recognise: (i) the headship of Christ, whose body is the church, and yet it is Christ’s body at the same time; (ii) the *dorea* of the Holy Spirit who fills the church and by whom all members should be filled with all the fullness of God for His purposes; (iii) the church being ‘in the Father’ so that the Three Persons are constantly in action in and for the church; (iv) the gifts, servings and operations (workings) of every member, and the way in which all members are members one of another and their ministry to profit withal; (v) that all are members, are ‘the saints’ and ‘the brethren’, and all are ministers, i.e. servants (Eph. 4:12), and all constitute ‘the people of God; and (v) that there are leaders of the people among the people, and yet all

¹ God’s glory as He revealed it to Moses in Exodus 34:6–7 speaks of such things as mercy, long-suffering, kindness, faithfulness and His refusal to condone guilt of which a person does not repent.

members of the body work to the principle of ‘to each his own’, (Rom. 12:3; 1 Cor. 3:5; 7:7; 11:18; 12:7; Eph. 4:7); ‘for one another’, (1 Cor. 12:25; 4:10; cf. 12:7; 1 Pet. 4:10); and they submit themselves one to another (Rom. 12:10; Phil. 2:3; 1 Pet. 5:5; Eph. 5:21).²

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE *DOMATA* GIFTS OF MINISTRY

Our reason for looking specifically at the *domata* is that in its context of Ephesians 4:7–16 the five ministries of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher combine for the purpose of ‘equipping the saints for the work of the ministry’ which is related to all attaining to ‘the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ’, so that spiritual immaturity be put behind and the church ‘truthing it in love’ will upbuild itself in love’.³

We have observed in previous papers that the five gifts (*domata*) work in tandem, and that, with the exception of ‘pastor’, all gifts are mobile. The stationary pastor cannot function as though possessing the other four ministries,⁴ and needs their ministries in the local church. We will try to define these domatic ministries.

Apostle: It is clear that the twelve apostles⁵ were a collegiate which closed with their deaths. Paul must be included in this college. It seems reasonable to argue that their work was unique and was not to be repeated. However, the matter is not quite as simple as that. We know their presentation of the truth was unique, and constituted ‘the apostolic truth’ which was ever to be depended upon and never to be altered, which seems to authenticate their writings as canonical Scripture. Also they were pioneer persons who opened up new areas through proclaiming the gospel. We gather that they visited and prayed for the churches that had been founded.⁶ Paul shows his care ‘for all the churches’ (2 Cor. 11:28). Apostles never seem to have been on their own, singly, but ministered as a travelling team. In Ephesians 2:20 Paul speaks of the foundation of the church being ‘the apostles and prophets’ and in 3:4–6 of ‘the mystery of Christ’ being made known ‘to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit’. Such revelation was unique to the apostles appointed by Christ, and the references to the twelve apostles in Revelation 21:14 seems to confirm this.

Was there, also, a secondary order of apostles? It seems at least some others might be called apostles, such as Barnabas (Acts 14:14), James (1 Cor. 15:7–9), Andronicus and Junias (Rom. 16:7), and Silas (1 Thess. 2:6), but it cannot be that they are included in the apostolic college. If they are to be counted as apostles then it would be in the ministry of proclaiming the gospel in new areas. It is interesting that the church at Corinth could be considering as apostles the ‘mega-apostles’ who opposed Paul

² The substance of this was taken from Ernst Käsemann’s *Essays on New Testament Themes* (SCM, London, 1960), and in the article ‘The Ministry and Communitiy in the New Testament’, pp. 76–8.

³ We need to keep in mind that it is the mature church which will be God’s *am segullah* which will work out its ministry by reigning as a kingdom of royal priests upon the new earth (Rev. 5:10).

⁴ It may be that a person may be gifted with more than one of the *domata*. If that were the case with the pastor then his would have to be partly mobile.

⁵ Were there thirteen apostles, including Matthias and Paul, or was Matthias not an apostle? The solution of this question is impossible. It is better to include them all and see them as unique. With the death of James the brother of John no new apostle was chosen.

⁶ ‘Founded’ is a word we use today for what we call ‘church-planting’, but the gospel proclamation in the power of the Spirit causes new communities to spring up. Only God founds churches.

(see 2 Cor. 11:5, 13), and the church at Ephesus discerned ‘those who call themselves apostles but are not’ (Rev. 2:2). Apostleship seems to be needed if only for the work we would call ‘opening up unevangelised territory’, i.e. true missionary gospel proclamation, and the subsequently needed ‘care of the churches’.⁷

Prophets: We have already seen in Ephesians 2:20 and 3:4–6 that prophets were important, and foundational to the church. Unlike the apostle which was a ministry given to few, all were said to be in prophetic ministry in Acts 2:17–21 (cf. Joel 2:28–32), and such was to continue until the ‘day of the Lord’. There seems to be a distinction between the ministry of one who was a prophet—e.g. Agabus—and the charism of prophetic utterance. If we take Acts 1:8 as the theme of the Book of Acts then for the Holy Spirit to be poured out was to witness and such outpouring of the Spirit would make the utterers to be prophetic if not wholly prophets. It appears that the community could be prophetic in the way it pleased the Holy Spirit, and that the charismatic gift of prophetic utterance was mainly for the church when it was gathered.⁸ Even so, prophets are among the *domata* and not the *charismata*.

In any case prophecy is to do with witness (Acts 1:8; 2:32; 4:33; etc.).⁹ We cannot understand ‘witness’ in the NT unless we first understand it in the OT. For a helpful understanding of the whole subject I am indebted to a monograph by Allison A. Trites entitled, *The New Testament Concept of Witness* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977). He has thoroughly researched the concept of witness in both the OT and the NT. His primary conclusion is that witness is juridical, i.e. that God is actually amassing the evidence concerning Himself and His character against the false ideas which the human race—and even Israel—have regarding Him and against Him. In some cases He even invites His listeners to enter into the very courtroom, state their cases, amass their evidence and assess the verdict. This verdict is always weighted for God and against rebellious Man.

If we refer back to Ephesians 2:20 and 3:4–6, the prophets here are surely part of the *domata*, but the question arises whether they are dispensable following the period of the twelve apostles. The question really raised regarding all *domata* is this one—of the dispensability of the *domata*, which we will discuss later. The ministry of Agabus in Acts 11:27–28 and 21:10f. was helpful to the church as a whole, and that of Judas and Silas likewise both authoritative and hortatory. What then of the mention of prophets in Acts 11:27, 13:1, and 15:32, as also those referred to in the Book of the Revelation? It is clear all mentioned apart from Revelation are domatic and those in Revelation may likewise be so. Paul enjoins the Thessalonians, ‘Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophesying, but test everything; hold fast what is good’, and this seems to indicate that prophecy was held in high regard.

The fact of false prophesying from false prophets seems to emphasise the value of true prophecy and true prophesying. Does this ministry ever cease? We should note that prophesying was not only the result of the infilling of the Spirit at Pentecost but was also

⁷ For an expanded study of ‘apostle’ see *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* by Wayne Grudem (IVP, Leicester, 1994), pp. 906–11.

⁸ Friedrich in *The Theological Dictionary of the N. T.* (eds G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1968, vol. 6, p. 849) sees the new community as wholly prophetic:

Acc. to Ac. 2:4; 4:31 all are filled with the prophetic Spirit and acc. to Ac. 2: 16ff. it is a specific mark of the age of fulfilment that the Spirit does not only lay hold of individuals but that all members of the eschatological community without distinction are called to prophesy. In Corinth there was obviously a greater number of prophets, for those who spoke at divine service had to be limited to two or three, 1 C. 14:29. In spite of this, Paul urges the Corinthians to strive after the *charisma* of prophecy, 1 C. 14:1, 5, 12, 39. It is not a gift for the chosen few. It can be imparted to any man even though in practice it may be limited to a comparatively small circle.

⁹ I suggest further reading should be Trites’s book, quoted above, and my own *Is Prophecy For Today?* (NCPI, Blackwood, 1982).

present in the infilling of the Gentiles at Caesarea and at Ephesus. In both cases tongues were there so then what does this say of prophecy, whether a *charisma* or a *doma*?

Evangelist: Although the term is much used today we cannot be quite sure of its activities in New Testament times. *Krux* was the word used for proclaimers of the *kerugma*, whilst *euaggelistes* is from the verb ‘to evangelise’. The term is used in Isaiah 40:9 and 52:7 and in the New Testament in Galatians 3:8 of God, and in Acts 8:4 of those who were ‘scattered abroad’ by the persecution of Stephen. We know that Philip was called ‘the evangelist’ (Acts 21:8), and he is the only one we see working on his own, as in Acts 8:4–13, but his ministry was not complete so that the apostles at Jerusalem sent Peter and John (8:14–17), especially so that they might receive the Spirit and be a full church in Samaria.¹⁰ ‘Evangelist’ seems to deal with salvific rather than pastoral ministry. Two Timothy 4:5 has Paul’s injunction, ‘As for you, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry’, and this could mean that Timothy should seek out the unsaved in the congregation whilst he was also fulfilling the ministry of teaching which Paul was also always pressing him to do. Such a gift is always needed since salvation is always personal. Acts 8:4 is a situation where all are doing the work of evangelists, so that generally all members of the church evangelise whilst some are evangelists in particular. The term was later also used of writers of the Gospels, e.g. Mark 1:1, ‘The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. . .’

Pastor: We should go back to the Monday Study of April 2000, ‘The Pastor and His People—I’ to see a fuller treatment, and I will be including some of that text in this section. Also an even wider treatment is my *Shepherds of the Flock* (NCPI, 1997), but both Studies need a simple correction by emphasising that the New Testament does not speak of a single pastor heading up a church. Pastors (i.e. elders) are in the plural and are operative along with the other four *domata*:

. . . we saw that in the Book of Acts there are elders in the Church at Jerusalem, James the brother of the Lord being the leading elder, since he made pronouncements (15:4, 6, 13, 22). We are not told how this eldership came into being. In I Peter 5:1–5 Peter addresses elders and calls himself an elder. In II John 1, and III John 1, John calls himself an elder. In the Pastoral Epistles (I Tim. 5:17, 19; Titus 1:5) Paul speaks of elders. A difficulty arises when we read Acts 20:17 where it is said that Paul called the elders of the church of Ephesus to Miletus. He gives them a charge to fulfil (vv. 17–34). They are elders but in verse 28 Paul calls them ‘guardians’ or ‘overseers’ (*episkopoi*), and his use of the verb ‘to shepherd’ (*poimainen*) the church (*ecclesia*) makes them pastors though that word is not used. We now have ‘elders’ and ‘overseers’ which seem to be synonymous. In Philippians 1:1 Paul writes to ‘bishops’ (*episcopoi*) and deacons (*diakonois*). Note that there is a number of bishops—the word used in Acts 20:28. In I Timothy 3:1–7 Paul speaks about a person desiring to be a bishop. The RSV text is ‘The saying is sure: If any one aspires to the office of bishop, he desires a noble task’. The NRSV text is ‘The saying is sure: whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task’. The NIV text is, ‘Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets

¹⁰ If seen as using the keys to open the Kingdom to the Samaritans then it would appear the apostles had wider authority, and that the evangelist was the one who ‘preached the good news about the kingdom of God’ (8:12). This occasion would be unique even for an evangelist as Samaritans were accessed—as a people—into the Kingdom but his meeting with the Ethiopian eunuch was probably characteristic of any apostolic evangelist.

his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task'. The NASB text is, 'It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do'. The words 'to the office of' are not in the text.

Again, Donald Guthrie in his Tyndale Commentary on *The Pastoral Epistles*¹¹ has the following statement:

It is important to notice that the modern word *bishop* does not represent the Greek word *episkopos*, which properly means 'overseer'. In its original usage, at least until the time of Ignatius, it was restricted to those who exercised oversight in the local church. In the proverbial saying in this verse, the office referred to is quite general and might encompass any position, secular or ecclesiastical, where 'oversight' was necessary. Nor is there any hint here or elsewhere in the Pastorals of the monarchical episcopacy so much lauded by Ignatius.¹²

Henry Alford in his *Alford's Greek Testament* says: 'The identity of the [*episcopos*] and [*presbuteros*] in apostolic times is evident from Tit. i.5–7'.¹³ That passage is as follows:

This is why I left you in Crete, that you might amend what was defective, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you, if any man is blameless, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of being profligate or insubordinate. For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain [emphasis mine].

When to this we add Paul's calling of the elders in Acts 20:17, and telling them in 20:28 that the Holy Spirit has appointed them as overseers (*episkopous*), surely we see the leaders (*hegeomai*) of Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24 (that is, 'those having hegemony—the rule—over you') are identical with the elders of I Peter 5:1–5, who are the same as pastors because they are to 'tend the flock of God'. Again, in I Thessalonians 5:12 Paul says, 'But we beseech you, brethren, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you', must surely be of the one order which is leader-elder-bishop-overseer-pastor.

This is a conclusion which can be challenged, and I think must be challenged, but for the moment we will leave the matter of pastors, and take it up in our 'Conclusion'.

Teacher: This is a ministry demanding even more enquiry and coverage than any other of the *domata*. It is to be noted that 'pastor' and 'teacher' are often conjoined as though one, which the text seems to indicate. However, 'teachers' as in Acts 13:1, 1 Corinthians 12:28–29, and Romans 12:7 and other places seems to indicate that it is a special ministry. Ephesians 4:20–21 is helpful in seeing the purpose of ministry, 'You did not so learn Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus'. Learning was from the teachers. Concerning this teaching we refer to Hebrews 5:12; James 3:1; Acts 13:1; 1 Timothy 3:2; 4:11, 13, 16; 5:17; 2 Timothy 2:2, 24; 3:16; 4:2, 3; Titus 1:9; 2:1. The teachers taught the whole body of truth, furnishing their listeners with the whole of salvation history the plan of God for time and eternity, and all the things of Christ within that. They applied the moral and ethical implications of the gospel. They taught against false teachers and their 'theology', as also they built up the members of the body that they should not remain as children, 'tossed to and fro [by] every wind of doctrine'.

THE PLACE AND PURPOSE OF THE DOMATA

We see firstly that the five ministries derive from the Head, Christ, and that he gives of himself to the church out of his fullness (Eph. 1:23; 3:7, 19; 5:18; Col. 1:19; 2:3, 9).

¹¹ Tyndale Press 1964, page 79.

¹² *The Pastoral Epistles: An Exegetical and Critical Commentary*, Tyndale Press, Leicester, 1964, p. 79.

¹³ *Alford's Greek Testament: An Exegetical and Critical Commentary*, vol. 3, Guardian Press, Grand Rapids, 1976, p. 321.

He is *the Apostle* (Heb. 3:1), the one sent by the Father and thus sending out this ministry (John 17:18). He is *the Prophet* as the Gospels¹⁴ and Deuteronomy 18:15ff. (cf. Acts 3:22–26) denote. He is *the Evangelist*, for he came preaching the gospel (Mark 1:1, 14; Isa. 52:7). In fact he is the one who formed the gospel by his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension and reigning. He is *the Pastor*—the ‘good shepherd’ of John chapters 10 and 21. See also 1 Peter 5:1ff, Hebrews 13:20, and Revelation 7:17. He was *the Teacher*, for that was the term given to him in the Gospels, i.e. ‘Rabbi’. As Teacher he gathered disciples who were learners and would themselves teach. Since all were members of his body and the church was his body, so it was equipped with the five ministries which he gave to it: it was out of his fullness that it operated as the church.

This brings us again to the thesis on the church which I have been putting forward in our Studies, namely that its basic ‘structure’—if we may use that word—is set through the *dorea* gifting, along with the *domatic* and *charismatic* giftings.¹⁵ Its *being* is Christ himself, not only as active Head but also because all members are his members. The term ‘body’ is not merely figurative but ontological. I see all these elements here mentioned constituting its form and functional being. If that is the case—and many deny it is so—then the church does not need to change its configurations from its inception at Pentecost. Certainly it has always been adaptive, for what is ontological contains that ability—and tendency—to reform to its functional configurations. So then we would say the gifts and their operations as given and actuated by the Trinity are indispensable to the life, action and goal of the active people of God, participating in the Divine nature, i.e. being partner to God in His eternal purpose.

By the last paragraph we mean that the church functions on *dorea*, *domata* and *charismata* as *laos periousios*—along with servings and workings—by the life of the Triune God operative within it. It was not the contemporary circumstances of the church which were met by a temporary and adaptive functionality, but that functionality was prior to the circumstances. It is the way the church is in the Father, is the body of Christ, and is empowered and equipped by the Holy Spirit. In our next Study we will seek to understand the part the *charismata* play in the life of the apostolic church, and hence in the universal church. We will seek to see how the church is upbuilding itself in love by its present functionality. Indeed if we have been trying to understand some kind of methodology in what we have said in this paper, then we have missed the wood for the trees. We have even been barking up the wrong tree!

CONCLUSION TO STUDY ONE OF ‘THE APOSTOLIC MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH OF GOD’

We yet need to see that whilst all elements of giftings, servings and workings (1 Cor. 12:4–6) are functional to the operation of the church, yet it is their purpose in history to equip and develop the church of God so that ultimately it will be ‘to the praise of His glory’ at the *telos* and then continue to be so in the outworking of eternity. Only as the community of love, of joy and of peace, can the church be to God’s glory. A

¹⁴ This is a large question and calls for detailed study. John was ‘more than a prophet’ and Jesus was ‘more than more than a prophet’. By the same token he was not less than a prophet but was the prophet, witnessed to by all the prophets (Rev. 19:10).

¹⁵ We have yet to deal in extension with the place and purpose of *charismata* but we know every member of the church is gifted with one or more of the *charismata*, and that these are livingly present and active where the gospel makes its impact and the church becomes pro-active.

community which was not such would not be to His glory. The great properties of God—righteousness, holiness, goodness, truth and love—are essential for the community to be God's *am segullah*—His *laos periousios*, so that the Triune God would not only be visibilised by the people of God, but would also work with Him in partnership in the work of eternity. We do not rightly know what that work will be but we assume it will be worship—service, which we have already begun to do as we can see in Romans 12:1, 1 Peter 2:5, and Hebrews 13:15–16. We have wonderful insights as to what this community will be. One of the points that we can make regarding it is that all evil will have been vanquished and obliterated. The kingdoms of the new heaven, of the renewed earth and all creation will be operative in the rhapsody of love, of joy, of serenity. Nothing less than this can mark out the true people of God, the priesthood of all believers, the holy nation which will rule creation forever.

The Apostolic Ministry of the Church of God—II

INTRODUCTION: FURTHER ELEMENTS TO THE ESTABLISHING OF THE CHURCH

In our last study we examined the matter of God's blessing the church and so equipping it by the gifts and ministries which enable it to share in the fulfilling of the counsel of God's will, especially as regards the completion of His *am segullah*—His people for eternity—to whom He gives the gift of serving as kings and priests unto God as they reign on the earth.

In this study we will try firstly to look at the gifts called *charismata*, then at the triune workings of God as we find them in 1 Corinthians 12:4–6 and, finally, the whole principle of leadership in creation and in the church, at which point we will double back to our discussion of the nature of the gift of pastors, looking at it in the light of the matter of authority, hierarchy, and so on.

THE MATTER OF THE CHARISMATA

The matter of *charismata* (as in 1 Cor. 12:7–11, 28–31; Rom. 12:3–8; 1 Pet. 4:10), ought to be dealt with alongside: (i) the gift (*dorea*) of Christ (2 Cor. 9:15), which we also have seen is 'the blessing of Christ' himself in the church; (ii) the whole or the full gift of Ephesians 1:3–4; (iii) gifts (*domata*) given by Christ (Eph. 4:7–11); (iv) the gift and blessing of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (cf. *dorea* in Acts 11:17; Rom. 5:15, 17); and (v) the gifts called the *charismata* which we are now investigating.

What is often neglected are the gifts given to Israel as in Romans 9:4–5. These are the gifts which belonged to the *am segullah*, the faithful people of Israel, and should be noted:

They are Israelites, and to them belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ. God who is over all be blessed for ever. Amen.

These are patently the gifts of the church as the continuing 'people of God', and they are things we are discussing. We have to keep in mind that the Christian community is the people of God, and that they are this in the light of 1 Peter 2:4–10, 1 Corinthians 3:16, Ephesians 2:21–22, and Titus 2:14. The church works through its life and its ministry many gifts, blessings and empowerments.

We have also noted that in 1 Corinthians 12:4–6 there are three elements of action: (i) varieties of giftings which are linked with the Holy Spirit; (ii) varieties of servings which are linked with the Lord (Christ) himself; and (iii) varieties of workings which are linked with God the Father. What Paul is working through in this chapter is a showing of the community as having unity in diversity, in the face of the common idea that variety is against unity, when, in fact, variety and diversity are essential to true unity.

What, then, are the *charismata*? We ought to note that Paul does not, in fact, speak directly about 'spiritual gifts' in 1 Corinthians 12:1, but about 'the spirituals' (*ton pneumatika*) which have been translated variously as 'spiritual people' or 'those who are spiritual' if the word is masculine, or 'spiritual matters or things' if the word is neuter. We cannot determine exactly but the sentence alerts us to the fact that the readers are to see that gifts are linked with what is spiritual. It would appear that some Corinthians had narrowed down spirituality to

having the gift of tongues, and had seen the variety of other gifts as being of little importance. This could not be the case.

Much has been spoken about the nature of each gift—a discussion we will not here undertake—but when in verses 28–29 of this chapter they are linked with the *domata* then the purpose of all gifts is apparent, they are all for the work of service, i.e. of ministry. First Corinthians chapter 13 shows us that without love the gifts are nothing, but if operated in love then they will certainly edify (1 Cor. 8:1; cf. Rom 14:15, 19).

First Peter 4:10–11 helps us to understand the purpose of *charismata*:

As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good *stewards* of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who utters oracles of God; whoever renders *service*, as one who renders it by the strength which God supplies; in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

In this passage the terms 'stewardship' and 'service' come up. The gifts of *domata* help to equip the saints for the work of ministry, and the spiritual gifts are effective means by which the saints minister to and serve others. It has been said that there is no gift which is not a serving (*diakonia*), and no serving which is not a gift (*charisma*).

A glance down the range of the gifts in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 shows us how the church would benefit from 'the utterance of wisdom', 'the utterance of knowledge', 'faith', 'healing', 'miracles', 'prophecy', 'the ability to distinguish between spirits', 'serving', 'teaching', 'exhorting', 'giving', 'helping', 'acting in mercy', and the gift of tongues and interpreting of tongues. Within the community of Christ these gifts would meet so many critical needs, for the gift exercised was so often the deed that met the need (cf. 1 John 3:17–18). It would thus help to build up members in their faith and the unity of love. They would also minister to many outside the church in the proclamation of the gospel. All of them as used to meet practical needs and maintain the unity of the *ecclesia* would manifest the Spirit working among them in a tangible and concrete way. Indeed, the operating of the gifts, of the services and the works were all manifestations of the Spirit, for gifts were—many of them—supernatural, whilst others were quite natural.

A point of immense importance in the matter of the gifts (*charismata*) is Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 12:7, 'To *each* is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the *common* good'. It does seem that the verse is assuring us that every person in the church is given a gift if not more than a single gift. Paul here speaks of 'the manifestation of the Spirit' which could mean that no gift is static and that its operation is in or by the Spirit. Secondly it is an assurance that each member may be at work in the Spirit 'for the common good'. In fact each person will have a ministry and will have the gift to use *in* that ministry. Whilst we may not say that every last one of the members has a gift, yet it seems this verse—along with the verses following—is weighted that way.

Now if each has a gift, each is a minister (servant), and if each is ministering within that gift in the Spirit, then it goes without saying that that person is edified, given dignity, has a rich sense of vocation and senses that he or she is participating in God's will and plan. It has been said that the term 'individual Christian' is an oxymoron for we are told in regard to the gifts that 'we are members one of another'. None can see himself or herself as elevated above another because of the gift or the nature of the gift. First Corinthians 13 is a powerful exposition of the life of love, especially as it relates to the use of gifts. One can use the gifts—as we might say—'unspiritually'; or we may use them spiritually, in which case all the developments to character which come by love will proceed, and so the community will increase in love both personally and corporately. Through the *charisma* or *charismata* given to a person will come such a sense of vocation and delight that the problems of self-respect and self-criticism—along with the emptiness of self-seeking—will give way to pleasure and joy in using God's gifts to His glory and to the building up of His people, as well as sharing in His plan for Creation.

THE MATTERS OF AUTHORITY, OBEDIENCE AND MINISTRY

On the surface it would seem that there is an order, perhaps even an hierarchical order, within the gifts and ministries of the church. It would seem that, in particular, the five *domata*—apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher—might be offices which are prior in order to the gifts called *charismata*. We have observed before that the term ‘office’ does not, strictly speaking, appear in the New Testament in the sense that we use it today. Acts 1:20 uses the term *ten episkopen* or bishopric, which is sometimes translated ‘office’, but 1:25 speaks of ‘this *ministry* and apostleship’, i.e. this *diakonia*. In Ephesians 4:11 the five *domata* are persons gifted to the church who are fulfilling a function but not occupying an office.

It might appear from 1 Corinthians 12:28–30 that there is a ranking of the gifts that are persons—apostle, prophet, teacher—and then the various *charismata*, but this is not the case. Certainly the domatic ministry is that which ‘equips the saints for the work of the ministry’ and has a kind of *prius* in relation to the *charismata*, but all ministries are grouped together in the situation where the saints are all ‘members one of the other’, where all comprise the whole body and where all minister ‘to profit withal’. All members are to ‘outdo one another in showing honour’ (Rom. 12:10).

All of this raises the important matter of hierarchy, and even the mention of the term in connection with theology seems to some to be anathema. This is particularly so in regard to the Trinitarian relationships. If there is a hierarchy in the order of Father, Son and Holy Spirit and it proves—to some—objectionable, then the ‘no hierarchy’ alternative is a barren one and yields no ontology of ordination, i.e. superordination and subordination. The mystery of relationships does not then exist in fullness. We need, then, to give special attention to this whole matter of hierarchy, and although at this point it may seem strange to introduce it in a special treatment, yet we will see the church from the view we take of hierarchy, especially the hierarchy of the Trinity if it contains one.

The Heart of Authority and Obedience

It is clear that Man from the Fall has been a creature who does not like authority unless it benefits him, and who baulks against law, unless it offers him some advantage. Man’s rebellion against God and all forms of authority is patent. We have the advantage of the history of a people, Israel, and their god, Yahweh, to see how people do not take kindly to law and authority. Only when they see God as love, and live in His love do they voluntarily obey Him. It is generally to the advantage of people to be obedient under proper structures. The Scriptures make it evident that law, commands, and functional structures are the expressions of God’s love, and that in some way they are necessary for Man’s proper living. In this case the giving of law is love on God’s part, and obeying it is love on Man’s part. Indeed all true authority is love exercised, and all true obedience is likewise love in action. The obedience on Man’s part is to God’s will, and not just to some set of legal precepts. By God’s will we mean what we have been pursuing in these Studies, namely ‘the counsel of His will’, i.e. ‘the whole counsel [purpose, aim] of God. Our obedience then is not simply to law prescriptions but to live life in and for God and be covenant partners with Him in His great plan of redemption as well as the sanctification, glorification and perfection of Man and the rest of creation.

If we detach the law from God then we are in great danger. There is no such thing as law which is an entity on its own. It only makes sense and life when the law is seen as the transcript of Himself. J. A. Motyer¹ has written:

¹ Motyer’s article ‘Law, Biblical Concept of’, in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* ed. by Walter A. Elwell (Baker, Grand Rapids, 1984).

Man is the living, personal image of God; the law is the written, preceptual image of God. The intention of Lev. 19 is declared at the outset: “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy” (vs. 2). The Lord longs for his people to live in his image, and to that end he has given them his law.²

Obedience always springs from love. That is understood in the giving of the law as we find it in Deuteronomy 5 and Exodus 20. God has liberated Israel from Egypt and so He expects their obedience, even though they fell in Adam. Jesus said simply, ‘If you love me, you will keep my commandments’ (John 14:15).

All Authority Is from God

This is a general presentation in Scripture, i.e. ‘All authority is from God’. God is King over all the earth, and over the nations. As Creator He has authority over all creation. He is the Law-Giver in every area of His creation. His authority is first over all celestial creatures—angels, seraphim, cherubim and the like—and in that celestial sphere He has set up an hierarchical system. In creation there are the sun and moon as they were to rule over the day and night respectively (Gen. 1:16–18). There are certainly hierarchies amongst the creatures, and in all bodies—human bodies as well—there are hierarchies of the living components which are said to have a ‘feedback loop’ where information is given back upwards to the ‘higher’ elements of the hierarchy.

Man and woman can be said to exist as a hierarchy because whilst God created the man from the dust as a creature, yet his wife was created from part of him, so that he has a creational *prius* and in some sense a *principium*. Man is said to *rule* over woman as a consequence of the Fall (Gen. 3:16), but he was leader prior to the Fall. Indeed he did not show that leadership in the matter of facing the serpent and his seduction. Whether or not we agree, the fact is that there are hierarchies in parents and children, even to the matter of responsibilities of the first born and the principles of inheritance.

Here we must pause and note that the term ‘hierarchy’ is obnoxious to many because it suggests a descending order of humanity which in turn raises the bogies of superiority and inferiority as suggested by superordination and subordination. One psychological factor is that Man, being made in the image of God, was created as a glorious creature—the very image of God—and this is seen by reading Genesis 1:26–27 and Psalm 8:3–9.³ When he fell Man did not have his glory—which was primarily moral—taken from him, but it was marred, to say the least. Because he ‘fell short of the glory of God’, he has ever since felt inferior, and lives with existential guilt. His anti-authority ‘mind’ is still with him (see Rom. 1:19–32) and he will have it that all things should be equal, i.e. egalitarian. In one sense, of course, they are, but creation as to functional order is not egalitarian. As to human *substance* all human beings are equal, but as to *function* there have to be hierarchies, whether we like it or not. For this reason we will now discuss the matter of hierarchy.

THE MATTER OF HIERARCHY—DIVINE AND HUMAN

The Hierarchical Order of the Triune Godhead

If we can grasp the fact of superordination and subordination in the Godhead, and if we can understand it adequately, then we will be able to proceed with our understanding of the divine relationship of the Three Persons in the one-subject conscious Trinity, and this will be of immense importance to us as the people of God, as His ‘treasured possession’ and the way we should operate now as the church, and then as those who reign on the earth (Rev. 5:10). Quite helpful is Helmut Thielicke. Speaking of the *imago dei*, he says:

² See my *The Law of Eternal Delight*, (NCPI, Blackwood, 2001).

³ See also Genesis 9:6; 1 Corinthians 11:7; and James 3:9.

It is characteristic that the various references to the divine likeness in Genesis (1:26; 5:1; 9:6; cf. also Wis. 2:23; Sir. 17:3) do not give us statements of ontological content but restrict themselves to these hierarchical relations, to the position of man in the total cosmos. This is true even of a verse like Genesis 5:1, where the concept of the divine likeness is, as it were, a preamble to the first genealogy in the Bible, the one that ends with Noah (5:32).⁴

It is not curiosity which drives us to understand the Godhead, but necessity so we will know our humanity as it has been created in God's image. What we must keep firmly in mind is that there has always been an *order* in the Divine Community, i.e. the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We have seen that our ideas of order or hierarchy are conditioned by existential guilt, anxiety and inferior feelings rising from the Fall. The idea of hierarchy was originally related to the priestly order but is now linked with any system of order, so to speak, 'from highest to lowest', provided we understand that this has nothing to do with superiority or inferiority, but function. The word 'priest' is *hierus*, the temple *hieron*, the high priest *arkierus*—from *arke* and *hierus*—and so a hierarchy is a *sacred* order in which something comes down from the level above. It comes down in order to assist those below it. In Greece the priest was called a hierophant and as such was an official expounder of mysteries or revelations, these being known as hierophanies. Whilst today we use the term 'hierarchy' to denote any entity which contains orders of persons, usually of a functional nature, yet if we lose its sacred connotation we lose a true view of hierarchy.

For this reason we need to look at the relationships which are always between the Three Persons of the Triunity. At this point we do not have the time or space to develop these from the Scriptures but we can see from previous Trinitarian studies that the Three Persons: (i) honour (worship: give worth to) one another; (ii) serve one another as Servants; (iii) give to one another; and (iv) receive from one another. This is really God in action, and shows—at least from one vantage point—what it is for Man to be in God's image. As God's image he would act this way *out of God's love given to him*.

Via the *imago dei*, resultant relationships must emerge, and they are the only true relationships human beings can know since they derive from and comport with the law of Christ—the true law of God. The reality of Divine love (*agape*) is the great power by which true relationships obtain (1 John 4:11, 12, 19). What we must keep in mind is that these relationships do not come as prescriptions. They are not legal requirements or even specified roles although they often appear to be. They issue from the archetype of the Godhead. They are also linked with the principle of hierarchy. They are functional to Man's true life, and even to creation's life, which leads us to state a universal principle, 'The whole creation works in hierarchy because hierarchy is functional and not ontological. At the same time *it is ontological to be functional after the manner of love*.'

Hierarchy in the Godhead and in Man

Many are aware that if Man is made in the image of God then the relationships Man should have must derive from the relationships God has within Himself, i.e. the relationships which obtain in the Three Persons. If there is an ontological hierarchy of the Three Persons, i.e. of their *ousia* or 'substance', then it is mandatory that this will be so amongst humans. If, however, the hierarchy is one of intra-trinitarian relationships functionally then it will mean Man must recognise the essential need for hierarchy since the question of inferiority–superiority does not arise essentially. It certainly does not arise functionally for to act as do the Persons of the Trinity in serving one another—i.e. are servants to one another, honour one another, give to and receive from one another—why that is the way of love. The following two quotes are supportive of this idea:

⁴ Helmut Thielicke, *Foundations, Theological Ethics*, vol. 1 (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1979), p. 155.

St. Hilary in reference to John 14:28, where Jesus says that ‘the Father is greater than I’ says according to Luther that ‘[s]ince the Father is the first Person, it is only fair to call Him greater than Christ. But since other passages of Holy Writ prove that Christ is true God, it must be possible to bring this verse into agreement with the rest of Scripture, namely, by saying that the Father is greater, “*not by nature or essence but by authority,*” that is, *not by reason of divine essence* but solely because the Son proceeds from the Father, not the Father from the Son’ (*Luther’s Works*, American Edition, vol. 24, p. 187, emphasis mine).⁵

The immanent Trinity is identical to the economic Trinity . . . while the economic Trinity . . . is expressed primarily in functional and not ontological categories; that is, *ad extra* words and deeds of the Trinity are articulated in relational terms and idioms; *yet inherent within these functional categories lies a trinitarian ontology. Functional economic trinitarianism discloses an ontological immanent trinitarianism.* The *pro nobis* manifestation of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit innately contains and naturally unveils an *in se* ontological reality [emphasis mine].⁶

At this point we may advert to the main thesis of our series of Studies, namely that the *laos periousios* does not have a hierarchical order which is *ontological*, but one which is functional, so that ‘offices’ are not filled because they are set (ontological) offices but because they are functional ministries, under the aegis of Christ, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and altogether conducted by love. The two quotes above would appear to underline this principle.

Without touching immediately on the matter of authority in the body of Christ, it would seem helpful to discuss the human body in an extra-biblical way. Dr Siew Kiong Tham, who is a general surgeon, has given us a paper entitled ‘The Body of Christ and the Human Body’.⁷ In this he has refused to use the physical body as *an analogy* of the spiritual body, the church, but feels that an examination of the physical human body could help us in understanding how the body of Christ might, in some sense, be illustrated. I quote but a paragraph here:

In the endocrine model that I have given above, while there is control and feedback between the organs involved, there is also a hierarchy of functions. The thyroid gland, while controlling the metabolism in the body, is subject to the control from the pituitary gland in the brain, and the pituitary gland is in turn subject to the regulation from the hypothalamus. While there is this hierarchy of operations, each controlling centre is in turn subject to feedback from the organ it controls.

The picture the writer gives is of the body with its ‘hierarchy of operations’ and he points out that the upper components of the hierarchy by means of an inbuilt ‘feedback loop’ receive intelligent promptings from those other organic components which are ‘lower’ in the hierarchical order. This agrees with my description—below—of a hierarchy: ‘It is a course of members moving functionally together for the fulfilment of a task in which hierarchical order is required’.

All of this, then, brings us back to the thoughts we shared concerning a hierophant. For our purposes the hierophant is one who by dint of much labour, and by a charism (anointing)⁸ given to him, is able to understand mysteries. Wisdom is often passed from a ‘senior’ hierophant to a ‘junior’ one. In any case the head of the hierarchy knows it is his responsibility to pass down—functionally—what is indispensable to the ‘lower’ parts of the hierarchy. It is interesting to see in the Gospels, and particularly in the Gospel of John, that the Father has loved the Son and ‘given all things into his hands’ (John 3:35; Matt. 11:27). It is also interesting to see how many times the Son says he can only give, do, and say what the Father

⁵ Quoted by Anthony Price in an article ‘Is There a Hierarchy in the Immanent Trinity?’ (unpublished, 18/11/99, p. 2).

⁶ Quoted by Anthony Price, *ibid*, p. 6, from *The Father’s Spirit of Sonship* by Thomas G. Weindady, T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1995.

⁷ Pastors’ Monday Study for August, 2001 (NCPI, Blackwood, 2001, p. 9).

⁸ Here we are not saying that all pagans who are priests, shamans, gurus, pundits and such like have a genuine spiritual gift from God. We simply say that in their religions and cultures they are regarded as wise persons with valuable wisdom—and so on. Cultures have always needed such leaders, and certainly many cultures have benefited by them to one degree or another, especially when they have not had a heart towards evil.

has given to Him. Indeed, all he does is really what the Father does in him, which drives us to see that all flows from the fact that he is in the Father and the Father in him, and that he prays that his followers ‘may be one *in us*’. Thus it emerges that the hierarchical relationship is that of love.

An Important Example of Hierarchy

Let us take one example, that of 1 Corinthians 11:3: ‘But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God’. Here we can build an ascending–descending hierarchy if we wish. Because it is not stated in that order we will look at it otherwise. First we will see the necessity, functionally, of ‘every man’ to have Christ as his head. We know that the term ‘head’ is now said to be ‘source’ or ‘origin’ and we concede the truth of it. We ask, therefore, ‘head for what?’ ‘origin for what?’ Are we attempting to speak ontologically or functionally? If the former, then it is for the man to attain to something. If the latter, then it is for a person to do and *be* something, i.e. in action. The ‘man’ indicated here has need of the head, as the Son has need of the Father—his Source or Origin. His need is for being head of his wife. Even then we do not see the whole import of what Paul has been saying, which is that Christ (the Son) being in the Father can be true Head of the man, the man can then be head of his wife—with all that that indicates—and the woman is one with her husband and in him, as he is in Christ and Christ is in God. Indeed all are in all, none is outside the others.

We see, then, that *a true hierarchy is a formation or cluster of persons or creatures (organs in a body) who form a functional unit and who do not exist as independent monads.* We are not thinking of hierarchies being separate but, by nature of the case, as being in harmony, and necessary to all other genuine hierarchies.⁹ In human society this is what many unconsciously crave for, but without being in God this is not possible. The image of God in Man has not so been marred that these functional relationships of love cease to maintain some hold on Man. All his art, religions, cultures and achievements show he is striving for true functionality, i.e. love in action, love in relationships. The life of a monad is lonely, and a society of granular monads is empty, something like C. S. Lewis’s idea of hell.

We ought to conclude this section by saying that apart from Christ’s incarnation and his works of love we could never arrive at the revelation we have just discussed.

THE OUTWORKING IN THE BODY OF THE GIFTS IN HIERARCHY

We have argued that there is a hierarchy in the Trinity but that it is a hierarchy of function rather than essence and operates the intra-Trinitarian relationships. A quote from C. K. Barrett¹⁰ will refresh our minds on this score:

We should avoid a difficulty if we stopped at this point, and thought of Christ’s belonging to God as something that refers **only** to his earthly life and humanity (so, e.g., Calvin, and most earlier commentators), in which he practised sacrificial obedience, as the Corinthians also must. We are however forbidden to do this not only by Paul’s thought in general, but by the explicit statement of xv. 28 (*When all things shall have been subjected to him, then the Son himself also shall be subjected to him who subjected all things to him, that God may be all in all*). **There is eternally a relation of superordination and subordination between the Father and the Son.** This does not however mean (if we may use language that did not rise till many years after Paul’s time—though Lightfoot notes that to take this phrase with reference to the divine nature of Christ ‘is necessary for the proper understanding of the Nicene Creed’) that the Son is not of one substance with the Father, and belongs to

⁹ We mean that when God created the world He said, ‘It is very good’ and much of the meaning is ‘functionally good’, i.e. ‘according to My mind, My law, My plan’, in which case all things, in some measure or another, would be hierarchical.

¹⁰ *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, A. & C. Black, London, 1973, pp. 97–98.

a different order of being; it means rather that the Son, being of one substance with the Father, is differentiated from him precisely in this, that he renders the obedience of perfect love to the perfectly loving will of the Father. This language is indeed much too formal for Paul, whose thought moves in **terms of function rather than essence**. For him, Jesus is the willing agent of God [emphases are mine].

What interests us is that whilst all humans are ontologically as God created them, yet part of that creation is to make Man have relationships with God, with creation and with one another as a body of creatures of the one essence. This would be impossible without love, but then Man was created in love, i.e. by God who is love (1 John 4:8, 16). This means that whatever a person is, he or she being gifted will exercise those gifts functionally and in relationship with all others.

This brings us to Paul's teaching in Ephesians 4:7–16, and 1 Corinthians 12:12–31. In the first statement Paul is saying that the five gifts (*domata*) are for the equipment of the saints for the work of ministry, the outcome of which will be: (i) the building up of the body of Christ until the church reaches the maturity of Christ, in which case; (ii) the members will not be caught in the deliberate deceit of crafty teachers; and that (iii) the whole church, all members working together in love, will set the church building itself up in love.

In the 1 Corinthians passage Paul is saying that all the members of the body are one in Christ and that none can claim to be important above another, or to be lower than another. All are essential to the true working of the body. He also speaks about the honourable nature of all members—a point we shall yet explore. No member is inferior to another, nor superior to another. The unity, harmony and functioning of all members is such that they feel it if any member suffers and are delighted if any member is honoured.

Applying this to the working of the gifts of the *domata*—apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher—we can see the beauty and effectiveness when all five gifts work harmoniously together and no one gifted person takes on the ministry for which that one is not gifted. By the same token that one may now minister fully the ministry granted to him. For example, we have much spoken of the work of the pastor who is 'shepherd'. Because of certain happenings in history overmuch is made of a monarchical pastor, and other gifts are neglected or this one pastor seeks to fulfil those other gifts. We have the answer to this harmful overemphasis in the hierarchy of gifts as they function, for we know that the five gifts flow from Christ himself, and are Christ in their functioning, for he is the Good Shepherd, whilst His Father is the Eternal Shepherd.

What is so delightful is that each person—gift to the church can fill out that gift to its most marvellous fullness without impinging on other gifts. That person can only do this where all gifts are in their true working. So, too, in the 1 Corinthians 12 passage: all gifts operate in fullness because of their interdependency and inter-operation.

Where there is fear today among 'clergy' that there will be a takeover by the 'laity', this fear should be dispelled as we learn that the term 'laity' refers to all members—all members being together—and that there is no such thing as *control* in the body of Christ. Reluctance to recognise the true functioning of members may lead to so-called 'laity' hijacking the power of the so-called 'clergy'. This would be sad in the light of the true nature of the body of Christ.

CONCLUSION TO 'THE APOSTOLIC MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH'

As I have worked on these studies by reading, thinking, researching and seeking to discern the matter of the church, in these two years—2000, 2001—I have many times repeated myself and certain materials. This is because I have been trying to discover the true nature of the church, and as insights have opened up and discoveries were made I have had to recast the material, time and again. I guess this is how it will always be. In respect to ministry which is our whole life and the reason for our existence, I can see that God supplies all grace both to understand and to practice such ministry. As I have suggested above, to be occupied with

whatever gifts God has given to His church is really to live and be active in the *koinonia* of the Spirit. It is to understand that in this world God is shaping up His *am segullah*, His *laos periousios*, for the ministry He has for them in ‘the age to come’, as ‘a Kingdom of Priests’, i.e. as members of His royal Kingdom, and ‘the priesthood of all believers’ under Christ the *leitourgos*—Leader—of all worship—service in the coming age. That we should be that fellowship of overcomers who inherit the new heaven and the new earth seems beyond present belief.

My thesis has been that we do not need to discover the church as an institution or reinvent it as a living body. It is Christ’s body. It is a living organism. We do not need to develop it. Christ has ever been walking amongst the golden candlesticks, and he perceives what is light and what is darkness, what is life and what is not. He raises up his servants and fits them with grace for their ministries. He is ever Head of the church, as he is ever ‘Lord of lords, and King of kings’. Long may we see this.

I trust we will be able to explore even more what God has for His church in *this* age also. History as it is unveiled to us as God’s mystery must be a glorious matter. The saints of Israel understood God and His action in the world so well, that it is incumbent on us to listen to the Holy Spirit as he tells us ‘things to come’ (John 16:13) and informs us of all things from the beginning to the end. The Holy City has ever been, and dynamically so, not only in Eden but also from Eden to the New Eden. Next, then, I would like us to share study in theme of ‘the beautiful City of God’.

The Church of God: The Beautiful City of God

INTRODUCTION: THE MATTER OF THE CITY IN SCRIPTURE

The writer of Hebrews in the 11th chapter of his book has much to say about a certain city. In verses 8–10 we read:

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Here tents—temporary dwellings—are compared with a city, a permanent city ‘whose builder [architect] and maker is God’. Other people of faith are mentioned and these saw themselves as ‘strangers and exiles on the earth’. They wanted ‘a better country, that is, a heavenly one’. The writer says, ‘Therefore God is not ashamed to be their God, for he has prepared for them a city’. It is clear from the whole chapter that these pilgrims are all going to inherit this city of God. This is a fascinating thought. What is no less fascinating to contemplate is how they arrived at this idea of a great city, one better than an earthly one, and the power it gave them to work towards it, putting all other things aside. They undoubtedly had a picture in their minds. From where did they derive this understanding, this powerful icon? Could it be that it was the city from which they had come, and in some sense lost through the Fall, i.e. Eden? It was certainly the new Eden to which they were looking. It has been suggested that Cain built a city, hoping not only for a personal refuge, but to also gain some of the joys of the erstwhile Eden.

That there was a terrific drive for all the saints to reach their destination and destiny is seen in the strong description of their endeavours as shown in Hebrews 11:32–38:

And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated—of whom the world was not worthy—wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

We might conclude here that there is a strong drive by the saints for their city. Might the drive not be equally strong for those who, like Cain, reject God to have a city for themselves and even what they would call ‘a holy city’—so strong are their cultures which derive from and are one with their cultures?

THE SUBJECT OF THE CITY

Life beyond death has intrigued and fascinated many generations of human beings. Many nations and their cultures have sought to open the mystery of the life beyond,

because it seems so linked with the matter of our present life and how we go about it. In our day we give much time to the practices of burial, and how different people have presented their beliefs concerning the future life, for most cultures make some provision for it. We say this in the light of cities beyond human life and death. Christ's statement that he was going to prepare dwelling places for his disciples must have hit that note in their thinking.

Amongst many nations the subject of 'Heaven' or Paradise' or 'the Holy City' has fascinated those who lived in Old Testament times, especially the people of Israel. For Israel, Jerusalem was the centre of its nation, and is many times called 'the city of David' because he had taken it from its owners and made it into a fortress and had defeated all enemies of Israel, reigning from that centre. In prophecy it was often called Zion, and its future was highly significant as Isaiah 65:18–19 indicates: 'But be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress.' This particular quote is clearly eschatological and has a whole body of ideas behind it. To be honest, Israelites did not seem to speak much about life beyond death, for their minds were set upon the earth, and God's City here which was Jerusalem and which would be head of all the earth. The idea of the Holy City has also fascinated the church since its inception at Pentecost when the Spirit came upon Christ's people. Those who responded in the event of Pentecost were Israelites and held fast to the teaching of their Scriptures which we call 'Old Testament' and, as we shall see, had a heightened interest in the teaching of 'the Holy City'.

It can be said that the nations which have received the teaching and preaching of the gospel over the last 2,000 years have all shown a lively interest in what lies beyond time and is at the heart of eternity, namely this very Holy City.

Teaching regarding the climax of this present age is called 'eschatological' information and deep interest is shown consciously in what we might call eschatological times, i.e. in what will be the *telos*, or end of the present—i.e. the last—age. Jews and Christians show deep interest in this coming goal, whilst Muslims have their own version of what will be Paradise, something the equivalent of heaven, or the Holy City.¹ For what we call 'revealed religions', such as the religions of Israel, Islam and Christianity, one of the living elements is faith in the coming *telos*. Other religions do not see time as linear and climaxing in the future, but as a series of cycles or repetitions, and never coming to an end. These lack an eschaton (last age) and so have no goal, and in many cases no object of hope; certainly not what we would call an historic hope. What we call 'an historic hope' has been taken up by various sects of the revealed religions, but has also been a driving force for ideologies. The strongest in this respect is Communism which argues for the principle of dialectical materialism, i.e. that it is built into history that eventually here on earth will be a material kingdom or society which will be that of equal persons and in which fear and want will have been removed. In one sense the terms used may differ but the main idea is common to all ideologies, namely that there will be a lasting era of peace, safety, security, pleasure, when pain, suffering and death will have been vanquished.

¹ Islam is sometimes said to be a mixture of Jewish and Christian ideas, and even a heresy of the two, and that much of it derives from Jewish and Christian apocryphal ideas. Whatever the case, its ideas are vastly different from the Judaic-Christian views.

THE CITY AND THE PEOPLE OF GOD

The fact of ‘city’ seems universal to us in these days. Most of us have a rough idea of what it means; a metropolis: in fact a gathering of people in the one locality—however large that area may be. The idea of the city—that it has a kind of being and character of its own—is also envisaged. Of Abraham it was said, ‘By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God’ (Heb. 11:9–10). This passage goes on to say God’s people were strangers on the earth, seeking ‘a better country, that is, a heavenly one’ and so ‘God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city’ (Heb. 11:16). It appears from the above that a city was certainly not one such as they saw among the other nations. We will speak of these other cities, but first let us ask the question, ‘Had these people known a city which was satisfying and had they lost that city and were they looking for one like the one they had known?’ If that were the case, and we are not saying dogmatically that it was, then they saw the first city of God (Eden) or its equivalent. The first earthly city was built by Cain who, it seems, being dispossessed from being a farmer was seeking a place of refuge and security. His kind of a city would not be acceptable to those who ‘called on the name of the LORD’ (Gen. 4:26). I am suggesting that the city that was in their minds was Eden, but was Eden a city?

Our idea of ‘city’ comes from what we know of them and the general idea is that first a farming community helped to form a centre of commerce and security. Doubtless this is what has largely happened but cities also were linked with the culture and worship of the people who made them. Certainly the head city of a nation was the expression of that nation, and if defeated then the people fell and their deities were shown to be defective. Eden was lightly populated, yet the whole of mankind was in the loins of Adam, who named Eve as ‘the mother of all living’ whilst he was ‘the father of all living’. It had within it all that could go to make a city, such as fruitfulness, fecundity, water supply, and so was a rich sanctuary. A reading of Ezekiel 28:11–19 gives us a picture of Adam and Eden, however stylised it may be. It was envisaged that from this centre the first couple would fulfil the creational mandate of Genesis 1:28, ‘And God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth”’.

Surely this was the sort of city the people of God envisaged. Men build cities but God created Eden and is building the eternal City, called the city of God, the one Abraham was looking for. Any ‘city of God’ would have been in contrast to the city built by a murderer, and was clearly in contrast to Babel—built by the descendants of those who had built Nineveh (Gen. 10:10; 11:1–9). Babel was built to defy the mandate of Genesis 1:28, in that the men of Shinar (Gen. 10:10; 11:1–21) refused to be dependent upon God. They wanted: (i) to build a city for themselves, by themselves; (ii) to have a tall tower; and (iii) to get a name for themselves—‘lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth’. To ‘get a name’ was to be powerful, self-sufficient, self-protective. This work at Babel was a deliberate and declared opposition to God and to coming under His hand. Genesis 11:5–9 tells us the story of Babel’s being scattered abroad, when men had built the city for that very reason—that they might not be scattered abroad on the face of the earth:

And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the sons of men had built. And the LORD said, 'Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; and nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down, and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.' So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

As we have suggested, a city comes out of the people, is their security and embodies their culture and their very selves.

THE TALE OF TWO CITIES

There is so much we could say about cities, about Sodom, Gomorrah, Nineveh, Tyre, Sidon, Babylon and Jerusalem, but we do not have the time and space. In modern times we could speak of London, New York, Washington, Tokyo, Cairo, Delhi, Moscow, Sydney and such, and the images they present, especially of government, power, intrigue, commerce and war. The value of them can be assessed when we put them on the one hand against Babylon, and on the other hand against God's Holy City, the true Jerusalem. We can say that salvation history—and for that matter all history—is the story or the tale of two cities; the Holy City, i.e. Jerusalem, and the Unholy City, Babylon. The city that Cain built is repeated in all such cities as Man has built. Jerusalem has been spoken of at times as though it were even Sodom and Egypt. In Revelation 11:7–8 we read of the two witnesses which had prophesied against the world:

And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that ascends from the bottomless pit will make war upon them and conquer them and kill them, and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which is allegorically called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified,

showing it to be Jerusalem as at that point being possessed by the beast, In the same book (14:1–2; 15:2–4) we see Mount Zion and the triumph of that true people of God, as they wage war against the beast and its ilk:

Then I looked, and lo on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder; the voice I heard was like the sound of harpers playing on their harps.

And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, 'Great and wonderful are thy deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are thy ways, O King of the ages! Who shall not fear and glorify thy name, O Lord? For thou alone art holy. All nations shall come and worship thee, for thy judgments have been revealed.'

The truth is that from the time of Eden the two cities have been in conflict, and will remain so until the consummation of the ages. Cain's city is only a symbol of the powerful city of Babylon, and Jerusalem has been the symbol of the mightiest city of the ages, namely the heavenly Jerusalem. Reams of explanation could be given and rafts of references in biblical and other literature. The following words are from Augustine in his *The City of God*:

I classify the human race into two branches: the one consists of those who live by human standards, the other those who live by God's will . . . By two cities I mean two societies of human beings, one of which is predestined to reign with God from all eternity, the other doomed to undergo eternal punishment with the devil.²

It is: (i) the head city of the Kingdom of God; and (ii) the other worldly city which is of 'the prince of the power of the air', 'the ruler of this world'. In reality a city is composed of people: buildings are their places of habitation, but it is who rules the city which makes it what it really is. In Ezekiel 48:35 God is called *Yahweh Shammah*, i.e. 'The LORD is there'. God is always present in Jerusalem, symbolised by the mercy seat under the shadowing wings of the cherubim. Of course Psalm 46 is very powerful and in verses 4–7 this is emphasised, yet God is present in Jerusalem, not only for its inhabitants but also for the nations of the earth as we see in Exodus 19:5–6, especially if we read that Scripture in the light of Genesis 12:1–3. Eden and Jerusalem seem to melt together if we look at the Psalm:

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.
God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved;
God will help her right early.
The nations rage, the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice, the earth melts.
The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Just as God is everywhere and ruler over all things and has built a city of which he is King, so Satan, although he is a creature and not a god, is present everywhere in his myriads of fallen celestial creatures and his human slaves, and has used every device he can to make his city of Babylon suited to human needs and desires and its harlot queen seductive and enticing to human creatures, yet it is doomed in an hour of a day to shatter and fall and all its commerce to crash into oblivion.

THE UNRELENTING BATTLE

One can understand the philosophy of the old Salvationist hymn, 'There'll be pie, in the sky, when you die, bye and bye', and the sweet song, 'Beyond the Sunset', along with 'In the Sweet Bye and Bye'. These songs do offer peace and serenity and fullness of being, against the conflicts of this world. Many a weary soul has revelled in these compensatory thoughts, and why not? Even so, the Holy City—the people of God—is always doing battle with Babylon, for it is in Babylon—destroyed—that the blood of the prophets and of the saints is discovered. Babylon is by no means languid but bitterly vicious. The church as the city of God is not fighting flesh and blood but it is contending against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

² *The City of God against the Pagans*, originally printed in 1467, reprinted by Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, in 1972.

The heart of this battle we find to be in the action of Christ on his Cross. In Psalm 22 he speak of ‘bulls of Bashan’, ‘roaring lions’, ‘encircling dogs’, i.e. all the foul carrion of the city of Babylon pitting themselves against this sinless and pure person. All the filth of that city, and all its cruelty of blood-shedding is brought into action, but Christ came to open the gates of Paradise and to usher the nations into the golden Holy City. How then was this to be done? In order to understand and answer our own question we must realise the nature of cities, and especially the nature of Satan’s city whether we call it Babylon or ‘Sodom and Egypt’. In Revelation 11:7–8 it is said, ‘And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that ascends from the bottomless pit will make war upon them and conquer them and kill them, and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which is allegorically called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified’. This is the city of Jerusalem, but it is not holy because others are possessing it, i.e. the Gentiles. So it becomes their city but in fact in 7:13 we are told, ‘And at that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven’. It is the same city, Jerusalem, and the unbelievers are being punished. We draw the conclusion that a city is what it is because of its people. So on the Cross Jesus met all forces which were against him and defeated them (see Heb. 2:14–15; Col. 2:14–15; Gal. 6:14; etc.). In fact it was at the Cross that the City of God triumphed. We cannot here trace the manner in which this was accomplished, but we can say that in history there is no defeat of the Dark City but through Christ’s suffering on the Cross, completed as it was through his resurrection, ascension and reigning.

It is fitting, then, that in the final battling his people should suffer, for suffering is what makes for glory. Any glory evil powers seem to have is wasted at the Cross and so, in history. As Paul said of believers:

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal (2 Cor. 4:16–18).

That is why ‘the people of the City’ battle now not exchanging blow for blow, worldly weapon for worldly weapon, but spiritual weapons against worldly weapons. It is the time for ‘faith and endurance’, and ‘the patient endurance of the saints’, for ‘their deeds do follow them’ even in the midst of martyrdom (Rev. 13:7–10; 14:12). Revelation 14:13 says:

And I heard a voice from heaven saying, ‘Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth.’ ‘Blessed indeed,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labours, for their deeds follow them!’

They are exhorted to overcome but not by unholy methods.

It takes the Cross to defeat the accusing powers of evil, for guilt gives way to the peace of true pardon. Filth is destroyed and the polluted become white as snow. Before, countless numbers were outside the City in states which forbade them enter its holy portals, but now they are part of that City. They are a multitude which no man can number; they are the great *am segullah* whose witness to God is of great joy, who are the flock led by the Shepherd who is at the same time the Lamb. They are led by beautiful waters in peace. They drink of the river of life and eat of the fruit from the tree of life. They sing countless new songs because of the amazing grace which has led them there.

They are the people who in reality are the Holy City itself. As Paul set out the matter in 1 Corinthians 3:9–15 the saints in this world are busy building the church with God—i.e. the Holy City of God—and in that as yet unseen world, the City is now being built from above and below, and all await the day of her gracious descent into the new earth.

**THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING, ALWAYS, IN ALL TIME,
IN ALL ETERNITY**

We have seen that Eden was the true City of God and it was Adam and Eve's responsibility to Edenise the earth. Israel was to be Eden but the people did not succeed in making it so, the holy remnant maintained the principle of the Holy City. Israel was God's Bride, and the church is the Son's Bride and is presently working in the continuity from Abel onwards. As we have seen, the chief city of a nation is its head city. If the head is severed the nation falls. Jerusalem was Israel's 'head city'. How many times in the history of the nation did she fall! Yet not so as to remain fallen, for time and again God lifted up her head. So much so that she becomes 'the mother of us all' (Gal. 3:26). She was ever destined to be the true City of God. Note, then, Psalm 48:1–3 and 46:4–7:

Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised
in the city of our God!
His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation,
is the joy of all the earth,
Mount Zion, in the far north,
the city of the great King.
Within her citadels God
has shown himself a sure defence.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.
God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved;
God will help her right early.
The nations rage, the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice, the earth melts.
The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Time passes and, after all her vicissitudes, now 'the mother of us all'—i.e. the new Eve, the Bride of the second and last Adam—is now descending from heaven:³

³ It would be good to be able to interpret all the symbols, but in this kind of a study such a description would be out of proportion with our subject. What we are keen to do is to draw a general impression of the people of God. What concerns us most is what the church will do in the future.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away' (Rev. 21:1–4).

It is now the 'city of the great King', who is God Himself. In Revelation the Holy City is the New Jerusalem, is the Bride, i.e. the church, the church of God. She is the head of the Kingdom. In the Head City God dwells, the Great King:

Life immortal, heaven descending,
Lo, my heart the Spirit's shrine,
God and Man in oneness blending,
Oh! what fellowship is mine!

How the hymn-writer has grasped the truth of the new City, the new Community!

The City is now, but it has ever been, and we will yet see her consummation. Even whilst she is in heaven, she is now on earth. God and His people are building her—this City which has eternal foundations—whose Architect and Maker is God. At the same time God is making all things new in both heaven and earth.

In Revelation 21:9–21 we are given another sight of the City, and this time we see clearly, though in symbolic language since literal language could not be nearly as effective:

Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, and spoke to me, saying, 'Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.' And in the Spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed; on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

And he who talked to me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its breadth; and he measured the city with his rod, twelve thousand stadia; its length and breadth and height are equal. He also measured its wall, a hundred and forty-four cubits by a man's measure, that is, an angel's. The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every jewel; the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass (Rev. 21:9–21).

Who, then, can explain this apocalyptic language? Some can, and their work is often most beautiful. Especially the work done by Jacques Ellul in his book *The Meaning of the City*⁴ has given us a lovely interpretation. Even so, there is something about such symbolic language which affects us and seems to penetrate us as if in a mystery. I recommend you read Ellul's interpretation, yet even more I recommend you read this passage aloud, over and over, not as a mantra, but as a thoughtful devotion and one thing

⁴ Published by Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1996.

will come clear, the Bride—God’s *am segullah*—is very, very beautiful and very, very practical. See the City’s symmetry, pick out its numbers, see it ‘having all the glory of God’. This is the church, the *ecclesia*, the Bride, the people of God. It is not a City which will be only in the future, but one which has been from the beginning of time. When it is her time she will be complete, or, as we have been saying, sanctified, glorified and perfected, and then she will be ready for what lies ahead, even ahead of the *telos*.

THE CITY WHICH IS ALSO THE NEW EDEN

We read now, the further description of the Holy City in its functional operations:

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

Then he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall worship him; they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads. And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever’ (Rev. 21:22 – 22:5).

We can quickly recognise the meaning of these descriptions for we have known about city, light, temple, Lamb, nations, kings, glory, honour, gates, the book of life, the river, the tree of life—its fruit and its leaves—God’s face, the people’s foreheads, the names of the Father and the Lamb, nothing but blessedness, and all is worship. Now the perfect has come and we know it. Now we know the equipment—if we may put it that way—of eternity.

CONCLUSION: GOD’S PEOPLE AND CHRIST’S WHOM HE TREATS AS HIS PEERS BY GRACE

God’s plan for His creation, we have seen, was from before creation. In creation Man was placed in the garden of Eden, and was a glorious creature, created after the image of God in the righteousness of truth and holiness (Eph. 4:24). His fall was the most ghastly tragedy of history for it was all the dishonouring of the human race in multitudinous ways. The sinuous serpent was devilish in all his deceitful ways and desired to take over God’s creation and rule in His stead. Grace bloomed as a lovely flower even in the midst of the Edenic devastation, as the prophecy of Genesis 3:15 shows. All was not lost. The serpent would be defeated. Eden would be saved. This strange but wonderful race would eventually reign on the earth. All this, we have seen, is by the power of the Cross.

At this very last observation we are now making about Man we see ‘another Adam to the fight, and to the rescue came’, and redeemed mankind would know ‘more blessings than their father lost’. The Second, and the Last Adam would become truly Man and in him would the race become ‘a kingdom, priests unto their God’. This lowly, humiliated, downtrodden sinful creature—Man—would become the highest of creatures in the

universe. The man, Jesus, would crucify the race with himself, in himself, and raise it up in glory by himself, and cause it to be seated at his right hand in the new era, the new creation, in the new heaven and the new earth.

In that most powerful book, The Revelation of St John the Divine, we have seven most powerful promises to those people of Christ's church who would overcome all evil and contrary forces in the Name of the Lamb. When we look at those promises we see they are all to do with the climax of the *telos*. They are in the seven letters from Christ, through his Spirit, to his people. They show how high he lifts his people. They are also the key to the church presently overcoming the red dragon, the beast and the false prophet of the Revelation. They seek by evil ways to overcome the children of God, and the City of God, but armed with spiritual weapons which are 'mighty to the pulling down of many strongholds', the saints overcome them. Paul had said, 'We are more than conquerors through him who loved us', and in Revelation 12:10–11 it is said of 'the accuser of the brethren' (Satan), that 'they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death'. The saints, having been delivered from death, no longer fear it. They have the power to overcome, and it is to this we now turn, for the spiritual weapons are proof against defeat by the Evil One:

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who conquers shall not be hurt by the second death.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone which no one knows except him who receives it.

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

He who conquers shall be clad thus in white garments, and I will not blot his name out of the book of life; I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.

He who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.

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

We see that each one of these promises is what we call eschatological. It means that now, in the time of building the Holy City, we are being encouraged by beautiful and brilliant promises concerning our participation in the Holy City. The nature of the City is that it is God's dwelling place, forever. Now the Covenant God will for ever be with His people. If we look at each promise thoughtfully and deeply then we will be overawed at what is coming to us in the *telos* of history, and at what will be ours as a result of these gifts and rewards. It is the final promise for overcoming, stated in Revelation 21:5–8, with 21:22–26, that comes as a warning to those who would oppose God to the very end and as a glorious assurance to those who obey God. How gloriously high is this *am segullah*—those streaming through the ages—of the Holy City with its celestial creatures, and with all the glory which is in that City and is that City:

And he who sat upon the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.' Also he said, 'Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.' And he said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the fountain of the water of life without payment. He who conquers shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and he shall be my son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, as for murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death' (Rev. 21:5–8).

As we have said, above, this passage contains glorious promises and fearful warnings. The great promises to each overcomer are, 'He who conquers shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and he shall be my son'. To be God's son is a high and lofty matter, the loftiest of all. What, then, is the meaning of 'this heritage'? It is the heritage which is the entirety of the new heaven and the new earth! It is for this that God has trained His *am segullah*, His *laos periousios*. These whom He treats as His peers, so to speak, will be participators in immortality, and will be a kingdom of priests unto their God and all creation. Only they will be competent to lead the new creation in Christ Jesus their Lord, in their Father–King and by means of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 25:31–46 sums up the labours of the people of God and the rebellion of those who hold out against His grace in this era, for it is what happens in this aeon (era) which determines what they will have in the aeon to come, i.e. in eternity:

When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me'. Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.' Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee?' Then he will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.' And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

This, then, is the tale of two cities. This is the story of two powerful systems: one of concentrated, selfish seeking for ruthless control of creation and utterly evil in its actions; the other of love from the beginning to the end. One is the dark Kingdom of Satan, and the other the glorious ministration of light, the very Kingdom of God. One is the City of destruction, and the other the City of delight, the beautiful City of God. On earth, from Eden to the *telos*, there has been this good City which has been the people of God who are people of faith and love. They have been building the City as they have lived in faith and love as fellow-builders with God who is its Architect and Maker. How perfectly crafted is it, built out of His work of creation, and of redemption, the latter being His works of sanctification, glorification and perfection of the whole creation. No wonder He loves His handiwork, His beloved, treasured possession of His kingdom of priests!

Being the Eschatological Church

THE CHURCH IS THE ESCHATOLOGICAL COMMUNITY

In John 16:7–11 Jesus was telling his disciples regarding the coming of the Spirit, that the Spirit's ministry or program would be 'to convict [convince, rebuke] the world of sin, righteousness and judgment'. This we should see as being the entire eschatological work of the Spirit. We should not, then, easily pass over it for the church is occupied wholly in the Spirit's program, and we can test whether we are being led by the Spirit in this gigantic task of working out the international operations of the age. That work it is said is to convict the world of sin because the world does not believe in Christ; to convict it of righteousness because Christ has gone to the Father and is therefore accepted and established as the Righteous One; of judgment because the whole evil system of Satan has been judged. All this work of the Spirit is operative by his continuously applying the work of Christ to the human situation, and the powers of darkness. Since the church is Christ's body and is Christ's people then it is in the business of proclaiming this convicting gospel in the power of the Spirit. If we look at 16:13 then we see the Spirit is the eschatological Spirit, 'Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, *these* shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come'. In fact the things that are to come are linked with verses 8–11, where the conviction of the world of sin, righteousness and judgment are about to happen. All, then, that is eschatological will come to the disciples by the Spirit. This will be their 'being the eschatological church'. They will know in what position they are in history, i.e. in this present age with a view to the age to come. Of course this will include the whole communication of the Lord in his Olivet address (Matt. chs 24 – 25), and other intimations of the future. We draw the conclusion from the Epistles that they were well acquainted with these 'things to come'.

After his resurrection Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of God and told them that when they were baptised in the Spirit they would participate in Christ's universal witness (Acts 1:1–8). All of this was linked with proclaiming the Kingdom of God to the nations in the power of the Spirit. To reiterate: the whole section of John 16:7–15 is preparing the disciples for the conflict ahead when: (i) the Holy Spirit will be the Convincer (Convicter); (ii) the Spirit will show Christ as the truly Righteous One; and (iii) Satan will be—or will have been—judged (cf. John 12:31; 14:30–31), and Christ will be shown as he is and not as the Jews wrongfully saw him, i.e. he will be over all things (John 3:35; cf. Eph. 1:19–23). He will be acknowledged as Lord and Christ. To be over all things is not just to be superior to those things but to be the one who works everything for the fulfilment of the Father's plan. The church is ever to be aware of this action, and to participate in it.

Pentecost marks the active beginning of the work of the Spirit and the church in this era, i.e. the commencement of its eschatological work. When at Pentecost the Spirit came and filled the community of some 120 followers of the risen Christ, causing them to witness to the gathering huge crowd, then Peter explained the happening as the

fulfilment of Joel 2:28f. These were the last days, the Spirit was being poured out on all the believing community, making them the prophetic people, and this would continue even to signs and wonders until the ‘great and notable day of the Lord’ would come. Without any doubt the Holy Spirit is the eschatological Spirit, and the community is thus the eschatological community. From the day of Pentecost they were destined to live as the eschatological people. If they ceased living this way, with this understanding, then the church would lose its power to act eschatologically in the last age. Everything was to be wrought in the light of the coming ‘great and notable day of the Lord’. The church did not set out to conquer the world in the sense that we use that statement today, i.e. in the sense of becoming *the* major world power, or of gathering in all nations to be under the aegis of the church. In that sense the church was never to be a political power. It was to be *in* the Kingdom but never to *be* the kingdom. Because of the resurrection they knew Christ to be now actively ‘both Lord and Christ’ of all things. They looked to the outworking of his Lordship in this age with a view to ‘the age to come’ when Jesus would be seen by all to be Cosmocrator under the Father who would be ‘all in all’. That was a stunning view of ‘all things’.

THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD: THE KINGDOM IS ESCHATOLOGICAL

John the Baptist and Jesus both came preaching the Kingdom of God. It was the eschatological moment for Israel, and was seen as that. The promise of the outpouring of the Spirit also related in the OT prophets to the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:4–7). Jesus was thoroughly concerned about the Kingdom, which meant the defeat of Satan and his system, and the coming of the Kingdom of God in fullness. The Synoptic Gospels speak of his ministry regarding the Kingdom. He was the King by the Father’s baptismal declaration in the light of Psalm 2, and perhaps, of Psalm 110. Matthew 12:28 (cf. Acts 10:38) covers Jesus’ action in ministry, ‘But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you’. His action in healing and exorcisms were the King acting sovereignly. His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount and in parables were all regarding the Kingdom of God. Just about all parables were eschatological. We are fortunate to have Jesus’ declaration regarding the Kingdom in John 18:37, ‘Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?”’ Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Every one who is of the truth hears my voice.”’ Here we need to ask the question, ‘Did that kind of ministry by Christ—i.e. Kingdom ministry—for all intents and purposes cease at his crucifixion?’ The answer must be, ‘No!’ for the Father has given all things into the hand of His Son (John 3:35; Matt. 11:27). It is just the *manner* of his ruling that we must understand. We must keep in mind his teaching that the church is his people who are in the Kingdom and who are there to proclaim it.¹

Looking to the outworking of the Kingdom from Pentecost onwards, we see the apostolic band proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom in Jerusalem and environs. Philip the evangelist, enabled by the Spirit, preaches the Kingdom in Samaria (Acts

¹ Sometimes Christ’s ministry in Palestine is spoken of as ‘Kingdom action’ meaning that when Christ was present special signs and wonders were done. Two mistakes can be made regarding this matter: (i) we can think that Christ as the King carried out these signs and wonders, and we who are of the Kingdom should (can?) likewise do the same; and (ii) that Christ, now King, does not continue to do such.

8:12). Peter proclaims the same gospel in Caesarea to the Gentiles. In Acts 20:20 Paul talked about having preached the Kingdom of God everywhere and in Acts 14:22; 19:8; 28:23, 31 we see his ministry regarding the Kingdom—something we ought to study thoughtfully. His teaching of the Kingdom comes through in the Epistles, e.g. Colossians 1:13; 1 Corinthians 4:20; 6:9; 15:28; 2 Thessalonians 1:5; Hebrews 12:28–29. Paul speaks of the Kingdom as God’s triumphant suzerainty, both as a spiritual ruling, and very much to do with God’s ruling over the whole creation. Inclusion in this Kingdom is a high privilege. One suffers for the Kingdom (2 Thess. 1:5; Acts 14:21–22; Matt. 5:3–12), for it is the life of the Kingdom we are now living. The coming inheriting of the Kingdom is imminent. We must never make the mistake of thinking Christendom, as such, is the Kingdom.

The point of us including the material concerning the Kingdom is that the church whilst not *being* the Kingdom is *in* the Kingdom, and all in the church will inherit the Kingdom at the close of the age when it will be ‘a kingdom of priests unto God’ and will ‘reign upon the earth’. Further, it is always proclaiming the Kingdom which means being involved in the unceasing battle with Satan and his ‘world’. Christ’s triumph over all powers and enemies in and by the Cross, Resurrection, Ascension and Session at God’s right hand means that the church is using the weapons of spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:10–18; 2 Cor. 10:3–6) here on earth, whilst Christ by the Father’s assistance is putting down all enemies, including death, so that he can give the Kingdom to the Father ‘that God may be all in all’. Most important is to see Ephesians 6:12 (*passim*) and 2 Corinthians 10:3–5.

We mean by all this that the church is the eschatological community which is one with the Kingdom of God, fights with Christ for its fulfilment, and looks in hope for the time of his appearing when the present titanic battle between the nations and God, between nations and nations, and the destruction of all evil forces will be resolved. Sin and death having been abolished, life and immortality will have been fully brought to light. This last sentence must not be accepted casually. It cannot be stressed too much that the church is always—repeat, always—oriented to the end: it is with God in all that He is doing. The church is the *only* revealer of what God is doing, as also it is the *only* community of humanity which is one with God in what He is doing. Its high calling is as ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood . . . God’s *own* people’ and as the *only* people who declares the wonderful deeds of Him who has called it ‘out of darkness into his marvellous light’. This is because they are the people of the Word and have been empowered by the Spirit to proclaim the gospel.

THE WAY IN WHICH THE ESCHATOLOGICAL CHURCH ACTS IN HISTORY

The simplest way in which it ought to act is to go on being the proclaiming community. As we have said, the church knows it is in the final age, that its commission is to go to all nations uttering ‘the word of the Cross’, i.e. the whole gospel which is the power of God. Indeed, ‘Christ crucified’ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. The Holy Spirit is in this eschatological proclamation and forms churches from it, and these possess and are the power of the Kingdom in defeating all evil, bringing creation to its *telos* or completion. Its weapons and gifts are given to it by God that this end may be achieved. Its prayer is related powerfully to the matter of history and history’s movements (cf. Rev. 5:8; 8:3–5).

The church is, all the time, facing the matter of human history. Human history is really God's history which is far more dynamic than Man can make it. It is so changeful, so expressing its powers, that it is ever turbulent, and is extremely stressful to humanity, let alone what is generally called 'nature'. The church as being eschatological ever seeks to understand the movements of nations because it wishes to play its true role in the midst of ever-changing history. What we have to keep in mind is that the church—as it is active in Christ—fulfils God's mandate for it whilst Man who is hostile to Him has misused all gifts given him, refusing to fulfil the creational commission of Genesis 1:28, and now has no means whatever by which he can be reconciled with God and resile from his prideful way of using time and the creation for his own plans. Only the confrontation of the Cross can arrest him in the way.

What the church needs to be is ever alive to the issues confronting the whole creation. This is why the Book of the Revelation and other related prophecies and revelations are so critical to its understanding the times in which it is living. If the community of Christ opts for the easy way, the steady institutional way, and if it sees itself in organisational and promotional modes, and pursues that institutional way then it will be wholly out of synchronisation with the eschatological church. Where the church is confused and lacks understanding in the changing and powerful happenings in the world then it needs to see that all its weapons must come into action. Most of all it must take courage to do so from the constant assurances given in the prophetic utterances. It must always be sensing the judgments of God and reading them aright. *Only as it sees the gospel as having to be preached, and is occupied in that preaching, will the events of time be properly understood as being from Christ as this world's Cosmocrator and will the church be in action as the eschatological church.* Understanding history in the light of the following quotation is the only way we can properly understand the rightness of events in time:

Then I saw another angel flying in midheaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; and he said with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of water' (Rev. 14:6–7).

The church, then, must be that community which approaches humanity with a view to saving it from what it is and what it does, for the inevitable outcome of all this being and doing of 'the world'—under Satan—is the second death, i.e. judgment to eternal punishment. The church knows that when it offers forgiveness in the name of Christ, then the world must receive that forgiveness. If it does not then the church retains the sins of rejectors (John 20:22–23), and so brings to the second death (Luke 24:46, 47; Rev. 20:6, 14)). The church is said to witness to Christ to all the nations. To witness is to proclaim 'the word of the Cross' which the Spirit gives to the church as the power of God and the wisdom of God, and by which persons and peoples are saved. On the one hand it is Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords on the white horse who smites the nations with the sword which goes out of his mouth (Rev. 19:15–16), and at the same time it is the 'armies of heaven' which follow him. From Pentecost onwards much of its witness is that it is the community of Christ, i.e. Christ as Lord and Saviour of the world. At the same time the church knows that Christ is Lord over all things *to* (or, *for*) the church (Eph. 1:22). He is head over all powers not only in this (eschatological) age but also for all eternity which is 'the age to come'.

The Importance of the Triad of Virtues

The church then has to be the community of faith, hope and love. These are the three essential virtues and are the one power, indivisible and acting as one. The community of Christ has faith in God and lives in His faithfulness. It has hope because of the irreversible promises of God as they concern the *eschaton* and the *telos*, and it loves because it is the community of love, in Christ. It has faith because of God's acts of faithfulness to His promises. These five sentences are of great importance. We are saying that if the nature of God forms the people in His own Image as persons then that is how the community must be. If it has devised internal arrangements and operations which do not witness to Christ by truly being 'the body of Christ' then its witness is defective, if not wholly absent. For example, if there is ecclesiocentric living and action, if there are internal dominations and distinctions which discriminate and militate against the *koinonia*, then the church is not witnessing to Christ. Likewise if the community imports relational structures, indeed any things which are not Christ himself, then it is not Christ himself. If it is self-promotional, entrepreneurial and managerial then its witness is not authentic because it is going to the world for its pattern of action and it is denying Christ's life in it. We must remember that Christ is the Lord of all history. He is conducting the proper affairs of the whole world. He is defeating all forms of evil and working out the destinies of his elect persons, peoples and nations. The church is to be one with him in these things.

I want to suggest something. I want to suggest that much of the visible church today is short on *knowing* the gospel. This gospel is 'the whole counsel of God', i.e. the plan of His purpose for all creation (Acts 20:31; Eph. 1:12–14). How often and how fully, then, is the gospel preached? I mean the gospel which the Thessalonians accepted 'not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God'. I ask: 'Are we knowing the gospel as Vincent Donovan had to come to know it when he sought to speak the word to the Masai people of East Africa? Are we as apostolic as were the apostles? Should the church be about "rediscovering Christianity"?² Has it parcelled off the apostolic gospel and the life and ministry by which it came into being and received its form, and has it now shaped and structured a gospel which is more simple and intelligible than the one which spoke to the apostolic age? Is it possible to grasp such a gospel with the mind, conceptually, and for that gospel not to have gripped the heart? How do we respond to, "... Jesus Christ. Without having seen him you love him; though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy", and "the love of Christ controls us"?'

To sum up this section, the church is to be with Christ in all that he is doing as Saviour to the world, and as Lord over all to bring it to its destiny of liberation (Rom. 8:18–30). This includes bringing all evil to its final destruction, and the beloved of God to immortality. That 'being one with Christ' so many times will call for being involved in vilification, suffering, persecution and martyrdom. This is genuinely being the eschatological church. It is living deeply in faith, hope and love. All the time it has in mind the eternal gospel.

THE CHURCH AND HISTORY

The community of God—the church is the church *of* God—is involved in history. In one sense what it does *is* the history of the human race. We mean the people of God as

² Vincent Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered*, SCM, London, 1978.

we find them in Hebrews 11, as we find them in Israel and now as the *ecclesia*. We mean that Christ himself is active in *all* history, and his people are one with him in his actions. Who is there amongst us who can spell that history out to us, interpreting it in wisdom? Israel understood God and His movements as history, and the church must see it the same way. The law and the prophets constitute the whole matter. They tell us history. For example Daniel is a book we might call apocalyptic. When we read its prophecies as they were told to Daniel we grow weak and tremble for we are being told history, and we are in it no less than in the Apocalypse of John. Both books and all matters concomitant with them should make us tremble. History is beastly: it has always been so. But it is better than beastly. It is more profound than it is beastly. It is the glory of the Lord pouring over history, for God is greater than all the beasts put together and He ‘confounds their knavish tricks’ to the end so that His glory fills the whole earth, always, and the darkness of enmity is not proof against that glory but is ultimately vanquished by it. However, to see truly the evil that has been perpetrated by the kingdom of darkness and is ever before us seems, often, to be too much to bear. For this reason we must see it wholly as the Scriptures tell it and thus must lift our eyes to the end—the *telos*—where its destruction can be observed, otherwise we will overly despair.

The Principle That the Church Is One with Christ in God’s Fulfilment of His Plan for History

We dare not read the cavalcade of human folly and evil of Man’s inhumanity to Man, without remembering at each point that the divine Sovereignty is always handling history. The people of God have always been eschatological, from Abel to the end. It has always had its eyes on that goal of the promises of God, and the goal is the ‘city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God’. If we think that the City of Man, i.e. Babylon, is stronger than the City of God, i.e. the church, then we are wrong. We must thoroughly understand that the paramount people in history are God’s people; His *am segullah* (treasured possession) in the OT and his *laos periousios* (a people for His own possession) in the NT. To secular eyes all this may all seem to be mild action in a backwater, and too weak and incompetent to be happening in what some call ‘the real world’, i.e. the worlds which work by sight, by human reasoning. In fact the people who are the *laos periousios* in Christ work in the true, presently effective power and wisdom which is that of Christ crucified (1 Cor. 1:18–25), which the world regards as either a scandal or foolishness. Secular minds do not even begin to grasp what are the titanic elements of that cosmic struggle on the Cross.

Let us look at it this way:

- (a) *Christ has been raised up as both Lord and Christ* (Acts 2:36). Ephesians 1:19–23 describes this elevation: ‘and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe, according to the working of his great might which he accomplished in Christ, when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly *places*, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come; and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all’.
- (b) *We, the church, have been raised up with Christ and are seated at his right hand*, as Ephesians 2:4–6 says: ‘God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love

with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus'. Nor do we sit with him merely to have a place which is secure, but we are located there because it is in the heavenlies that we wrestle with principalities and powers, against the rulers of this world, against spiritual wickedness in these very high places. Such wrestling has its effects in the whole of this cosmos.

What we have to see is that the eschatological church has Christ as its Lord and, at the same time, that Christ is Lord of all history. We need to ask ourselves the questions: 'Is Christ as Lord of history the One who is ruling the entire world now, and has been since the time of his ascension?' 'Does he do this apart from the church, or does his Lordship draw the church in on his "program"?' 'Is the church in a real sense his body working out his will in history, and if so, in what ways does it act?' What we must grasp is that Christ works in history so that all his acts are effective, and so that everything which happens is in some way developing creation towards the *telos*. At the same time all his work is by his church, so that it—the church—is always, and likewise, in the business of the Kingdom of God. First Corinthians 15:24–28 is clearly to be seen as the working of him in this *eschaton* in all things—to summate them, to reconcile them, to fill them—but doing so by the life, witness, worship, proclamation and actions of the church. His Lordship over all things is not a Lordship which is only in juxtaposition with his Lordship over the church. The two may be in juxtaposition one with the other, but it is the one Lordship and the one action, so that the church is wholly involved with Christ as the eschatological people of God. This *is* the church being eschatological. This is its reason for its being. The rest of its work is in eternity in 'the age to come' when it will be a kingdom of priests unto God and reign on the earth.

The key to all this is the matter of the Kingdom of God as we have said above. Unfortunately there seems to be little comprehension of what it means to say that the Kingdom of God—under Christ—is being worked out in every detail of history. This is partly because we divide history into the curious categories of 'secular' and 'spiritual', whereas 'secular' and 'spiritual' are the ways some of us look at history. All history is the actions of God as He works out His plan. Certainly it is not easy to interpret history simply by examining it, but we are helped by the prophetic principles the Scriptures teach us, and by much of the prophecy that is laid out for us in the Old and New Testaments.

THE CHURCH IN THE ESCHATON

We now need to look at the world's history over the past 2000 years to see whether we can comprehend some of the workings of God in His Kingdom in this era or age, i.e. the *eschaton*, since Christ has been reigning through this period of time. By 'His Kingdom' we mean first of all that God's Kingdom is the entire creation, for His rule is over all things. We then mean Christ's rule under the Father which has resulted from his victory over all evil, and the liberation of God's elect as the church which works with Christ in finally vanquishing the enemies of God and in the bringing in of the age to come, i.e. eternity. When, then, we are seeking to comprehend God's history as it is in order to see ourselves as being the church in the *eschaton*. Understanding of history, therefore, has to do with comprehending the identity of the church.

David J. Bosch in his book *Transforming Mission* speaks of Christian action in history as fitting into six paradigms in regard to missiology,³ and this system he had derived from Hans Küng. They are:

- (a) The Apocalyptic paradigm of primitive Christianity.
- (b) The Hellenistic paradigm of the patristic period.
- (c) The medieval Roman Catholic paradigm.
- (d) The Protestant (Reformation) paradigm.
- (e) The modern Enlightenment paradigm.
- (f) The emerging Ecumenical paradigm.

It is clear that these paradigms relate primarily to the church on mission and not so much to history as we seek to understand it. Even so, they give some indication of the movement of history as it effects the church. Loren B. Mead in *The Once and Future Church*⁴ sees in relation to Ecclesiology three paradigms, namely the Apostolic, the Christendom and the Time Between Paradigm which is now emerging. None of these helps us much to see our role as the eschatological church. We need, of course, to go to written church history to be further helped. In one sense we are helped to a 'cause and effect' pattern of history, but written history in order to be complete has also to be theologically understood with an accompanying prophetic understanding, and this is a rare combination in historical research. What we are really saying is that history is God working out His plan as He is partnered by His people, and always in view is the opposition of Satan and his world system. We can see how difficult it is to understand history along these lines, but we must endeavour to do so.

Take, for example, Küng's six missiological paradigms. How do these come about? What forces are working which bring them about? Again, what is the matter causing the shift of Mead's Apostolic paradigm to the Christendom paradigm? Does the latter paradigm develop from what is innate in the Apostolic paradigm? Why are these paradigms different? Cannot the Apostolic paradigm be operative within the Christendom one—and so on? If we examine 'the Apocalyptic paradigm of primitive Christianity' then what do we find? It seems that Mead's Apostolic paradigm is stated with a view to ecclesiology and mission, but Küng's with reference to the fact that the church knew itself to be in the apocalyptic happenings of the *eschaton*. This was certainly a powerfully motivating manner of life and ministry. Revelation 12:11 shows how they faced the prince of evil—Satan. 'And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death'.

The recent happenings of 11th September (2001) in New York and Washington brought people—if only for a time—into a sense of apocalyptic. Suddenly the moral sense was sharpened. Old ideas let lie or discarded because of no interest have now come alive. This is an example of a renewed sense of the apocalyptic, and although many wild ideas have been propounded this new sense of God's revelation by His acts is most valuable. Many who had thought nothing much has been happening now think, 'Why, anything can happen!' What if we were to have this mind continually? In

³ *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* by David J. Bosch, Orbis Books Maryknoll, 1991, pp. 181f.

⁴ Loren B. Mead, *The Once and Future Church*, the Alban Institute Inc., 1991.

previous papers we have set forth the fact that Christ is the Head over the whole creation, and considerably more powerful than principalities, powers, rulers and authorities which to a great degree determine the action of the nations. We have said that he is also Head and Lord *of* the church, as well as *for* the church. This means that for 2000 years as seated on the throne of God he has determined the happenings of history. We are parochial if we have been thinking he has only been occupied with the church and its matters. We are foolish if we think that Christ only comes to the alert when such things happen as recently happened in New York and Washington. God is the God of all the nations and the Lord of creation's history. Are then history and its movements determined by Christ, but then worked out in appropriate details in the long struggle against evil, and evil against him?

At this point we really need a series of maps, and a diagram of history with a commentary involving the growth of Christianity in a pagan world up to the end of the third century and the establishment of the Holy Roman Empire and so of what we have called Christendom, i.e. the domain of Christians. This, too, involved the conversion to Christianity⁵ of most of Western and Eastern Europe, including the triumphs of Greek Christianity and the Byzantine Empire as the Eastern part of the Roman Empire. Further afield were North Africa, Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia and Asia east of the Euphrates, places where Christianity penetrated. In the seventh century the movement of Islam began, a movement designed to change the face of the world forever, so quickly many Christian nations and churches came under the rule of Muslims which was dynamic enough to penetrate most areas of the then known world. This quick rise called eventually for European nations to oppose it by whatever means lay to hand. The Western world entered into the Middle Ages, and the work of evangelism went on apace. There was the time of the Enlightenment, the Reformation and various other ecclesiastical and revival movements. Beyond them—the world of today—are the matters of human technological advance, the distributions of nations, and the world in which we are the eschatological church, the world of extraordinary movements.

The years between the seventh and fifteenth centuries were the centuries in which Islam was active and powerful. About the fifteenth century began the explorations and colonising of much of the world by European powers which continued in their conquests until the twentieth century. Evangelism was linked with this movement. Western powers dominated the world. The Arab movement of Islam was halted and Islam as a conquering power appeared to become static. Today it has become resurgent, fighting back against the West.

So we could continue to narrate history but our point is that all this was under the hand of Christ, Cosmocrator, who was—as also he is—putting down every enemy of God and His people. Does this appear to have been so to the eyes of human reasoning? It would seem not. What appears to the eyes of faith? It is there we have to stress that we are the eschatological church, Christ's people working in the world over which His Father is King. One day, having worked the will of the Father, he will 'deliver the Kingdom to God the Father . . . that God may be all in all'.

This can all seem so puzzling. History has been filled with such cruelty, selfishness, suffering, starvation, massacres, genocides, homicides, fratricides, and the abominations of moral pollution and human perversions, that we might wonder who ruled the world created by God and sustained by Him from moment to moment. What, then, are the criteria by which we can understand what is seen without what is seen

⁵ By saying the nations were converted to Christianity we are not saying that this equals personal faith in Christ by all who became part of Christendom. That is another matter which calls for further research.

overwhelming us into grief and even to cynicism? Part of the answer may be that ‘the secret things belong to the LORD our God; but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children for ever’, but Paul does charge us to look at the things that are unseen, and he means ‘unseen by the eyes of human reasoning’.

Criteria by which we work are those set out in God’s history and written for us in God’s Word. We have seen that our task is not simply to interpret all that has happened and will happen in history so much as the essence of the commission is to *be* eschatological. We began by saying that this is the era in which the Spirit is bringing all things to their conclusion. He is convicting the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. This is on a universal scale. We are led back to the principles of being the eschatological community.

CONCLUSION: BEING THE ESCHATOLOGICAL CHURCH

Jesus said, ‘I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it’. Whatever he meant by this, the primary thought is that the church will be more powerful than death and ‘him who has the power of death, that is, the devil’. In other words when the church proclaims the gospel it is proclaiming the mind of God which is the whole counsel of God. Thus the ‘angel flying in midheaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and tongue and people’, has also to proclaim as part of the gospel, ‘Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of water’, which is essentially what Jesus said the Spirit would do when he would come at Pentecost—that which we saw in John 16:7–15. All human events, turmoil and action must be understood in the light of this, ‘for the hour of his judgment has come’. A peaceful and calm world in which everything has come together in tranquillity is not the case. The unifying, filling, and reconciling of all things in and by Christ is the outcome of the ‘great and notable day of the Lord’ and does not precede it.

The church has been through all ecclesiastical and missiological paradigm shifts which we have discussed and has served God in and through them all. Not by any means has it always done this creditably but it still presses on wherever its commission is remembered and obeyed. That is, whenever it trusts God for the outcome and presses on simply with the proclamation, it is thus being the eschatological community. Even so, it has often tended to be confused as to the real issues, i.e. in that it has been somewhat conditioned by the phases of history through which it has been passing. Christ is not conditioned by history—he directs it. He creates it. He controls it. In the ultimate the church has needed to keep on hearing the word of Christ, the very words that he uttered in his ministry and the words he especially directed to the twelve. In training the twelve he has ever been training us. The church has to live by these words. That is why he commissioned his disciples, ‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age’ (Matt. 28:19–20). What had he commanded them but all that he had taught them throughout his years in Palestine. Every one of those words is important and none is redundant. Paul can talk about teaching being ‘dominical’, i.e. what the Lord has spoken, and then speak words which comport with the general mind of Christ. We have the words of Christ in the Gospels, so that the church must teach and live by these. What it needs to know is always available to it.

At the same time, we said above under the heading ‘The Importance of the Triad of Virtues’, it does not live in these simply to appear virtuous, or even to be virtuous, but because this is the nature of the new community created by Christ. What it proclaims as the gospel is worked out in the way that it lives as a redeemed people. A redeemed people is a witness to the gospel and thus tells the world that the gospel is not a theory or a formulated religion in practice, but is Christ himself being Lord of everything, and Lord with his people. Thus the gospel is not detached from those who have been redeemed. Faith, hope and love manifest themselves in the church which is being eschatological. Some may see this as a matter of ethics but whilst the church’s ethics may be a fact, it is the living community which is the witness of the *eschaton*. Passages such as Romans 13:11–14, Ephesians 5:11–15, and 1 Thessalonians 5:1—with other admonitions to holiness of living—constitute the thrust to true morality. The church is the eschatological community into which come those who have acceded to the universal command to repent of their sins and believe in Jesus Christ and the God of all grace and mercy.

Thus the passion for Man’s salvation, the heart compassion towards sinful humanity, is part of the proclamation, and so is the true witness. The church must not forget its gospel is a scandal and foolishness. It is always this to all other religions. It lives in the knowledge of this. It suffers deeply because of this. And all of this is being the eschatological church.